How Could Transformational Leadership Influence Collaboration

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Abstract

Objectives: To explore an emerging leadership style, namely transformational leadership, in terms of collaboration, thus help leaders to improve nurses' working effectiveness and efficiency within the healthcare.

Methods: A comprehensive literature search used "transformational leadership", "collaboration" search terms to identify relevant literature on CINAHL, Academic Search Complete and Science Direct from 2000 to 2020. A critical review and thematic synthesis of research literature conducted to identify and construct a framework to explain how transformational leadership influences collaboration.

Results: Four attributes of transformational leadership were identified to influence collaboration: (i) Individualized consideration. Leaders acknowledge individuals' differences and contributions to the team. They empower followers to collectively create goals and take responsibilities to work in the group; (ii) Intellectual stimulation. Leaders innovate individuals to think in a nontraditional way. They create an innovative learning environment within the group and thus could accelerate shared-vision-building and systems thinking; (iii) Inspirational motivation. Leaders integrate individuals' rivalries, motivate subordinates to change their interests for the benefit of teams. They help to achieve consensus and establish a connected network in the team; (iv) Idealized influence. Leaders typically serve as role models among followers and have an authentic self-awareness that transformation starts with themselves. They are consistent with their behavior, and thus facilitate followers to internalize their belief.

Conclusions: Transformational leadership has the potential to help leaders to balance complex conditions in the demanding healthcare environment and human resource shortage. Four dimensions of transformational leadership coexist to improve leaders to become successful vision-builders, standard-bearers, integrators, and developers in healthcare. Nurse leaders could learn from the insights of transformational leadership to facilitate the collaboration within nurses and nursing with other healthcare professions.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Collaboration; Healthcare; Nursing

Introduction

In the past few decades, collaboration has become an extraordinary approach to achieve integration of fragmented healthcare worldwide [1,2]. In 1988, the World Health Organization promoted that healthcare professionals should be educated together to develop competencies for collaborative working [3]. However, in today's transforming healthcare, there are many opportunities and challenges to maintain a successful collaboration [4,5]. Mainly, nurses, as a crucial part of healthcare, usually are over-managed and inadequately-led [6,7].

Effective leadership can balance complicated demands in an unstable healthcare environment and formulate healthier healthcare organizations [8,9]. An emerging leadership style, namely transformational leadership, is frequently discussed in the recent research literature [10]. This leadership style enables leaders and followers to motivate each other and boost morale [11]. It has tones of positive effects including job satisfaction, team performances, and employee cooperative commitments [12,13]. This article aims to explore transformational leadership in terms of collaboration facilitation. It is expected to help leaders to facilitate the collaboration within nurses and nursing with other healthcare professions.

Results

Four dimensions of transformational leadership, namely individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence, were identified to influence collaboration.

Individualized consideration

Transformational leaders acknowledge individuals' differences and contributions to the organization through open communication [14,15]. They give individual supervision and performance feedback to help develop professionals' skills, knowledge and self-efficacy [16,17]. Also, they are more likely to empower individuals to express their feelings and collectively create shared goals [14,16,17]. This mutual interaction may help staff to find common ground within the team and build a trusting and respectful relationship through the alignment [18,19]. In this way, Staff can understand their team better and have high satisfaction with their job, stimulating their commitments and job performances in teamwork [13,20,21]. However, limited time and resources may be the challenges to transformational leaders [16,22]. Thriving to meet individuals' needs may also put leaders into vulnerable positions [16]. Also, empowering professionals could impose a threat to the team if leaders fail to make sure all members hold the same vision [23].

Intellectual stimulation

Transformational leaders stimulate creativity and innovate a non-traditional way to think among followers [17,23]. They may utilize creative strategies to evoke individuals' awareness of change, and encourage followers to feel confident in challenging current situations [23,24]. Meanwhile, leaders may also create an innovative learning environment within the group [24,25]. Individuals, for example, are motivated to share, externalize, combine and internalize others' expertise, which in turn accelerate shared-vision-building and systems thinking [24,25]. However, it may be problematic to facilitate followers to improve their competency and skills before innovation [14]. There is also a possibility that followers are unwilling to participate in, thinking that it could add unwanted workloads [25].

Inspirational motivation

Transformational leaders attend to motivate individuals to change their interests for the benefit of teams and engage them in group decision-making and reciprocal communication [16,18,26]. They are generally good at integrating professional rivalries, which is crucial to collaboration [14,20]. For example, inspiring followers to consider other colleagues' needs could diminish the negative aspects of individuals' personalities or values [20]. However, it is a challenge that leaders must be able to convince staff to "buy-in" [22]. Few leaders in healthcare settings are genuinely inspired because of the traditional hierarchy [16].

Idealized influence

Transformational leaders regularly serve as role models among followers. Bottomley and colleagues [27] proposed several fundamental characteristics to be effective transformational leaders, namely "vision-builder", "standard-bearer", "integrator", and "developer" [27]. Transformational leaders first need to have an authentic self-awareness that transformation start with themselves, and be consistent in their behaviour [14,19]. Under the influence of this behaviour, professionals tend to internalize their leaders' beliefs, performance in line

with leaders' intentions and make more contributions to the team [28,29]. However, the influence of the idealized model may expand the unhealthy dependence of staff and control power, exacerbating hierarchy during collaboration [23,30,31].

Conclusion

This article critically addressed the influence of transformational leadership on collaboration based on four dimensions of this leadership style, namely individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealized influence. It is expected to provide an innovative method for nurse leaders to improve nurses' working effectiveness and efficiency within healthcare, and balance complicated situation in the human resource shortage and demanding healthcare environment.

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