

THE EFFECT OF A NURSE-LED TRANSITIONAL EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM FOR VETERAN-HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR: A CO-MENTORING PROGRAM

Girish Bhalodi,

Reg. No. 26720048, Shri Jagdishprasad
Jhabarmal Tibrewala University, Jhunjhunu,
Rajasthan, India.

Dr. Pradeep

V. S. Department of Nursing, Shri
Jagdishprasad Jhabarmal Tibrewala
University, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan – 333001

ABSTRACT

The Effect of A Nurse-led Transitional Empowerment Program for High School Seniors and the home-bound veteran: A Co-mentoring Program utilizing a holistic approach to provide services, and improve outcomes for participants. The high school senior and the veteran post deployment commonly are in transition as their roles evolve into new roles. Transition for both parties will signal a life changing process with a potential to challenge or overwhelm their coping mechanisms unless conscious effort is made to adequately prepare them for this change process. The high school senior will be graduating from high school and either going onto college or not, while the veteran will be in post deployment and for re-integration to civilian role. Both will undergo a huge change process but the pathways may be undefined and uncertain overtime. The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of a nurse-led transitional empowerment program through the formation of a Veteran-High School Senior partnership that uses a holistic approach and compared to a usual veteran transitional re-integration program. The program will combine intensive skills training with mentoring, recreational activities and creative projects and also integrate primary health prevention and referral services versus standard transitional veteran re-integration program. It will run through a twelve month period during which the effectiveness will be measured using survey instruments. The survey instruments will include the quality of life scale which will measure the general life satisfaction, the activities of daily living scale which measures functional status and the decision making scale which measures their general empowerment. The data will be collected at baseline (first month), midway (six months) and at the end (twelve months) of the study. The results of this study will contribute to health policy, nursing research,

and veteran's recovery and re-integration program outcomes.

Introduction

Empowerment. This is the process of enhancing an individual or group's capacity to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes (Alsop & Heinsohn 2005). Empowerment is associated with making effective choices that translate into actions and outcomes. It is classified as both a process and an outcome with much focus on an individual's agency versus structure. As a process, empowerment requires participation which in turn has a tendency to be transformative over time. Triggering events stimulating change may be positive or negative, huge or small. They may be internal or external factors. Some stimulants of change may result in motivations to explore possibilities for change. Triggers may not directly produce change but may be crucial antecedents that lead to reconsideration of options. A meeting or encounter with someone new may positively be a motivator for change and for exploration of alternatives, giving rise to the formation of veteran in transition and high school senior partnership. The goal is for both parties to bring their previous skills and experience to the program, share and acquire new skills, and at the same time be a role model and mentor

for each other under the guidance of a professional.

Transitions. The Oxford Dictionary defines transition as “the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another”; “students in transition from one program to another”. Cambridge English Dictionary describes a change from one form or type to another, or the process by which this happens. Synonyms include change, transformation, changeover. A high school student will transition to their next stop in life or for the veteran from combat to civilian. Some individuals have had opportunities to partake in side activities during the transitions process but for others, the ending have become abrupt, leaving them unprepared. Positive social support network may impact the speed and direction of change. The transition period for the high school senior and the post deployment veteran is indeed a tipping point that is not only inevitable but must be carefully embraced individually. People in transition experience fear, anxiety, or sense of loss as they go through the different phases of transition such as immobilization, denial, self-doubt, letting go, testing options, searching for meaning, integration, and renewal. (Leibowitz and Lea 1985)

The discussion of an adult's career transition and trajectory must recognize developmental stages, life roles, and interactions. A review of these factors will help to determine readiness for change, in addition to factors such as self, situation, support, and strategies (Sargent and Schlossberg, 1988).

Nurse-led programs: These are nurse-managed care centers that focus on providing care and services to the underserved and vulnerable communities.

Their programs meet the unique needs of the vulnerable populations. These centers partner with the communities to help with the unique needs identified. They align with service providers across disciplines to provide comprehensive and holistic care. They are utilized in places where access is lacking or inadequate. The programs organized and managed by nurses integrate health policy issues with social need; enable and strive to connect the dots of health care and social service drivers; partner with communities for wellness programs using holistic approaches; establish trust by listening and learning about the patient's needs and then plan and organize programs to help meet the identified needs.

