

The Relationship between the Leadership Styles of Nurse Managers and Nurses' Structural Empowerment in Two Saudi Governmental Hospitals

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Abstract: Leadership styles have been positively related to Structural Empowerment (SE) as reported since leaders empowering behaviors such as participative management had an influence on Staff Nurses (SNs) responses to their work environment. The Aim of the Study was to identify the relationship between the various types of leadership styles of the Nurse Managers (NMs) and the nurses' Structural Empowerment at two Saudi governmental hospitals. A descriptive correlational design was used. A stratified random sampling of Staff Nurses (SNs) (n = 197) was selected to complete the Conditions of Work Effectiveness Questionnaire II (CWEQ-II) to measure the SE of the SN, and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ form -5X short) to measure the leadership style of the NM. Findings indicated that the leadership style of the NM and the SE of the SN were positively and significantly related. Additionally, a significant relationship was found between the study participants' demographic data (nursing degree, hospital, and working unit) and the SE of the SN and the leadership style of the NM. It is recommended that nursing leaders can basically use right leadership styles and traits that empower nurses to participate in decision-making as a way to improve and enhance their working environment.

Keywords: Leadership Style, Nurse Manager, Structural Empowerment, Staff Nurse, Transformational

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I. Introduction

Health care settings are in a state of rapid change which alleviates pressure on health care providers especially nurses in dealing with this change. Adding to the change, there is also the global nursing shortage [1].

Health care system is in difficulty with the global nursing shortage and the ever-increasing demand for healthcare services; it is a result of budget cuts and downsizing, nurse migration, and an aging workforce. The nursing shortage is a threat to the quality of care, cost, and patient safety [2]. Nursing shortage must be examined from all dimensions, because it was discovered in the nursing management literature that it is affected by numerous factors. In depth examination requires challenge, time, experience and attention from all nursing services administrators in order to be able to recruit and retain highly qualified staff nurses [3]. Leadership behaviors are pivotal in creating an empowering work environment for nurses to be able to have power and control over their nursing practice to increase their job engagement and improve their abilities to give quality nursing care. Leadership is a process of influencing others to achieve organizational goals and to ensure overall success [4]. Therefore, providing a structure of work environment that empowers nurses and meets their needs is primarily the leaders' responsibility [5].

II. Literature Review

Leading staff differs among different healthcare organizations and each NM adopts a different leadership style to lead others based on their background, preference, knowledge, values, beliefs, experience and the organizational culture and climate [6]. Transformational (TFL) and relationship focused styles resulted in increased job satisfaction, more commitment, lower stress levels, increased empowerment and ultimately higher productivity amongst employees [7], [8].

In order to create an empowering workplace, NM needs to address and supports SNs' emotional, and informational needs effectively. Moreover, competent and style of the leader are very important, to ensure staff access to necessary information and resources effectively [9]. Permitting to Kanter's theory of SE (1977), giving employees access to resources, information, support, and opportunity accompanied with power necessary to accomplish the work to make employees feel empowered [10]. Both formal and informal powers are

associated with mastery and autonomy as opposed to control [11]. The style of leadership preferred by the NM could either motivate or demotivate SNs. Therefore, it is important for leaders to adopt their style of leadership wisely, to ensure SNs being motivated to work efficiently and be structurally empowered [12]. In conclusion, empowered nurses will feel supported, and they are less likely to leave. Additionally, they will show support to their organizational vision & mission, give quality care to patients, and serve as role models to future nurses. Leadership style is therefore very crucial in nursing management as it determines not just nurse behaviors but also the quality of patient care.

III. Design And Methods

3.1 Aim

To identify the relationship between the various types of the leadership style of the nurse managers and the nurses' structural empowerment at two Saudi governmental hospitals.

3.2 Study Design

A quantitative/ descriptive correlational design was employed to achieve the specific aim and objectives of the study.

3.3 Setting

This research was conducted in two settings located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The first setting is Hospital A, which is a governmental- teaching hospital. The second setting is Hospital B; it is a governmental hospital and a research center.

3.4 Sample

A stratified random sampling was used in the selection and calculation of the study participants.

