

Exploring the Transformational Leadership Style in the Field of Nursing

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Abstract— Nursing leadership directly affects the success of health institutions, as attitudes of nurse leaders will reflect on staff nurses' job satisfaction and, consequently, on the quality of care. It is necessary to emphasize that care is the basic talent of nursing, therefore, when performing their duties as leaders; nurses must focus on their main objective, which is to guarantee the quality of care. Nurse managers can adopt several leadership styles while leading their teams, but transformational leadership seems to be the most suitable for nurses. The purpose of this study was to explore the transformational leadership style in the field of nursing. This is a bibliographical and descriptive study. Search for articles was conducted in the Scopus database using the descriptors: "Transformational leadership" and "Nursing" using the Boolean Operator "AND". A total of 12 articles were included. Transformational leaders are innovative, creative, and visionary; they seek to empower their followers through personal and professional development. Staff nurses and nurse managers get more satisfied when transformational leadership is adopted. It was observed that nurses who received more training in leadership are more supporters of transformational leadership practices. Thus, nurses should receive adequate leadership training in nursing schools and the subject should also be addressed in continuing education programs in health institutions.

Keywords—Nurse Managers, Nursing, Transformational Leadership, Health Institutions.

I. INTRODUCTION

The characteristics and behavior of the leader impact team members' attitudes [1]. Nursing leadership influences staff nurses' job satisfaction and the quality of care [2]; [3] since the motivation of nurses will reflect on the provided care [4]; [5]. In addition, nurses need to receive continuing education to provide efficient and effective care [6] to a population that is increasingly in need and aware of their rights. Thus, the role of the nurse leader as a mentor to his/hers team is essential to keep staff nurses updated and motivated [7].

There are several leadership styles that can be adopted by nurse managers while leading their teams [8]. Studies indicate that there is not a single type of leadership that works for all situations that may arise in the health sector, so nurse leaders must be prepared to alternate leadership styles according to different situations [5]; [9]; [10].

Nursing leadership is discussed in several studies through different approaches [3]; [11]. Studies associate the existence of burnout, lack of motivation, high levels of stress, and low levels of job satisfaction of nurses with toxic leadership [12]; [13]. Thus, there is a correlation between high levels of nurse retention and satisfaction with their leaders [12]; [14].

The transformational style is pointed out in several studies as a type of leadership that favors the satisfaction of nurses

and, consequently, increases the quality of care and the success of health institutions [12]; [15]. The nurse manager who adopts a transformational leadership style is open to novelties, is focused on change, and seeks to equip the followers so that they also act as leaders [8]. Transformational leaders strive to motivate, inspire, and empower other team members through personal and professional development [4].

The nursing shortage is a serious problem in several countries [16]. Therefore, different strategies should be used to retain nurses. One of these measures is the adoption of a leadership style in which nurses feel valued, empowered, and motivated [3]. Therefore, it is necessary to be aware of the leadership styles chosen by nurse managers and offer recommendations so that leaders can keep nurses on their teams [12]; [17]. High nursing turnover is harmful to health organizations as time and money will be spent on hiring and training new staff, in addition, the safety of patients will be at risk in the absence of skilled and experienced nurses [18]; [19]. Given the above, the purpose of this article was to explore the transformational leadership style in the field of nursing.

The introduction is given in section I; Related works are mentioned in section II; The methods are presented in section III; Section IV contains the results and discussion. Conclusion and future scope are reported in section V.

II. RELATED WORK

Reference [10], a study that sought to identify leadership styles used in the health field and to point to the importance of different leadership styles adopted by nurses, reported that the attitudes of nurse leaders influence the behavior of other team members, so the leadership style adopted by nurse managers reflects the efficiency and effectiveness of staff nurses. According to reference [20], a study from Brazil, nurses need to be motivated while working in order to provide quality care. Reference [21] pointed out that good working conditions, opportunities to advance in the career, and good interpersonal relationships are some of the factors that increase the motivation of the nursing team. A study carried out to understand the importance of motivation in nursing reported that the nursing leader is largely responsible for motivating the team [22] and an integrative review on leadership and nurses' job satisfaction identified that the nursing leadership style is important for the success of care [3]. Reference [23], research from Pakistan about the impact of transformational leadership on nurses, reported that this style exerts a positive influence on the nursing team. Reference [15] a study conducted in Turkey to investigate the perception of staff nurses and leaders regard to leadership observed that also nurse managers rate transformational leadership practices as positive.

