

The Nurse Managers' Knowledge and Attitudes Toward Transformational Leadership Styles in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigates the knowledge and attitudes of nurse managers regarding transformational leadership (TL) style in Ondo State, Nigeria. Specifically, it aims to describe the knowledge of top nurse managers about TL and explore their attitudes towards its four components: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Employing an explorative qualitative approach, the study involved in-depth interviews with 12 nurse managers selected through purposive sampling from primary, secondary, and tertiary health facilities. The interview guide was adapted from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), featuring open-ended questions to elicit detailed responses. Data were analysed using thematic analysis with Atlas Ti 9 software. Findings revealed that while participants demonstrated a basic understanding of leadership, their knowledge of TL style was superficial, often conflating it with democratic leadership. Their attitudes towards the TL components were similarly limited. For example, participants emphasised teamwork and delegation under idealised influence but lacked deeper application of ethical and visionary attributes. Inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration were inconsistently implemented, with respondents displaying only partial understanding of these concepts. The study highlights the need for comprehensive training to enhance nurse managers' understanding and practice of TL style. Such training could improve nursing leadership, foster positive organisational culture, and ensure quality patient care. Recommendations include the development and implementation of TL-focused training programmes for nurse managers across health institutions in Ondo State.*

Key words: knowledge, attitudes, transformational leadership style, nurse managers

INTRODUCTION

Quality healthcare management is a significant challenge for managers of healthcare organisations worldwide. Factors influencing change include evidence-based nursing care, the implementation of effective quality healthcare improvement efforts, and the establishment of

standard guidelines for clinical practices (Salama, 2023). Recent descriptions of nurses' roles indicate that they are characterised by high stress levels and predominantly shift work in Sub-Saharan African hospitals, attributed to a significant scarcity of healthcare personnel across all departments (Jambawo, 2018). This necessitates proficient nursing leadership abilities to advance evidence-based nursing practice. Consequently, nurse supervisors must have the ability to motivate their subordinates to ensure their complete dedication to delivering high-quality nursing care.

This capability, as per Jambawo (2018), can be attributed to the traits of transformational leaders. Numerous studies (Quesado, et al, 2023; Jankelova & Joniakoya, 2021; Alanazi, et al, 2020) have established that nurse retention and job satisfaction are directly correlated with the application of transformational leadership (TL) by nurse managers. Nearly all publications examined by Gebreheat, Teame, and Costa (2023) indicated a favourable impact of transformational leadership style on followers' job happiness, workplace retention, quality of treatment, and beneficial patient outcomes. Nursing care is recognised worldwide as having a crucial function in all healthcare organisations. Nursing teams necessitate proficient leaders possessing the requisite knowledge to ensure their team's successful performance and excellent outcomes (Bessa, 2022). Prufeta (2017) asserts that effective leadership requires nurse managers to exhibit essential qualities to encourage, inspire, and cultivate a climate conducive to staff engagement. An recognised issue is the prevalence of unfavourable work cultures in hospitals where nurse supervisors do not employ transformational leadership styles. Absenteeism and the heightened migration of healthcare professionals from Nigeria to nations offering superior working circumstances also pose significant challenges. Additionally, issues are emerging from heightened stress levels among nurses attributable to workforce shortages, inadequate communication, and insufficient collaboration among interdisciplinary healthcare team members (Huddleston, Mancini & Grey, 2017).

Research indicates that the majority of nurse managers employ a transactional leadership style, characterised by a minimal correlation between their educational attainment and professional domain amidst evolving health policies and constrained financial resources in healthcare institutions. In certain research, nurse managers acknowledged their deficiencies in exemplifying nursing practice and expressed diminished confidence in employing transformational leadership approaches. It was also observed that prominent clinical nurse managers are relatively young in leadership roles and possess few or no prior leadership experience. They acknowledged their necessity for TL skill enhancement to improve their TL practices in the workplace (Moradi et al., 2020; Zaghini, 2020; Suliman et al., 2024).

Moreover, proficient nurse leadership is a critical determinant in attaining optimal patient outcomes and improving the workplace (Kok et al. 2023). Significant apprehension exists over nurse managers' inability to attain quality patient outcomes and the overall quality of the nursing practice environment (Jackson et al. 2020). The healthcare system is dynamic and experiencing significant transformations. Nurse leaders are therefore expected to embrace a leadership style that facilitates their junior colleagues' adaptation to changes that would advance organisational objectives. There is less knowledge regarding the leadership styles of

nurse managers (NMs), particularly the transformational leadership (TL) style, across various healthcare settings.

