



ISSN: 0975-833X

Available online at <http://www.journalcra.com>

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF CURRENT RESEARCH

International Journal of Current Research
Vol. 11, Issue, 02, pp.1426-1430, February, 2019

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24941/ijcr.34157.02.2019>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

LEADERSHIP'S IMPACT ON JOB SATISFACTION

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 05th November, 2018

Received in revised form

14th December, 2018

Accepted 29th January, 2019

Published online 28th February, 2019

Key Words:

Nursing shortage,
Servant leadership,
Turnover intention,
Job satisfaction,
Human capital.

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Citation: Dennis M. Mitterer, Richard Schuttler, Stephanie Noel Hoon and Heather Mitterer, 2019. "A Study to assess nurse call response monitoring – Proximity a contributing factor", International Journal of Current Research, 11, (02), 1426-1430.

ABSTRACT

Aim: The purpose of this research was to test whether nurse manager's servant leadership behaviors correlated to the job satisfaction and turnover intention of staff nurses. **Background:** Distinguished nursing excellence is accomplished by leaders that inspire others to adopt behaviors that encourage service and performance. **Method:** A 58 Likert-type servant leadership questionnaire assessing managers' behaviors, relative to job satisfaction and turnover intention, was completed by 283 nurses working at a Magnet certified, Level II trauma center. In order to predict the influence of management behavior on job satisfaction and turnover intention, multiple linear regression analysis was utilized. **Results:** The conclusion reflected that servant leadership behaviors resonate with staff nurses resulting in an increase in job satisfaction and reduction in turnover intention beyond that of transformational leadership. The research demonstrated a strong, positive correlation linking servant leadership behaviors and job satisfaction. **Conclusion:** Servant leadership behaviors engage nursing staff resulting in higher job satisfaction and decreasing turnover intention. **Implications for Nursing Management:** Given the importance of human capital in nursing, nurse managers have an opportunity to create an environment where nurses can make meaningful contributions to an organization by reducing one of the causes of the nursing shortage.

INTRODUCTION

Leader behaviors influence employee engagement leading to organizational outcomes. With health care costs expected to continue to consume higher amounts of individual and governmental spending, leaders must enact proven leadership behaviors that improve employee engagement, leading to activities that reduce the financial burden of a countries health care system. One expense associated with the operations of a health care organization is the cost related to nursing dissatisfaction resulting in turnover. Creating a positive work environment for staff nurses that contributes to providing safe patient care is an ongoing challenge for health care leaders. To accomplish this feat, the health care executive's myopic view of leadership, specifically nursing leadership, must shift to include nontraditional leadership styles. The nursing shortage has reached a global crisis as the demand for health care continues to grow while projections of the supply of nurses show a reduction in many countries (Buchan, O'may, & Dussault, 2013). For example, Buchan, et al. (2013) reported that Canada projected a shortage of 600,000 nurses by 2022, Australia will need 90,000 to 105,000 nurses by 2025, and the United Kingdom anticipates a need for 309,000 nurses by 2021.

The United States expects a shortage of as many as 1.1 million nurses (McMenamin, 2014) or an overall turnover rate of 17.8%, an increase of .7% since 2013 (Colosi, 2015) with a slight decrease to 17.1% in 2014 (Colosi, 2016). While many factors contribute to this global crisis, one factor is nursing leadership.

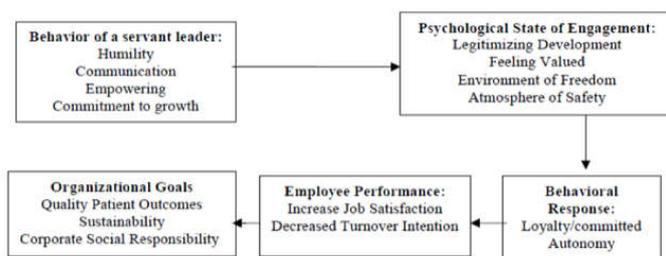
MATERIALS AND METHODS

Distinguished excellence is a desirable goal by organizations and is accomplished by working with internal stakeholders by adopting behaviors that enhance the desire to serve and perform (Sipe and Frick, 2015). Optimal performance occurs when leaders create order and consistency, encourage the positive effects of leadership behaviors that advocate for employee well-being and build cohesive teams that champion individual successes and trust (Tanno, 2017). Achieving excellence necessitates that leaders encourage managers to adopt behaviors that boost job satisfaction and discourage behaviors that hasten turnover intention. Healthy work environments exist when leaders display positive behaviors, admired traits, and demonstrate specific competencies. These positive behaviors influence the psychological state of employees resulting in higher job satisfaction. In health care organizations, having a satisfied nursing workforce is critical

