



Leadership Qualities in Implementing the TB DOTS Program in the Philippines: A Qualitative Study on Challenges and Strategies

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Tuberculosis Directly Observed Treatment, Short-Course (TB DOTS) program in the Philippines presents multifaceted challenges and opportunities in healthcare leadership. This paper examines the leadership roles, challenges, and strategies involved in the successful execution of TB DOTS across various healthcare settings in the Philippines.

This study aims to explore the leadership dynamics and operational challenges faced by healthcare leaders in TB DOTS centers in the Philippines.

Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with healthcare leaders from multiple TB DOTS centers. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes and patterns in their leadership experiences and practices.

Leadership in TB DOTS centers encompasses strategic resource management, patient-centered care, and operational efficiency enhancements through effective communication and continuous staff development. Challenges such as limited resources, inadequate facilities, and medication shortages were prevalent across the centers.

Effective leadership is critical for overcoming the barriers in TB DOTS implementation in the Philippines. Future strategies should focus on policy enhancements, resource allocation improvements, and ongoing professional development to sustain and enhance the program's effectiveness.

Keywords: TB DOTS, Philippines, healthcare leadership, qualitative research, thematic analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The global burden of tuberculosis (TB) remains a significant public health challenge, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course (DOTS) strategy, recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), has been pivotal in TB control efforts worldwide. The DOTS strategy emphasizes five key components: political commitment, case detection through quality-assured bacteriology, standardized treatment, effective drug supply and management, and monitoring and evaluation (WHO, 2019). Despite its proven effectiveness, the implementation of the DOTS program faces various challenges, especially in resource-limited settings like the Philippines.

In the Philippines, TB continues to be a major health concern. The country is one of the high-burden TB countries identified by the WHO (WHO, 2019). The Philippine Department of Health (DOH) has been implementing the DOTS strategy since the late 1990s with varying degrees of success. While there have been significant strides in TB control, several challenges persist, including inadequate health infrastructure, limited financial resources, and socio-cultural barriers (DOH, 2019). These challenges necessitate effective leadership to ensure the successful implementation of the TB DOTS program.

Leadership in public health is crucial for the successful implementation of health programs and policies. Effective leaders are expected to navigate complex health systems, mobilize resources, motivate and support health workers, and engage with communities to improve health outcomes (Rowitz, 2021). In the context of the TB DOTS program, leadership plays a vital role in addressing the multifaceted challenges that hinder program success. Leaders must exhibit qualities such as strategic vision, adaptability, effective communication, and the ability to foster collaboration among stakeholders (Kouzes & Posner, 2022).

This study aims to explore the leadership qualities that are essential for the successful implementation of the TB DOTS program in the Philippines. By employing a qualitative research approach, the study seeks to gain insights into the experiences of key leaders involved in the program. It also aims to identify the challenges and barriers they face, the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges, and the lessons that can be learned from their

experiences. Understanding these leadership qualities and strategies is critical for informing future TB control efforts and improving the effectiveness of the DOTS program.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of leadership in public health initiatives. For example, Gilson et al. (2020) emphasized that strong leadership is associated with better health outcomes and improved program implementation.

The findings from this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on public health leadership and TB control. They will provide valuable insights for policymakers, health program managers, and practitioners involved in TB control efforts in the Philippines and other similar contexts. By identifying effective leadership qualities and strategies, the study aims to support the development of more robust and resilient TB control programs, ultimately contributing to the global fight against tuberculosis.

Literature Review

Visionary Leadership

Visionary leadership involves setting clear goals and expressing an inspiring vision that motivates others (Kouzes & Posner, 2022). It is closely linked to organizational commitment and program success, as leaders with a clear vision can effectively align their team's efforts with the program's goals (Northouse, 2022). Throughout history, visionary leadership has played a crucial role in public health initiatives, ensuring sustained focus and resource allocation. Effective TB programs globally have greatly benefited from leaders who can anticipate challenges and opportunities (WHO, 2019).

Effective Communication

The importance of effective communication cannot be overstated in public health campaigns. Clear and efficient dissemination of information among stakeholders is crucial for ensuring everyone is informed and engaged (Yukl, 2019). Furthermore, effective communication enhances team collaboration and community engagement, which are essential for the success of TB control programs. It also plays a key role in reducing misunderstandings and increasing compliance with treatment protocols (Northouse, 2022). Leaders' ability to convey complex health information understandably is often the linchpin of the success of TB DOTS programs, emphasizing the pivotal role of communication in public health initiatives.