Duggar (2017) discovered that transformational leadership practices are highly beneficial in fostering and maintaining a positive work environment in healthcare facilities, based on an examination of nurse managers and assistant nurse managers. Nurse managers exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours guide nursing teams to attain optimal performance, hence improving job satisfaction and retention among their subordinates. Nurse managers who consistently employ a transformational leadership style by demonstrating care and concern for their subordinates, as well as providing mentorship and coaching, facilitate their cooperation in striving towards organisational objectives (Adunola, 2023). Park, et al (2022) established in their study that transformational leadership style positively influences employee commitment to the organisation and boosts job performance. Worldwide, TL style is acknowledged as a vital leadership competency for fostering quality in nursing care and is crucial for attaining esteemed recognition in the field (Moon, Van Dam & Kitsos, 2019).

No research has been conducted on the effective application of transformational leadership style by nurse managers to cultivate skills that motivate followers to enhance their commitment to delivering great nursing care. Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical research about the possession of transformational leadership traits by nurse managers, which could enhance staff nurse satisfaction and favourable patient outcomes in Ondo State, as indicated by studies conducted in other regions globally (Moradi et al., 2020; Zhang, 2020; Alharbi, Rasmussen, & Magarey 2021; Suliman et al., 2024). Olu-Abiodun and Abiodun (2017) conducted a study on the perspective of transformational leadership behaviour among general hospital nurses in various regions of Ondo State, revealing that nurse managers' understanding of transformational leadership style is positively correlated with their educational attainment and work environments. Therefore, this study has been carried out to explore and investigate the situation of the knowledge, attitudes of the nurse managers on TL style in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study specifically

1. described the top nurse managers' knowledge toward transformational leadership style; and
2. explored the of the top nurse managers 'attitudes toward transformational leadership style

METHODOLOGY

An explorative qualitative approach was used by the researcher to some extent, participate in the real-world experience to have a better understanding of the phenomenon and was able to express its emergent properties and features (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). An in-depth interview guide was developed and adjusted from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) questions. The interview guide consists of eight (8) open-ended questions. These were used to elicit information from the top twelve (12) nurse managers which addressed objective. A non-probability, purposive sampling method (Polit & Beck, 2012) was used to select twelve (12) nurse managers heading the vital nursing services in health institutions and parastatals in

primary, secondary and tertiary health care facilities in Ondo State for the study. The ethical approval was obtained before the collection of the data for the qualitative studies from the participants.

Recorded and transcribed data were analysed by means of thematic analysis using Atlas Ti 9 software to store, organize, code, classify, create categories and subcategories, and explicate major themes of the data. The findings were responsibly interpreted and synthesised, and researcher experiences acknowledged in line with accepted scientific practice. The steps involved were; transcription, reading, and re-reading for understanding. It involves condensing meaning units, coding the units, categorizing the codes, and creating themes (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

RESULTS

Knowledge of transformational leadership style of the nurse managers

The participants have a general knowledge of leadership, and gave appreciable description of some aspects of transformational leadership style. The respondents' general knowledge of transformational leadership style was found to be shallow as they repeated nearly the same thing in the questions asked in all the components of the TL style. They equated TL style as a form of a democratic style of leadership showing their lack of understanding of differences between the two leadership styles (H2 R15). However, the main purposes of the nurse managers are to fulfil their responsibilities of organising workloads for the nurses working under them and ensure the wards have the right balance of skills to effect changes by creating new ways of engaging their followers (Islami & Mulolli, 2020).

Below are some of the nurse responses on their knowledge of TL style:

- “.... at least they should have knowledge of what they want to do (P5)
- “... to innovate and at the same time to develop a will to grow ...” (P5)
- “...And a transformational leadership style, that leader is creative (P10).
“is able to find is a, is a solution finder so that they be able to be productive.” (P10)
- he himself or she herself is dynamic...(P10)
- “And you must have a listening skill” (P3)
- leading the others by example...(P1)
- I should be able to lead others to do it right (P1)
-mentoring followers to become good leaders of tomorrow.” (P4)
“...Is somebody that believes that the subordinate too they have said” (P3)
- that I would say is that such a leader must be loyal to the work (P2)
.... that person must be a person of integrity” (P2)

Description of attitudes transformational leadership style of the nurse managers

Generally, the respondents have limited attitudes to TL styles expected of them to their followers on the four components of TL style namely; idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration.

Idealised Influence:

The nurse managers declared they manifest; “building confidence”, “living their values”, “sharing of vision”, “making decisions together” and “building trust” other than; trust and conviction, implementing or attending to the vision not staying at the point of having the vision alone, belief on the organization culture, instil pride to followers, gaining the followers’ respect, following strong ethical and moral value which are the attributes of the leaders’ individualised influence according to Islami and Mulolli, (2020). This revealed their limited knowledge and in turn affect their practice of TL style as idealised influence ability

Some extracts of the nurse managers’ submission on idealised influence showing their limited attitudes of the component:

