Alcoholics Anonymous Article Review

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Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), as its name implies, is a very discreet organization. Little is known about the organizational structure of the group which is intentional and by design. The article selected for review encompasses the history of the organization, the foundational goals and principles of the organization, and the organizations structure. The review will be supported by referenced material and a critical evaluation and analysis of the content.

**The Article**

The article selected is titled: The Expressions and Transformations of Identity in Alcoholics Anonymous: A Multimethod Study of Individual, Group, and Organization. The dissertation by Hedges (2008) was submitted through the University of Utah for a doctorate degree of philosophy. Contained within the article is a unique and detailed approach to the business model of AA. Hedges (2008) indicated AA operates within the identity and self-help business industry. The original concept implemented by the organization provide a service which influenced the original purpose and goal of the organization. Hedges (2008) rationalized the organization founded by Bill Wilson and Bob Smith, was designed to assist alcoholics to achieve and maintain sobriety. This has been the guiding principle behind the organization

**Organizational Theory**

The perspective of organizational theory depends on variables of the presenters as witnessed by the scientific management theory of Taylor, the bureaucratic theory of Weber, or the administrative theory proposed by Mooney and Reiley (Walonick, 1993). The organizational theory which accurately aligns with the AA principle of service to others, and a transformation of the participant, is a blend of two contemporary approaches. Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990) introduced the servant leadership theory as a way of life. Frick and Senge (2004) wrote “The core idea of servant leadership is quite simple: authentic, ethical leaders, those whom we trust and want to follow, are servants first” (p. 5). Wilson and Smith epitomized this approach which was reflected in their reluctance to form a traditional organization with a hierarchy and formal structure. Hedges (2008) specified the organization formally organized what was necessary for legal and productive existence. The organic nature of the organization is prevalent in the current structure and design of the operation. Transformational leadership and the subsequent improvement of the participants, is a theory credited to Burns and Bass. Mulla and Krishnan (2011) maintained leaders have a professional and morale impact on the follower’s wellbeing. Enabling the follower to advance in their desired objectives benefits the individual and the organization.

**Organization Design**

The beliefs and values of AA organization are the foundation of the organization’s design. Hedges (2008) proclaimed the goal of the organization is to help people. The organization is structured as a nonprofit 501c3 tax exempt organization. With the absence of shareholders and other for-profit officers, the operation is designed to function financially on charitable contributions and donations. Hedges (2008) retorted AA has been one of the most successful nonprofit organizations in the United States. The statement referenced the number of successful recoveries which signifies the achievement of organizational objectives.

**Article Conclusions**

Alcoholics Anonymous is an organization which transforms lives through membership of the organization. Hedges (2008) concluded AA is a self-help organization which relates the organizations values, beliefs, principles, and identity to the members. Membership requires the individuals to be honest and trust the process as stated in the Big Book. The organization encourages the opportunities for emotional expressions and the forming of relationships. Scott and Davis (2007) classified this behavior to be consistent with the natural system perspective. The organization supports the freedom of members to exchange experiences through open lines of communication. The organization does employ formal activities which consist of donation collection and distribution, publication of literature, and administrative functions. Hedges (2008) reiterated the importance of the meetings and group identity as essential to the organizations success and sustainability. Group identity is one of the characteristics of the scholar, practitioner, leader (SPL) model at the University of Phoenix. As a member of the School of Advanced Studies, scholars are encouraged to engage with faculty and cohorts with the goal of building a community for advancing doctoral studies. As a practitioner, the flexibility of AA structure demonstrates the advantages of the contingent approach to management. As a leader, aligning actions with the organizations mission and purpose is essential to conveying consistency and building trusting relationship. This article was selected because it encompassed the topics of shared leadership within an informal, loosely structured organization which is the focus of my dissertation on purpose driven leadership models of contemporary social movements.

Reference

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