Relational leadership practices in the workplace can lead to positive outcomes for the nursing workforce, healthcare organizations, and patients


What is the context of this review?

• Currently, there is a nursing shortage in many healthcare organizations around the world.
  o This shortage can impact how nurses perform at work, their relationship with other care providers, and patient care.
• Leadership plays an important role in helping team members motivate each other to achieve shared goals.
• There are many studies that explore how leadership in healthcare settings positively impacts the satisfaction and performance of healthcare workers, the healthcare organization as a whole, and patient care.
• However, there is a limited understanding of the role of leadership in the nursing workforce.

What question is being addressed?

• What is the relationship between different nursing leadership styles and outcomes for the nursing workforce and their work environments?

How was the review done?

• Several online databases were searched to find studies that explored the outcomes of different leadership styles in the nursing workforce.
• The authors were supported by funding from a New Investigator Award, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), a Population Health Investigator award, and the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research (AHFMR).

How up to date is this review?

• The authors searched for relevant studies published up to May 2009.

Box 1: Coverage of OHT building blocks

This review addresses building block #6:
1) defined patient population
2) in-scope services
3) patient partnership and community engagement
4) patient care and experience
5) digital health
6) leadership, accountability and governance (domain 47 - proactive provider engagement at all levels)
7) funding and incentive structure
8) performance measurement, quality improvement, and continuous learning
What are the main results of the review?

- The authors found a total of 18,693 studies, 53 of which were deemed relevant.
- The outcomes of nursing leadership were grouped into the following categories:
  - Staff satisfaction with work, role and pay
    - Higher job satisfaction was associated with styles of leadership that focused on socio-emotional (forming relationships with other people in their lives), inspiration, and transformational leadership (creating a vision to guide change)
    - Job satisfaction was reported to be lower with task-focused forms of leadership (putting more emphasis on structures, plans, and schedules)
  - Staff relationships with work
    - Studies reported that organization commitment (employees’ relationship with their employer) was higher with transformational leadership, supportive leadership, and charismatic leadership (connecting with people on a deeper level)
    - Organizational commitment was reported to be lower with task-focused leadership forms of leadership (putting more emphasis on structures, plans, and schedules)
    - Nurses’ intent to stay was higher with consideration leadership (being supportive)
  - Staff health and wellbeing
    - Anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and stress were reported to be lower with transformational and empowering leadership, and other forms of supportive leadership
    - Dissonant leadership (reaching goals created by the organization) and management by exception (less contact with managers) was associated with poorer nurse emotional health
  - Work environment factors
    - The climate and culture of workplaces was improved with leadership styles that focused on improvement and change oriented leadership
    - Teamwork between physicians and nurses increased with resonant leadership (working on emotional intelligence to meet group goals)
  - Productivity and effectiveness
    - Transformational, charismatic, and change-oriented leaderships improved productivity of individuals, teams, and organizations
    - Productivity was reported to be lower with task-focused forms of leadership

How confident are we in the results?

- This is a moderate-quality systematic review with an AMSTAR score of 7/9.