

Examining the Effect of Medical-Surgical Nurse Manager Leadership on Employee Organizational Citizenship

Cheryl B. Cullen, RN, DHA

Abstract

An intriguing question in a hospital is “What makes one medical-surgical nursing unit more desirable to nurses, physicians, and patients than another?” This quantitative, correlational research study identified a moderately positive correlation ($r = .35$, $p = .000$) between the leadership and communication behaviors of the nurse manager and the organizational citizenship of the nurses and nursing assistants who worked on the medical-surgical nursing units studied. The social impact of this positive correlation is better patient care outcomes.

Problem

Acute care hospitals compete for a limited number of registered nurses and nursing assistants to care for patients. The problem is that a constant churn of staff creates a stressful environment due to short staffing, increased overtime, lack of team cohesiveness, and increased use of contracted labor. Another problem is that within the same hospital some nursing units have low turnover, good patient satisfaction, and excellent quality outcomes while another nursing unit is just the opposite. Research in venues other than medical-surgical nursing units provides evidence that the relationship between the manager and the employee has a direct effect on employee commitment, work performance, and engagement with the organization.

Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative, cross sectional, correlational research was to determine if a significant relationship exists between nurse manager leadership and communication behavior and the organizational citizenship behavior of the nursing team. A significant correlation provided information for hospital leaders to determine the root cause of nursing team behaviors with regard to productivity, commitment to the organization, and intent to leave.

Relevant Literature

How did leadership evolve?

Leadership theorists Fredrick Taylor and Chester Bernard identified that key concepts for leaders to master were communication and the exchange of information between the leader and the worker. Bernard identified the construct of organizational citizenship as the subjective commitment of the employee to the leader, the work group, and the organization. Leaders evolve in their style through experience, empowerment of the work group, and intuition.

Challenges for hospital administrators

The research identifies three key challenges for hospital administrators. 1) The recruitment and retention of expert registered nurses and nursing assistants. 2) Effective, confident leadership of four generations of nurses and nursing assistants working together to foster team work and trust. Medical-surgical nurses must have keen observation skills, time management and good team work to take care of the number and acuity of patients they manage each day.

Research Questions

RQ1: What is the relationship between employee perception of nurse manager leadership and communication behavior and the self-reported organizational citizenship behavior of the nursing staff?

RQ2: What is the relationship between employee perception of nurse manager leadership and communication behavior and the self-reported organizational citizenship behavior of the nursing staff with regard to job category, registered nurse or nursing assistant, and age?

Procedures

The CNO sent an email to the nurses and nursing assistants who worked on the medical-surgical nursing units of a community hospital in Northern New Jersey introducing the researcher and a request to participate in the study. The hyperlink to the study was provided in the email. Each week, for three weeks, the CNO resent the email to the 250 employees in the cross-sectional sample. A total of 126 employees completed the on-line survey.

The Supervisor Leadership and Communication Inventory (SLCI) was used to explore the relationship between the independent variables 1) employee perception of nurse manager leadership and 2) employee perception of nurse manager communication and the dependent variable employee citizenship behavior. Employee citizenship behaviors included employee teamwork, helping coworkers, ability to handle a crisis, level of innovation, compliance with organizational policies, intent to leave, a feeling of empowerment, and trust.