Resource Limitations

According to a 2019 report from the WHO, the implementation of TB DOTS programs is significantly affected by resource limitations such as funding and trained personnel. It is emphasized that effective leadership plays a vital role in alleviating these limitations through innovative resource management and advocating for increased funding. Understanding how leaders navigate resource constraints is pivotal, and this study seeks to address this gap by examining the strategies employed by leaders in resource-limited environments.

Socio-Cultural Barriers

Socio-cultural barriers such as stigma and misconceptions about TB can impede the effectiveness of programs. Leaders must take an active role in addressing these barriers by engaging with the community and providing education. It is crucial to comprehend the leadership strategies that effectively tackle socio-cultural barriers. This study investigates how leaders in the Philippines navigate these challenges to enhance program outcomes.

Logistical and Operational Issues

A 2023 study by the Department of Health Philippines highlighted the various logistical and operational hurdles encountered in reaching remote areas and ensuring consistent treatment protocols. It emphasizes the need for strong leadership to come up with innovative solutions to these challenges. The gap in research lies in the lack of detailed analysis of leadership strategies that can effectively address logistical and operational issues. Therefore, this study aims to uncover valuable insights into successful leadership practices within this context. Upon reviewing the existing literature, it becomes clear that visionary leadership, effective communication, and adaptability are crucial for successfully implementing the TB DOTS program. Previous studies have pointed out the challenges stemming from resource constraints, socio-cultural barriers, and logistical issues. However, there remains a gap in comprehending the specific leadership strategies needed to tackle these challenges. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the leadership qualities and strategies that contribute to the successful implementation of the TB DOTS program in the Philippines.

Understanding what it takes to lead the TB DOTS program is essential for making it more effective and sustainable. This review of existing literature lays the groundwork for exploring the tactics used by leaders to tackle obstacles and enhance program results. The discoveries from this research will add to the scholarly discussion on leadership in public health and guide future efforts in TB control programs.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in the Transformational Leadership Theory, which was initially developed by Burns and further elaborated on by Bass. According to this theory, transformational leaders can inspire and motivate their followers to prioritize the interests of the organization or a higher cause over their self-interests. This is achieved through four key components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Northouse, 2022).

Idealized Influence: In healthcare settings such as TB DOTS programs, building trust and leading by example is crucial. Gaining the trust of both healthcare workers and patients is essential to ensure adherence to treatment protocols (Kouzes & Posner, 2022).

Inspirational Motivation: Articulating a clear vision for TB control can unify and motivate healthcare teams, government agencies, and community stakeholders. This is particularly vital in the Philippines, where a collaborative effort is necessary to address the high burden of TB (Northouse, 2022).

Intellectual Stimulation: Encouraging innovative thinking and problem-solving can assist leaders and their teams in developing new strategies to address the program's operational challenges. This may involve utilizing technology for improved monitoring and creating culturally sensitive educational campaigns to reduce stigma.

Individualized Consideration: Addressing the specific needs of healthcare workers and patients can lead to improved program outcomes. For example, personalized training and development programs for staff can enhance their skills and commitment, while individualized patient care can increase treatment adherence (Yukl, 2019).

The Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizes that leaders exemplifying these behaviors have the potential to bring about significant positive changes in both individuals and organizations. Idealized influence entails the leaders serving as role models and earning the trust and respect of their followers. Inspirational motivation involves articulating a clear and compelling vision that uplifts and motivates followers. Intellectual stimulation encourages followers to think innovatively and solve problems, and individualized consideration entails attending to the unique needs of each follower and fostering their personal growth.

Transformational leadership theory provides a robust foundation for understanding the leadership qualities necessary for the successful implementation of the TB DOTS program in the Philippines. By applying this theory, the study aims to identify how key leaders can inspire and motivate their teams to overcome significant challenges, such as resource limitations, socio-cultural barriers, and logistical issues.

In conclusion, the theory of transformational leadership offers a detailed framework for evaluating and enhancing leadership practices within the TB DOTS program. Through building trust, boosting motivation, encouraging innovation, and providing tailored support, transformational leaders can effectively tackle the challenges encountered in TB control and elevate the overall efficiency of the program.

