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Nurse Manager Communication Associated with Staff Nurse Satisfaction or Retention

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NURS 7863 - Integrative Review Project

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Abstract

Background:

Nursing communication is a significant part of a nurse's job, especially when communicating with their patients, patient's families, and the healthcare team. Communication is the center of attention of many studies, and the way nurse leaders relate messages can influence an organization's outcomes, including nurse satisfaction and retention. This integrative review aims to analyze communication styles, behaviors, and instruments used by hospital unit nurse managers to increase staff nurse satisfaction and retention.

Methods:

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis were used in the literature search and review. The Johns Hopkins Evidence-Based Practice Model and Guidelines were used with the critical analysis and leveling of evidence.

Results:

Research reveals evidence that leaders exhibiting better communication competencies increase nursing staff satisfaction and retention. The most prominent theme is that staff nurses wish for more open, prompt, and transparent communication with leadership, and these lead to higher satisfaction and retention among staff members.

Conclusion:

The way nurse managers communicate with staff can lead to better company outcomes, including nursing satisfaction and retention. Using existing communication theories, methods, and tools can improve nurse leader proficiency in relating information to staff and increase nurse satisfaction and retention.

Keywords: communication, nurse manager, staff nurse, nurse satisfaction, nursing retention

Nurse Manager Communication Associated with Staff Nurse Satisfaction or Retention

Communication is the center of attention of many studies that support a correlation between nurse managers' communication with staff and company outcomes, including nursing satisfaction and retention (Hughes, 2019). The effective communication of the nurse managers and other healthcare members is the essential instrument in reaching the organization's productivity goals and assuring high-quality care (American Nurses Association, 2016). For example, the hospital's improvement in communication between clinical staff increased annual hospital revenue by \$236,000 and decreased transportation time by 75% (O'Connor, 2017).

The leaders' communication influences patient safety and quality, job satisfaction, and retention and impacts the practice environment (Fowler et al., 2021). Nurse leaders are expected to communicate effectively and build communication competencies while leading the team and the organization in accordance with the company's vision and mission (American Nurses Association, 2016). Nurse managers must communicate effectively to create, support, and promote a safe, healthy, and sustainable work environment (Dimino et al., 2021).

Effective nurse communication employs visual, speech, and language to relay accurate information and feedback while demonstrating cultural empathy and mutual respect (American Nurses Association, 2016). Nurse leaders communicate effectively when they communicate openly, listen to nurses, and pass relevant information (Jankelová & Joniaková, 2021). The American Nurses Association (ANA) and the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONE) (2012) explain that effective communication in healthcare means relaying information and getting feedback in a highly intense environment. While considering the underlying situational concepts and contexts and employing important principles: convey accurate

information, listen actively, and foster open and safe conditions. Effective nurse managers' communication increases staff engagement and satisfaction (Fowler et al., 2021).

Nurse job engagement is the nurse's commitment to the job, the organization, and the nursing profession itself (Dempsey & Reilly, 2016). Nurse job satisfaction is defined by Liu et al. (2015) as a positive emotional feeling gained from work, its environment and conditions, that meets nurse's desired wants and needs. The researchers found that a twenty-five percent increase in nurse job satisfaction over two years was linked with the overall quality of care increase between five and twenty percent (Larson, 2017). It was also found that an increase in nurse job satisfaction decreased injury rates from falls and lowered hospital-acquired pressure ulcers and infection rates. Furthermore, also an increase in job satisfaction increased nurse retention significantly.

Paying close attention to nurse retention and turnover is essential since training new nurses is expensive. According to National Healthcare Retention & RN Staffing survey, the average cost of turnover for a bedside RN is about \$40,000 (NSI Nursing Solutions, 2021). Moreover, training and mentoring new graduate nurses bring the costs even higher. This review aims to analyze communication styles, behaviors, and instruments used by hospital unit nurse managers to increase staff nurse satisfaction and retention.

Research question

The PIO (Population, Intervention, and Outcome) format is used in this integrative review to address the question: what kind of nurse manager communication influences the staff nurses' satisfaction or retention in the hospital? In the review, the studied population is the staff nurses, the intervention is the nurse leader communication, and the outcome is higher nurse satisfaction and retention.

Definition of terms

Several terms are used throughout this paper: communication, nurse manager/leader, staff/ward nurse, nurse/job/work satisfaction, and nursing retention. Communication is presenting, listening to, and receiving information (Plonien, 2015). For the purpose of this review, the nurse manager is a leader who supervises the staff of the ward or unit in the hospital. Nurse manager or nurse leader is used interchangeably. The staff nurse or ward nurse is a bedside nurse in the hospital setting. Nurse satisfaction or job or satisfaction describes the level at which the staff nurses are content or happy with their job. Nurse retention pertains to the measure related to keeping nurses employed by the hospital, which is the opposite of nurse turnover.