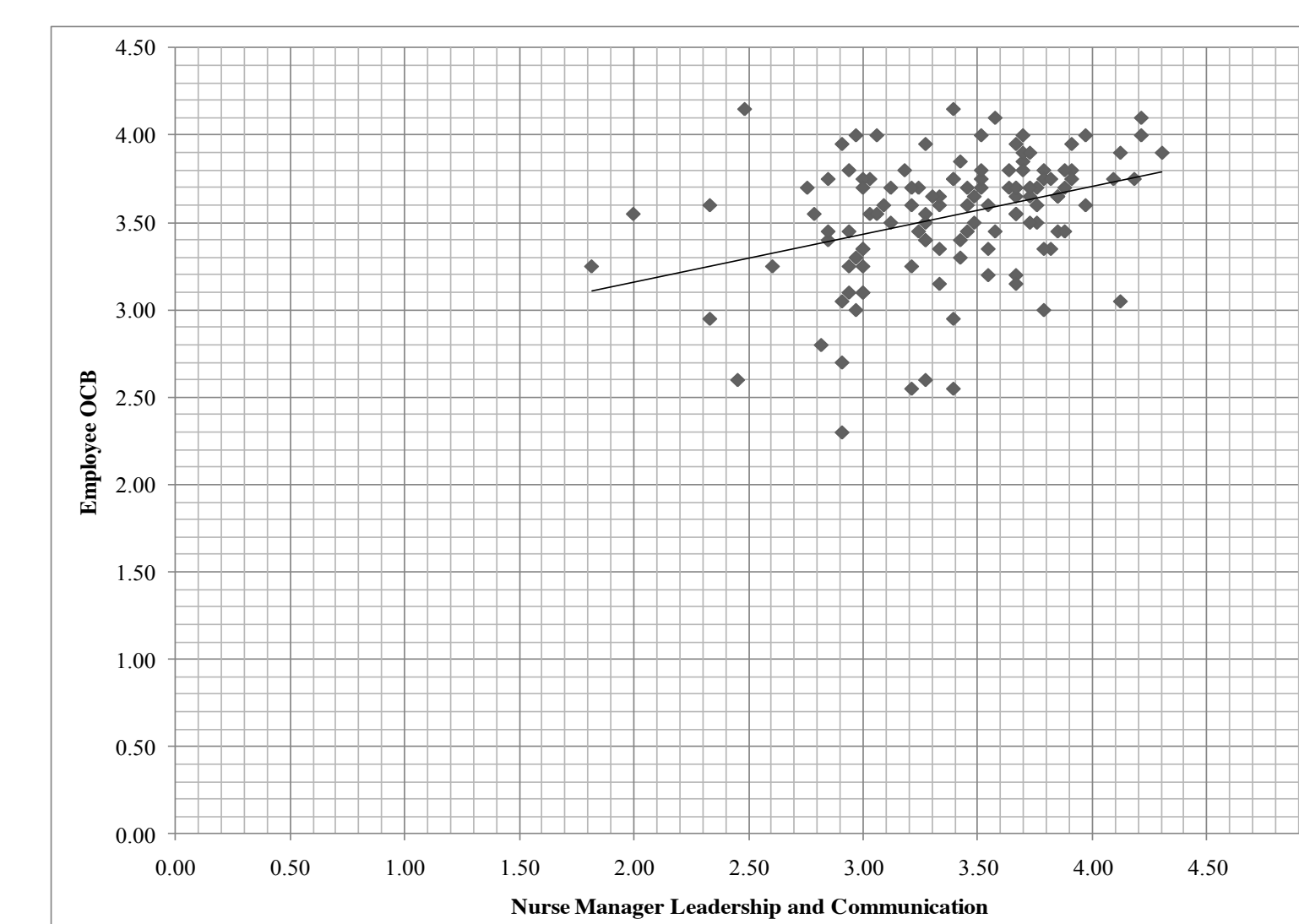
Data Analysis

Multiple regression analysis tested the effect of on the correlation between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables were nurse manager communication and leadership behaviors. The dependent variable was the employee citizenship behavior construct. The registered nurses and nursing assistants aggregate group results were analyzed. Specific demographic variables included job category, gender, age, length in job category, shift worked, and hours worked per week. The venue studied was one community hospital in Northern New Jersey.

Results

Pearson Correlation $r = 0.35$ p value = 0.00

Findings



Limitations

Study limitations include:

- Respondent had to choose an answer and did not have the opportunity to make comments
- The employee may consider the charge nurse the manager when making choices
- The employee may overestimate personal performance
- The employee may underestimate manager performance

Conclusions

- Nurse manager leadership and communication behavior has a positive correlation with employee organizational citizenship behavior
- Nurse manager training programs need to include communication skills, the importance of staff empowerment, and leader-follower exchange
- Further study in other types of nursing units such as critical care and maternity services
- A qualitative study would allow the researcher to gain employee insights to improve the values of the information gained
- Consider including nurse managers in a study

Social Change Implications

Study contributed to the literature

- Evidence that the behaviors of the nurse manager have a positive correlation on staff retention
- Acute care nursing assistants had not been studied before

Reduced turnover of nursing staff will

- Increase the competency of the nursing team
- Improve quality of care and patient outcomes
- Improve customer and employee satisfaction
- Reduce recruitment costs for hospitals