3.5 Inclusion criteria

Staff Nurses (SNs) with at least two years of clinical experience and working directly with the unit Nurse Managers (NMs) in inpatient units were included in the study.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Permission and ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethic Committee in Hospital A and B. SNs were informed by the SN letter attached in the data collection tool that their participation was not voluntary and no risk was associated.

3.7 Data collection and analysis

Distribution and collection of the questionnaires were done by the nurse manager in sealed envelopes to ensure participants confidentiality. There were two reminders given to each nurse manager; verbal and non-formal. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

IV. Results

Findings of the study in regards of the frequencies and percentages of the demographic data among the study participants (age, nationality, gender, nursing degree, hospital, working unit, total years of nursing experience and the number of years at present hospital) showed that half of the participants (50.8 %) were from hospital A and (49.2%) were from hospital B, and half of the nurses (50.3 %) from both settings were working in acute care units. Additionally, most of the nurses (93.4%) included in the study were non-Saudi, and the majority of the nurses (91.9%) were females. As well as, nurses with a bachelor degree represented more than half of the participants (52.3%).

Additionally, the mean and the standard deviation of the demographic data among the study participants showed that, the mean values of age was ($M=36.3 \pm 7.4$), years of experience in nursing was ($M=12.8 \pm 6.3$), and the years of experience in present hospital was ($M=6.8 \pm 4$).

Moreover, results of the descriptive analysis of the MLQ form -5 X short indicated that the outcomes of leadership had the highest mean value ($M=2.92 \pm 0.622$), followed by the TFL and the Transactional (TAL) subscales ($M=2.81 \pm 0.545$), and ($M=2.96 \pm 0.529$) respectively. Whereas, the passive/avoidant subscale had the lowest mean value ($M=1.48 \pm 0.927$).

Furthermore, results of the descriptive analysis of the COWE-II showed that, the total COWE-II Score (SE of SNs) was equal to (22), which reflected moderate level of empowerment. Results of the descriptive analysis of the COWEQ-II indicated that amongst the six COWE-II subscales, the "access to opportunity" had the highest mean value ($M=4.12 \pm 0.05$), followed by the "access to information" ($M=3.81 \pm 0.78$), the "informal power" subscale ($M=3.73 \pm 0.72$), the "access to support" ($M=3.71 \pm 0.77$), and the "Formal Power" ($M=3.3 \pm 0.82$). While the lowest mean value was found in the "access to resources" ($M=3.30 \pm 0.83$).

In addition, Table 4.1 showed that most of the values of the correlation between the leadership style of the NM and the SE of the SN were positive and highly significant at ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$). The Table also showed that the correlation between the leadership style of the NM and the SE of the SN was 0.412 at a $p\text{-value}$ equal to

0.000. Thus, there was a 41.2 % correlation between the leadership style of the NM and the SE of the SN. Since p -value < 0.01. This indicated that the correlation is highly significant.

Table 4.1: Correlation between the Leadership Style of the NM (MLQ Form -5X Short) and the SE of the SN (COWE-II)

Correlation Coefficient (r) COWE-II	MLQ (Form -5X Short)			
	TFL	TAL	Passive/Avoidant	Outcomes of Leadership
Access to Opportunity	.350** .000	.265** .000	-.044 .537	.301** .000
Access to Information	.331** .000	.236** .001	-.086 .229	.289** .000
Access to Support	.458** .000	.372** .000	-.097 .177	.324** .000
Access to Resources	.378** .000	.240** .001	-.150* .035	.338** .000
Formal Power	.403** .000	.278** .000	-.141* .048	.335** .000
Informal Power	.341** .000	.250** .000	-.181* .011	.299** .000

Correlation Coefficient (MLQ and COWE-II) r = 0.412**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The following scatter diagram as shown in Fig. 4.1 reflects the relationship between the leadership style of the NM and the SE of the SN, as the leadership style of the NM increase as the SE of the SN increase too.

