


1-18-2019

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Recommended Citation

Patterson, Jennifer, "Nurse Supervisors and Certified Nursing Assistants: Leadership Characteristics and Job Satisfaction" (2019). *2019 Program & Posters*. 31.
<https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/symposium2019/31>

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Nurse Supervisors and Certified Nursing Assistants: Leadership Characteristics and Job Satisfaction

Jennifer Patterson, PhD

Problem

Despite efforts by management of skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) to provide competitive benefits and compensation, many Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) choose to change places of employment frequently (Tilden, Thompson, Gajewski, & Bott, 2012). Negative effects of this problem on the residents of SNFs include the lack of quality of customer service based on continuity of care and the disgruntled worker attitudes (Morley, 2014). The retention rate for these workers is also the source of significant costs to healthcare organizations (Kash, Castle, Naufal, & Hawes, 2006).

General Problem

Employee turnover rates for CNAs in SNFs associated with the relationship between the characteristics of leadership of the supervisors and the job satisfaction of the CNAs.

Specific Problem

What specific leadership characteristics of supervisors have the greatest impact on the job satisfaction of CNAs in SNFs?

Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative cross-sectional study was to examine leadership characteristics of nurse supervisors that could impact the job satisfaction of the CNAs in SNFs.

Significance

The findings of this study may result in benefits for **CNAs:**

- an approach to increasing job satisfaction through improved working relationships between the nurse supervisors and the CNAs.
- satisfaction of needs of these workers who are critical to the overall healthcare field.

Nurse Supervisors:

- opportunities for enhanced relationships between the nurse supervisors and the CNAs.

Customers – SNF Residents:

- improved quality of customer service through continuity of care.

SNFs:

- reduced costs associated with employee turnover rates.

Social Change Implications

Healthcare for vulnerable members of society through better-quality customer service and healthcare that includes continuity of care should be improved.

Theoretical Framework

Maslow (1943) theorized that individual performance relied upon the satisfaction of individual needs.

Herzberg's (1959) dual-factor theory of motivation suggests that motivators are intrinsic and related to satisfaction and dissatisfaction is extrinsic and associated with hygiene factors.

Relevant Scholarship

Turnover

Turnover rate among CNAs in SNFs remains high (Tilden et al., 2012) resulting in reduced continuity of care that impacts the quality of care of the residents (Morley, 2014; Juk Hyun, 2013).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction positively impacts organizational commitment for care employees (Rai, 2012) and correlates with high-quality exchange between nurse supervisors and nurse assistants (Trybou, Gemmel, Pauwels, Henninck, & Clays, 2014), and with increased empowerment (Tourangeau, Cranley, Laschinger, & Pachis, 2010) and high levels of trust (Gibson & Petrosko, 2014).

Empowerment

Effective motivation of groups of followers depends on the appropriate style of leadership (Doody & Doody, 2012). Empowerment of followers and the provision of opportunities for workers predict their success (Brumm & Drury, 2013). Benefits of empowerment of workers not only include the satisfaction of customer needs, ensuring organizational longevity, but also lead to the creation of a learning working climate that increases knowledge and enhances achievement of organizational goals and (Armache, 2013). Workers are more willing to work with managers that empower (Campbell & Campbell, 2011).

Research Question

What specific leadership characteristics of nursing supervisors in SNFs including the ability to:

- Create trust with employees
- Develop teamwork
- Provide supportive supervision
- Develop and maintain leader-follower relationships
- Empower employees

predict the job satisfaction of CNAs?

Participants

A random sampling of 95 of the population of 800 CNAs from 120-bed SNFs located in Florida completed online surveys.

Procedures

Participants completed online surveys that included:

- **Organizational Trust Inventory** (Nyhan & Marlowe, 1997) – measured trust
- **Conditions for Work Effectiveness Questionnaire II** (Kiefer, Harris-Kojetin, Brannon, Barry, Vasey, & Lepore, 2005) – measured supportive supervision and empowerment
- **Benjamin Rose Nurse Assistant Job Satisfaction Scale** (Noelker & Ejaz, 2001) – measured teamwork and the leader–follower relationship

Analysis

Multiple linear regression was used to determine the relationship of the leadership characteristics to the job satisfaction of CNAs in SNFs.

Findings

- The best-fitting model consisting of independent variables (leadership characteristics):
 - **Trust (TR)**
 - **Empowerment (EM)**
 - Two-factor interaction between trust and empowerment (**TR*EM**)**influenced and best predicted** dependent variable, **job satisfaction (JS), of CNAs in SNFs.**
- Higher levels of empowerment resulted in higher job satisfaction.
- Trust in the nurse supervisors negatively impacts the job satisfaction of CNAs.
- The two-way interaction explains variances in workers' trust when empowerment exists. Similarly, the existence of trust impacts empowerment.

Results for Multiple Linear Regression to Predict JS

	B	β	Sig.
Constant	2.202		.000
EM	.496	.939	.047
TR	-.120	-.222	.000
TR*EM	-.075	-.750	.000

- The following equation may be used to predict JS:

$$JS = .496 (EM) - .120 (TR) - .075 (TR*EM) + 2.202$$

Model Summary

	R	R ²	Adj R ²	Std. Error of Est	df1	df2
	.6	.36	.34	.43	3	91

- The model predicts 34% of the variability in the dependent variable.
- 66% must be attributable to other explanatory factors not studied in this research.

Interpretation

The findings support the tenets in both Maslow's and Herzberg's theories.

Worker **empowerment** was considered by the CNAs to be most associated with job satisfaction.

An unexpected finding suggested that when empowerment was high, trust in leadership declined, which is inconsistent with previous research (Gibson & Petrosko, 2014).

Limitations

Possible fear of repercussions may have limited the willingness of the CNAs to participate in the study.

Results may not be generalizable to other industries because of pressures associated with working in life-and-death situations and the unique organizational culture prevalent in the healthcare industry.

Recommendations

To Practice

- Enhancing the CNA and nurse supervisor relationship including empowerment and trust building training.
- Training with both the CNAs and nurse supervisors towards improving relationships.
- Improved communication.

For Future Research

- Consideration of other factors that might influence job satisfaction.
- A qualitative analysis of the associations between trust and empowerment and the job satisfaction.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Donna Brown, Committee Chair
 Dr. Branford McAllister, Committee Member
 Dr. Jean Gordon, University Research Reviewer