III. METHODOLOGY

This is a bibliographical and descriptive study. These designs were adopted because bibliographical research aims to improve and update knowledge through the analysis of existing studies [24] and descriptive approaches describe features of facts and events [25]. Thus, this methodology was considered adequate to explore transformational leadership styles in nursing.

The search for articles was conducted in June 2022, in the Scopus database, through the descriptors: "Transformational leadership" and "Nursing" using the Boolean Operator "AND". Original primary research articles about transformational leadership in nursing conducted with staff nurses or nurse managers and published in English with full texts available on the Internet were included. The search was not limited by the date of publication. Articles such as reviews, editorials, and comments; articles that were not conducted with nurses; and articles that did not address transformational leadership in nursing were excluded.

A total of 45 articles were found. One duplicated article was excluded. The titles and abstracts of the remaining 44 articles were read, and 32 articles were excluded for not addressing the objective of this study. Thus, a total of 12 articles that addressed the topic of transformational leadership in the field of nursing were read in full, analyzed, and discussed. Figure 1 presents the research flowchart. It shows the number of articles found by searching the Scopus database, the number of excluded

articles, the reasons for exclusion, and, finally, the number of articles that were included in this study.

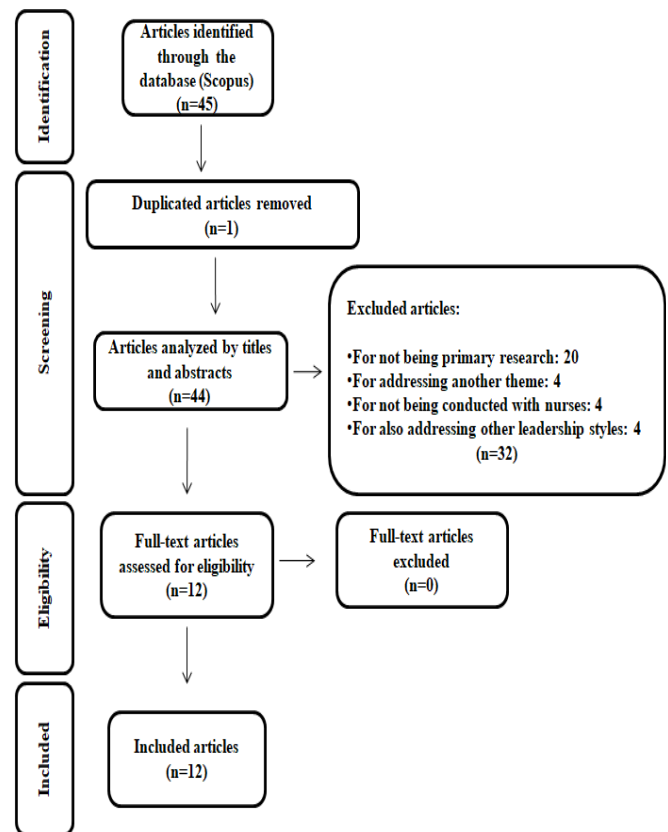


Figure 1: Research Flowchart

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The 12 included articles were carried out in seven different countries; China (n=4), the United States (n=3), Australia (n=1), Brazil (n=1), England (n=1), India (n=1), and Taiwan (n=1). Four articles were published in 2020. The sample ranged from 25 to 651 participants.

After reading and analyzing the selected studies, two themes emerged for discussion: (a) Characteristics of the transformational nursing leader and (b) Transformational leadership in nursing. The main characteristics of the included articles are shown in Table 1 through references, the country where it was conducted, research design, and sample.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Included Articles

References	Country	Design	Sample
Bowles & Bowles (2000) [26]	England	A comparative study	Seventy nurses (14 leaders and 56 staff nurses)
Clavelle et al. (2012) [27]	United States	A descriptive study	The study was carried out with 384 chief nursing officers
Devi et al.	India	A quasi-	Seventy-eight

(2020) [28]		experimental study	nurse managers
Ferreira et al. (2020) [29]	Brazil	A qualitative and exploratory study	A study of 25 nurses
Gong (2022) [30]	China	A cross-sectional study	A study of 366 nurses
Herman et al. (2015) [31]	United States	A descriptive study	A total of 261 nurse managers
Jing et al. (2021) [32]	China	A descriptive correlational study	A total of 586 nurses
Lin et al. (2015) [33]	Taiwan	A cross-sectional study	A study of 651 nurses
Moon et al. (2019) [34]	Australia	A cohort study	A total of 78 nurse managers
Ross et al. (2014) [35]	United States	A descriptive study	The study was carried out with 448 nurse leaders
Wu et al. (2020) [36]	China	A cross-sectional study	A study of 391 nurses
Xie et al. (2020) [37]	China	A descriptive study	A total of 217 nurses

