

The Relationship Between Desirable Leadership Characteristics Of Nursing Administrators And Happiness At Work Of Registered Nurses

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Abstract

This descriptive research aimed to study desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators and study happiness at work of registered nurses and study the relationship between desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators and happiness at work of registered nurses. The samples were 203 registered nurses, who work at Srinagarind Hospital. Data collection was conducted from December 2022 - January 2023. Data were collected from 176 people, accounting for 86.70% of the total sample group. The research instruments were a questionnaire on the desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators and a questionnaire on the happiness at work of registered nurses. These instruments were verified by three experts. Data were analyzed by descriptive statistics; including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation coefficient statistics.

The results revealed that the desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators as perceived by registered nurses were at a high level. The happiness at work of registered nurses was at a high level and There was a highly positive relationship between desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators and happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital. When considering each aspect, two aspects were at the highest level: practical qualification and general qualification. Two aspects were ranked at a high level: cognitive qualification and specialty qualification. The aspect with the lowest correlation was the affective qualification. The results of this research can be used as basic information

for administrators to plan human resource development to enhance the happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital.

Keyword: Leadership, Happiness at work, Registered nurses, Srinagarind Hospital.

Background and significance of the study

Happiness is what every human desire, and it is the power that drives creativity. To increase work efficiency, individuals try to make their lives happy because happiness is important to an individual's mental and physical state. When happiness occurs, energy in the body will increase, and the motor nervous system will be improved, resulting in work efficiency. Happy people show their happiness both physically and verbally. They are full of energy, excitement, cheerful mood and optimistic and friendly personalities. This creates a good working atmosphere. Service recipients will also receive good, efficient and satisfied services. (Kerns, 2008). One of the sources of human happiness is work because every human being spends more than a third of their lives working. (Manion, 2003) This is consistent with a study by Kaneman (2004) which found that work is the most time-consuming activity compared to other daily activities. But if work makes people have more negative feelings, such as being stressful, bored and unhappy, than positive feelings, such as being happy and fun, it inevitably makes living each day unhappy for more than 7-8 hours. Work is meaningful and important because it is a source of income that a person can spend to provide the necessities of life which cause happiness.

Registered nurses are important persons in the health service system because their work is related to the life and safety of those who receive the service. (Thongkao & Suppapitiporn, 2018) Especially, working in hospitals above the tertiary level, nurses have to bear increasing pressure from many ways, such as working pressure that they have to follow the correct guidelines, pressure from expectations and experiences of service recipients who want convenient, fast and safe services, and pressure from organizations that they have to maintain their reputation and standards of service. These are all causes that cause stress to nurses, resulting in decreased happiness, lack of enthusiasm and burn out, leading to the decision to change jobs and finally resign. As a result, there is a shortage of public health personnel which is a major problem of the health system in Thailand. (Rajchaburi & Pipatprapa, 2021) According to the 20-year national strategy for public health, people excellence strategy has been formulated with the goal of cultivating good, valued and well-being public health personnel at work. Therefore, happiness of the personnel of the Ministry of Public Health has been assessed. According to the latest assessment in February 2022, the mean happiness score was 63.92%, which decreased from that of the year 2017 that the mean happiness score was 62.60%. (Ministry of Public Health, 2022). This

is consistent with the results of the happiness survey of Thai people conducted by Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living ASEAN (THAILAND) in April 2022, which revealed that the overall happiness of Thai people decreased as a result of the COVID-19 situation that continues to spread as well as tough economic situations which cause concern for Thai people. (Sukkong, 2022)

Srinagarind Hospital is a tertiary level hospital with specialized doctors, modern medical equipment, nurses and staff who are skilled in caring for patients with serious, complex and chronic illnesses. They also perform duties in the COVID-19 situation and prepare to provide care services for patients with emerging diseases. It is a duty to work with a lot of workload and urgency. In many wards, manpower is shared to take care of patients with COVID-19. Knowledge in caring for patients with other emerging diseases is required. As a result, more knowledge and skills are needed to provide quality and safe nursing care to patients and nurses must be safe from work. These situations may cause stress and anxiety, which can result in a decrease in happiness at work of nurses.

