

Evaluating the Role of Nursing Leadership in Promoting a Positive Work Environment and Reducing Job Stress

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ABSTRACT

In order to facilitate and enhance nurse performance—which is necessary for delivering high-quality care and guaranteeing patient safety—nursing leadership plays a crucial role. By comprehending the leadership behaviors and elements that drive nurses to perform effectively, this study seeks to investigate the link between nursing leadership and nurse performance. A systematic review was conducted to investigate the elements that nurses feel drive them to perform better and to correlate these factors with leadership behaviors and styles. Nurses' performance is impacted by nursing leadership practices, both direct and indirect. Nurses' performance may be enhanced by having a deeper grasp of the elements that drive them to perform well and by supporting them in the workplace through leadership behaviors and styles.

KEYWORDS: Evaluation, Role, Nursing Leadership, promotion, Positive Work Environment, Empowering Staff.

1. Introduction

High turnover rates and a worldwide personnel deficit are putting further strain on the nursing profession. In addition to other work-related responsibilities, nurses must manage a heavy workload, which can have detrimental effects on their physical and mental well-being as well as the safety of their patients. Research indicates that nurses' psychological health and perceptions of work-related stress are significantly impacted by leadership behavior. Poor leadership and a lack of autonomy, for example, can lead to nursing burnout, while acknowledgment, awards, and recognition can improve work-related well-being. Positive leadership approaches (such as transformational leadership) and staff empowerment promote nurses' well-being at work, according to a recent systematic study of nursing leadership (Dall'Ora et al., 2020).

The lack of nurses has led to an increase in the burden of current nurses, which has a substantial influence on their performance and work life and may directly affect the

standard of care provided. Organizational, physical, and cognitive aspects all affect nursing performance. Nursing performance can be greatly impacted by a number of factors, including high workloads, a lack of technological support, skills and competencies (such as problem-solving ability and nursing informatics competencies), communication skills and confidence, commitment, quality of work life, job stress, and motivation. It's noteworthy to note that the majority of these elements fall under the umbrella of leadership management, which focuses on resolving issues impacting nurses and offering support and training (Jang et al., 2019).

The bulk of leadership studies have generally overlooked leadership's influence on health-related outcomes, such burnout and work engagement, in favor of job performance or job satisfaction, despite the fact that leadership is widely recognized to be important in fostering healthy workplaces. Furthermore, due in part to inadequate conceptualization, measurement, or analysis of leadership and burnout, prior studies have undervalued (inadequate) leadership as a driving element in the development of employee well-being and ill-health (Kohnen et al., 2024).

Good leadership was shown to be one of the key elements in encouraging nurses to take on more responsibility and engage in more physical activity. Similarly, it was shown that supervisors' rudeness at work had a negative correlation with nurses' performance. In order to achieve the organizational goals of guaranteeing the delivery of high-quality care and improving patient outcomes, nursing leadership behaviors are essential in influencing nurse performance. Transformational and transactional leadership styles and their effects on nurses' resilience, burnout, and satisfaction have been extensively studied in light of nursing leadership theories. Very few research has examined the leadership elements influencing nurses' motivation to work effectively, despite the fact that the majority of studies have examined the effects of leadership styles on the factors determining nursing performance (Alsadaan et al., 2023).

2. Literature review

Since they spend more time with patients than any other member of the healthcare team, nurses are vital resources in hospitals. As a result, by enhancing their performance, they contribute significantly to guaranteeing high-quality treatment and patient safety. Even though nurses make about half of the world's healthcare workforce, there is a serious nursing shortage in practically every nation. From 2020 to 2030, developed nations like the United States will require an additional 275 000 nurses. The International Council of Nurses estimates that 13 million nurses are required worldwide to address the upcoming nursing shortage (Ung et al., 2024).