Characteristics of the Transformational Nursing Leader

Transformational leaders are visionaries and have the ability to take risks and recruit new staff for new opportunities [27]. Transformational leaders are charismatic, they dialogue with their team and they are models for others [29]. Leaders who embrace transformational leadership encourage other team members to share a vision and also use goals as sources of motivation and inspiration. Staff is encouraged to take innovative actions to solve old problems. In addition, transformational leaders are trustworthy, respectable, and dedicated to their work and their followers [33]. Transformational leaders are better able to mobilize and lead team members to achieve values, goals, and results, thus transformational leaders are important for new generations of nurses, making nursing become increasingly valued within health institutions and consequently by the population in general [35].

Nurse leaders who adopt transformational leadership are closer to their teams. In addition, as the levels of education of nurse managers increase they become more inspiring leaders who share visions and feel challenged by the process of leading [27]; [34]. It was observed that nurses who received more training in leadership are more supporters of transformational leadership practices [35].

Leadership is a skill required for all nurses and must be present at all stages of the nursing process. Nurses must, therefore, exercise leadership while planning, organizing, conducting, coordinating, and supervising nursing services.

Nursing leaders must be effective in leading to favor the engagement of followers to achieve common goals [8]. Thus, while setting goals to be followed, nursing leaders must inspire and encourage other team members so that they work with competence and motivation to provide quality care. When there is competent nursing leadership in the healthcare institution, staff nurses work more satisfied, nursing leaders feel motivated, patients receive qualified care, and health organizations achieve their goals.

Nurse leaders should have diverse knowledge that, in addition to technical skills, includes management and leadership abilities [38]. Nurse managers, in addition to utilizing the skills learned, must also develop the ability to adapt their leadership behaviors [39]. Without adequate and trusting leadership, no group can achieve its goals, it would be no different with nurses that depend on their leaders to acquire new knowledge and skills and also to have a work environment where they feel satisfied. The characteristics of transformational nurse leaders will favor the provision of quality care since visionary and creative nursing leadership, which is concerned with the personal and professional improvement of followers, will bring benefits to nurses and patients, culminating in the success of health institutions.

Transformational Leadership in Nursing

Transformational leadership is identified in several studies as the ideal style for healthcare organizations [28]; [29]; [31]; [33]; [34]; [37]. A study carried out in the USA identified the need to train nurse managers in transformational leadership so that the goals of health institutions are achieved [31]. These results are similar to those from a study from India which stated that the transformational leadership style favors the success of health organizations since it has a positive influence on the nursing team [28]. As leaders gain more experience, they adopt more transformational leadership practices, which in turn positively influence nurses’ attitudes [27] and the quality of care [27]; [36]. Figure 2 represents the correlation between transformational leadership, nurses’ job satisfaction, and quality care. Transformational leadership is identified as one of the elements that increase nurses’ job satisfaction and the quality of nursing care, thus, is possible to affirm that there is an important correlation between these three variables.

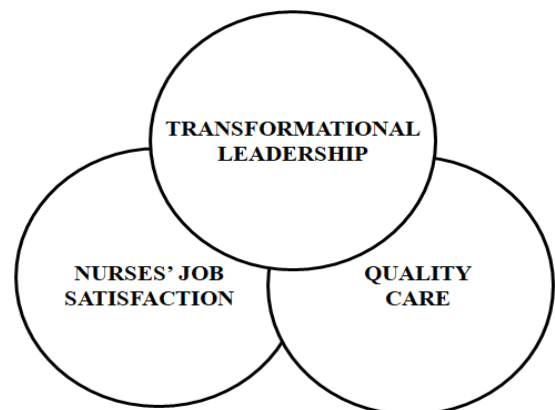


Figure 2: Relationship between transformational leadership, nurses’ job satisfaction, and quality care

Many studies reported the benefits of transformational leadership for nurses. Studies carried out in Taiwan [33] and China [37] identified that transformational leadership increases nurses' job satisfaction. It was also stated that transformational leaders positively affect nurses' health in varied dimensions as nurses' well-being and quality of professional life increase in the presence of transformational leadership [33]. Transformational leadership decreases burnout [36] and consequently leads to nurses' retention [36]; [37]. Transformational leadership also can increase nurses' organizational commitment [37]. Therefore, transformational leadership provides a positive and supportive work environment [36].