Method

To meet the objectives of this study, an Integrative Review was used. This method aims to gather and synthesize the researched topic in an orderly manner to contribute to further knowledge (Toronto & Remington, 2020). Six steps were used to achieve the goal of this study: (1) formulate purpose and/or review questions, (2) systematically search and select literature using predetermined criteria, (3) quality appraisal of selected research studies, (4) analysis and synthesis of literature, (5) discussion on new knowledge, and (6) dissemination plans of findings.

Search strategy

For this integrative review, the search was completed by reviewing these databases: CINAHL Plus, ProQuest, Medline, and Ovid. The keywords used in search engines were – communication AND (methods OR tools) AND ("nurse leader" OR "charge nurse") AND ("nurse retention" OR "job satisfaction"). The search was specified for the discipline of "Nursing and Allied Health," and the keywords were to be found as "Boolean/Phrase." The search was

narrowed down to show only the literature "Available in Library Collection," "Full Text," "Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals," and "Published Date" from 2011-2021. Also, in the subject window were selected "Leadership," "Communication," and "Nurse Administrators."

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The search for the relevant articles followed these strict directions. The inclusion criteria were: the literature must be written in English, peer-reviewed, discussing the communication of hospital nurse managers who directly supervise bedside nurses, and addressing hospital bedside nurse satisfaction or retention. Excluded were texts not written in English, duplicated articles, writings older than ten years (published before December 2011), and those with low quality and credibility.

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) diagram

The PRISMA diagram depicts the flow of information through the different phases of article identification. The selection process is shown (Figure 1) with the inclusive and exclusive categories considered and the reasons for exclusion explained.

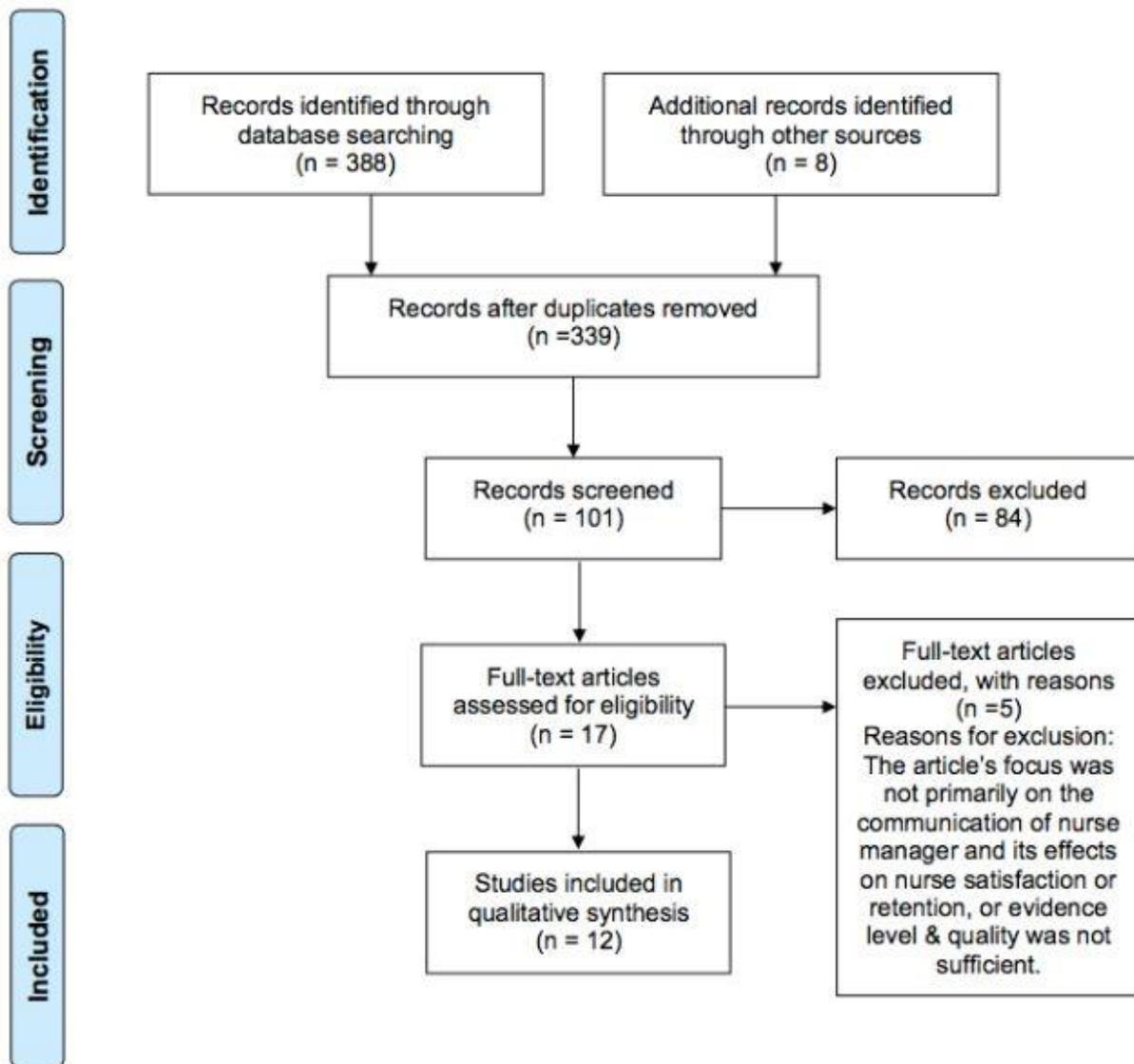
The first search in the selected databases identified three hundred and eighty-eight articles, and eight more were found in other sources. After duplicates were removed, three hundred and thirty-nine records were left to analyze. One hundred and one records' abstracts were read, and eighty-four of them were excluded. After that, seventeen full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, and five of them were excluded because the article's focus was not primarily on the communication of nurse managers and its effects on nurse satisfaction or retention, or evidence level & quality were not sufficient.