Literature review

The veteran population experience multiple challenges as they transition from combat veterans to homeward bound veterans. They experience a myriad of changes that not only challenges them but pose a great barrier to their existence. Veterans must undergo transitions post deployment but specialized programs are needed to provide support as their new roles evolve. Some veterans report fragmentation of services worsened by the burden of war experience and its aftermath. The strategic identification of gaps and processes needed to close the gaps are necessary for better outcomes. Veterans face challenges as they transition to civilian lives and careers (Druzin, 2015). However, many veterans report not finding jobs for multiple reasons. Some of these reasons might be due to completely different perspective of work habits, complexity of military resume, suspicion of post-traumatic stress disorder preventing opportunities for new career. Statistics show that most of the veterans

experience difficulties during transition to civilian life. (Prudential report on Veteran's Employment Challenges 2012), 69% reports experiencing hurdle in finding a job, 60% cite translation of military skill to civilian jobs, 46% threatened by civilian competitors, 67% needs time off to figure out themselves. Kehle, Greer, Rutks & Wilts (2011) in a systematic review examined interventions to improve veterans' access to healthcare and a variety of articles were reviewed. Trivedi, Grebla, Wright & Washington (2011) found that racial disparities persist despite the quality of care in the Veteran's Administration health system.

Webber & Clark (2016) states that nurses must have a good understanding of differing eras of military service as it affects the care needs of veterans and outcomes. Galovski & Lyons (2004) reported about the impact of traumatic stress on secondary traumatization of veterans families as this can affect re-integration.

On the other hand, the high school seniors are challenged by not only their development tasks but also by systems that have created gaps that impact their transitions after high school. A report from the National center for Education statistics following a high school longitudinal study (2009) shows that Some of the factors affecting the high school seniors are getting behind in schoolwork, poor grades, lack of motivation, multiple suspensions and lack of support system at home or even absence of role models to emulate. These reasons result in dropouts or stop outs.

The vulnerable condition of both groups, the high school seniors struggling with their academic performance and the veterans struggling for re-integration remain at the

cross roads in transition and as such, the development of purposeful pathways that will enable then utilize their strength in mentoring each other may result in positive outcomes for both groups.

Alsop & Heinsohn (2005) emphasizes that personal agency and opportunity structure are paramount for empowerment and do present the context for choice. They consider indicators such as psychological, information, organization, material, social, financial and human as assets necessary for personal agency for either the veteran or the high school senior. On the other hand, opportunity structure may present as the presence or operation of a formal or informal programs. These authors stress that empowerment is complex and as such affects measure of degrees of empowerment but is indicated by choice as presented, made and achieved. Therefore, this study is one of such formal opportunity to present choice through the program context to the veterans and the high school seniors and the degree of achievement will be analysed using the instruments noted in the methodology section.

Problem statement. The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of a nurse-led transitional empowerment program through the formation of a Veteran-High School Senior partnership that uses a holistic approach and compared to a usual veteran transitional re-integration program.

The questions are to be examined are

1. What are the problems affecting veteran's transition to civilian role post deployment?
2. What programs will impact the veteran's re-integration after deployment?
3. What is the impact of a collaborative empowerment program on the

successful transition of a veteran and a high school senior?

4. What are the demographics of a veteran in transition to civilian role and a high school senior in transition to graduation from high school.

Significance- This study was designed to provide co-mentoring possibilities between high school seniors who have faced challenges with academic progression and veterans in transition to post-deployment status. The underlying desire to succeed, learn coping mechanisms and finding reasons to be hopeful for a successful future served as a binding factor for both groups.

Operational definition. Veterans are defined as men and women who have previously served on active duty in the US Armed Forces and may have served in the wars. Some veterans may have disability called service connect disability which is an injury or disease incurred during military service. Veterans in general experience a unique set of circumstances that pose challenges when being reintegrated to civilian role of living and returning to work. These challenges may be physical or mental but may also be because of poor preparation for civilian job and expectations that may be unrealistic. They may have untreated underlying mental condition, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder. They may experience difficulty assuring the civilian work expectations. Accommodation may be needed for the veteran in the work place which may be unique for the individual and their environment. The accommodation may mean modification of environment, work stations, flex time for treatment, adjusting desk heights, use of wheel chair, recovery time or for training purposes.

Hypothesis

Veterans participating in the nurse-led transitional empowerment program will experience successful transition to civilian role than those who did not participate in the nurse-led empowerment program

This study will examine the effectiveness of a nurse-led transitional empowerment program for high school seniors and home bound veterans. This is a pilot project that will utilize the available veterans and high school seniors in transition.

Framework-

Empowerment. The goal for this transitional nurse-led program is to incorporate intensive skills training with mentoring, recreational and creative projects, integrate primary health prevention and referral services to empower both the high school senior and the veteran in transition through partnership to enable them to easily evolve into their new role.

Conceptual Framework- This program uses collaboration between the veteran and the high school senior in form of commitment, sharing and empowerment and mentoring each other to enable easier transition into new roles. Each of the participants will bring their previously learned skills, knowledge, and problem solving abilities as well as adaptability to respective roles in programs.

