Transformational Leadership of Nurse Supervisors Expected and Perceived by Nurses in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Transformational leadership is a process that motivates followers by appealing to higher principles and moral values and ability to bring about significant changes, adjustment in the organization’s vision, strategy, develop leadership behavior, and culture as well as promotion and innovation. This study aimed to identify the level of transformational leadership of nurse supervisors expected and perceived by nurses and to compare the nurses’ expectation and their perception.

Data were collected from 186 nurses at a tertiary hospital in Bangladesh. A majority was female, and had working experience more than 10 years. The instrument used in this study consisted of two parts, part I: Demographic Data Form and part II: The Transformational Leadership of Nurse Supervisors Questionnaire (TLNSQ). The reliability of the questionnaire was tested by using Cronbach’s alpha coefficients. The alpha of nurses’ expectation and perception were .79, and .87, respectively. Data were analyzed by using paired t – test.

The result revealed that the mean score of nurses’ total expectation was at a high level (M= 3.63, SD = 0.21), and nurses’ total perception was at a moderate level (M = 1.47, SD = 0.29). The total mean score and mean scores of each dimension of nurses’ expectation towards nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership were significantly higher than those of nurses’ perception (p< .001). This study provides an empirical support in the area of nursing administration in Bangladesh. The results can be used to improve transformational leadership of nurse supervisors in order to lead nursing quality to the maximum standard.

Key words: Leadership, transformational leadership, expectation, perception

Background and Significance of the Problem

Complex events and chaotic development throughout the world denote that nurse leaders are facing massive changes. In many developed and developing countries, health system reform is a major part of restructuring of health care delivery system (Shaw, 2002).
Nurse leaders need to be more creative and innovative than before to survive, compete, and lead effectively (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2008).

The existing situation of the nursing profession in Bangladesh is not well accepted. Nursing care is not up to the level of standard patient care. Hadley and Roques (2007) investigated the nursing activities between government and non-government hospitals. They found that for government hospital only 5.3% of nurses’ time was spent in direct contact with patient care, 32.4% was for indirect patient care and paperwork. 50.1% was spent their time with maintaining ward accessories like; count linen, instruments, handover and taken over of equipments, and remaining time was spent away from the ward and chatting with other nurses. These findings flag the nurse leaders to improve this situation. They need to be more active in participating and contributing to health and public policy and be able to influence changes in nursing practice.

Transformational leaders have a comprehensive vision and most importantly they manage, communicate, influence and motivate the followers effectively (Bass, 1990 as cited in Epitropaki, 2001). These leaders are directly responsible for involving others in an environment of participatory decision making. They are closely associated with followers’ working conditions, and job satisfaction (Nielsen, Yarker, Brenner, Randall, & Borg, 2008). These leaders employ a visionary style of leadership that inspires employees to become deeply interested in their work and to be innovative and creative and communicate it effectively to all employees (Nielsen, Randall, Yarker & Brenner, 2008).

Transformational leaders broaden and promote the interests of their people, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of their group, and when they encourage their people to look beyond self-interest for the well-being of their group (Bass, 1985). The transformational leaders are characterized by (1) idealized influence or charismas, being role models for their followers; (2) individualized consideration, respect for the individuality of each follower; (3) intellectual stimulation, encourage problem-solving and innovation; and (4) inspirational motivation, motivate and inspire followers to make meaning and challenge their own work (Bass, 1985).

Currently, there was no known study regarding transformational leadership of nurse supervisors in Bangladesh. Therefore, it was not known whether nursing supervisors in Bangladesh possessed transformational leadership characteristics. This transformational leadership of nurse supervisors could be investigated by asking nurses who are working under their supervision. Nurses may expect their supervisors to possess transformational leadership characteristics whereas in the reality the supervisors may or may not possess
(actual practice). The researchers were interested in exploring transformational leadership of nurse supervisors as expected and perceived by nurses in Bangladesh. The result of this study would be used as a baseline data in order to further improve nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership.

**Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the level of transformational leadership of nurse supervisors expected by nurses
2. To identify the level of transformational leadership of nurse supervisors perceived by nurses
3. To compare the differences between nurses’ expectation and perception regarding nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership in Bangladesh

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study was constructed, based on the four dimensions of transformational leadership model developed by Bass (1985). There are four dimensions of transformational leadership as follows:

- Transformational leadership: (1) Idealized influence, (2) Individualized consideration,
  (3) Intellectual stimulation, and (4) Inspirational motivation.

**Technical Terms of Transformational Leadership of Nurse Supervisors Expected and Perceived by nurses**

**Expectation:** Transformational leadership of nurse supervisors expected by nurses was defined as nurses’ perception towards their nurse supervisors’ ideal behaviors of a visionary leadership style. These behaviors included: idealized influence (charisma), individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. It was measured by the questionnaire developed by the researchers based on Bass’s framework of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985). The higher score indicated higher expectation of nurses on the nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership.

**Perception:** Transformational leadership of nurse supervisors perceived by nurses was defined as nurses’ perception towards their nurse supervisors’ actual behaviors of a visionary leadership style, identical to the ones nurses expect their leaders to possess. It was measured by the questionnaire paralleled to the transformational leadership of nurse supervisors expected by nurses. The higher score indicated higher perception of nurses on the nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership.

**Research Methodology**
The descriptive study was used to identify the level of nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership expected and perceived by nurses in Bangladesh.

**Sample:** The sample of this study was nurses working at the study setting and met the inclusion criteria. 186 nurses were selected through systematic random sampling.

**Instrument:** The instrument in this study consisted of two parts, part I: Demographic Data Form, and part II: The Transformational Leadership of Nurse Supervisors Questionnaire which was developed by researcher based on Bass’s transformational leadership model (1985). The 40-item TLNSQ contained four dimensions of transformational leadership including idealized influence (11 items), individualized consideration (11 items), intellectual stimulation (9 items), and inspirational motivation (9 items). Subjects were asked to rate their perception of nurse supervisors’ ideal behaviors and actual behaviors regarding their transformational leadership using a 5-point Likert scale (0-not at all to 4-very much). The levels of transformational leadership of nurse supervisors expected and perceived by nurses were classified into three levels: 0.00-1.33 = low, 1.34-2.66 = moderate and 2.67-4.00 = high.

**Ethical consideration:** Permission was taken from the Institutional Review Board, Faculty of Nursing, Prince of Songkla University. The issues of confidentiality, anonymity, and the right of withdrawal were addressed prior to the data collection. Subjects were assured about their rights in participating in this study.

**Validity and reliability:** The questionnaire was validated and back translated by a panel of experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested by using Cronbach’s alpha coefficients. The alpha of nurses’ expectation and perception were .79, and .87, respectively.

**Data collection and analysis:** Data were collected from 186 nurses through systematic random sampling and who met the inclusion criteria. Data were analyzed and presented with descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, paired t-test.

**Results**

In this study, most of the subjects were female (93.0%) with the average age of 37.53 years (SD = 3.77). Majority of the subjects were Muslim (78%) and married (96.2%). Approximately 74 percent of them had Diploma in Nursing and Midwifery, 61.8 percent of subjects had 11-20 years of experience in nursing service. After completion of diploma, 73.7 percent of the subjects did not have any clinical nursing training. Most of the subjects (67.3%) did not have experience in attending conference or seminar related in nursing administration.

1. Nurse Supervisors’ Transformational Leadership Expected by Nurses.
The results of this study showed that the total mean score of nurses’ expectation towards nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership (M = 3.63, SD = 0.21) was at a high level. Considering each dimension, it was found that mean score of every dimension was at a high level respectively (Table 1).

2. Nurses Supervisors’ Transformational Leadership Perceived by Nurses.

The results of this study showed that the total mean score of nurses’ perception toward nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership (M = 1.47, SD = 0.29) was at a moderate level. Considering each dimension, it was found that mean score of every dimension was at a moderate level respectively (Table 1).

