



The Relationship between Leadership Style of Head Nurses and Career Independence of Nurses in Educational Hospitals of Hamadan University of Medical Sciences

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Abstract

Leadership is one of the most important aspects of management that plays an important role in the effectiveness of organizations and has different styles. Job independence, the degree to which the occupation creates individual freedom, independence and power of comment on the timing of the work and the necessary work in the development process as well as leadership styles may influence it. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between leadership style of head nurses and career independence in nurses. This descriptive research is correlational. In this study, 240 nurses were selected by stratified random sampling method out of the nurse community in medical education centers. A standard questionnaire of leadership style and career independence was used to collect data. SPSS software version 16.0, Pearson correlation coefficient and Kruskal-Wallis test were used to analyze the data. The mean score and standard deviation of leadership style used by managers from nurses' point of view was relationship-oriented leadership style (86.92 and 16.76), task-oriented leadership style (50.45 and 7.62) and synthetic leadership style (60.60 and 3.3), respectively. The mean score and standard deviation of nurses' career independence were 2.453 and 0.496. The mean and standard deviation of career independence scores in the task-oriented leadership style were the highest (13.16 and 2.23). Head nurses prefer the relationship-oriented leadership style. Career independence scores were highest in the task-oriented leadership style. Managers should choose appropriate leadership styles based on the different situations to provide the ground for nursing staffing independence.

Keywords: Leadership style (Fiedler), career independence, nurse, medical education centers.

Introduction

Providing optimal medical services and improvement of hospital processes is highly dependent on the leadership style of managers in these organizations and team work of the staffs [1]. Leadership style of managers is one of the factors affecting enhancement of spirit, motivation, performance, efficiency, effectiveness, and ultimately leads to productivity in the organizations [2]. According to Fiedler, for effective staff leadership it is necessary that managers adopt the styles matched to the situation, needs, and ability of staffs. In other words, effectiveness of management occurs when the skills and personality of the leader is matched to the situation [3]. In contingency leadership style, the leadership style depends on the situation. Fiedler specified leadership style based on three variables of interpersonal communication between the leader and the group members, strength and authority of the leader in the position, and structure of duties [4]. Independence of nurses is one of the main factors of professional identity and power source for nurses [5]. Independence requires recognition of power and greater freedom for nurses in their occupational activities. The researchers described it as the control over occupational environment and freedom in decision making. Therefore, independence of nurses means lack of dependency and maintaining independence in the hospital environment and care decision making [5]. Independence is an important element of professional identity and a source of power in clinical practices [6]. Career independence includes three key and interrelated aspects; i.e. Work timing, decision making, and methods of implementing the work [7]. Career independence is the degree of independence, freedom, and authority provided by the job when planning for the work and determining work procedure, and its outcome is individual responsibility taking in doing the tasks and achieving determined organizational goals as well as feeling attachment to the organization [8]. Career independence refers to the individual's freedom of action in implementing assigned tasks. Such freedom of action is highly dependent on the job design applied by the managers [9]. Routine and repetitive tasks which provide less independence for the staffs lead to work alienation. High level of career independence is a significant area for determining the activities of a job and highly supports creativity in a job [10]. Employees with high or low (not middle) career independence prefer the supportive style of leadership so that this leadership style increases level of performance and satisfaction of staffs with high career independence. On the other

hand, those who have little independence also want to have a supportive and friendly leadership style. In supportive leadership style, the leader highly pays attention to the staff and there is friendly communication between the leader and subordinates [11]. Ronie and Gotlib (2007) showed that subordinates with high or low career independence prefer supportive leadership style [10]. Leadership is regarded as a potential or active force, through which the managers and leaders influence and create confidence in their followers to realize the goals and ideals of the organization and group. Leaders inspire their followers to find the right path and try to determine the leader's conduct and to achieve the situation desired by the leader. The leadership is rooted in the commitment to service delivery [12]. Leadership styles include permanent and continuous behavioral patterns which are used by individuals when working and are perceived by others. The method which the leader uses his influence to achieve the goals is known as leadership style [13]. The leadership is rooted in the commitment to service delivery. Leadership style determines the culture and strategy governing the organization. Leaders inspire their followers to find the right path and try to determine the leader's conduct and to achieve the situation desired by the leader [7]. The career independence in nurses influences working process and professional interactions of nurses. Head nurses in medical education centers closely communicate with the nurses considering their leadership style, which may influence career independence of nurses. Considering importance of leadership style and its impact on career independence in nurses, current study aims at investigating relationship between leadership style and career independence in nurses in medical education centers of Hamedan University of Medical Sciences.

