Transformational Leadership & Nursing

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Transformational leadership affects a variety of variables in healthcare industry. A healthcare organization’s performance best illustrates transformational leadership. The performance of an organization includes recruitment, selection, promotion, training, and development. Transformational leadership occurs in all environments of healthcare.

The application of transformation leadership in healthcare seems to be most prominent within the nursing sector. This assumption is an interpretation from all examined research and studies. A nurse can function solely, but this direction occurs as part of a group. Nurses work as a unit in nursing staff. The staff coordinates to work interdependently to reach a common goal of delivering patient centered care.

The dynamic of a leader – follower relationship occurs between the supervisory nurse/head nurse and the nursing staff. Other perceptions may call this argument false, but nurses are independent from doctors. Doctors provide nurses with a vision, but not direction. Head nurses and nursing staff set the goals to achieve the vision. The use of self-direction occurs in this relationship dynamic. These aspects reflect transformational leadership.

**Transformational Leadership**

*Transformational Leadership* is a process that changes and transforms people. The process includes variables, such as focus, assessment, and involvement. Transformational leadership focuses on emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals (Northouse,
2012). A leader can assess followers’ motives and satisfy the followers’ needs. Involving themselves with followers’, a leader can influence followers to accomplish more.

Downton in 1973 devised transformational leadership. Many other researchers have conducted studies that reflect Downton’s initial theory and developed the theory over the last several decades.

Bass’s (1985) research and studies have given expanded and refined credence to transformational leadership. Bass expanded on Burn’s studies of transformational leadership by giving more attention to followers’ needs rather than leaders’ needs. This focus establishes motivation as a variable to transformational leadership. Bass’s main argument is that transformational leadership motivates followers’ to do more than expected. The ideals of this concept are raising followers’ levels of consciousness about the importance and value or specified and idealized goals, getting followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the team or organization, and moving followers to address higher-level needs (Northouse, 2012). The application of these variables of Bass’s argument and research apply to the nursing sector of healthcare.

**Strengths and Weakness of Transformational Leadership**

Assessing the strengths and weaknesses associated with transformational leadership will allow researchers and practitioner has to understand it. This reflects the severity of transformational leadership in the healthcare industry because every decision and action is time sensitive. Transformational leadership has several dimensions that have pros and cons.

Strengths are imperative for the development of leadership processes especially transformational leadership because it is about transforming people and changing an outcome.
Qualitative research supports transformational leadership. It has an intuitive appeal that emphasizes that the leader is at the forefront. Leadership is a process that occurs and leaders do not hold the sole responsibility. Leaders and followers share responsibility (Northouse, 2012). A broader perspective represents the relationship between leaders and followers earning a reward for achieving a goal. A leader is aware of followers and an emphasis on their needs, values and morals are taken into consideration.

Aside from the strengths, transformational leadership still has vulnerabilities that can affect the application of this leadership style in the healthcare industry and directly affect an organization’s performance. The lack of clarity affects applying this leadership process because without clear direct the leadership behavior will lack efficiency in the appropriate situation. Measuring how effective transformational leadership is still questionable. Without effective measuring instruments, the validity of this process is in the air. The perception of transformational leadership can come across as elitist because of the concept reflecting a process of transforming people or organizations (Northouse, 2012). There is no solid evidence of transformational leadership doing as it states or claims.

With these attributes understood, transformational leadership reflects the context of healthcare industry. This direction allow for a conceptual understanding of its application.

Application of Transformation Leadership

Transformational leadership applies the state of change to a behavior. The behaviors of transformational leadership can cause positive or negative implications. The factors of transformational leadership can affect performance. In healthcare, nurses face constant change. Nurses need to efficiently adapt under pressure and be able to implement change while in this
state. When nurses are coordinating and directing in a leadership position, they need to be able to implement the idea of leadership that creates a positive outcome corresponding to job performance.

**Studies of Transformational Leadership in Nursing**

Several studies support the application of transformational leadership of nurses and the healthcare environment corresponding to job performance.