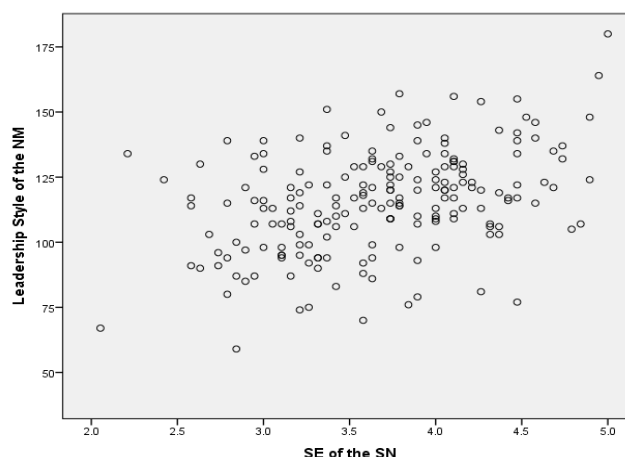


Figure 4.1: Scatter Diagram of the Relationship between the Leadership Style of the NM and the SE of the SN

V. Conclusion

Structural empowerment of the nurse and the leadership style of the manager are significantly related and both are essential for nurses’ job satisfaction and other work-related outcomes because managers with supporting behaviors such as participatory management can influence the level of job commitment of nurses and their participation in achieving the organizational goal of their work.

As the healthcare system has been gradually changing and developing over time and leadership style of NMs definitely plays a crucial role in the facilitation of change for future prospects and growth of the nurses. Therefore, nurse managers should use focused workplace training to increase their leadership skills by providing a contented and a positive work environment for all nurses to work effectively and to improve the quality of patient care and outcomes as evidenced in previous research findings. The manager’s adaptation of effective leadership styles such as in TFL style that enables nurses to participate in decision-making and encourages independence will help them to improve their working environment, and to be motivated to take on difficult jobs as a means of increasing their creativity, knowledge, and innovation at work.

In Saudi Arabia, in respect to all the challenges that the health care system is facing due to the shortage of healthcare professionals particularly nurses, the concept of the leadership style of the NM and the SE is

greatly encouraged so as to motivate them to be more committed and to increase job retention level among nurses.

Essentially, nurse managers should use good leadership styles and traits that empower nurses to participate in decision-making as a way to improve and enhance their working environment. Therefore, the following recommendations to improve the current conditions of the leadership behaviors of nursing directors and to develop educational programs to develop and improve their leadership skills are; nursing managers should use good leadership styles and traits that empower nurses to participate in decision-making as a way to improve and enhance their working environment. Recommendations from the study findings indicated the great emphasis on female and male recruitment to join nursing profession to cover the demands of the ever growing population and accelerated change in health care sectors. Gender preferences by the patients and Stereotyping issues in nursing society indirectly affect nursing shortage. Therefore, it's recommended for nursing managers to establish the promotion of a neutral image in nursing schools and society to change nurses' perceptions and views through advocating male gender as great candidates for nursing profession. Nurse Managers and leaders should increase the SE of their SNs through improving their perception of power and empowerment, and provide access to the necessary information, resources, support, and opportunities to them to be structurally empowered.

Recommendations for future nursing research are; a focus on nurse manager recruitment and retention should include more studies conducted to study and examine new strategies for leadership development and succession planning, mentoring, and professional coaching of the SN. Additionally, mentoring and coaching are teachable behaviors. Therefore, they should be highlighted in leadership development programs and studies. In Saudi Arabia, it's recommended for nursing management studies to be particularly conducted to study leadership styles in healthcare system to increase knowledge among healthcare administrators about effective leadership styles on working environment and quality of patient care, and their negative effect on SNs career progression within the nursing profession.

Therefore, such studies will increase knowledge and provide extra support and evidence about the importance of effective leadership styles on working environment and quality of patient care, and the significance of SE as an effective strategy for retention, motivation and increased productivity among nurses.

There were a number of limitations accompanied with this study. The first limitation was the prolonged time of the Ethical Approval process in both study settings which resulted in the delay of data collection process. For this reason, the study findings were rescheduled in the study time plan. Another limitation of this study was the limited studies in the literature that examined the SE of the staff in regards to mediators, contributing factors, effects, and outcomes. In order to fill the gap in the literature, it is recommended for future studies such as interventional to emphasize on the applicability of leadership development programs in combination with researches that will examine the subject of SE to increase the insight and knowledge about it among health care professionals, specifically nursing administrators and also to fill the gap in the literature.

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