Twelve articles were included to analyze and appraise to address the research question. The data was collected on the bibliographical data collection forms, and the extracted

information included the authors, year of publication, type of research/methodology, level of research evidence, quality rating, conclusion/results (Table 1).

Figure 1

PRISMA flow diagram



Discussion

The goal of the literature appraisal and analysis was to find patterns and themes answering the research question. In identifying the articles related to the nurse leader's communication with staff nurses affecting job satisfaction or retention, it was found that the most

commonly repeated themes are empowerment, openness, clarity of the information, feedback, trust, and cultural awareness.

Empowerment

Several reviewed articles described communication as a behavior. For example, Hopkins et al. (2020) discussed communication behavior as being positive or negative, with empowering or limiting attributes. The nurse leader's empowering communication leads to nursing satisfaction and retention. Efforts to develop the communication empowering instrument uncovered several other critical communication behaviors; openness, empathy, providing feedback, and empowerment. The empowered nurses are found to be more satisfied and more likely to stay in their job as they are more engaged at their job and happier (Hopkins et al., 2020).

Similar findings are documented by Keogh et al. (2019) using the term inspirational for this communication behavior. The enthusiastic and optimistic leader's communication style or behavior leads to a positive environment with lower staff turnover (Keogh et al., 2019). On the same note, Nurmeksela et al. (2021) emphasize that supporting and motivating communication improves organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction. Motivational (empowering) language is found to increase nurses' engagement and further satisfaction (Fowler, 2018).

The same theme is repeated in the work of Feather et al. (2018), who also analyzed which nurse leader's communication behaviors lead to nurse satisfaction and found that supportive communication is critical. In addition, Feather et al. (2014) found other communication behavior themes: openness, consistency, and confidentiality to increase nurse satisfaction in their job environment after asking bedside nurses their opinions and then dissecting and sorting the information.

Openness

Open communication is not only discussed by Feather et al. (2014) but also by Hughes (2019), Hopkinson (2020), and Saleh (2018). The leaders' open communication, connection, transparency, and trust lead to patient and nursing outcomes, including nurse satisfaction and retention (Hughes, 2019). Comprehensibility, manner (how and when), listening, openness, feedback, and empathy empower nurses and lead to higher satisfaction (Hopkinson, 2020). Saleh's (2018) findings suggest that nurses want more open communication, honesty, and less favoritism.

Clarity

Clarity was found to be of importance. Doleman et al. (2020) found that the level of quality of communication flow and the clarity of information had a significant influence on nurse contentment with the job. When communicating with staff or clients, clarity and structure can be supported by using communication tools such as situation, background, assessment, and recommendation (SBAR) or illness severity, patient information, action list, situational awareness and contingency plans, and synthesis by the receiver (IPASS). It was discovered that SBAR, when used correctly, increases work efficiency and, later, the satisfaction of workers and patients. SBAR provides consistency, reduces transcription time, and heightens the focus on the information that matters without unnecessary distractions (Cornell et al., 2014).

