The Influence of Nurse Managers’ Role and Leadership Style on Nurse Retention

1, Sharon J. Golding and 2, Daniel Fider
1, Department of Graduate Education and Leadership,
2, Northern Caribbean University, Mandeville, Manchester, Jamaica, W.I.

ABSTRACT: Many factors influence nurse migration. Perceived weakness of nursing leaders in advocating for nurses encourages their migration, as does the inability to influence decision-making and policy-making bodies. This paper examines The Influence of Nurse Managers’ Role and Leadership Style on Nurse Retention in Jamaica. Burn’s theory of Transformational Leadership is the theoretical framework used for this study. A phenomenological perspective in qualitative methodology was employed for the current work and adopted a phenomenological approach. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. Seven Nurse Managers constitute the population. Data were collected using interviews, and a thematic approach was used to analyse the data. The study found that transformational leadership style, motivational skills, good communication skills, and commitment to work influence nurse retention. The study concluded that, there needs to be on-going training and simulation workshops for nurse managers on nursing management and leadership styles. The study recommend that this study be replicated in other hospitals across Jamaica after conducting teaching sessions with the nurse managers as also conducted with registered nurses to understand their perspective of the phenomenon.

KEYWORDS: Nurse Retention, Nurse Leader, Nurse Manager, Leadership, Leadership Style

1. INTRODUCTION

Jamaica is a middle-income nation in the Caribbean with a good medical education system. It is the brightest of the bunch that have the best chance of migration, resulting in devastating impact (brain drain, patients have longer waiting times, more workload for those left behind). According to the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Caribbean region has been especially hard hit by migration, with Jamaica at the top of the list. The country has been affected by the brain drain in all sectors. Statistics from the IMF and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) tell us that more than 80% of all Jamaicans with tertiary education of any kind have migrated. The healthcare sector has not been spared. Every year, the country loses 8% of its registered nurses, 20% of its specialist nurses to high-income countries, most of them to the US and UK. It is estimated that two thirds of Jamaica’s nurses have emigrated. This mass exodus led to nationwide vacancy rates in 2001 of 37% for registered nurses, 28% for public health nurses, 17% for nurse practitioners, and 61% for assistant nurses. In 2003, the overall nursing vacancy rate had reached 58% (Can J Public Health, 2012).

Numerous policy and research reports call for leadership to build quality work environments, implement new models of care, and bring health and wellbeing to an exhausted and stretched nursing workforce (Cummings, et al, 2010). Nurse leaders should strive to promote environments that promote the health and well-being of nurses (Hughes, 2017). Nurse Managers or those aspiring to be one would benefit from learning and adopting leadership styles that have shown to be effective (Perez, 2014). Looking at the relationship between leadership styles of nurse managers and nurses’ job satisfaction indicated that nurses preferred managers who were transformational leaders (Negussie and Demissie, 2013). Leadership exists in forms such as autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, transformational, transactional, and servant. However, they differ in terms of the relationship between the leader and the follower. Autocratic leadership reduces self-motivation and autonomy, while a democratic leader promotes autonomy and growth. When group members are highly motivated and self-directed, the laissez-faire leadership can result in much creativity and productivity. The transformational leader sets challenging expectations and achieves higher standards of performance. On the other hand, the transactional leader emphasizes the exchange between a leader and followers. Whilst, the servant leader possess a natural feeling to serve, and enhances the growth of workers (Bass, 2013; Marquis& Huston, 2012).
**Problem Statement**: The rate of international migration is increasing; the number of persons migrating has doubled from 75 million in 1965 to an estimated 150 million in 2000, with a recent growth in the migration of skilled and qualified workers such as nurses. Assessing the severity of nursing migration in Jamaica is difficult due to the incomplete recording of necessary data (Evans & Tulaney, 2011). The present study focused on Nurse Managers as their role and function is integral to changing the healthcare landscape in Jamaica, and ultimately improves nurse retention. In an effort to encourage and develop transformational and relational leadership to enhance nurse retention particularly in this current and worsening nurse shortage. Do nurse managers’ role and their leadership style influence nurses’ retention?

**Theoretical Framework**: The transformational leadership theory was used to guide this study. This perspective provided valuable insights in exploring the leadership styles and nurse managers’ role that a subset of nurse managers perceived as either inhibiting or enhancing nurses’ decision to remain in Jamaica. The next section will discuss Transformational Leadership Transformational leadership was first mentioned by Downtown (1973) and first formalized as a theory by Burns (1978). In contrast to transactional leaders, transformational leaders were said to motivate followers to go beyond their own self-interests for the good of the group, organization, or society. Followers’ interests are raised by transformational leaders from concerns for security to concerns for achievement. Followers are encouraged to meet the challenges they face, to excel, and to self-actualize. Burns’ conceptualization of leadership as either transformational or transactional was modified by Bass (1985a, 1985b), who proposed that transformational leadership augmented the effects of transformational leadership on the efforts, satisfaction, and effectiveness of followers (Bass, 2008). Waldman and Bass’ (1985) analysis of surveys of senior military officers and business managers confirmed the fidelity of the model. Factor-analytical studies done by Bass (1985b) and confirmed by Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1999) have suggested that transformational leaders can be conceptually organized along four correlated dimensions: (1) charismatic leadership, (2) inspirational leadership, (3) intellectual stimulation, and (4) individualized consideration (Bass, 2008) (see Fig. 1). Transformational leadership is closer to the “prototype” of leadership that people have in mind when they describe an ideal leader and is more likely to provide a role model with which subordinates want to identify (Bass & Avolio, 1985, cited in Bass, 2008).

