

The Challenges And Opportunities In Healthcare Leadership And Management

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Abstract

Effective managers are crucial for the efficiency and excellence of medical organizations and the long-term viability of the healthcare system. Gaining a comprehensive awareness of the prerequisites for managing competency is crucial for enhancing one's management skills. This research aimed to consolidate the data on leadership and management abilities in healthcare organizations using the best-fit technique. A systematic literature analysis was conducted to identify research published throughout 2000 and 2020 that specifically examined the competence needs of hospital administrators. The best-fit framework synthesis approach was used to align the identified capabilities and their corresponding behavioral elements with the validated management skill evaluation program (MCAP) management competence framework. A competence model for hospital administrators has been created by mapping the specified skills and behavioral elements. This model is applicable to many healthcare contexts. The updated competency model comprises seven essential management and leadership competencies: evidence-based decision-making, operational proficiency, administrative and resource management skills, understanding of the healthcare environment and organization, interpersonal communication and relationship management, effective leadership of individuals and organizations, and the ability to facilitate and oversee change while maintaining professionalism. Through reviewing prior research and aligning the discovered capabilities with the validated MCAP framework, it has been determined that an enhanced leadership and management competence framework is recommended for health care managers. It offers guidelines for developing training and development strategies for the healthcare management staff in a diverse healthcare environment.

Keywords: competences, development of competencies, leadership, management, hospital managers, best-fit framework, review.

1. Introduction

Contemporary healthcare systems have several obstacles. These factors include the increasing healthcare requirements and expenses due to an expanding elderly population with noncommunicable illnesses and diverse pathologies, intensified by a sudden influx of new medical technology. These issues are worsened by the uneven distribution and lack of workers, as well as the inadequate quality and safety of service delivery. 1-3 Furthermore, disparities in healthcare, limited availability of high-quality medical services, and an inadequately trained healthcare staff are significant obstacles encountered by several nations in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.4,5

Consequently, changes have been put into place to enhance the efficacy and efficiency of service delivery inside the company. These reforms include simplifying the management structure, placing more emphasis on improving performance, and comparing service results to industry standards.6,7 The evolving healthcare environment and the demands of delivering services need a fresh set of skills for healthcare professionals. Consequently, a new management style is required to effectively lead and oversee this process of change and consolidation. The changes mentioned in (8 and 9) have a significant influence on the job of healthcare managers and the skills they need to be successful in their roles. 7, 10, 11

Significant changes have occurred in Iran's health system since the late 1980s. The implementation of the Health Sector Evolution Plan in 2014 aimed to bring about a significant transformation in the Iranian health system. This transformation focused on improving the accessibility, efficiency, and quality of hospital services, as well as addressing the substantial increase in healthcare costs that have occurred over the past decades. 12 The Iranian healthcare system allocates a significant portion, ranging from 55% to 80%, of its healthcare expenditure on hospitals.13-15

There are no formal regulations or procedures for registration or credentialing for managerial roles in Iranian hospitals. The establishment of explicit competency standards for health managers is lacking, which hampers the implementation of effective formal and informal training and development programs. While there are Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate level degrees available in healthcare management/health administration, as well as two informal training programs offered by the MOHME and a private institution, there is no evidence to suggest that graduates or participants have gained the requisite skills and competences for management. This may be attributed mainly to the lack of clear emphasis on the enhancement of management skills via both informal and formal training. Managers in the public

sector are often not chosen based on their ability and skill. 5, 16, 17

The evaluation of the Bachelor and Master programs in healthcare management/health administration affirms the use of an improvised approach in creating the teaching and training curriculum, without a universally applicable competence framework. 5,17. Recent researches have shown a significant variation in the general emphasis and content needs of Iranian official and informal training programs in health care management. Additionally, there is a lack of consensus on the method to management development. 16,18

Managers must exhibit fundamental abilities including knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to carry out their duties and meet their managerial obligations. 19 There is a continuous emphasis on the need of developing leadership and management skills in hospitals and recognizing management as a legitimate profession. Although there have been attempts to cultivate capable healthcare administrators and leaders, these efforts have been inadequate due to a lack of a defined and specific objective. 20, 22, 23. This shortcoming is particularly noticeable in nations with limited resources and lower levels of development, such as Iran.

2. Health Care Managers

Various international literatures have provided evidence supporting the presence of fundamental leadership and management skills for health care managers, as cited in 24 and 25. Additionally, many management competence frameworks have been presented. These efforts may be used to enhance healthcare systems in many nations and contexts as a comprehensive framework for establishing the training and development path for healthcare managers.

Over the last two decades, a limited number of researches have been carried out to investigate the skill needs of health care managers. One possible reason for this is because the area of research related to health care management competence is relatively young and still developing. The use of competency-based education and training has been limited to a small number of health care management training programs, mostly in the US, UK, and a few European nations. More recently, Australia has also started using this approach. 26 Nevertheless, the systematic literature review successfully validated the essential skills and abilities that health care managers need. These comprehensive skills may be verified and used in nations who have not yet established their own framework for assessing management abilities, in order to provide guidance for training and improving their healthcare management workforce.

It is important to acknowledge that leadership and management skills are influenced by the specific situation in which they are used. The skills and behaviors revealed in research done in one healthcare setting or nation may not be completely relevant in other settings. 26 For instance, the significance of behavioral components under each competency may vary across hospital administrators in Australia and Iran. Furthermore, the significance of behavioral components under each competency may vary across various management levels and kinds of management roles. For instance, the behavioral aspects that have significance for executive directors of hospitals may not be regarded with the same level of importance by directors of nursing, especially if their primary responsibilities vary.

The analysis of the competencies identified in the studies conducted over the past 20 years using the MCAP framework and associated behavioral items as the guiding framework confirms the following comprehensive competency framework (Figure 1) for health service managers. This framework will be validated in the Iranian healthcare context in the next phase of the research.



Figure 1. The ultimate paradigm of management and leadership ability specifically designed for hospital administrators.

In recent times, healthcare companies, particularly hospitals, have embraced a patient-centric strategy. In order to ensure that patients get excellent treatment, healthcare personnel must adhere to rigorous professional and ethical guidelines and stay up of the latest knowledge and information. The goal is to oversee and maintain the quality and standards in the performance of managers. ¹⁰ Hence, professionalism necessitates the advancement of education and training in healthcare services. ^{10, 27, 28, 29, 30}

Managers have several options to obtain professional development opportunities specifically designed for managers. Several effective methods may be used to do this, such as pursuing a formal education in management at colleges, participating in in-service training programs, using mentors and study groups inside the organization, and attending offsite intensive training sessions, seminars, and conferences.³¹ It has been proposed that the establishment and adoption of competency-based education and training for health services managers will help facilitate their professional growth.³²

3. Summary

The study has provided the results of a thorough examination of previous studies on the competencies required for managing health services. It has also highlighted the method and outcomes of mapping leadership and management competencies using the MCAP framework, which has been verified and serves as the foundation for this research. Consequently, a comprehensive management competence framework including of seven fundamental leadership and management abilities is suggested. While the proposed framework lacks clarity in distinguishing the varying levels of competence needed across different sectors, management levels, and positions, it does offer a valuable guide for revising and enhancing the existing healthcare management training and development curriculum. Additionally, it aids in the selection and recruitment of candidates suitable for various management roles within healthcare settings. Overall, enhancing leadership and management skills may strategically and methodically enhance overall organizational performance and crucial managing tasks, while also facilitating the growth and preparation of capable managers and leaders.

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