An examination conducted by Ian Govier explores transformational leadership in effective leadership in the healthcare environment. He depicts healthcare as constantly changing. Healthcare is always adapting to trends and policies. This helps those in a healthcare profession, such as nurses to lead, organize, and deliver care. The changing environment of healthcare is universal. The change is becoming complex. The complexity of the healthcare environment is derived from putting people in the position of doing things that they have little experience in. Govier cites Kotter, who refers to leadership of this environment as reflecting change and movement (Govier, 2009). This explores the attributes of change, choice and principles.

Change refers to being organized or going with the flow. Each of these aspects of change has consequences. Going with the flow causes uncertainty. This can be a harmful consequence directly affecting the environment. If a leader is organized, they are able to achieve greater stability, which enables a quality outcome of job performance (Govier, 2009). Govier cites an argument from Covey, states organizations need a strong core. A healthcare organization’s trends and policies may evolve, but the core values and principles do not.

Choice is an ability that gives people the ability to choose how they respond to any given stimulus. Proactive leadership can occur through transformational leadership. Proactive refers to
assessing the situation and developing a positive response (Govier, 2009). Nurses use proactive techniques in transformational leadership when they are concerned with making things happen and making a positive difference to patient care. Proactive tendencies enable nurses to become better leaders and help initiate change.

Principles are requirements and obligations that govern growth and prosperity in people and organizations. Principles refer to the influencing and inspiring components of transformational leadership. The components enable leaders to increase leadership skills and abilities and navigate through the changing environment of healthcare (Govier, 2009).

Govier’s study refers to the United Kingdom National Health Services, which implements a different transformational leadership model. The framework is “engaging leadership.” The model revolves around four dimensions of engaging individuals, engaging organization, moving forward together and personal qualities and core values. This model enables a leader to enable followers to display leadership (Govier, 2009). This framework of transformational leaders gives the follower a sense of direction that initiates change.

When a nurse is performing his or her job functions, how well these functions are carried out result from a leader’s ability to motivate. A follower can only be as competent as the leader. If a leader can’t influence or inspire a follower, then they can’t expect a follower’s job performance to change. Using the ability to motivate and inspire allows a leader to achieve change.

Research by Medley and LaRochelle investigate head nurses in hospitals that use transformational leadership in a supervisory role. A head nurse can influence the nursing staff’s job satisfaction, which correlates to the nursing staff’s job performances. If a head nurse provides
support and positive motivators and influences, the nursing staff performance outcome will be positive (Medley & LaRochelle, 1995). The more satisfied the nursing staff is with his or her job the more positive the outcomes. Negative experiences that decrease job satisfaction will cause the nursing staff’s performance to be unsatisfactory. When a member is unhappy, then they negativity of this state will directly affect his or her patient care system.

Three factors that help illustrate transformational leadership in healthcare of charisma, intellectually stimulation and individualized consideration. Charisma evokes an emotional response from the followers. Followers want to emulate his or her role model. A young nurse with less experience may look up to an older nurse whom has more experience to gain knowledge.

Intellectual stimulation is leadership that stimulates followers’ to be creative and innovative and challenge beliefs and values. Head nurses of a pediatric ward face the challenge everyday of seeing to the needs of their patients. A head nurse could challenge the nursing staff to be creative in how to keep the children occupied and happy.

Individualized consideration is leaders who provide a supportive environment for his or her followers. This could occur when one of the head nurses’ nursing staff needs to speak out in regards to how they feel or may feel. Nurses deal with life and death situations on a daily basis, its time-sensitive. The head nurse can provide an emotional outlet for the nurses who experience any hardships.

Transformational leadership allows those within healthcare to become change agents (Trofino, 1995). There are driving forces, such as globalization, empowerment, and technology that help initiate change.
Globalization has the ability to bridge cultural gaps. This heightens the chance of reaching global goals. This could occur in patient centered care, which can integrate an understanding of diversity. A diverse workforce can integrate different problem solving strategies and influences (Trofino, 1995). Diverse influences can instigate change.