From the literature review, many scholars have studied about the factors affecting happiness at work of nurses, such as perceived organizational support by considering compensation and welfare, job advancement opportunities, job security, honor and factors supporting the performance. (Nantharojphong, 2019) In terms of the environmental factors, freedom of action, skill development and use, achievement, job descriptions, relationship with other people, career advancement, support from supervisors, operational safety, financial readiness, work-life-family balance and job value are considered. (Promchoo, 2020) The aforementioned factors are all related to the administration of nursing administrators, who are important persons that lead the activities of the organization to make the personnel under their supervision happy to work and work more efficiently. This will lead to the quality of nursing services. The leadership characteristics of nursing administrators play an important role in driving nurses to be happy in their work. From the literature review, however, there was no study of the relationship between desirable nursing administrators' leadership characteristics and happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital. Also, there is no evidence-based research on the happiness at work among nurses.

Therefore, the researchers are interested in studying this issue so that the level of happiness of registered nurses in the organization can be recognized. This descriptive research aimed to 1) study desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators as perceived by registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital, 2) study happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital and 3) study the relationship between desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators and happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital. Moreover, the study results can be used as a guideline for planning human resource development to enhance happiness of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital.

Literature review

Happiness at work

The word "happiness" has been studied and discussed for a period because it's the vital goal many people pursue worldwide. All persons in every culture, country search for happiness. Happiness is crucial for improving productivity in jobs and life. Happy people are productive people, while those unhappy may not pay full attention to anything, even task. Happy employees have higher capacity. Also, they are more sensitive to the occasions in the workplace, more open and help fellow employees, more positive and self-confident. For example, happiness can describe as the experience of a positive emotional state and a sense of pleasure with life as a whole. Bhatia and Mohsin (2020) stated that happiness is a concept of subjective well-being of people and the feeling of joy, fun, delight, and positive emotions, or people get by doing or achieving something desirable or getting something positive unexpectedly. Meanwhile, Fisher (2010) claims that happiness showed through pleasant moods, positive emotions, subjective well-being, and a positive attitude. Happiness at work includes job satisfaction. A comprehensive measure of individual-level happiness might consist of work engagement, job satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment. Wesarat et al. (2014) stated that happiness is related to individuals and subjective well-being. Joy at the workplace is defined as how satisfied are people with their life and work. There is a nearby association between job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Conzo et al. (2017) suggest that well-being drove by the joy of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, relatedness, and competence.

Desirable leadership characteristics

Leaders share a common set of characteristics. Hughes reviewed ten national and international research studies to identify the characteristics of great nurse leaders. The leadership characteristics identified by Hughes were integrity, accessibility, motivation of others, emotional capability, and social intelligence. Leaders must be open and approachable, with the ability to motivate others through support and empowerment.

Other qualities that nurses seek in their leaders include a commitment to excellence, passion for their work, clear vision and strategic focus, trustworthiness, respectfulness, approachability, empathy, caring, and commitment to coaching and developing staff. These qualities are essential to outstanding leadership, and organizations must learn the best ways to identify and develop these traits in existing and emerging leaders.

Skills needed to achieve these characteristics include communication, creating a healthy work environment, collaboration, shared decision-making, coaching and mentoring, and delegation. Effective leaders must have strong verbal and written communication skills and must create a healthy work

environment attending to the physical, social, and mental health and well-being of patients and staff. This includes both giving and soliciting feedback. Leaders should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and react cautiously.

With the current healthcare environment and the focus on interprofessional education, the leader must develop good working relationships with members of the other disciplines comprising the healthcare team. Effective leaders implement shared decision-making practices to allow for the active and full participation of stakeholders and continuously support, coach, and mentor staff members. In addition to serving as role models, leaders motivate and empower people with the tools and the resources they need to do their job, then get out of their way and let them do it. Leaders seize opportunities to motivate people by recognizing their worth, services, or contributions. However, since the leader cannot achieve strategic goals in a vacuum, delegation skills are an essential tool in the leader's arsenal. (Barbara and Bette, 2023)

Conceptual framework

In this study, the concept of happiness at work of Warr (2007), consisting of 1) work pleasure, 2) enthusiasm for work, and 3) work satisfaction was employed. In addition, the factors affecting happiness at work of registered nurses are the desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators. The concept of Konkanghana (2021) which consists of 1) general qualification, 2) cognitive qualification, 3) practical qualification, 4) affective qualification, and 5) specialty qualification, was employed. Therefore, the conceptual framework of the research can be summarized as shown in Figure 1.