due to its positive relationship to increased productivity of staff, improved patient outcomes, and superior financial performance. An anticipated worldwide nursing shortage of more than 2 million nurses is expected by 2022 (Buchan *et al.*, 2013; McMenamin, 2014). In light of this staggering number, managers, who are looking to reduce nurse attrition, can positively contribute to improved patient outcomes and organizational success by understanding the relationship between management behaviors and job satisfaction. Although there is limited research on the applicability of servant leadership in health care and even less in its relevance in nursing leadership, existing literature on servant leadership reflects the advantages and positive influences on team performance and achieving organizational goals (Liden *et al.*, 2014), increasing job satisfaction of employees (Mayer, Bardes and Piccolo, 2008), and enriching quality of life (Zhang, Kwan, Everett and Jian, 2012). Greenleaf (1977) proposed the concept of servant leadership by postulating that a relationship exists between followers and leaders. Servant leaders identify as 'other-centered' and foundationally, lead from a position of service. For this reason, the attributes that a servant leader consciously exhibits, must be other-oriented. A leader who builds authentic relationships, inspires positive behaviors within the follower. Based on existing literature on leadership and the foundations of nursing (Benner, 2004), four behaviors were identified; humility, communication, empowering, and commitment to employee growth. As a result of having *other-focus*, managers positively shape the psychological state of engagement of the nurse resulting in an optimistic behavioral response, giving rise to improved employee performance and commitment.

Conceptual Model and Research Question

The conceptual model of the relationship between servant leadership behaviors and employee performance guided the research as illustrated in Figure 1.



Humility

Leaders exhibit humility, not as a sub-set of normative behaviors, but rather as an innate virtue (Mitterer and Mitterer, 2015). Humility is a state of decreased self-focus that unites rather than divides (Ou *et al.*, 2014). Humility often entails the recognition and appreciation of knowledge and guidance beyond self. When leaders demonstrate humility, employees readily engage in behaviors that exceed their prescribed job duties leading to superior organizational performance (Owens and Hekman, 2012). By placing the shared goals of others before their own, leaders provide continuous support and facilitate performance, resulting in positive outcomes. Followers reciprocate a leader's humility by engaging in stronger leader-follower relationships (Owens, Johnson and Mitchell, 2013) and improved decision-making (Chancellor and Lyubomirsky, 2013), and by demonstrating greater commitment to the leaders and organization.

Communication

An essential aspect of leadership and management is communication. Leaders, who share information and encourage consensual decision making enhance the well-being of followers. Schuttler (2010) noted the failure of supervisors to communicate effectively with followers, results in poor employee performance. Communication entails both listening and providing information, with the emphasis on listening. Continuous, one-way communication is ineffective in building strong leader-follower relationships. Leaders learn from listening to staff resulting in empowered followers. Trusting relationships, between leaders and followers, results from effective, two-way communication. Strong, trusting interpersonal relationships improve employee performance resulting in higher goal achievement.

Empowering

By developing and empowering employees, leaders provide increased autonomy permitting followers to assess, discuss, and suggest solutions, thus involving employees in organizational decision-making (van Dierendonck *et al.*, 2014). Research results find that empowered employees seek more meaningful ways to contribute to their work and continuously express desire to share in decision-making resulting in increased self-confidence (MacPhee *et al.*, 2014). Employee engagement also results in increased responsibility. Empowering allows the nurse professional to demonstrate expertise in patient care, while the nurse manager facilitates the nurses' work. Accountability for outcomes ultimately shifts from the manager to the nursing staff. Higher levels of job satisfaction results from empowering and supportive work environments resulting in greater organizational commitment and goal achievement (Bartram, Casimir, Djurkovic, Leggat and Stanton, 2013).

Commitment to Employee Growth

When an employee strives to achieve personal career goals and the manager supports the goals, commitment to employee growth exists (Ertürk, 2014). When managers assist employees with the acquisition of knowledge and skills to perform their role effectively, employees achieve personal, professional, as well as organizational goals. Engaged employees improve the quality of service delivery, thus influencing organizational performance (Truss *et al.*, 2013). In nursing, improved patient outcomes are the result.