A study conducted in Brazil, in addition to point that transformational leadership brings contributions to nursing and increases the quality of care also reported that the lack of institutional incentive, lack of experience of the leader, and resistance of the nursing team are some of the difficulties encountered in the implementation of such leadership style [29]. On the other hand, when nurse leaders act as models for their team members and exercise dialogic relationships, the development of transformational leadership becomes easier [29]. Thus, the transformational leadership style is adopted by nurse leaders to ensure good relationships with hospital administrators, staff nurses, and patients in order to achieve the organization's goals [28].

A study carried out in England identified that nurse managers who work in Nursing Development Units adopt transformational leadership more than those who work in conventional clinical environments. The Nursing Development Units were created to develop innovative leadership practices and increase the quantity and quality of strong nursing leaders. In other words, such units were created to train leaders who seek to listen to other team members and empower them through alternative leadership practices [26].

A study from China mentioned the benefits of transformational leadership for nurse managers. According to its findings, when transformational leaders act as mentors to their followers, they achieve psychological satisfaction [30]. Thus, in the presence of transformational leadership, both leaders and their followers will be positively affected [30].

Transformational leadership is a style that promotes change and strengthens the organization [35]. For example, a study conducted in China found a positive correlation between transformational leadership and computer literacy among nurses, which demonstrates that innovation has positive effects on the nursing team. Thus, nursing managers must adopt transformational leadership styles to promote innovation and self-efficacy in nurses [32].

Transformational leadership can be used as a health promotion strategy as the quality of care provided by nurses who are satisfied with their leaders increases [33]. The benefits of transformational leadership must be taken

into account by healthcare administrators when determining strategies to achieve better results in care delivery [34].

The leadership style that the nurse manager adopts will directly influence the success of the health institution since nurses are the professionals who spend more time with the patient providing direct care [40]. Generally, patients satisfied with the nursing team are satisfied with the health institution as a whole [40]; [41]. On the other hand, only satisfied nurses will be able to provide adequate care [4]; [5] and the nurse leader has a great responsibility in promoting the satisfaction of the nursing team [2]; [3]. It is necessary to emphasize that care is the basic talent of nursing, therefore, when performing their duties as leaders; nurses must focus on their main objective, which is to guarantee the quality of care.

Nurses must receive adequate leadership training in nursing schools and the subject must also be addressed in continuing education programs in health institutions [42]; [43]. In addition, nurse managers should be encouraged to improve their leadership skills through graduate programs [42]; [43]. Studies conducted with nurses [44]; [45] and nursing students [46]; [47] point to a lack of theoretical and practical knowledge to exercise leadership. Especially novice nurses may face problems while leading a team [45].

Through the present study, the influence of nursing leadership on the satisfaction of the nursing team and the quality of care was emphasized. In research carried out in different countries, several advantages of transformational leadership in the area of nursing were identified. These findings point to the need for educational and health institutions to pay attention to leadership training for students and nurses since adequate leadership will bring several benefits to the nursing teams and health institutions.

The study has several limitations. One of them is the fact that the search for articles was conducted in only one database, in addition only one excluding operator was used during the search for articles. Another limitation is that only articles published in English were included, which may have excluded important research published in other languages. Further studies using different methodologies should be conducted to correlate different nursing leadership styles, nurses' job satisfaction, and quality of care/patient satisfaction.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

This study sought to explore transformational leadership style in the field of nursing. It was determined that nursing leadership directly affects the success of health institutions [27]; [31], as attitudes of nurse leaders will reflect on nurses' job satisfaction [33]; [37] and, consequently, on the quality of care [27]; [36]. Transformational leadership seems to be the most suitable for health institutions since

nurses whose leaders are transformational are evaluated as more satisfied and motivated [33]; [37].

Nursing leaders are expected to guide team members, create goals to be followed, question the nursing process, and encourage the development and success of staff nurses. In addition, nurse leaders have the functions of mediators between staff nurses, patients, other healthcare workers, and administrators of health institutions, and must exercise such functions competently. Transformational leaders have features to motivate and empower their followers to achieve success, which in the case of nursing and health institutions is the delivery of effective and efficient care. Due to the importance of leadership in nursing, it is clear that the subject should be better addressed in undergraduate nursing courses, where innovative methods should be used to better train nursing students to exercise leadership. It is also important that nurse leaders keep up with the constant changes that occur around them and prepare themselves to lead different generations of nurses. In other words, nurse leaders should be updated in leadership, thus, administrators of health institutions should pay attention to the training of nurse managers in leadership, as staff nurses' dissatisfaction with their leaders reflects negatively on the quality of care and increases turnover, which will bring risks to patients and damage to health facilities.

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