Workplaces for nurses are essential to efficient healthcare systems that respond to workforce demands for maximizing patient safety, having a sufficient number of employees with a variety of skills, and guaranteeing dependable care teams. "A professional practice environment [that] supports nurses to function at the highest scope of clinical practice, to work effectively in an interdisciplinary team of caregivers, and to mobilize resources quickly," according to researchers, is how they

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define good nursing work settings. A substantial amount of research backs up this concept and shows that nurses' work environments are linked to lower rates of adverse events and missed treatment, in-hospital days and expenses, nurse retention, lower rates of burnout, and increased job satisfaction. Because of significant staff turnover and shortages, unfavorable working conditions, workplace violence, a lack of professional development, and unequal compensation, the absence of healthy work environments for nurses has therefore led to the worldwide nursing workforce crisis (Paguio et al., 2020).

Nurse leaders are nurses, nurse managers, or other nursing staff members that operate in a healthcare setting and try to change the behavior of a group or an individual based on objectives that align with those of the organization. In addition to being viewed as a team where "leaders innovate, transform, and achieve quality outcomes for patients, health care professionals, organizations, and communities," they are also viewed as professionals "armed with data and evidence, and a commitment to mentorship and education." (Cline et al., 2022).



Figure 1. Principles of Nursing Leadership (Cline et al., 2022).

3. Creating a Supportive Environment

The capacity to listen to nurses is the most crucial competency for a nursing leader. The nurse leader has to be physically present in the department and participate in the conversations. Speaking with nurses facilitates an open exchange of ideas and offers validation. Nurses who are not bearing their burden must be held accountable by nursing leaders. The nurse's behavior changes will show that the nursing leader is taking action and supporting them. Furthermore, nursing leaders need to be aware of, comprehend, and show a strong concern for their nurses. Being present on the unit is crucial for this reason. Since deeds usually speak louder than words, we must provide an example of professional, helpful, and healthful behavior for our nurses (Doherty & Revell, 2020).

When team members critically follow leaders and are inspired by their choices in

response to the needs and goals of the company, effective leadership is demonstrated. However, issues with employee relations, stress, illness, or retention may also arise as a result of subpar leadership. Thus, leadership necessitates an awareness of many issues that need to be resolved by combining data from clinical experience, research, and stakeholder preferences. Leadership decisions, also known as leadership decision making, might guarantee proper staffing and provide enough care at a reasonable cost if they are supported by evidence. Nonetheless, nurse leaders continue to base their choices more on their professional and personal experiences than on research findings, which may result in subpar care delivery that is not safe. Since every nurse should be a leader in their field, their leadership skills should be improved (Välimäki et al., 2024).

For many years, healthcare systems throughout the world have struggled with safety concerns in treatment, including adverse events, drug errors, falls, and surgical errors. According to a number of studies, hospital settings are dangerous and lack a safety culture, which can result in long-term discharge delays, impairment, or even death. The contemporary healthcare environment and the nursing profession are inherently chaotic, and it has been demonstrated that a credible and visible leader who encourages patient safety practices may create a good safety culture. Since nurses contact with patients the most, it is critical to acknowledge that nurse leaders are key players in fostering a culture of patient safety that will lead to safer patient outcomes (Ree & Wiig, 2019).

4. Empowering Staff

Engaging leaders are supposed to act in a way that meets the basic requirements of their followers in the workplace, which is supposed to increase intrinsic motivation. The four elements of EL that Schaufeli suggests are connecting, inspiring, empowering, and strengthening. These might influence how nurses view their workplace, which would increase their motivation for their jobs. First, by acknowledging their ownership and providing them with a voice, engaged leaders empower nurses. They will feel more in charge of their work as a consequence, which will probably increase their intrinsic drive. Second, nurses are stronger as a result of engaging leaders giving them difficult assignments that challenge their abilities (Xue et al., 2022).

Leaders promote nurses' sense of competence and mastery by strengthening, especially through positive feedback, which is thought to be one of the requirements for the growth of intrinsic motivation. Third, nurses are motivated to strive for the team's or organization's overarching objective by their leader's encouragement and dedication to a vision (Xue et al., 2022).

The leader also recognizes each member's unique contribution to the ultimate objective, which will help nurses feel that their job matters and that their efforts have an impact. They will hence probably develop intrinsic motivation. Last but not least, active leaders build relationships with their followers by encouraging cooperation and a strong sense of teamwork, for instance. Therefore, engaging leaders are thought to establish positive working circumstances that are marked by emotions of

autonomy, competence, significance, and relatedness by empowering, strengthening, motivating, and connecting. This would ultimately boost nurses' intrinsic motivation. Increased levels of wellbeing and work engagement are probably the outcome of this experience (Xue et al., 2022).