The second standardized tool used to improve the clarity of communication and its quality and consistency, especially in handoffs, is IPASS. IPASS saves time and provides more structured messages decreasing errors, increasing accuracy, and further promoting safety and quality of care (Miller, 2021). Both tools, SBAR and IPASS, enhance communication

competency. The greater clarity of the information provided by SBAR and IPASS increases nurses' experience at the workplace.

Feedback

Another theme found in several articles was feedback in communication. For example, Saleh et al. (2018) main findings were that bedside nurses are more satisfied when nurse leaders give and get feedback more often, listen better, and communicate more professionally. Also, the RNs who are recognized, respected, and get feedback from management are happier (Feather, 2014). An interesting perspective was observed in Plonein's (2015) article when feedback is provided by the personality indicator test taken by nurse leaders and staff nurses, enabling reflection on the team communication, which could be the most effective. Saleh (2018), besides feedback, the ward nurses also desire honesty and more professionalism from managers leading to trust.

Trust

Leaders' open communication, connection, transparency, and trust lead to patient and nursing outcomes, including nurse satisfaction and retention (Hughes, 2019). Trust was achieved when the communication between the nurse manager and staff stayed respectful and emphasized fairness (Feather et al., 2020). Hughes (2019) discusses open and respectful communication to promote trust and adds transparency and safety as valuable communication features leading to nurses' satisfaction (Hughes, 2019).

Cultural awareness

Cultural differences can hinder communication, it can be caused by misunderstanding concepts, beliefs, or even using charged or biased vocabulary. An interesting perspective of communication failure or inefficiency where nurses felt marginalizing was discussed by Jua and

Wu (2021). The COVID-19 pandemic set an environment in which the healthcare professional of Asian descent felt alienated or harassed by managers who labeled this disease the "Chinese Virus" or "Kung Flu" (Jun & Wu, 2021). Using this stigmatizing vocabulary for COVID-19 negatively affected Asian American nurses and created a feeling of job dissatisfaction (Jun & Wu, 2021).

The way we use words, cultural empathy, and cultural awareness matters. The nurses' cultural empathy within the healthcare settings is an essential part of the communication competency (American Nurses Association, 2016). The article by Fowler (2018) also shortly touched on the importance of cultural empathy and awareness of cultural diversity when leaders communicate with staff. The nurse professionals must respect cultural values and differences while providing care for individuals, families, and populations (American Nurses Association, 2016).

Table 1

Evidence regarding the communication of nurse managers influences on nurse satisfaction or nursing retention

Article Number	1st Author's Last Name and Date of Publication	Evidence Type	Findings that Help Answer the Research Question	Limitations	Evidence Level, Quality
1	Cornel (2015)	Cohort study	The information exchange is clearer , leading to increases nurses' experience at the workplace when communication is structured and ordered using SBAR approach.	Small sample size. Number of variables was high. Nurses' preconceived attitude toward using a standardized tool (SBAR) was not measured prior to	II, B

				gathering the end data.	
2	Doleman (2020)	A cross-sectional quantitative research	The satisfaction and turnover were influenced by the presence or lack of support . Level and quality of communication flow (clarity) also had a significant influence on nurse contentment with the job.	Small sample size and limited to pediatric nurses.	III, B
3	Feather (2014)	A qualitative descriptive design	Nurses who feel supported by nurse managers are more satisfied and intend to stay in their jobs. The RNs who are recognized, respected, and get feedback from management are happier. Managers who communicate in these manners are trusted more.	Self-report and limited sample size.	II, A
4	Fowler (2018)	Cohort study	Motivational (empowering) language is found to increase nurses' engagement and further satisfaction. Engaging nurse communication is not found to influence the rates of nurse turnover.	Did not fully address diversity. Also, the finding did not support the hypothesis that communication influences retention.	II, B
5	Hopkinson (2020)	A Cross-sectional prospective survey study	Nurse leaders' empowering (positive) and limiting (negative) communication behaviors with staff nurses to increase job satisfaction and retention. Main themes emerged: Comprehensibility (clarity), manner (how and when), listening,	Small sample size and limited to nurses in US military settings. Lack of information about demographic data.	I, A