3. Comparison between Nurses’ Expectation and Perception toward Nurse Supervisors’ Transformational Leadership.

The total mean score and mean score of nurses’ expectation of every dimension were significantly higher than those of nurses’ perception toward nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership at .001 level respectively (Table 1).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformational Leadership of Nurse Supervisors</th>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Individualized consideration</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Idealized influence</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Inspirational motivation</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .001


All items of nurses’ expectation towards individualized consideration of nurse supervisors were at a high level. The two highest mean scores of the items were (1) ‘provide opportunity for nurses to continue education’ (M = 3.84, SD = 0.36), (2) ‘creates a new learning environment for nurses’ (M =3.77, SD = 0.42) (Table 2).

All items of nurses’ perception toward individualized consideration of nurse supervisors’ were at a moderate level, and one item which was (1) ‘acts as a mentor/coach for each nurse based on her needs/capabilities’ (M = 1.26, SD = 0.61) was at a low level.
The two highest mean scores were at a moderate level (1) ‘provide opportunity for nurses to continue education’ (M = 1.62, SD = 0.63) (M = 1.62, SD = 0.65), and (2) ‘creates new learning environment for nurses’ (M = 1.59, SD = 0.67), (Table 2).

Table 2.
Nurses’ Expectation and Perception toward Nurse Supervisors’ Individualized Consideration (N= 186)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualized consideration</th>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Provide opportunity for nurses to continue education</td>
<td>M = 3.84, 0.36</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>M = 1.62, 0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Creates new learning environment for nurses</td>
<td>M = 3.77, 0.42</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>M = 1.59, 0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Acts as a mentor/coach for each nurse based on her needs/capabilities</td>
<td>M = 3.44, 0.50</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>M = 1.26, 0.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Mean score of all items of nurses’ expectation toward idealized influence of nurse supervisors were at a high level. The two highest mean scores were (1) ‘acts as a role model for nurses’ (M = 3.84, SD = 0.37), (2) ‘shows positive response toward nurses’ performance’ (M = 3.77, SD = 0.42) (Table 3).

Nurses’ perception towards idealized influence of nurse supervisors, it was found that mean scores of all items were at a moderate level. Among those items, the two highest mean scores were (1) ‘acts as a role model for nurses’ (M = 1.70, SD = 0.67), (2) ‘shows positive response toward nurses’ performance’ (M = 1.66, SD = 0.70). Mean scores of the other two items of nurses’ perception towards idealized influence of nurse supervisors were at a low level. Which included (1) ‘takes risk for the benefit of organization’ (M = 1.25, SD = 0.52), (2) ‘devotes self for organization’ (M = 1.23, SD = 0.58) (Table 3).

Table 3
Nurses’ Expectation and Perception toward Nurse Supervisors’ Idealized Influence (N= 186)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idealized influence</th>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Acts as a role model for nurses</td>
<td>M = 3.84, 0.37</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>M = 1.70, 0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Shows positive response towards nurses’ performance</td>
<td>M = 3.77, 0.42</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>M = 1.66, 0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Takes risk for the benefit of organization</td>
<td>M = 3.53, 0.50</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>M = 1.25, 0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Devotes self for organization</td>
<td>M = 3.42, 0.50</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>M = 1.23, 0.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All items of nurses’ expectation toward inspirational motivation of nurse supervisors were at a high level. The two highest mean scores were (1) ‘motivates nurses to work with sense of purpose’ (M = 3.75, SD = 0.45), (2) ‘challenges nurses to work with high standard’ (M = 3.74, SD = 0.44) (Table 4). Nurses’ perceptions toward inspirational motivation of nurse supervisors were at a moderate level. The two highest mean scores were (1) ‘motivates nurses to work with sense of purpose’ (M = 1.81, SD = 0.64), (2) ‘challenges nurses to work with high standard’ (M = 1.65, SD = 0.70). Only one item had a mean score at a low level that was ‘communicates vision clearly to nurses’ (M= 1.24, SD = 0.50) (Table 4).

Table 4.