- “Delegation of responsibilities (P1).
- “So, there's delegation of duty in our department and also on the wards (P1)
- “Treating every subordinate with dignity (P2)
- “.....empathy and carrying subordinates’ along (P4)
- “and I communicate effectively with my followers. (P10)
- “if they perform well, then I applaud them.” (P2)
- “...I'm a team, team player, A-Team manager.
- “We give information out on timely and what is needed to be done (P7)
-I communicate effectively with my followers (P11)
- “...on getting there and I set a goal that we must all be educated (P3)
- “Have creative thinking.....(P11)
- “Allowing them to be part of decision making (P1)
- “I have a kind of intimate relationship with most of my nurses, because I have an open-door policy (P1)
-and also, I believe in teamwork. We've been working together..... (P3).
- “As a leader, I cannot do it alone (P3)
- “Transformational leadership is collaborative (P4)
- “Collaborative leadership philosophy (P10)

Inspirational Motivation

The nurse managers counted planning for success, keeping connected, supporting growth, recognition and earning respect as means of inspirational motivation. Whereas, motivation is more than their submissions but it’s a set of processes that stimulate the subject, initiate, induce, and influence the behaviour in order for the individual to perform his or her task. This made

their submission on perception of inspirational motivation contradicts what Islami and Mulolli, (2020). The skills expected of them include; providing meaning for the work environment's problem, setting high standard and communicating optimism about how to achieve the vision.

Below are some of their responses showing their limited implementation of inspirational motivation's attributes:

...the goals we have been setting..... (P8)

“So, we communicate what is expected to them before we even start implementation.....(P2)

“...we have a unit we used to call it continuous education unit.... (P1)

“if they perform well, then I applause them.” (P6)

“... we give them recommendation, open recommendation (P12)

“...My opinion as a leader is that you earn respect (P1)

Intellectual stimulation

The respondents' submissions revealed they have limited knowledge of how to stimulate their followers intellectually. They identified problem-solving, delegating responsibilities and valuing input under this theme. However, the attributes of the nurse managers that are required from TL include; ensuring that the employees are aware of their problems, asking the followers to develop creative thinking of problem solving, enabling employees to understand, conceptualize and comprehend their problems and increasing the follower's efficacy. Others are; giving the followers the “I can do” spirit of motivation, putting the challenge assumptions in front of followers for their input, promoting the followers' intelligence and presenting new approaches and encourage followers to share their opinions and respect them

Find below the extracts of their submission on intellectual stimulation attribute:

....so, the person should be very, very intelligent” (P1)

“So, you can see that the head, the head has already delegated some duty out.....(P1)

“... will give them; I will allow them to come in and give their own view on that particular thing. (P1)

Individualized Consideration

The attitudes of the nurse managers to their individual followers is far from the attributes expected of them in TL styles. The respondents muddled up the attributes of this component with others in their responses during both the in-depth interview.

They said they involve their followers in professional development, connect with them individually and provide guidance to them when asked questions on individual consideration. However, the attributes that show the leaders' individual consideration of their followers according to Islami & Mulolli (2020) theoretical framework of TL style are; delegating responsibilities, considering their needs and listening to their concerns, developing the needs

of followers and treating each employee equally. Others include; training with mentoring or coaching, rotation technique, giving personal attention to individual employees, enabling followers attending courses or programmes and advising the followers even on personal issues.

Some of their responses on individualised consideration are:

- ...Ehm we do encourage our nurses to go for conferences, workshop.....(P1)
- “... I’ve developed relationship with them that they can relate with me, they can talk to me, they can seek my opinion” (P5)
- “...Mentoring is by practical, most of the time, I do it in their presence.....(P11)

Implication of the findings

The TL style facilitates alterations in leadership behaviour and enhances nursing practice, fostering a nurturing, secure, and supportive organisational culture throughout all tiers of the healthcare institution. The findings enhanced the understanding of nurse managers across various levels of nursing practice regarding transformational leadership styles, hence contributing to the improvement and assurance of quality care and favourable patient outcomes. Furthermore, there is an understanding of the leadership style most appropriate for the evolving nursing profession within the contemporary global healthcare system. The stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health and nursing management specialists, can establish essential steps to promote the adoption of transformational leadership styles among nurse managers in all health institutions in Ondo State through training.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study demonstrate that, the participants have a general knowledge of leadership, and gave appreciable description of some aspects of transformational leadership style. However, they lack adequate knowledge of TL style and manifested limited attitudes of TL style and their attributes identified appear vague and shallow, suggesting that more enlightenment is needed for them to fully grasp the concept of TL style. Training and retraining of the nurse managers are needed to help them comprehend and replicate TL style knowledge and attitudes.

Recommendation:

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Training and retraining of the nurse managers are needed to help them comprehend and replicate TL style knowledge and attitudes.
2. Development of training programme to facilitate the utilisation of TL style among nurse managers in all the tiers of health facilities in Ondo State.

3. The developed training programme to be recommended to the Ondo State Ministry of Health for implementation to train the nurse managers in the State.

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