5. Providing Resources

Nurse leaders are able to comprehend their individual requirements, anxiety triggers (such as infection risk), and support preferences. The development of pertinent (as opposed to generic) education and support techniques that may really have an impact and be beneficial will be guided by these findings. Furthermore, these self-care insights are essential since worry has a negative impact on nurses' wellbeing and can impair their capacity to give patients high-quality care. Therefore, nurse leaders must make sure front-line nurses are equipped to offer COVID-19 patients safe, high-quality care, as well as end-of-life care as necessary. This implies that creating individualized self-care programs needs to be a top concern (Hofmeyer & Taylor, 2020).

One of the many resources required to practice nursing efficiently, according to nurses, is personnel. For many healthcare facilities, recruiting and retaining nurses is a difficulty. More importantly, there are other resources that are positively impacting nursing practice than personnel. Nurses' perceptions of a healthy work environment associated with high-quality treatment are also influenced by physical, social, and environmental aspects (Kowalski et al., 2019).

The capacity to use advocacy skills is a significant significance for nurses. Nurses still speak out for their patients. The profession of nursing has to approach lawmakers and broaden its scope to include self-advocacy. Research aimed at enhancing patient care quality must back up critically debates. In order to communicate the intricacy of issues pertaining to providing high-quality care, nurses must go outside their comfort zone of fighting for specific patients and reach a larger audience (Kowalski et al., 2019).

6. Engaging Leadership: such as transformational leadership

There are four essential elements that make up transformational leadership. In order to gain the trust and confidence of the workforce, a leader who practices "idealized influence" must first act as a great role model for followers, exhibiting a strong work ethic and values while advocating for the organization's mission. "Inspirational motivation" is the term used to describe the second kind of conduct. It entails formulating an exciting and appealing future vision and conveying it to supporters via stirring speeches, striking visuals, and alluring symbols. This fosters a greater degree of dedication and improved performance by motivating followers to work toward this common goal (Ystaas et al., 2023).



Figure. 2 Transformational leadership (Ystaas et al., 2023).

"Intellectual stimulation" is the term for the third kind of conduct. Intellectual stimulation enables followers to come up with creative answers to common problems by pushing them to think creatively and from several angles. "Personalized consideration" is the last category of behaviors, which includes coaching, goal-achieving assistance, and creating a positive environment. Leaders may assist in meeting such demands by paying close attention. For example, some followers may need clear instructions on how to do a task, while others need the necessary resources to solve the problem independently. However, when regularly displayed, the four traits of a transformative leader are likely to inspire followers' respect and adoration (Ystaas et al., 2023).

7. Nurse Managers Role in Promoting a Positive Work Environment

To comply with legal requirements and aid in quality assurance initiatives, nurse supervisors must regularly oversee reports, write procedures, and keep accurate records. Efficient documentation is essential for both legal protection and the smooth delivery of patient care. Therefore, communication clarity encompasses more than just dialogue; it also involves a thorough strategy for disseminating information across the whole business (Penconek et al., 2021).

Effective nurse managers also possess emotional intelligence (EI). A nurse manager with a high emotional intelligence (EI) is able to negotiate challenging social settings and prudently handle interpersonal relationships because they are aware of both their own and others' emotions. Because the healthcare industry may be demanding and team members may become emotionally exhausted and burn out, this attribute is essential (Penconek et al., 2021).

A supportive atmosphere is fostered by a nurse manager who possesses emotional intelligence and can relate to their employees. They are aware of how crucial team morale is and how emotional health affects both patient outcomes and work performance. A nurse manager who notices indications of stress or discontent within

the team can move quickly to address these problems by providing resources or assistance. By having a more motivated and satisfied nursing staff, this proactive strategy not only increases staff retention but also improves patient care (Penconek et al., 2021).

