
ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Perception of Intellectual Stimulation, Reliability and Proactiveness among Health Managers Working In Tertiary Level Hospitals

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ABSTRACT

Background: Needs and priorities in public health require leaders who are able to engage in systems thinking, including analytical and critical thinking processes, visioning of potential futures, strategic and tactical assessment, and communication and change dynamics. New public health, in the back drops of globalization, financial strain, shifting power basis and serious demands on an already stressed system; needs visionary leadership.

Objective: To assess perception of health managers regarding Intellectual stimulation and its variables.

Methods: A Qualitative study was conducted in two public sector tertiary level hospitals in Lahore. Data collection was done by means of observation and in- depth interviews. Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was taken as benchmark and an open ended questionnaire was developed on its lines. One main domain of Intellectual stimulation along with its two variables was developed and emergence of different themes and categories was noted.

Results: In the domain of Intellectual stimulation all 17 participants of the study showed positive themes regarding reliability which was supported by their work life examples. On the other hand out of the total, six health managers did not have any idea about proactiveness. Female health managers were more inclined towards transformational leadership behavior.

Conclusion: Health managers with Administration/ Management degree had a clear and better concept of Intellectual stimulation as a pillar of transformational leadership and had clear perception regarding the variables of reliability. In contrast few had a clear idea about the variable of proactiveness. Female health managers were found to have greater perception and application of transformational leadership behavior; thus taking enhanced output as a team leader.

Key words: Intellectual stimulation, reliability, proactiveness health managers.

INTRODUCTION

Intellectual stimulation is defined as having a leader who encourages innovation and creativity, as well as critical thinking and problem solving. Intellectual stimulation involves arousing followers' thoughts and imagination, as well as stimulating their ability to identify and solve problems creatively.¹ Great internal and external demand have always kept health sector under great pressure. For many years, public sector organizations have clung to the model of administrative leadership where leaders were equated to administrators. Their role was to maintain bureaucratic system and status quo. They could engage only in cautious and iterative changes.² Number of studies came under

researcher's scrutiny; upon transformational and transactional leadership theory related to health sector. Transformational leadership is more appropriate in the stability of environment and routine decisions. On the other hand in organizations where traditions are deeply rooted in, rules and sanctions are exercised; transactional leaders will be more appropriate who do not question status quo.¹ Public sector organizations are usually perceived as stable, bureaucratic, and unwilling to change. Therefore one could expect that leadership styles in these organizations will be more transactional than transformational. Still in the present times health care organizations are experiencing a high pace of changes, high level of uncertainty and a turbulent environment in the

hospitals will lead to the emergence of transformational leadership.³ Previous research from organizational psychology literature has identified personality characteristics that help distinguish successful leaders. These include personal motivation, intelligence, action oriented judgment, skill in dealing with people and capacity to motivate others.⁴ Successful leaders are able to harness these qualities to revitalize and transform their organizations. Transformational leaders are thought to achieve these goals by providing Intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and inspirational motivation to clearly communicate the importance of an organization's mission.⁵ Transformational leader's focus on the intangible qualities such as vision, shared values and building closer relationship with the workers. They also promote intrinsic motivation and provide employees with psychological support needed to cope with complex job demands.⁶ Employees proactive work behaviors are crucial to organizational success in rapidly changing economic environment.⁷ Proactive work behaviors are especially important in uncertain environments where the most effective work behaviors cannot be prescribed in advance.⁸

Current study investigates Intellectual stimulation as a pillar of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders influence follower's values, attitudes and emotions.¹ such leaders motivate followers to perform beyond their expectations.⁹

A study showed that transformational leaders are likely to encourage proactive work behaviors because they focus on change and improvement. Indeed the positive influence of transformational leaders on organizational performance could result primarily from their impact on proactive work behaviors. Intellectual stimulation will enhance individual's confidence in their ability to take on proactive, integrative and interpersonal tasks.¹⁰

Researcher in the current study tried to focus upon the variable of reliability through health manager's team work behavior and group dynamics. Effective communication and practice are accomplished by leaders through building team work group capacity and capability.¹¹ Group/ team leadership skills and competencies are seen as one of the keys to success of a team.¹² While there are many other factors that contribute to making a team highly effective, leadership is certainly one of the more important factors.¹³

Specific problem identified in public health sector is lack of proactive work behavior on part of the health managers as leaders; and lack of development of harmonious team work from bottom to top. Focus of this study was upon assessing the perception of health managers regarding the key idea and its variables; especially emphasizing upon knowledge, opinion and experience. Further avenues will open up with this study.

METHODS

This qualitative study was conducted in two public sector tertiary level hospitals in Lahore namely; Lahore General Hospital (LGH) and Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (GRH). Convenient sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 17 willing health managers including one Medical Superintendent (MS), nine Additional Medical Superintendents (AMS), and seven Deputy Medical Superintendents (DMS). Inclusion criteria were set at health managers working at administrative levels (decision and policy making level), and work experience of more than three years at one managerial post. Exclusion criteria included health managers at supervisory level, and those who had taken part in a research study in the past two years. MS and two DMS of one hospital did not consent to participate in the study.