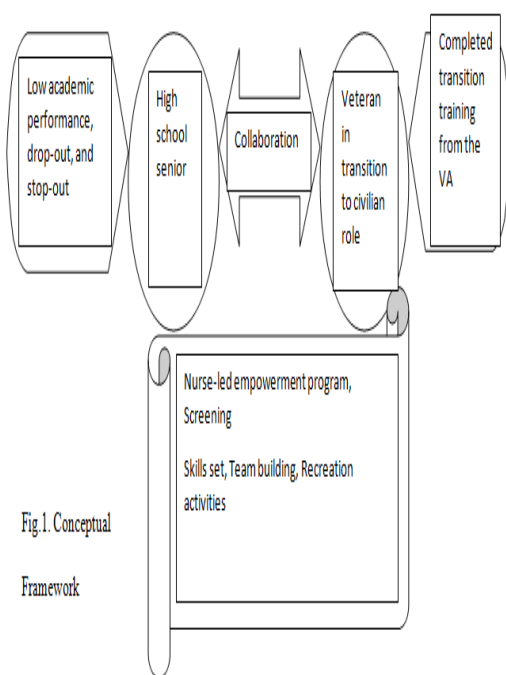


Fig.1. Conceptual Framework

Methods

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of a nurse-led transitional empowerment program for high school seniors and home-bound veterans. The independent variable is the nurse-led transitional empowerment program and the dependent variable will be successful transition to civilian role. This is a quasi-experimental cohort study of (50 veterans) and 50 high school seniors for the purpose of co-mentorship using three survey instruments administered at the beginning, midway at six months, and at the end of twelve months then, comparing with veterans in transition to civilian role who did not experience the empowerment program. The study will also examine the factors that enhance transition from high school. Protocol for conducting research will be followed and the Institutional review board approval will be sought. Once approvals are received, the veterans will be screened for eligibility and those will become the veteran participant group. The

eligible groups will be given an explanation about the study prior to obtaining consent. Demographic information will then be collected from the participants. Outcome measures such as successful transition into the civilian role evidenced by better coping skills, new career pathways, and overall stability will be analysed.

Ethical Considerations

Institutional review board (IRB) approvals will be sought and obtained from the high school and the Veteran's facility. Protection of Human Subject Training will be conducted for all participants and all research assistant personnel as well as the lead investigator. Full explanation of the study will be provided to participating parties and all clarifications made prior to presenting the consent forms for participation. Copies of the signed consent will be provided to the participants.

Time

This study is a pilot study and intended to be an early intervention program for the veteran in the process of re-integration, it is intended to arm them with the skills to help them transition into the civilian role. For the high school senior, this program is aimed at providing them the skill and strategies for survival post high school. This study is projected to last one year. Recruitment of participants will be done after IRB approval and after informing the stake holders in the veterans' administration and the high school respectively, then, data collection and analysis of outcomes will start after the recruitment period.

Intervention and Procedure. Preliminary interview of potential participants will be conducted to identify interests and goals and outcome expectations for both the high school seniors and for the veterans awaiting re-deployment. Recruitment will focus on

those who fit and can be matched as co-mentors. The idea is to match the high school senior with a veteran with similar interest especially in relation to recreational activities. Both groups of participant will bring their area of expertise as an asset to the partnership. This will help to engage, sustain, and improve outcomes. During the study period, participants will jointly receive skill training as part of the empowerment program, with the mind to help create cohesiveness and sense of belonging as they strive towards a common goal of completing the program. The researcher will examine barriers, limitations, incidentals unexpected during and between sessions.

The study will be carried out over one year period on a weekly basis for the first six months and then on a monthly basis for the next six months. It will entail conducting skill training sessions aimed at empowering both the high school senior and the veteran to enable them gainful employment, and in recreation activities to enhance mind, body and spirit. They will also be involved in group projects to be completed within a specified time period. Additional activities will include resume writing workshop, time management workshop, financial management, gardening, counseling and referrals. Alternate registered nurse will be trained about the study protocols, to assist in data collection, to facilitate the sessions and for analysis of data. Additional twenty volunteer assistive personnel will also be trained to assist during study. The service of a social worker will also be needed to help with the complexities that may be noted.

Subjects and Setting

Sample Criteria. High School Senior inclusion Criteria

Students with history of multiple absences from school in freshman, sophomore and junior years, history of suspensions from school, history of low academic performance, history of low achievement in high school, Medical problems- complex and history of disability. They may be college bound or not.

Veteran inclusion Criteria. The veteran must be on course for post deployment as a civilian, must have completed the Veteran's Administration (VA) transition GPS training, possession of Complex skills not easily translatable to civilian skills, and a desire to be enlisted in skill training. Both groups of participants will have some Common characteristics such as an interest in academics, Interest in sporting activities, Interest in computer technology, Interest in Arts and design, Interest in Poetry, Interest in Acting and Performance, Interest in Music and dance, and Commitment to participation in the sessions.