Materials and Methods

Current research is a descriptive research of correlation type which was carried out on 240 nurses of Besat, Shahid Beheshti, Ekbatan, Farshchian, and Fatemiyeh Education Hospitals in Hamadan in 2015. Research inclusion criteria included having at least a bachelor's degree in nursing, having at least two years of work experience in Hamadan University of Medical Science's medical education centers, and exclusion criteria of the study were non-completion and non-return of the questionnaires. Sampling was done as stratified random sampling in this research. The research sample was selected with cooperation with nursing offices of these centers following observation

of nursing staff list. Following taking necessary permissions from the university, the researcher referred to these centers and gave leadership style and career independence questionnaires to the nurses after visiting the samples and explaining about the way of questionnaire completion and ensuring them about confidentiality of their personal information, and the questionnaires was collected in the next day after completion.

The research questionnaire included three parts:

1. The first part of the questionnaire included demographic information such as age, level of education, gender, marital status, work experience, work shift of the respondents,
2. The second part of the questionnaire included questions related to Fideller's leadership style, 3. And the third part measured the nurses' career independence.

Leadership style questionnaire contains 18 items with 8 choices. For calculation of LPC score, the values underlined by the participants are summed and if the sum of values is 64 or above, Fideller evaluates the person with high LPC, and considers people-oriented style as appropriate leadership style. If sum of values is 57 or lower, Fideller considers him with low LPC, and task-oriented leadership style is suitable for him. If sum of values is between 58-63, Fideller offers synthetic leadership style as suitable. Reliability of Leadership Style Questionnaire was calculated through Cronbach's Alpha in the study of Sosik and Dinger (2007) (0.867) [14], Nekoeimoghadm (0.90) [12], and it was calculated as 0.752 in this study in a leadership style pilot test. The career independence of nurses was assessed through the Aiken and Patrician questionnaire. This questionnaire consists of five items with four choices. Choices are scored from 1 to 4. In order to obtain the total score of the questionnaire, the scores of all items were summed up and calculated. Reliability of the questionnaire was calculated through

Cronbach's alpha in the study of Madathil, Heck, and Schuldberg (2014) (0.7787)[15], and in this study, career independence was calculated as 0.649 in a pilot test. Validity of the questionnaires was approved by the professors of nursing and midwifery faculty. SPSS software, Version 16 was used in order to analyze data, and ethical issues were taken into account in the whole research process [16, 17].

Findings

Most nurses participating in the research (30.4%) were at age range 27-31. Mean and standard deviation of age of nurses participating in the research was 43.39 ± 9.43 years. Highest gender (75.8%) was female gender and 78.8 percent of them had BA educational level (Table 1). Results of Table indicate that mean and standard deviation off nursing managers' leadership style in the view of nurses is relationship-oriented style (86.92 and 16.76), task-oriented style (50.45 and 7.62 and synthetic style (60.60 and 3.3). Highest leadership style of nurse heads in the view of nurses was relationship-oriented style (94.6) and lowest was task-oriented leadership style (2.5). According to Table 3, mean score and standard deviation of nurses' career independence (2.453 and 0.496) were maximum as 3.40 and minimum as 1.60. Pearson correlation coefficient was used in order to determine relationship between leadership style and career independence of nurses. The results suggest that there is no significant relationship between leadership style and career independence ($P > 0.05$). According to Table 4, the mean and standard deviation of career independence scores in the task-oriented leadership style were the highest (13.16 and 2.32), followed by the relationship-oriented leadership style (12.17 and -2.64) and the synthetic leadership style had the lowest mean (11.57) and standard deviation (1.13) for career independence. The results of Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant statistical difference in the mean of career independence scores in different levels of leadership style ($P = 0.478$).