Data Collection

Data was collected through observation and in-depth interviews. Voice recording was planned to record the interviews but due to refusal by all study subjects this technique was dropped. In- depth interview technique was used to assess the perception of Intellectual stimulation by using a well designed questionnaire prepared on the analogy of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ).¹⁴ Data was collected in one month time period. In the domain of Intellectual stimulation, themes were developed upon two variables, i.e. reliability and proactiveness. Categorization of the responses in the domain of Intellectual stimulation was done in a flexible manner. Emerging themes and categories were noted. Consistencies and dissimilarities were categorized. Analytical objectives were: a) to describe and explain the relationship of the responses to different questions in order to develop themes/ patterns in the main domain. b) To describe any other variation that emerged during the in- depth interview. Questionnaire format was open ended and

flexibility was applied to add or exclude a question, phrasing of the question, as well as order of the question could be changed. Knowledge and opinion about proactiveness was assessed through open ended questions about preparedness for an uncontrolled situation, provide assistance to others in exchange for their efforts, articulate a compelling vision of the future, wait for things to go wrong before taking action, go beyond self interest for the good of the group and help others to build their strengths. Knowledge and opinion about reliability was assessed through open ended questions about trust building between you and your team members, avoid taking decision or not, team members' confidence upon team leader, involve yourself when important issues arise or avoid it. Recruitment strategy adopted for the study was to take help and direction from one of the health manager amongst the administrative team in order to recruit the participants. With permission of the Medical Superintendent, time was taken from each participant for interview. Informed verbal consent was taken from each. Open ended in- depth interview was carried out and extensive field notes were taken with his/ her permission. After completing each interview day, the researcher used to endorse all the responses on paper in all detail. Each interview took approximately one and a half hour with unavoidable interruptions in between. Medium of communication was English mostly but at one or two occasions Urdu was used as few health managers were not very fluent in communicating in English. Documentation of the interview was the most important part of data collection as it had to be done at the end of each day without failing; so

as not to miss any detail from going into black and white. In- depth interview with each respondent started with questions about general bio-data and then building onto the core concept of the study.

Data analysis was done with the evolving themes and patterns in the main domain of Intellectual stimulation with the variables of reliability and proactiveness. All themes and patterns were explicitly penned down. Consistencies and differences were categorized among the participants with explanation of any variation.

RESULTS

All the study participants had basic medical education of MBBS. Out of 17 participants, two were female health managers. Nine (9) managers had major degree in Management/ Administration (MPH, MHM, MHA, DPH, and MBA); and out of these eight (8) had management experience of more than 10 yrs. Eight (8) participants had done minor courses in management out of which only three (3) had management experience of more than 10 yrs. Health managers with management/ administration degree showed positive themes regarding the key idea of Intellectual stimulation and its two variables (reliability and proactiveness). Emergence of themes was supported by evidence from their work life experiences. Female health managers were found to have more leaning towards transformational leadership behavior. Evolving themes for proactiveness are given in Table 1. Evolving themes for reliability are given in Table 2.

Table 1: Intellectual stimulation (main domain): Evolving themes for proactiveness

Hospital- 1	Hospital- 2
Supportive environment	Pre hand planning/ backup plans
Preplanning/ back up plans	Anticipatory attitude
Situation analysis	Broader vision
Far vision/ far sightedness	Effective dealing with human reactions
Intelligent handling of situations	Assistance enhances efforts
Mental preparation of team members	Assistance provision increases output
Regular stock taking of backup measures	Assistance enhances motivation level
Personal interest in team members	Assistance cultivates efficiency
Physical and mental involvement of manager in working	Logical and rational future vision
Constant liaison with team mates	Rational/ achievable aims and objectives
Flexibility	Preventive approach
Achievable and practical targets	Constant inspection/ vigilance
External influence in health sector	Self interest equates to organization interest

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Self interest equating to organization interest	Going beyond self interest matches Islamic teaching
Building team performance/ output	
Professional/ personal assistance of team mates to enhance motivation level	
Personal/ professional development of strengths	
Effective core values/ principles of the organization	
Going beyond self interest for the good of the organization	

Table 2: Intellectual stimulation (main domain): Evolving themes of reliability

Hospital- 1	Hospital- 2
Reliability as trust/ confidence/ dependability upon team leader and vice versa	Team mates should be owned by the team leader
Working with pleasure	Reliability upon each other both ways
Reliability equates to honesty/ commitment of both	Effective/ prompt problem solving attitude
Job capability	Proficient/ competent task handling by team mates
Preserve self respect of team members	Honesty
Understanding and communication among all	Loyalty towards institution
Own the team members	Interaction between team mates
Performance beyond expectation	No disparity between preaching and practice
Meeting personal needs of team mates	Verification of informal feedback
Leader as a role model	Comprehensive communication of targets
Decentralization	Understanding each other
Professional sharing	Leader's character strength
Decision ownership	Ability to decide
Taking different suggestions	Bearing consequences of a decision
Situation analysis	Good listener
Manager as final deciding authority	Situation analysis
Critical thinking skills	Open door policy
External influence	Management by wandering
Open door policy	Preserve self respect of team mates
Good listener	Personal involvement of manager in working

Six health managers from one of the hospitals showed positive themes for proactiveness; they had clear perception about the term and its implications, where as three did not. From the second hospital four managers showed positive themes for the same variable and four did not. Female health managers were more inclined towards developing professional/ personal strengths of their team members; thus building team performance.