			openness , feedback, and empathy.		
6	Hughes (2019)	A review	Leaders' open communication, connection, transparency, and trust lead to patient and nursing outcomes, including nurse satisfaction and retention.	Secondary resource. Communication is discussed only secondary to leadership styles.	III, A
7	Juan (2019)	A cross sectional study	The researchers found that racial, stigmatizing, discriminating language, and the improper selection of communicated terms impact job satisfaction. The leaders should be culturally aware and competent. Communicators (nurse leaders) must be sensitive to the receiver's perception of the sent message as their ethnic and cultural background is influential.	Leaders were manipulated to use stigmatizing labels, and the exact environment in which the subjects were tested could be recreated. Too many variables were in place, possibly skewing the results.	II, A
8	Keogh (2019)	Cohort study	The inspirational (empowering), enthusiastic, and optimistic leaders' communication increases nurse satisfaction or retention.	Focus was primarily on leadership style and only after that the leaders' communication was discussed.	II, B
9	Miller (2021)	Quality improvement	The handoffs can be standardized to decrease errors, increase accuracy and clarity , and further increase safety and quality. The IPASS standardized communication tool saves time and provides for structures of the message.	Measures were not taken in a homogenous environment as compliance was a concern. The unwillingness of staff was a hurdle to collecting	II, B

				relevant and quality data.	
10	Nurmeksala (2021)	A cross-sectional and correlational study	The leaders' supportive and motivational (empowering) and safe communication lead to nurses' satisfaction.	Sample size and the difference between the conditions in the observed units were not comparable.	II, A
11	Plonien (2015)	Cohort study	The personality type indicator provides feedback on the preferred mode of presenting (speaking) and receiving (listening to) the information of both leaders and staff and helps them communicate in a way nurses will be more satisfied.	Limited to subjective instruments/ evaluations. Also, the suggestion to find the personality type of the nurse leader and staff nurse before effectively communicating to increase satisfaction is costly and time-consuming.	III, B
12	Saleh (2018)	Qualitative study	Nurses want more open communication, honesty, and no shouting. Bedside nurses want leaders to listen, get feedback from them more often, and communicate more professionally.	The limitation is the qualitative study is highly subjective in evaluating results.	II, B

Conclusion

All explored articles agreed on the importance of effective communication in nurse leaders in relation to nursing satisfaction and retention. Some reports concentrate on nursing satisfaction, others on nursing retention, but all of them consent that communication is a valuable

nurse manager skill. Empowerment, openness, clarity, feedback, trust, and cultural awareness are the essential categories that impact a nurse manager's effectiveness.

The nurse leader's empowering and open communication are supportive and desired communication behaviors. Communication tools can assure the clarity of information and the necessary feedback. And, the lack of trust and cultural awareness can hinder the nurse leader's communication and set back desired outcomes.

Implications for nursing management

Nurse leaders come to their profession with various personalities, communication styles, behaviors, skills, and tools. Some managers can achieve the organizational goals, such as high nurse satisfaction and nurse retention, more successfully than others, and communication plays a role in these measures' achievements. This integrative review addresses nurse leaders' communication in practice and the commonalities. This review uncovered that communication which includes empowerment, openness, clarity, feedback, trust, and cultural awareness, increases nurse satisfaction and retention. Any nurse manager can apply these findings to higher nurse satisfaction and retention.

Applying these elements in the leader's communication improves organizational outcomes and makes managers' grow professionally. So, the new perspectives this study offers can lead to further study and deeper understanding, and later educating and training in the nursing leaders' communication. And overall, it can contribute to managers' communication competencies. Although no single article selected for this review answered the review's evidence-based practice question directly, it still provides excellent suggestions and guidelines about the nurse leader communication tool, behavior, or skill increasing nurse satisfaction or retention.

Limitations of the study

The limitation of this study is that only few articles were found related to the topic and analyzed. The research addressing nurse manager communication and its relationship to nursing job retention and job satisfaction is limited. The current writings concentrate mostly on nursing communication increasing patient outcomes, such as safety, quality of care, and patient satisfaction.

Also, nursing leaders' communication competencies haven't been studied as extensively as bedside nurses' communication proficiencies yet. It became evident while conducting this review that the topic is in its developmental stage. Manager communication is extensively studied in other disciplines than nursing. The lessons about effective communication can be learned from these different disciplines. Still, this review excluded the studies where the communication is not between the nurse manager and staff nurses or is not associated with nursing job retention or job satisfaction, and this might be limiting the lessons possibly learned.

Recommendation

There are no set to-do lists or guidelines for the nurse managers to follow while communicating with staff nurses to be effective. It is evidenced that good nurse leader communication will increase nurse job satisfaction and retention. However, more research needs to be done, theories created and tested, and education related to improving nursing leaders' communication supplied.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared that there is no conflict of interest regarding the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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