8. Encourage Work-Life Balance

Because of the long hours, shift work, and emotional strain, nursing may be a very demanding career that frequently results in burnout and discontent. Healthcare companies need to actively support policies that promote human well-being and acknowledge the significance of work-life balance. This might involve providing wellness initiatives like exercise classes, stress management seminars, and counseling services, as well as flexible shift scheduling and mental health resources. Because it greatly enhances overall job satisfaction, organizations should encourage nurses to take the breaks and vacation time they are entitled to (Younies & Al-Tawil, 2020).

9. Implement Recognition and Reward Programs

A key factor in raising nurse involvement is recognition. Institutions ought to create initiatives that recognize and honor exceptional work performed by nursing personnel. This can be accomplished informally by peers and superiors or formally through award schemes like "Nurse of the Month." Nurses can also be motivated by putting in place a systematic incentive system that offers cash bonuses, gift cards, public recognition, or chances for professional growth. Nurses are more likely to stay involved and dedicated to their organization if they feel valued for their efforts. (Younies & Al-Tawil, 2020).

10. Competencies

Four studies looked at how nurses' performance was affected by characteristics linked to their competence. Few of this research examined novel leadership philosophies and how they affected novel performance domains. For example, researchers discovered that nurses' innovative work behaviors, such as idea generation, exploration, implementation, and championing, have been positively impacted by entrepreneurial leadership. This can enhance overall performance and help the organization achieve its objectives, like sustainability (Wang et al., 2022).

Similarly, nurse managers may greatly enhance the sustainability of nursing leadership by fostering a healthy work atmosphere, managing resources well, and implementing transformational leadership techniques. Furthermore, prior research has shown that qualities like treating staff members like family, providing guidance, and allowing them to make their own judgments have improved a number of areas that might affect nurses' performance. Among these enhancements are decision-making skills and the capacity to take advice and criticism (Wang et al., 2022).

11. Leadership practices

Nurses' performance was found to be influenced by their leadership methods. High nursing performance may also be achieved through leadership behaviors that promote autonomy, inclusion, transformation (enhancing skills, innovative abilities, and competences), and staff prioritizing (empathy, paternalistic conduct, and care). Sharing corporate goals is crucial for nurse leaders to inspire employees, provide ideas, and get input on creative ways to accomplish objectives in a collaborative and encouraging work environment. According to the analyzed research, leadership has a significant impact on nurses' performance in a number of domains, including creativity, judgment, and engagement at work (Alsadaan et al., 2023).

Additionally, innovative leadership techniques like transformational leadership and entrepreneurial leadership may enhance nurses' performance and help the business reach its objectives, including sustainability. As a result, it's critical that nurse managers keep improving as leaders and foster an atmosphere that encourages nurses to achieve at their highest level. By doing this, nurse managers may contribute to the development of practice settings that support nurses' capacity to carry out their duties efficiently, improving nursing performance as a whole (H. Wang et al., 2021).

Thus, nurses' opinions of the elements influencing their desire to perform are greatly influenced by nursing leadership. Both direct and indirect effects are possible. As a result, having capable nursing leaders is crucial to developing practice environments that support nurses' potential for success. In other words, there is a strong correlation between nursing leadership and nurses' success, and in order to get the best possible patient outcomes, nursing leadership development must be given top priority (Alsadaan et al., 2023).

12. Conclusion

For all healthcare institutions, delivering high-quality treatment and guaranteeing patient safety are essential objectives. Nurses play a vital part in accomplishing these goals since they are the main healthcare professionals that spend a lot of time with patients providing care and services. Since they are the primary staff in charge of monitoring patient safety and care quality, nurse leaders who control nursing resources must help nurses better understand the needs and values of their patients. Because nursing leadership has been shown to have a direct and indirect impact on nurses' performance, strong nurse leaders are adept at putting evidence-based approaches into practice to guarantee that these goals are met. To improve the quality of care and accomplish organizational objectives including sustainability, development, and innovation, nurse leaders must have a thorough understanding of individual nurse traits, connections, and support, as well as leadership techniques and styles. In order to address or enable these elements through their conduct or leadership styles, nurse leaders should endeavor to comprehend and identify the factors that drive nurses to perform successfully.

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