

Board of examiners

Prof. dr. Marjolein Dieleman

Faculty of Science and Amsterdam Public Health - Global Health
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Dr. Jacintha Nzinga

KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Programme in Nairobi
Lecturer at the University of Oxford, UK

Prof. dr. Lieve Van den Block

End-of-life Care Research Group
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Prof. dr. Johan Bilsen

Mental Health and Wellbeing Research
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Prof. dr. Rose Njemini, Chair

Department of Gerontology
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Prof. dr. Wim Van Damme, Promoter

Department of Gerontology
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Prof. dr. Bruno Marchal, Promoter

Department of Public Health
Institute of Tropical Medicine



PhD in Medical Sciences
2020-2021

INVITATION to the Public defence of

Zakaria BELRHITI

To obtain the academic degree of

'DOCTOR OF MEDICAL SCIENCES'

Unravelling the role of leadership in motivation of health workers in four Moroccan hospitals : A realist multiple embedded case study

The defence will take place on **Wednesday 7th October 2020 at 3 p.m.**

and will be organised online via Teams Meeting, accessible through the following link:

[Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

Summary of the dissertation

In LMIC, health system leadership is often characterised by hierarchical exercise of power, which contributes to poor motivation, dysfunctional patient-provider interaction and patient dissatisfaction. While effective leadership is recognised as a critical lever of health system strengthening in low- and middle-income countries, little is known about the mechanisms and contextual conditions underlying the relationship between leadership and “public service” motivation of health workers in LMIC. In Morocco, this relationship has not yet been examined. I set out to unravel the processes linking leadership to health worker motivation and to identify the organisational characteristics and contextual conditions within which these processes are enabled or hindered.

Methodology

I adopted the realist evaluation approach. I developed the initial programme theory on the basis of a scoping review and tested it in four hospitals using a multiple embedded case study design. The data collection included 68 individual interviews, 8 focus group discussions and 11 group discussions with different professional cadres, and non-participant observations, carried out between January and June 2018. I analysed the qualitative data using thematic analysis and adopting the Intervention-Context-Actors-Mechanisms-Outcome (ICAMO) configuration as a heuristic tool to identify plausible causal configurations. Conjectural ICAMOs were compared within cases (across time spans and professional profiles) and across cases. We finally translated the confirmed ICAMOs into a refined programme theory.

Results

I found that in high-performing hospitals, effective leaders foster distributed leadership and facilitate the creation of a supportive environment, which enables open communication, improves relations between staff and allows for effective problem-solving but that this requires a conducive organisational culture and the absence of perceived organisational politics.

Discussion

My study showed that effective leaders can foster health worker motivation by distributing leadership and facilitating the creation of an enabling environment. By adding an explicit analysis of the time dimension (ICAMO (t)), I was able to track the sequencing, timing and dynamic processes of leadership, overcoming the traditional “snapshot” analysis.

Conclusion

Our study leads us to recommend that the development of leadership capacity in Morocco would benefit from focusing on reinforcing individuals’ cognitive, functional and social capabilities, distributed leadership and enabling a positive organisational climate.

Curriculum Vitae

Zakaria Belrhiti was born on 14th August, 1981 in Rabat, Morocco. He graduated as a medical doctor in 2007 from the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, University of Rabat. He joined the public health sector in 2008. He worked as a medical doctor before being appointed as director of the provincial hospital Es-Smara, Morocco between 2008 and 2011.

Meanwhile, he obtained a Master degree in Public Administration at the ISCAE Business School in 2012 and a Master degree in Public Health at the *Ecole Nationale de Santé Publique (ENSP) Rabat* between 2011 to 2013. He graduated top of his class in 2013.

In 2013, he joined the ENSP as a lecturer, researcher in health management, coordinator of the hospital management Master degree course and promotor of international research projects (<http://www.ensp.ac.ma/fr/node/193>; <https://ripsec.org/>; <http://www.evident-network.org/about/>).

In 2014, he enrolled in the Short Course in Strategic Management of Health Systems at the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) in Antwerp, Belgium. This short stay in Antwerp was a crucial cornerstone in his research career by interacting with leading scholars in health system research. This was the starting point of the PhD journey at the Vrije Universiteit of Brussels.