Psychological State of Engagement

Commitment, energy, and work identification are characterizations of an employee's psychological state of engagement (Anitha, 2014). Emotionally and physically engaged nurses achieve established organizational health care goals due to their positive psychological state. Employees who experience a positive psychological state of engagement and a healthy work environment feel good about themselves, experience higher levels of well-being and become superior performers. High nurse performance is associated with increased decision-making, autonomy, and participation. When employers enhance employees' well-being an increase in organizational health occurs as measured by performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intention (Van der Vaart *et al.*, 2013). Job satisfaction is a valid forecasting tool of organizational

Table 1. Servant Leadership Behaviors Reliability

SLB	α	M	SD	n
Humility	.97	4.83	1.81	8
Communication	.92	5.21	1.65	5
Empowering	.93	5.22	1.58	4
Commitment to Growth	.94	4.98	1.67	4

Note. all items have relatively high internal consistency.

SLB=Servant Leadership Behaviors. CI = 95%. n = number of questions.

Table 2. Job Satisfaction/Turnover Intention Reliability

JS/TI	α	M	SD	n
Job satisfaction	.85	5.14	1.55	4
Turnover intention	.86	4.07	1.84	3

Note. all items have relatively high internal consistency. CI = 95%. n = number of questions.

Table 3. Servant Leadership and JS Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.48 ^a	.23	.22	.92	.23	20.40	4	278	.00	1.98

Note. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction Question Average. Predictors: (Constant)

Table 4. Psychological State of Engagement and JS Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE	Change Statistics				
					R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.51 ^a	.26	.25	.89	.26	24.56	4	278	.00

Note. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction Question Average

a. Predictors: (Constant)

performance and, therefore, is a sub-set of the psychological state of an employee (Wright, 2014). Factors that enhance an employee's psychological state of engagement are a positive job environment, perceived managerial support, organizational commitment to staff, equitable rewards and positive recognition, procedural and distributive justice (Anitha, 2014). On the other hand, disengagement occurs when staff experience job dissatisfaction, a perceived decrease in management and organizational commitment to employees, favoritism, an unequal distribution of rewards and benefits leading to an increased intention to quit (Anitha, 2014).

Job Satisfaction

Empirical research continues to demonstrate that management behavior contributes to job satisfaction. The desire to stay in a job increases when a positive relationship exists between leaders and employees. Nurse managers, who exhibit servant leadership behaviors, increase followers' achievement of their potential by establishing an environment of trust which results in a boost in employee self-confidence, communicating vital information and listening to responses, providing feedback constructively, and supporting patient care outcomes through the allocation of essential resources. Nursing staff, who reported that their manager was high in servant leadership orientation reported greater job satisfaction (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2015). According to research, a positive variance of 5% employee commitment, 7% positive variance in satisfaction with supervisor, and 4% positive variance in perceived supervisor support, was attributed to servant leadership behaviors, beyond that of transformational leadership (Ehrhart, 2004).

Turnover Intention

The inception of turnover intent begins with an employee's psychological response to negative aspects of their job environment, leader behavior, or organizational decision

making. The cognitive component of turnover intention involves the withdrawal of positive behaviors and psychological separation of the employee (Boamah and Laschinger, 2016). Turnover intention is a psychological deliberation by the employee, the decision to leave or turnover is the outcome result. Organizations that simply track turnover, are missing key indicators of low job satisfaction that could be discovered if turnover intention were measured. As unhappiness increases, turnover intention significantly intensifies (Ramoo *et al.*, 2013). The reasons for leaving, shared by a majority of nurses, were simple; ineffective supervisory relationships, the lack of competency of the manager, and insufficient opportunities for professional development (Ramoo *et al.*, 2013). This supports a common belief that employees leave their job due to their direct supervisor more so than being dissatisfied with the job.

Design and Sample

In order to determine the extent of the existence of a relationship between four discrete, independent variables of servant leadership and the dependent variables job satisfaction and turnover intention a quantitative, nonexperimental, cross-sectional correlation study was conducted. A Magnet Certified, Level II Trauma center was chosen to conduct the research. Of the 719 nurses and managers who were eligible to complete the survey, 369 nurses and 5 nurse managers returned the survey, for a 48% response rate. To determine if a relationship existed between four independent variables identified as servant leadership characteristics, and the dependent variables of job satisfaction and turnover intention, a Likert-type survey was utilized. Statements were ranked on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *neutral response*, to 7 = *strongly agree*).