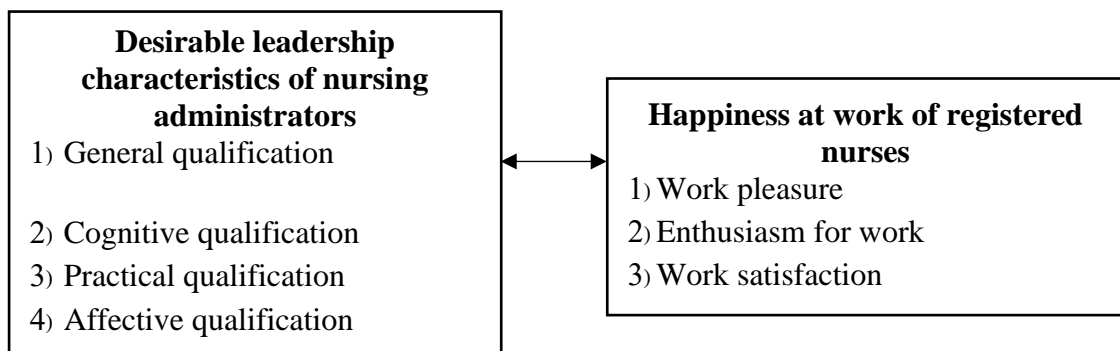


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Hypothesis

The desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators are positively correlated with happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital.

Methodology

The details of the research conduction process are as follows.

1. Population and Sample

Population: 1,440 registered nurses who work at Srinagarind Hospital with more than 1 year of work experience and are not nursing administrators.

Sample: The sample size was determined by the sample size table for testing the relationship between the two variables using Pearson Product Moment Correlation: $\alpha = .05$, Power $(1-\beta) = .80$, and $r = 0.20$ where no previous study exists. Based on the sample size table, the number of samples was 197 people. (Juntachum, 2002) However, the number of the samples was increased by 3% to prevent sample loss by comparing with previous studies. (Promchoo, 2020) Therefore, there were 203 samples in total. In this research, data were collected from 176 samples, accounting for 86.70% of the total sample group.

Personal information: It was found that most of the samples aged 31-40 years old (37.50%). They are mostly married (52.84%). Most of them have been working for more than 10 years (55.11%) in the Operating Room Department (11.93%) with the income of higher than 40,000 baht (40.91%).

2. Data collection

The questionnaires were used to collect data from December 1, 2022 - January 31, 2023, a total of 2 months.

Research instruments: There were 3 parts.

Part 1: A personal information questionnaire consisting of the information of age, marital status, duration of work, department, salary and allowance. It is a check list and fil-in-the-blank questionnaire.

Part 2: A questionnaire on happiness at work of registered nurses: There are 15 questions, which are closed-ended questions on a 5-point rating scale.

Part 3: A questionnaire on desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators: There are 25 questions on a 5-point rating scale.

Samples' rights protection: This study was approved by the Khon Kaen University Ethics Committee for Human Research (Project Number: HE651414).

3. Data analysis

The statistics in accordance with data characteristics and being able to answer the research objectives were chosen for data analysis as follows.

3.1) General information of the samples such as age, marital status, duration of work, department, salary and allowance was analyzed by frequency and percentage.

3.2) The levels of happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital were analyzed by mean, standard deviation and data interpretation.

3.3) In terms of research hypothesis test to analyze the relationship between desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators and happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was employed.

Results

1. The desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators as perceived by registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital: The desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators as perceived by registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital were at a high level (\bar{X} = 4.28, S.D.= 0.64). When considering each aspect, the aspect with the highest level of the desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators was affective qualification (\bar{X} =4.36, S.D.=0.63), followed by and general qualification (\bar{X} =4.31, S.D.=0.64), cognitive qualification (\bar{X} =4.28, S.D.=0.72) and specialty qualification (\bar{X} =4.21, S.D.=0.73). The aspect with the lowest level was practical qualification (\bar{X} =4.19, S.D.=0.69) as presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Mean and standard deviation of the desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators as perceived by registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital (N=176)

Desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level
General qualification	4.31	0.64	High
Cognitive qualification	4.28	0.72	High
Practical qualification	4.19	0.69	High
Affective qualification	4.36	0.63	High
Specialty qualification	4.21	0.73	High
Total	4.28	0.64	High