Nurses’ Expectation and Perception toward Nurse Supervisors’ Inspirational Motivation (N= 186)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspirational Motivation</th>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M, SD</td>
<td>Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Motivates nurses to work with sense of purpose</td>
<td>3.75, 0.45</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Challenges nurses to work with high standard</td>
<td>3.74, 0.44</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Communicates vision clearly to nurses</td>
<td>3.53, 0.52</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


All items of nurses’ expectation toward intellectual stimulation of nurse supervisors were at a high level. The two highest mean scores were (1) ‘assist nurses when they work in critical situation’ (M = 3.78, SD = 0.41), (2) ‘uses different perspectives/approaches to solve problems’ (M = 3.71, SD = 0.45).

Nurses’ perception toward intellectual stimulation of nurse supervisors were at a moderate level. The two highest mean scores were (1) ‘assist nurses when they work in critical situation’ (M = 1.70, SD = 0.70), (2) ‘uses different perspectives/approaches to solve problems’ (M = 1.60, SD = 0.56). One item’s mean scores were at a low level included ‘seeks new ideas from nurses’ (M = 1.25, SD = 0.51) (Table 5).

Table 5.
Nurses’ Expectation and Perception toward Nurse Supervisors’ Intellectual Stimulation (N = 186).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual Stimulation</th>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M  SD Level</td>
<td>M  SD Level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Assist nurses when they work in critical situation</td>
<td>3.78 0.41 High</td>
<td>1.70 0.70 Moderate</td>
<td>37.83**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Uses different perspectives/approaches to solve problems</td>
<td>3.71 0.45 High</td>
<td>1.60 0.56 Moderate</td>
<td>45.37**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Seeks new ideas from nurses</td>
<td>3.46 0.50 High</td>
<td>1.25 0.51 Low</td>
<td>45.00**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

The result of this study revealed that nurses’ total expectation was higher than those of nurses’ total perception. There was a significant difference between nurses’ expectation and perception toward nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership.

Discussion

The findings of this study are presented as follows:

1. Demographic characteristics of the subjects.

Subjects in this study were middle age female adults (M = 37.53, SD = 3.77), and had been working for more than 10 years (79.6%), with this regard they had adequately observed and perceived. The majority of them had completed only basic nursing education, diploma in nursing and midwifery (70.4%).

2. Nurses’ expectation toward supervisors’ transformational leadership.

The total mean score (M = 3.63, SD = 0.21) and mean score of every dimension of nurses’ expectation toward nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership were at a high level with the mean score ranged from 3.66 - 3.57 (Table 1). Nurses’ expectation was high towards their supervisors’ transformational leadership due to low professional status of nursing. 70.4 percent nurses had diploma in nursing and midwifery, which needs a leader to guide them, help them, to provide quality of care, and these nurses expected their leaders to increase their status up to high level. Expectation of people in society needs high quality of care, need leaders to support their expectation. Nurses’ expected their supervisor to lead them to higher status as professional nurses. Nurses have been socialized to work with inferiority to physicians and their higher authority for a long time (Hadley et al., 2007).

Nurses in this study were highly expected towards their supervisors’ ‘individualized consideration’ (M = 3.66, SD = 0.21). As, nurses have different goals, values, and beliefs. Each of them has different requirements, needs and demand. They perceived nurse supervisor...
to respect and consider them individually to satisfy their needs. Nurses expected, supervisors would create learning environment and to continue their study for their professional growth. The results of this study showed that nurses expectation was high on the items: (1) ‘provide opportunity for nurses to continue education’ (2) ‘create a new learning environment’ (Table 5). Nurses in Bangladesh needed higher education, salary, acceptances, knowledge and skills to perform maximum standard of care. As Bass (1985) stated that; supervisors can make available learning opportunity for the individual development.

Nurses’ expectation in the ‘inspirational motivation’ was at a high level (M = 3.62, SD = 0.27), (Table 2). Nursing situation in Bangladesh, nurses are always discouraged such as: status, position, poor salary, workload, autonomy, poor working environment (Uddin, Islam, & Ullah, 2006). The results of this study showed that nurses expected highly on the items; (1) ‘motivates nurses to work with sense of purpose’ (M= 3.75, SD = 0.45), (2) ‘challenges nurses to work with high standard’ (M = 3.74, SD = 0.44). They expect leaders to motivate them toward quality of care, encourage and support them for their professional development. (Table 4).