Positive encouragement can lead to a successful job performance. Empowerment is self-directive. A leader allows the followers to take responsibility and authority on decisions that affect them (Trofino, 1995).

Technology offers positive advantages. The advantages of access, speed and flexibility can enable a positive and efficient job performance (Trofino, 1995). It serves as a development tool to help improve the quality of care healthcare professionals can provide patients. Many doctors and nurses use technology to help identify and diagnose patients. This enables doctors and nurses to increase the speed of his or her job to give the patient the best access to treatments available. These driving forces help leaders create a clear vision moving forward.

A study conducted by Salanova, Lorente, Chambel and Martinez reveal that transformational leadership relates positively to job performance. In the study, they observed nurses extra-role performance and work engagement. These two factors reflect job performance. They suggest that nurses use self-efficacy through inspirational motivation and individual consideration.

Inspirational motivation acts as a catalyst for initiating verbal persuasion. The study emphasizes the positive significance of transformational leadership and self-efficacy. In their review of this concept, the effect of this relationship was indirect. Different mediators cause the direct effect. The mediators are self-efficacy and work engagement. These mediators have a
direct correlation in increasing job performance through self-efficacy. Increasing self-efficacy in the performance of nurses enables mutual trust, openness and strong flow of communication (Salanova. 2011).

Individual consideration allows leaders to be open and active listening to each follower. This course of action could be time-consuming. If a leader does not assess each follower they are not giving each follower due consideration. The follower will not achieve self-efficacy. If each follower does reach, self-efficacy they then engage in job functions and increases the probability of a positive outcome.

An exploratory study by Baker, Mathis and Stites-Doe examines whether followers exhibit performance characteristics attributed to leaders. This dimension allows for a focus on the characteristics attributed to transformational leadership.

Baker’s exploratory study reinforces Salanova’s study of inspirational motivation and individual consideration. A characteristic that can cause change is inspiring a shared vision. Baker’s study claims that this characteristic of a leader uses verbal and non-verbal expression, actively listens to followers and appeals to shared aspirations (Baker, 2011).

When a leader can cause influence on a behavior because of motivation it makes change possible. Without enabling changing the dynamic of job, performance can’t improve. Implementing different dimensions to a follower’s growth is the role of a leader. Improving skills and abilities enable a leader and followers to achieve a set vision and goals.

With nurses, keeping a nursing staff motivated may seem hard, but it is the followers’ individual vision that keeps him or her going alongside the leaders’ vision. Each nurse aspires to help others in need and make a difference. They use these influences to make change in people’s
lives every day. They provide patient care to everyone. Whether it is providing a patient with care, treatments, or a laugh they move forward to create change, they excel at becoming change agents.

**Quality of Research**

The research and studies of transformational leadership within healthcare offer different insights. Each study probes a different angle of how transformational leadership affects healthcare professionals, such as nurses. The quality of the information available varied from older to newer studies. Each had relevance and empirical support to the research of transformational leadership. The quality of information was available for research was limited to a focus on nursing. While a limitation may exude the perception of lacking details and understanding, this is not true. The focuses of these studies were on a specific context that brought a better understanding to the material.

**Conclusion**

Leadership is essential to enable the healthcare system to survive. The healthcare industry dominates 15.3% of the Gross National Product in the United States. This thriving field represents how the nursing sector has a vision for patient care. Using transformational leadership enables leaders, such as nurses to illustrate a willingness to exert extra effort towards effective leadership (Spinelli, 2006).

Varying attributes initiate the development and evolution of people and organizations within healthcare. Attributes of transformational leadership, such as charisma or idealized influence, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration have a significantly positive impact on job performance.
These attributes use transformational leadership as a framework to effective leadership. Effective leadership, typologies, such as transformational leadership is conducive to change. Enabling nurses to change and adapt will reflect on a quality outcome of his or her job performance.
References


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