A power analysis will be conducted to determine adequate sample size and since this is a pilot study, the sample size will be based on the available participants.

Demographic variables will be composed and collected for generalization to the population. These will include age, gender, socioeconomic factors, educational background, race, marital status, and health status. Identifying the health status will be necessary to help to determine impact of health on their ability to remain committed to the program. Background characteristics will be based on self-report information from participants through interviews.

Instruments

1. General life satisfaction. – Lehman Quality of Life Scale with scores ranging from 1 (terrible)- 7 (delight) where higher

scores translate to more satisfaction. Baseline, midway, and at the end.

2. Functional status- The activities of daily living scale, a 12-item seal measuring daily functional status. Score of 1-5 Likert scale with higher scores meaning higher functional ability- baseline and at the end

3. General empowerment- 28 item decision making scale will be used to measure general empowerment. Responses 1-4 with higher scores translating to stronger empowerment or greater levels of empowerment. Baseline, midway, and the end.

Collection and Data Analysis Plan

Two groups of analysis will be conducted. One for the high school senior group and one for the veterans' group and will include all participants in the sample population. Frequencies and mean values will be generated. T-tests and Chi-square tests will be used for Bivariate analysis within groups and between groups. Descriptive statistics will be presented as well to represent the characteristics of both groups.

Sample Budget for submission to a funding agency is in the appendix section. Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine in partnership with the Veteran's Administration is researching on the types of programs and services that are most helpful to veterans as they re-integrate after deployment. This study will be instrumental in helping veterans as they re-integrate after deployment.

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BUDGET

| | Requested | Total |
|--|-----------|--------|
| I. Personnel | | |
| A. Salaries and Wages | | |
| Project Coordinator @ \$3,000/month @ 100% time x 12 months | 36,000 | 36,000 |
| 2 Social Workers @ \$1,500/month each @ 50% time x 12 months | 18,000 | 18,000 |
| 20 Volunteer Recreational Aides @ 50 hours each/year x 7.00/hour | 7,000 | 7,000 |
| Stipend for participants # 100 @ \$100 each (completion bonus) | 10,000 | 10,000 |
| B. Fringe Benefits | | |
| Project Coordinator @ 36,000/annum @ 30% | 10,800 | 10,800 |
| 2 Social Workers \$9,000/annum each @ 30% | 1,620 | 1,620 |
| C. Consultant and Contract Services | | |
| Bookkeeping Services @ \$200/month x 12 months | 2,400 | 2,400 |
| Meal Services @ \$400/day x 30 meetings/year | 12,000 | 12,000 |
| Trainer @ \$250/day x 8 days (1 day per month) | 2,000 | 2,000 |
| Annual Audit | 2,000 | 2,000 |
| II. Non-Personnel | | |
| A. Space | | |
| 900 square feet @ \$1.25/square foot/month x 12 months | 13,500 | 13,500 |
| Telephones @ \$200/month x 12 months | 2,400 | 2,400 |
| Utilities @ \$300/month x 12 months | 3,600 | 3,600 |
| Facility Insurance @ \$600/year | 600 | 600 |
| B. Rental, Lease, Purchase of Equipment | | |
| Word processor/printer | 2,000 | 2,000 |

| | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| 12-passenger van @ \$400/month x 10 months | 4,000 | 4,000 |
| 3 desk/chair sets @ \$250/each | 750 | 750 |
| C. Supplies | | |
| Desk top supplies @ \$125/year/staff x 3 | 375 | 375 |
| Educational materials @ 50/month x 12 months | 600 | 600 |
| D. Travel | | |
| 4 roundtrip airfare Washington DC and lodging @ \$650/each | 2,600 | 2,600 |
| Reimbursement for staff auto travel @ \$.20/mile average 400 miles/month x 12 months | 960 | 960 |
| 8 days per diem @ \$150/day | 1,200 | 1,200 |
| 3 Luxurious Bus rides @ \$1500/trip (NY, PA ,DC) | 4,500 | 4,500 |
| E. Telephone | | |
| Installation @ \$260 | 260 | 260 |
| (3) instruments @ \$100 each (Beginning, midway, & end) | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| F. Other Costs | | |
| Conference Tuition (Creative Accounting) @ \$200/each x 4 staff | 800 | 800 |
| Temporary Liability Insurance | 600 | 600 |
| III. Indirect Costs | | |
| Note: Indirect costs are expressed as contingency funds | 5,000 | 5,000 |
| Total Project Cost | \$146,565.00 | \$146,565.00 |