Statement of the Problem:

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the leadership experiences of key leaders in implementing the TB DOTS program in the Philippines?
2. What leadership challenges and barriers do leaders face in the implementation of the TB DOTS program in the Philippines?
3. What leadership qualities can be identified and learned from the implementation of the TB DOTS program?
4. What leadership strategies and recommendations in terms of training programs can improve the implementation of TB DOTS centers?
5. What training programs could be proposed to enhance the effectiveness of the TB DOTS Center?

Research Objectives

General Objective:

The main goal of this research is to investigate the key leadership qualities, challenges, and strategies that significantly impact the successful execution of the TB DOTS program in the context of the Philippines.

Specific Objectives:

1. To specifically pinpoint the crucial leadership qualities necessary for the efficient management and execution of the TB DOTS program.
2. To scrutinize the primary hurdles and obstacles encountered by leaders in the implementation of the TB DOTS program.
3. To assess the tactics utilized by leaders to surmount challenges and enhance the efficiency of the TB DOTS program.
4. To assess how various leadership qualities and methods influence the outcomes of the TB DOTS program, including patient adherence and treatment success rates.
5. To generate suggestions for cultivating and improving leadership competencies among individuals involved in the TB DOTS program, to enhance program execution and results.

Significance of the Study

The research conducted on leadership qualities in implementing the TB DOTS program in the Philippines is highly valuable for individuals and organizations involved in public health, especially in the context of tuberculosis control. The findings of this study are significant for the following:

1. **Government Agencies:** Valuable insights from this study can inform the critical leadership qualities essential for effective TB program implementation. The findings can be leveraged by government agencies, particularly the Department of Health (DOH), to shape and enforce policies that foster strong leadership across different levels of the healthcare system. This is vital for ensuring sustained commitment and resource allocation for TB control efforts. The research findings can guide the DOH in creating targeted training programs aimed at enhancing leadership among healthcare professionals, with the goal of improving the management and execution of the TB DOTS program at both national and local levels.

2. Healthcare Leaders and Managers: The study can benefit current and future healthcare leaders, including those managing the TB DOTS program within DOH and local health centers, by refining their leadership practices. This, in turn, can lead to more effective management of TB programs, improved resource allocation, and better patient outcomes. The research supports healthcare managers in enhancing their strategies to address challenges in TB control, leading to improved coordination between national, regional, and local healthcare units.

3. Barangay Officials and Local Government Units (LGUs): The study's findings can be used by barangay officials to strengthen their leadership capacity, which is crucial for promoting TB awareness, encouraging treatment adherence, and fostering community participation in the TB DOTS program within local healthcare delivery. By developing leadership skills within barangays, local government units (LGUs) can ensure the successful execution of TB control efforts in communities, particularly in hard-to-reach and underserved areas.

4. Department of Health (DOH): The DOH assumes a pivotal role in spearheading and orchestrating the TB DOTS program nationwide. The discernments of this study can facilitate the fortification of leadership at both central and regional offices, leading to more effective program implementation, enhanced data management, and optimized resource allocation. The DOH can capitalize on the study's findings to institute leadership development programs aimed at ensuring that healthcare leaders at all echelons, from the national level down to the barangay level, possess the requisite qualities to tackle the intricate challenges of TB control.

5. Academic and Research Institutions: The study enriches the pool of knowledge concerning healthcare leadership and TB control. Academic institutions can build upon this research to delve further into the role of leadership in the successful execution of public health programs. The study has the potential to inspire detailed research delving into leadership in public health, particularly emphasizing how the DOH and local governments can collaborate to surmount public health challenges such as tuberculosis.

The research emphasizes the pivotal role of leadership in the successful execution of the TB DOTS program in the Philippines. By recognizing crucial leadership attributes and approaches, the study provides practical insights for the Department of Health (DOH), barangay officials, healthcare professionals, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions. Reinforcing leadership at all levels, from the national to the barangay level, can notably enhance the efficacy of TB control endeavors, contributing to the mitigation and eventual elimination of tuberculosis in the country. The wide-ranging significance of these discoveries underscores the extensive influence that robust leadership can exert on public health outcomes across diverse sectors.