Table 1. Distribution of absolute and relative frequency of the studied units (nurses) in terms of personal characteristics

Variable	Age (Year)	Number (percent)
Age	22-26	52(21.7)
	27-31	73(30.4)
	32-36	30(12.5)
	37-41	30(12.5)
	42-46	55(22.9)
Gender	Female	182(75.8)
	Male	58(24.2)
Education	BA	189(78.8)
	MA	51(21.2)
Work Experience	9	123(58.8)
	10-20	82(34.2)
	21	29(12)

Table 2. Distribution of absolute and relative frequency of nurse heads' leadership style components in view of nurses

Leadership Style	Number	percent	Max. Score	Min. Score	Mean	SD
Task-oriented	6	2.5	57	39	50.45	7.62
Synthetic	7	2.9	63	58	60.60	3.3
Relationship-oriented	227	94.6	124	64	86.92	16.76

Table 3. Mean score and standard deviation of nurses' career independence

Statistical Indexes / Variable	Number	percent	Min. Score	Max. Score	Mean	SD
Career Independence	240	100	1.60	3.40	2.453	0.496

Table 4. Comparison of career independence scores at different levels of leadership style in nurses

Variable	Leadership Style	Number	SD ± Mean	Test Type (Kruskal-Wallis) P-value
Career Independence	Task-oriented	6	13.16 ± 2.23	478
	Synthetic	7	11.57 ± 1.13	-
	Relationship-oriented	227	12.17 ± 2.64	-

Discussion

Current research was conducted aiming at investigating relationship between leadership style and career independence in nurses working in medical education centers of Hamadan city. Highest leadership style in the view of nurses was relationship-oriented style, and no significant relationship was observed between leadership style and career independence, but highest career independence score of nurses was in

task-oriented leadership style (13.16 and 2.23), followed by relationship-oriented leadership style (12.17 and 2.64) and synthetic leadership style had lowest mean (11.57) and career independence (1.13). In relationship-oriented leadership style (employee-oriented) the leader shares his leadership responsibility with his subordinates and contributes them to its planning and implementation, and in a task-oriented

leadership style, the leader tells his subordinates what to do. And how should they do it. In this style of leadership, there is higher career independence. In the study by Khazali et al. (2015), the most leadership style among male managers was relationship-oriented, which is in line with the results of this study [18]. In the study by Nekoeimoghadm et al. (2010), senior and middle managers of educational hospitals in Kerman mostly used employee-oriented leadership style [12]. Leadership style is a collection of attitudes, attributes, and skills of managers which is formed based on the values, trust in employees, leadership tendencies, security feeling in different situations, and appropriate leadership style is shaped based on specific conditions, special situations, and the culturing governing the organization [19]. In fact, the situation and conditions are the main determinants of leadership effectiveness [4]. According to the findings in the current study, there was no significant statistical relationship between leadership style and career independence. Volmer et al. (2012) in their studies showed that there is relationship between leadership style and career independence [19]. Ng and Feldman (2015) concluded that career independence has positive relationship with job performance and its outcome, and negative relationship with the organizational obstacles and limitations [20]. These findings are inconsistent with findings in the current study, which may be due to difference in statistical population, sample size, and the culture governing the populations. Godarzvand et al. (2014) pointed out that career independence refers to the individual's freedom of action in implementing assigned tasks. Such freedom of action is highly dependent on the job design applied by the managers [9]. Considering high educational level of staffs and scientific - cultural nature of staff job tasks, managers can focus on career independence and satisfaction of staffs using relationship-oriented leadership style, and considering role of leadership styles in career independence and performance of staffs, it is suggested that strategies such as holding communication skill, problem solving, and life skills training courses are used for its improvement as a goal in educational plans so that managers can utilize the best styles.

Conclusion

According to research findings, it can be stated that nurse heads prefer relationship-oriented leadership style, which is a suitable style in long-term interactions, thus its maintenance should be taken into account and career independence scores were highest in the task-oriented leadership style. Managers should

choose suitable leadership style based on different situations so that career independence is provided for the nursing staffs and the grounds are paved for increasing motivation and efficiency of all staffs.

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