All seventeen health managers showed positive themes for the variable of reliability. Female health managers were found to be looking after each of their team member as a different individual with needs/ aspirations/ aims and goals;

giving individualized consideration to each. In contrast male health managers did not place much stress upon meeting the personal needs of the workers.

DISCUSSION

Transformational leadership projects a model of leadership with more emphasis upon Intellectual stimulation, and whenever applied, it always leads to successful health care organizations and teams. In turn this scenario will lead to provision of a highly responsive and high quality health care that benefits all the end stake holders; which includes patients, organization itself and community.

Present study found that health managers with degree in management/ administration had better concept of leadership, Intellectual stimulation and proactiveness; by showing their knowledge, opinion and experience. Ten (10) health managers showed positive themes for proactiveness by implying that proactiveness was important for the growth and progress of a health care organization. Transformational leadership behavior in the managers/ leaders facilitates proactivity. These findings are consistent with a previous study done in health sector.¹⁰

By virtue of observation the researcher gathered that in of the hospital selected for study; general environment was composed, purposeful, calm and dignified in the administration wing. In contrast the other hospital projected a look of chaos, confusion and mismanagement to its utmost. Health managers in this hospital projected a look of casual management style.

Proactiveness/ proactive behavior can be defined as self directed and future focused action in an organization, in which the individual aim to bring about change, including change to the situation (e.g. introducing new work methods, influencing organizational strategy) and/ or change within oneself (e.g. learning new skills to cope with future demands).¹⁵ This definition concurs with lay definitions, which highlight both a future focus (anticipation) and a change focus (taking control). Evolvement of subthemes like supportive environment, self interest equating to organization interest, building team performance, and enhancing motivational level of team mates in the present study; all support the theoretical knowledge of proactiveness. Employee's proactive behavior is increasingly important for organizations seeking to adapt in uncertain economic environments. Transformational leadership by team leaders would enhance commitment to the team, which would predict team member proactivity. Transformational leadership by the leaders of the organization would commitment to the organization, thus increasing proactivity.¹⁰ Subthemes like situation analysis, preplanning for an upcoming or anticipated situation, far sightedness of the team leader, and readiness of the backup measures strengthen our study and are again in line with the theoretical definition of proactiveness. Present study found that alignment of individual's interests and goals with those of the organization will definitely motivate the worker to go beyond self interest, for the good of the

organization. These findings are supported by a previous research which states that going beyond one's self interests for the good of the organization requires aligning the individual member's interests and values with those of the organization.¹⁶

Second categorical theme for Intellectual stimulation is reliability. All 17 health managers had a clear, concise and comprehensive idea regarding reliability. Their opinions and positive themes development in this category strongly support the transformational leadership behavior with application of Intellectual stimulation. Subthemes like reliability as trust/ confidence upon team leader, ownership of the team members, meeting personal needs of the team mates, preserving self respect of the members, understanding and communication are strengths of the present study. Reliability upon the leader plays a major role in his being successful.

Present study found that female health managers emphasize upon nurturing and developing personal/ professional strengths of the team mates. These findings are consistent with a previous study done upon Taiwan's nursing Deans and Directors, showed more transformational leadership style.

Concept of reliability plays with concept of individualized consideration, where leader considers each employee as an individual and looks into his needs and requirements. As a result leader himself becomes a figure upon whom the employees can rely. Nursing faculty was more satisfied with the leaders who practiced transformational leadership style with more emphasis upon individualized consideration. These female leaders are potentially capable of displaying transformational leadership because of the influenced gender roles in a transitional society. They tend to be supportive and inspirational towards their subordinates, emphatic with their follower's different needs.

There was emergence of certain other themes also for this variable like decentralization, professional sharing, open door policy, leader being a good listener, taking different suggestions, and decision ownership. All these make our study strong and are in accordance with the knowledge of transformational leadership behavior among health managers.

CONCLUSION

Health managers with Management/ Administration degree had a very clear concept

regarding Intellectual stimulation as one of the pillar of transformational leadership and its application practically to get performance beyond expectation. These health managers had understanding of both variables. In contrast managers who were at this post by virtue of their experience only, and managers with a clinical experience background did not have an understanding of proactiveness and its application. Female health managers were more inclined towards transformational leadership behavior by considering each team member as an independent and separate individual, whose needs and aspirations should be looked after in order to get performance and output beyond expectations.

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