

Public Abstract

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Abstract

The purpose of this mixed-designed, phenomenological study was to explore the extent to which servant-leadership exists among faith-based correctional volunteers and to discern the impact of faith-based correctional volunteers in transmitting the ten characteristics of servant-leadership identified by Spears (1998) to county jail inmates. To identify the extent of servant-leadership among faith-based correctional volunteers, the Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership instrument was administered and analyzed. Data from interviews with inmates, faith-based correctional jail volunteers and jail administrators were collected to examine their perception of the volunteers' overall impact. A phenomenological analysis involved connecting the various themes to arrive at a general description of the experience. Major findings revealed all of the faith-based correctional jail volunteers were identified as servant leaders. Results specifically addressed the characteristics of servant-leadership and five major themes emerged: (a) volunteers' laughter and positive attitudes inspire inmates; (b) while being served, inmates serve others; (c) volunteers encourage a sense of peace, hope and faith; (d) volunteers started serving to fulfill a spiritual conviction to help others; and (e) volunteers love feedback. The conclusion of the researcher was that the current study represented the inaugural investigation of the relationship that exists between faith-based correctional volunteers and county jail inmates. While serving the inmates, faith-based correctional volunteers clearly assured that inmates were not further deprived when they helped inmates "become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants" (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 7). This exploratory case study laid a foundation to study faith-based programming in jails.