Nurses’ expectation toward ‘idealized influence’ of nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership was at a high level (M = 3.62, SD = 0.24) (Table 1). The results of this study indicated that nurses’ expectation was high among the items: (1) ‘acts as a role model for nurses’ (M = 3.84, SD = 0.37), (2) ‘shows positive response toward nurses’ performance’ (M = 3.77, SD = 0.42) (Table 3). According to Jooste (2004), nurse leaders have a crucial role on changing global health care environment moving to the new dimension. They expected supervisor to be role model for them. Nurses’ need leaders who demonstrate plan to work, lead and control their activities.

Nurses’ expectation toward ‘intellectual stimulation’ of nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership was at a high level (M = 3.57, SD = 0.26) (Table 1). The two highest mean scores were (1) ‘assist nurses when they work in critical situation’ (M = 3.78, SD = 0.41), (2) ‘uses different perspectives/approaches to solve problems’ (M =3.71, SD = 0.45). Nurses need to leaders who assist them when they work in critical situation, give more attention to the intellectuality, and move to problem solving attitudes (Jooste, 2004).

3. Nurses’ perception toward nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership.

The total mean scores (M = 1.47, SD = 0.29) and mean scores of every dimension of nurses’ perception towards nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership were at a moderate level with the mean score ranged from 1.42 - 1.65 (Table 1). Nurses perceived moderately toward their supervisors’ transformational leadership because, nurse supervisors
were recruited based on length of service experiences not based on education and competencies, workload, there is no specific remuneration system for specific work.

The findings of this study showed that nurses’ perception toward ‘inspirational motivation’ was at a moderate level (M = 1.65, SD = 0.41). The two highest mean scores of nurses’ perception were (1) ‘motivates nurses to work with sense of purpose’ (M = 1.81, SD = 0.64), (2) ‘challenges nurses to work with high standard’ (M = 1.65, SD = 0.70). One item that nurses perceived at a low level ‘communicate vision clearly to nurses’ (M = 1.24, SD = 0.50) (Table 4). According to job description of nursing supervisor in Bangladesh (Directorate of Nursing Services and Ministry of Health, population Control and Family Planning, Bangladesh, 1979) nurse supervisor’s responsibility includes, maintain communication between nurses and authority. Therefore inappropriate supervisor nurse ratio, education, training, competencies of supervisor are important to lead the nurses.

Nurses perception toward ‘individualized consideration’ was at a moderate level (M = 1.50, SD = 0.36) (Table 1). The two highest mean scores of nurses’ perception were (1) ‘expresses appreciation toward nurses’ performance’ (M = 1.70, SD = 0.63), (2) ‘provide opportunity for nurses to continue education’ (M = 1.62, SD = 0.63) (Table 2). The results of this study revealed that nurses perceived the lowest mean score in ‘acts as a mentor/coach for each nurse based on her needs/capabilities’ (M = 1.26, SD = 0.61) (Table 2), due to mentoring system is not established, workload of nurse supervisor, and low educational level.

Uddin, Islam, & Ullah, (2006) investigated that nurses’ workload, lack of proper training, poor salary, lack of giving rewards of merit to individuals, lack of overtime facilities were the hinders to performed supervisors’ leadership. This study setting had 616 nurses, 31 nurse supervisors, (Personal communication, DMCH, May, 2009). This study revealed that, it was not possible for supervisors to perform their ideal leadership behavior, hence the nurses’ perception was reflected at the moderate level.

4. Comparison between nurses’ expectation and perception toward nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership

The total mean score of nurses’ expectation (M = 3.63, SD = 0.21) toward nurse supervisors’ transformational leadership was significantly higher than the total mean score of nurses’ perception (M = 1.47, SD = 0.29) at 0.001 level. In addition, mean scores of all dimension of nurses’ expectation were significantly higher than those of nurses’ perception at 0.001 level (Table 1).

Recommendation
Nurse supervisors need to train themselves to perform transformational leadership. The findings of this study can be used for further research.

**Limitation**

This study was performed in only one hospital in Bangladesh; therefore, the generalization of the study is limited.

**References**