RESULTS

The participant profile contained more female respondents (85%) vs. males (15%). The age demographics consisted of a

minimum age of 21, a maximum age of 66 years, with a mean age of 34 years. The highest number of responses (42%) were attributed to third shift nurses, followed by 40% from first shift, and 18% from second shift. The number of years worked for a manager ranged from a minimum of 1 year to a maximum of 31 years with a 3 year mean. The survey was answered by 151 Bachelor of Science (BSN), 120 Associate in Nursing (ASN), and 12 Master in Nursing (MSN) staff. The variables were statistically significant with a positive correlation between the measured variables of servant leadership, as found using Pearson product-moment correlation. The correlation coefficient between humility and job satisfaction and humility and turnover intention was ($r = .44, p < .05$) and ($r = -.34, p < .01$), respectively. With reference to communication and job satisfaction and communication and turnover intention, the correlation coefficient was ($r = .42, p < .05$) and ($r = -.33, p < .05$), respectively. When considering empowering behaviors and job satisfaction and empowering behaviors and turnover intention the correlation coefficient results indicated ($r = .40, p < .05$) and ($r = -.29, p < .05$), respectively. The final measure was commitment to growth and job satisfaction and commitment to growth and turnover intention, which showed a correlation coefficient of ($r = .45, p < .05$) and ($r = -.33, p < .05$), respectively. Results of the measures of a linear relationship indicated moderate strength. The predictability of job satisfaction confirms an R^2 of .23 indicating that a variability of 23% in job satisfaction was positively influenced by the independent variables of Servant Leadership. The predictability of job satisfaction shows an R^2 of .26 suggesting that a variability of 26% in job satisfaction was positively influenced by the independent variable of psychological state of engagement.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research support Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership behaviors, indicating, when embraced by the leader, creates an increase in job satisfaction and decreases nurses' intention to leave their employment. Additionally, the results of this research align with Benner (2004) in that the variables measured are foundational to the philosophies of the nursing profession. Servant leadership behaviors shape the development of learning organizations, create a more robust serving culture, stimulate employee performance leading to notable organizational outcomes (Bobbio and Manganelli, 2015; Parris and Peachey, 2013). Few research studies appear to directly examine the relationship between nurse managers, who embrace servant leadership behaviors, and job satisfaction of the staff that they oversee. Despite recent research demonstrating that transformational leadership maybe less effective as previously believed, nurse leaders and nursing organizations continue to emphasize and support this leadership style as the primary approach used in nursing, von Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) determined that the primary function of transformational leadership was to influence employee behaviors to advance organizational goals. When the nursing profession persists in embracing traditional models, such as transformational leadership, without serious consideration of other genres, such as servant leadership, a crossroad will linger leading to greater uncertainty in the delivery of health care. More nurses will become dissatisfied and will leave organizations, and the profession, adding to the projected nursing shortage numbers. This study demonstrated that servant leadership behaviors positively influenced the psychological state of staff nurse engagement that led to greater

job satisfaction, and a decrease in turnover intention. The study also identified management behaviors that resonate with staff nurses. The results verified that a positive correlation existed between the behaviors of servant leadership and job satisfaction and a negative correlation existed with turnover intention. These findings suggest that nurse managers who genuinely embraced servant leadership behaviors positively affected the psychological state of engagement in staff nurses. This positive influence leads to greater job satisfaction and a decrease in turnover intention. Nurse Managers who embraced the behaviors of a servant leader, connected with staff increasing their trust and loyalty to the manager, while receiving desired autonomy to perform their job effectively. Health care is changing, and when nurse managers incorporate servant leadership behaviors into their repertoire, the relationship changes between what nurses' desire of their leaders and what nurses' currently experience. Further research, in the health care setting, on the effects of servant leadership and job satisfaction in nursing is necessary, as few empirical studies explore the mediating factors related to improving satisfaction and decreasing nursing turnover through better leadership. Health care and nursing researchers, administrative practitioners, and nursing leaders should acknowledge the value of servant leadership and how these collective leadership behaviors can stimulate a paradigm shift in health care organizations, leading to higher nursing job satisfaction and lower turnover intention. Ultimately, the responsibility for nursing retention lies with the nurse managers. Leadership behaviors, of the manager, are essential factors, for nurses, in deciding to transfer to another unit or position, pursue employment elsewhere, or leave the nursing profession. A different approach to leadership is needed that exceeds the expectations of nurses and prepares all health care organizations for the future demands of a constantly changing environment. This study's results should encourage, if not the adoption, at least the consideration of embracing servant leadership behaviors to improve the job satisfaction and retention of good nurses.

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