2. The happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital: It was found that the happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital was at a high level (\bar{X} = 3.94, S.D.=0.59). When considering each aspect, the aspect with the highest level of happiness at work was enthusiasm for work (\bar{X} =4.26, S.D.=0.53), followed by work pleasure (\bar{X} =3.82, S.D.=0.77) while the lowest one was work satisfaction (\bar{X} =3.73, S.D.=0.72) as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Mean and standard deviation of the happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital (n=176)

Questions	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level
Work pleasure	3.82	0.77	High

Questions	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level
Enthusiasm for work	4.26	0.53	High
Work satisfaction	3.73	0.72	High
Total	3.94	0.59	High

3. The relationship between desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators and happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital: There was a highly positive relationship between desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators and happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital ($r = 0.61$) with statistical significance at the 0.01 level. When considering each aspect, two aspects were at the highest level: practical qualification ($r = 0.60$) and general qualification ($r = 0.58$). Two aspects were ranked at a high level: cognitive qualification ($r = 0.57$) and specialty qualification ($r = 0.57$). The aspect with the lowest correlation was affective qualification ($r = 0.55$).

Table 3 The relationship between desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators and happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital

Variables	Happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital	
General qualification	r	0.58**
Cognitive qualification	r	0.57**
Practical qualification	r	0.60**
Affective qualification	r	0.55**
Specialty qualification	r	0.57**
Total	r	0.61**

** Statistical significance at the 0.01 level

Discussion

The research results can be discussed based on the research objectives as follows.

1. The desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators as perceived by registered nurses were at a high level. The aspect with the highest level of the desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators was affective qualification. Probably, it is because nursing administrators are trained and instilled with positive attitudes towards the profession while studying at the university and working in the workplace. So, they know their own identity, knowledge, ability, aptitude and strengths and

weaknesses that should be developed. They also have stable mood and can create good feelings for themselves and desire for self-development with life-long learning. They are also ready to act when there is an appropriate opportunity. They do not deny the opportunity for self-improvement. They are the ones who seek to learn and gain experience to enhance their progression and perform their duties efficiently. In addition, they have a good attitude towards the nursing profession. They desire for career advancement and public acceptance. This is consistent with the concept of Singhanetr, Jaisit and Henkeaw (2017) which found that desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators are essential in a changing future. Health services are exposed to a variety of health problems, emerging diseases and re-emerging diseases. Environmental and behavioral risk factors are linked to economic and social aspects. The future trends of nursing leadership development are becoming more complex and challenging. The vision and skills required for nursing leadership continue to change. Furthermore, complex and adaptive thinking abilities are required.

2. The happiness at work of registered nurses was at a high level. The aspect with the highest level of happiest at work of registered nurses was enthusiasm for work. This may be due to the fact that Srinagarind Hospital is a large hospital and patients with complex diseases and treatment. It is a good learning resource for nurses to increase their knowledge from work free of charge. In addition, nurses play an important role in helping patients to lessen both physical and mental suffering. Therefore, registered nurses need to be enthusiastic in their work. They have to physically and mentally dedicate to work with the main aim of keeping patients safe. This is in line with a study by Promchoo (2020) which found that happiness at work of registered nurses is related to the development of knowledge and ability to work and fully utilize their potential, which will result in career advancement.

3. There was a highly positive relationship between desirable leadership characteristics of nursing administrators and happiness at work of registered nurses. When considering each aspect, the results were as follows.

3.1 Practical qualification was positively correlated with happiness at work of registered nurses at a high level. It may be due to administrative ability, which is the ability to plan, make decisions, analyze and sort out problems, choose the best practice to solve problems that will bring efficiency, effectiveness in a timely manner and benefit all parties involved as well as being able to organize other management activities under the motivation and inspiration of subordinates to show their full potential, resulting in subordinates' satisfaction. Therefore, the work has been accomplished according to the organization's goals. These all have a positive effect on happiness at work of registered nurses. This is consistent with the concept of the Nursing Division, Ministry of Public Health (2018), stating that nursing administrators must have both academic and administrative abilities. These abilities will affect the behavior and happiness at work of personnel in the organization.