Definition of Terms:

1. Leadership Qualities: Within this study, leadership qualities pertain to the specific traits and competencies essential for successful implementation of the TB DOTS program in the Philippines.
2. Implementation: In this context, implementation involves carrying out the TB DOTS program strategies and activities within the healthcare system of the Philippines.
3. TB DOTS Program: The TB DOTS program in the Philippines aims to reduce and ultimately eradicate tuberculosis through standardized treatment protocols and systematic patient monitoring.
4. Philippines: The geographical and socio-political setting where the TB DOTS program is being implemented and the study is carried out.
5. Strategies: The study investigates the strategies employed by leaders to address the challenges in implementing the TB DOTS program and ensure its success.

II. METHODOLOGY

This chapter covers the study design, research locale, subjects and participants, instruments, data collection procedures, study limitations, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations.

Study Design:

The phenomenological research case study design focuses on delving into and comprehending individuals' real-life experiences related to a specific phenomenon. This approach entails interviews and discussions to capture participants' viewpoints, emotions, and insights. Its goal is to offer a depiction of the phenomenon as perceived by the participants.

This phenomenological research case study design is particularly fitting for this study as it aims to comprehend the leadership attributes, obstacles, and strategies from the vantage points of those directly involved in carrying out the TB DOTS program. This methodology facilitates an exploration of the personal and professional experiences of program leaders, offering valuable insights into their motivations, challenges, and methods.

Sampling Design

Utilizing a qualitative case study approach allows for a deep comprehension of the essential leadership qualities required for the successful implementation of the TB DOTS program in the Philippines, with a specific focus on the experiences and strategies of key leaders. This method offers an exploration of the diverse challenges and strategies associated with the TB DOTS program, providing valuable insights that may be overlooked by quantitative methods (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019).

Research Locale:

The research was carried out in Manila, Philippines, focusing on several key locations where the TB DOTS program is actively enforced especially in public settings. The decision to conduct the study in the Philippines was influenced by the high TB burden in the country and the extensive efforts of its national TB control program (Department of Health Philippines, 2023). The Philippines' diverse socio-cultural landscape presents particular challenges and opportunities for TB control. The country's healthcare infrastructure, which encompasses both urban and rural settings, allows for a comprehensive understanding of the implementation dynamics.

Participants of the study:

For this study, purposive sampling is employed, which is a non-probability technique commonly utilized in qualitative research to select participants who can offer valuable, pertinent, and varied data (Patton, 2021). The researcher targeted 5 participants that will participate in the study which will be then validated.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Individuals who have served in leadership roles within the TB DOTS program in the Philippines for a minimum of two years.
- Participants should possess direct experience in executing TB control strategies and overseeing program operations.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Individuals who do not have leadership responsibilities or have less than two years of involvement in the TB DOTS program.
- Participants who are not directly engaged in the operational facets of the program.

The selection of participants is theoretically justified as it aims to capture the perspectives of those with the most knowledge about the leadership challenges and strategies in the TB DOTS program.

Instruments:

Semi-structured Interviews: These interviews, derived from qualitative research traditions, aim to gather insights into leadership experiences, challenges, and effective strategies (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2023). The questions are formulated based on established literature and validated by experts.

Observations: During the implementation of the program, field notes are taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual factors.

Validation Process: The interview guide undergoes pre-testing and refinement through back-translation to ensure clarity and cultural relevance.

Data Collection Procedure:

The data collection process started with preliminary field visits to TB DOTS centers across various locations in the Philippines. The researcher noted the operational environment, resource availability, and overall management practices. The goal is to explore the leadership dynamics, challenges, and strategies in the execution of the TB DOTS program in the Philippines.

The research proposal, including objectives, methodology, and consent procedures, was reviewed and approved before data collection began. Informed consent forms were developed to ensure participants understood the purpose of the study, their role, and their rights, including the confidentiality of their responses. Consent was obtained at the TB DOTS centers where interviews and observations took place and was gathered from the participants.

Semi-structured interview guides were developed with open-ended questions tailored to explore leadership experiences, challenges, and strategies in TB DOTS implementation. Questions focused on leadership roles, resource management, problem-solving strategies, and perceptions of program effectiveness.

Interviews were scheduled with selected participants through email or phone communication. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, the interview format, and the time commitment required. The interview guides were used during face-to-face or virtual interviews, depending on the participants' availability and location.

The time frame would be approximately 1 week for planning, obtaining approvals, and developing instruments. 1 to 2 weeks for conducting interviews and gathering supplementary data. 3 weeks for transcribing, coding, and analyzing data. 2 to 3 weeks for drafting and finalizing the research report.

Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accurate data capture. All recordings, transcripts, and documents were stored securely to maintain confidentiality. Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns. By following this structured approach, the study ensured a comprehensive and systematic collection of data, providing valuable insights into the leadership aspects of the TB DOTS program in the Philippines.

Scope of the study:

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the key leadership qualities, challenges, and strategies involved in the successful implementation of the TB DOTS program in the Philippines. The study aims to understand how leadership affects the execution and effectiveness of the TB DOTS strategy

and to identify best practices and recommendations for improving the program's performance. The population for this study includes healthcare leaders and administrators involved in the management and execution of the TB DOTS program and this study will be conducted over a period of 3 months.

The study is focused on various TB DOTS centers across the Philippines, including urban and rural areas. The topics that will be discussed includes:

Resource-Based View (RBV): Examines how effective management and allocation of resources impact the success of the TB DOTS program.

Systems Theory: Looks at how various components of the TB DOTS program interact and affect its overall effectiveness.

Quality Improvement Frameworks: Discusses strategies for enhancing the quality of care and treatment outcomes within TB DOTS centers.

Health Belief Model: Analyzes how beliefs and attitudes towards TB influence patient behavior and adherence to treatment.

Social Determinants of Health: Investigates how socioeconomic factors impact the implementation and effectiveness of TB DOTS programs.

Advocacy Strategies: Looks at methods for improving resource allocation, securing funding, and addressing systemic challenges.

Limitations of the study:

Upon reviewing, this study has some limitations. These are:

Sample Size: The use of purposive sampling might restrict the broader application of the findings.

Subjectivity: There is a possibility of biases in participant responses and researcher interpretation.

Context-Specific: The findings may be specific to the Philippine context and not easily applicable to other settings.

Data analysis:

Thematic analysis serves as a methodological approach aimed at identifying, analyzing, and presenting patterns (themes) inherent within collected data. Braun and Clarke (2019) have presented a comprehensive framework for conducting thematic analysis that encompasses six distinct phases: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, exploration of themes, validation of themes, definition and naming of themes, and the production of the final report.

Applying Braun and Clarke's six phases of thematic analysis will provide an understanding of the leadership qualities, challenges, and strategies in implementing the TB DOTS program in the Philippines. This approach ensures that the analysis is transparent, and firmly rooted in data, offering valuable insights for enhancing TB control efforts.

Data collection methods:

Accessing participants involves submitting formal requests to the local health units engaged in the TB DOTS program. Initial contact is established through official letters and subsequent meetings.

Data is gathered through semi-structured interviews, which can be conducted either in person or virtually. Prior consent is obtained from the participants for audio recording, and the interviews are transcribed verbatim. In addition to this, field notes are taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details.

The researcher itself is responsible for the data collection. The process spans over a three-month period, allowing sufficient time to gather a diverse and comprehensive sample of participants.

Prior to the interviews, participants are provided with an information sheet and a verbal explanation, outlining the study's purpose, procedures, and their role.

Ethical considerations:

Permission is sought from relevant authorities, such as the local health units. Informed consent is secured from all participants through a written consent form, which explains the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, benefits, and the voluntary nature of participation.

Ethical protocols are observed, including confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The data gathering process lasts for approximately three months, allowing ample time for scheduling interviews, conducting follow-ups, and ensuring data collection.

III. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The implementation of the TB DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course) program in the Philippines is a crucial public health initiative aimed at combating tuberculosis (TB), a persistent health challenge in the country. This qualitative study explores the experiences, challenges, leadership roles, and strategies employed by healthcare leaders involved in TB DOTS implementation across diverse regions of the Philippines. The participants, predominantly female healthcare professionals with varying years of service, provide insights into their roles, the socio-economic context influencing TB control efforts, and the unique challenges faced in delivering effective TB treatment.

The Philippines remains one of the high TB burden countries in the world, with challenges exacerbated by socio-economic disparities and limited healthcare resources, and geographical barriers to healthcare access. The study focuses on understanding how these contextual factors influence the implementation of TB DOTS and shape the strategies adopted by healthcare leaders to overcome barriers.

The data presented in this study are subjective, interpretative, descriptive, holistic, and copious, reflecting the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants. The thematic analysis organizes the findings around key categories that emerged from the qualitative data:

Theme 1: Roles of Leadership and Personal Anecdotes (SOP #1 What are the leadership experiences of key leaders in implementing the TB DOTS program in the Philippines?)