**Fig 1: Concepts Map of Transformational Theory** (source: [https://www.google.com](https://www.google.com))

Brooks (2017) in writing his dissertation, Health Care Leaders’ Strategies to Improve RN Retention used the transformational leadership theory as a potential conceptual lens and framework through which to view his study. Using this framework helped in understanding the leadership strategies to improve nurse retention. Sheppard (2006) in a qualitative phenomenological study explored the two central phenomena of leadership and organizational culture that potentially influenced the retention choices of African American registered nurses. Using the transformational leadership theoretical perspective to guide this study provided valuable insight in
The Influence of Nurse Managers’ Role and Leadership...

expanding the leadership factors that a subset of African American registered nurses with long-standing experience as staff nurses perceived as either inhibiting or enhancing their decision to remain as staff nurses.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research using a phenomenological approach was used in the study to gather data. Interview schedules were designed and used in the investigation and themes were deduced from the data. The interview was divided into two sections; the first section required that the participants gave biographical information and the last question was based on open-ended type of question items. Sampling was selected through purposive sampling method since the sample was limited based on the nature of the study. Thus, the total sample was 7 respondents participated in the study selected from a specialist hospital in Jamaica. The researcher used Moustakas (1994) modification of the van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data to explore the nurse managers’ leadership styles and role that either inhibited or enhanced retention of nurses. The researcher recorded and transcribed themes verbatim; answers for the questions were placed into categories and themes manually. Then entered into a database according to headings with the use of the QDA Miner to extract and compare entities. Four essential themes emerged from the data, communication skills, motivational skills and commitment to the job, and leadership style.

Permission was obtained from the Regional Health Authorities Ethics Committee and the participating institution. Written informed consent was obtained from the study participants. Participation in the study was voluntary, minimal risk was experienced by the participants and there was no individual benefits from the study. Refusal or withdrawal from the study did not affect the job status or create any threat of discrimination against participants. Confidentiality of information and anonymity of participants was protected during the study. Finally, the participants were also advised that the information gathered will be kept under lock and key until 5 years after which they will be discarded by means of incineration. All guidelines recommended by the Regional Health Authorities Ethics Committee were followed.

Findings and Discussion: The respondents were asked using interviewing what are their experience with leadership style and its influence on nurse retention. Four essential themes emerged from the data, communication skills, motivational skills and commitment to the job, and leadership style. These themes or topics were derived inductively from the data, it is only logical that leadership style that influences nurse retention serves as a main category for analysis (Kuckartz, 2014, p. 71). The nurse managers strongly believed a transformational leader is a role model in the performance of duties and exhibits deportment and good work ethics. A transformational leader who encourages employees to do their best and motivates them by displaying positive attitudes and hope. One, who is committed to the job, loves nursing, fairly distributes duty; is honest, upholds integrity, flexible and has good decision-making capabilities. A good team leader, accountable, professional, optimistic, sets clear goals, is inspiring and altruistic.

A visionary who conducts and recommends educational session and lobbies with the Nurses Association of Jamaica to advocate for increases in remuneration influences retention. While the authoritative leader drives nurses away. With transformational leadership, the followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect toward the leader, and they are motivated to do more than they are originally expected to do. The leader transforms and motivates followers by (1) making them more aware of the importance of task outcomes, (2) including them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organization or team, and (3) activating their higher-order needs (Bass, 1985). Nurses should be able to work within an environment in which everyone is treated with respect and appreciated for their contribution to patient care. The workload for nurses needs to be manageable so that the patient does not suffer because of staffing inadequacies. Finally, the nurses should feel supported and empowered to grow as individuals and to provide a significant contribution to healthcare. Creating a healthy work environment requires leaders who are willing to listen, take a strong moral stance and stay connected to the needs of the nurses on the unit (Hughes, 2017).

III. CONCLUSION

The findings from this study presented a clear picture of nurse managers’ ability to influence retention in a specialist hospital in Jamaica. The respondents identified and portrayed traces of stereotyped thinking as regards nurse managers’ suitability to leadership, to create an enabling environment and generate training programs which contribute to nurses leaving the specialist hospital. A main concern of nurse leaders is the creation and sustainability of healthy work environments that attract and retain nurses and enable them to provide quality care. It is imperative that educational efforts advance to include leadership skills and strategies, with the immediate
The Influence of Nurse Managers’ Role and Leadership...

goal of reengaging the midlevel manager and a long term goal of advancing leadership and succession planning (Henrick, 2016). Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions are made:
1. On-going training and simulation workshops for nurse managers to revisit their roles as managers and to understand they are a part of the management structure not just in nursing but also within the institution.
2. Nurse Managers need to develop programme goals and conduct ward conferences to meet training and education needs of their team members.
3. Nurse Managers should involve nurses in decision making and management of the units, as well as conducting research to inform policies such as nurse retention strategies.
4. As a nurse manager, nurse leader and budding educator it is imperative that I begin and be a part of the transformation of the nursing workforce through research findings and education, if we really want nurses to remain.

Recommendations: I strongly recommend that this study be replicated in other hospitals across Jamaica after conducting teaching sessions with the nurse managers. I also believe it should be conducted with registered nurses to understand their perspective of the phenomenon.

REFERENCE
The Influence of Nurse Managers’ Role and Leadership... 