3.2 General qualification had a high positive correlation with happiness at work of registered nurses. It is probably because nursing administrators have good human relations, are polite and gentle to nurses at all levels who work in various departments 24 hours a day as well as other general people in order to lead to positive thoughts, feelings, creativity and understanding of other people's needs, which will lead to cooperation in solving problems. They also show willingness, which is a good basis for building relationships and working networks, leading to success in supervision, giving advice, guiding, solving nursing problems as well as having self-confidence and listening to the opinions of others. They have good listening skills and are sensitive to the feelings and thoughts of others. These have a positive effect on happiness at work of registered nurses. This is consistent with a study by Panwon, Cheevakagsemsook, and Thongkamrod (2020), stating that administrators should build good relationships with personnel as it will result in a good working atmosphere for personnel in the organization.

3.3 Cognitive qualification had a high positive correlation with happiness at work of registered nurses. This may be due to the administrators' knowledge of organizational structure and policies. The structure is the chain of command and the operational goals of the organization. Administrators must have knowledge and understanding of the structure, policies and regulations of the organizations to help set the operational goals as the guidelines for operational planning. If the operation is planned carefully and consistent with the policy of the organization, when put into practice, the operation will run smoothly. Having knowledge of human behavior and understanding each behavior of nurses will help nursing administrators understand the needs of nurses so that operational activities can be organized correctly and appropriately. These all help increase happiness at work of registered nurses even more. This is in line with a study by Chaonarin, Chinatongkul and Chaisirithanya (2022), indicating that to manage the organization effectively, administrators must understand and accept individual differences. The academic ability accepted by the nursing education community is also required. Nursing administrators must have skills to strengthen the organization by focusing on the achievements of nursing licensing examination. Since the nursing profession is a life care profession, it requires academic accuracy. Nurses must build credibility with clients, and nursing administrators must have academic skills so that the nursing organization can be strengthened.

3.4 Specialty qualification was positively correlated with happiness at work of registered nurses at a high level. This may be due to the nursing administrators' leadership skills. Nursing administrators should have appropriate leadership styles. They should find opportunities for everyone to participate in solving problems together. They should give everyone the opportunity to express their opinions and needs according to individual expectations. Attention, development of work and appropriate support are

required to meet the organization's goals. They are also required to have the ability to teach, demonstrate, give advice and positive and negative responses to reflect on the nurses' performance, which will help nurses to develop themselves. Strategies to build morale and critical thinking are also important. It is a system where ideas, processes and events can be linked. Administrators must have communication skills. Communication is an important process. Good nursing administrators must be able to communicate in a variety of ways and have the ability to demonstrate appropriate communication behavior in each situation. Moreover, motivational skills are required to motivate nurses to like and love their work to meet the individual's needs. Good motivations can encourage people to work to achieve the set goals. These all help increase happiness at work of registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital even more. This is in line with a study by Konkanghana (2021), stating that nursing administrators need to have special skills such as leadership skills, organizational skills, communication skills and motivational skills.

3.5 Affective qualification had a moderate positive correlation with happiness at work of registered nurses. This may be because of their good attitude towards the nursing profession. Nursing administrators must be able to accurately assess the current nursing situation. They must recognize that the nursing profession is beneficial to themselves, family and society. They must desire for career advancement and public acceptance. In addition, nursing administrators must know their organization and its conditions well. They must know if the current work is in accordance with the policy or not. They must be able to know what should be improved or developed at any point. They must love and have commitment to the organization and increase work efficiency or create new things for their profession and organization. These have a positive effect on happiness at work of registered nurses. This is consistent with a study by Kitwitee (2018), recommending that administrators should have analytical and creative thinking skills. That is, they must have the ability to bring creative ideas to create and develop innovations.

Recommendations

1. Recommendations from research findings

Nursing administrators should be encouraged to have desirable leadership characteristics. Five desirable leadership characteristics should be developed, especially practical qualification that is most closely related to happiness at work of registered nurses. Nursing administrators can do this by organizing manpower, arranging a suitable and fair schedule as well as organizing activities that encourage their subordinates to fully show their unique abilities in order to be a mechanism for creating happiness at work for registered nurses. In addition to making nurses work happily, it also affects the quality of nursing services.

2. Recommendations for further research

2.1 Since this research is a quantitative research, the samples did not express their opinions or give additional suggestions. Therefore, for further research, qualitative methods, such as observations, in-depth interviews and focus group discussion, should be employed to obtain more details.

2.2 The samples in this research were from only one area, which was registered nurses in Srinagarind Hospital. Further research, therefore, should be conducted in many areas to draw conclusions and compare opinions of registered nurses in each area.

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