

Leadership Styles for Healthcare

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Abstract- Leadership is a vital component in the management of healthcare organizations. There are many leadership styles. The purpose of this literature review was to explore the different leadership styles with reference to the impact on healthcare management. Even though there are positive and negative aspects of each leadership style, beneficial outcomes for health system can be achieved by using the most suitable leadership style for the given context.

Index Terms- Leadership Styles, Healthcare Management

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is simply defined as the activity of leading a group of people or an organization [1]. In literature, it is conceptualized as a process that elicits influence within a context for achieving goals by sharing a common vision [2]. Owing to various factors including complexity of healthcare systems and lack of resources, provision of healthcare to a target population efficiently and effectively is a challenging mission for a healthcare manager. Therefore, it is evident that leadership plays a vital role in this context.

The style of the leadership is the manner that a leader exerts influence to the followers [3]. There are many styles of leadership, and it was mentioned that the outcomes of the organization can be influenced by the leadership style [4], and researchers believe that the leadership styles have great influence on the efficiency [5] and ultimately the success [6] of the healthcare organizations. Meanwhile some are in the belief that successful leadership requires more acquired qualities than the inherit qualities [7]. That highlights the importance of deciding and establishing a suitable leadership style for the purpose of bringing about good results in healthcare. Many studies have been carried out across the world on leadership styles and their relationships between the healthcare systems. This literature review explores the different leadership styles with reference to the impact on healthcare management.

II. LEADERSHIP STYLES

Based on many dimensions, leadership styles have been described in different ways. The classifications for leadership styles seem not to be rigid, and some overlapping areas can also be seen within leadership styles. Basically, leadership styles can be seen classified into autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire styles. In addition, it can be fallen into transactional and transformational leadership styles. Furthermore, some other leadership styles such as bureaucratic, charismatic and ethical leadership have also been explained in literature [7][8][9].

Autocratic leadership, also referred to as authoritarian leadership, is considered as the core of the classical management approach [3]. Here the leader reserves the decision making power, and comes to decisions without considering employees' ideas. Rewards, punishments [3] and coercion [10] are the tools for motivating employees in this leadership style. There is less value for employees' creativity in this style [11]. This leadership is also considered as an extreme variant of transactional leadership [7]. Bureaucratic leadership style differs slightly from the autocratic leadership style. In bureaucratic style, the leader expects the things to happen according to a predetermined manner, and adherence to policies, rules and standards are greatly valued [3]. One notable thing that can be seen in the bureaucratic leadership style is that the leader also follows the already laid down rules in a strict manner [7].

Democratic leadership style lies at the opposite end of the autocratic and bureaucratic styles. It is also known as the participatory leadership style because of the involvement of the employees for the purpose of gathering opinions in the decision making process [3]. However, the final decision is made by the leader [7]. In this leadership style, due to the perception of the ownership of the organization, the employees are readily motivated and satisfied with their work environment. Creativity is admired and the environment is made favourable to employees' growth. Even though this leadership style seems to appear good in theoretical terms

[11], a leader has to spend a lot of time and effort to come to an even small decision. However, this leadership style is said to be successful in the presence of matured and skilled employees [3].

Laissez-fair leadership style is considered to be the most passive form of leadership styles. In this style, the leader avert responsibilities and does not involve in decision making [12].

A Charismatic leader acts with a vision, and inspires the employees to follow the vision with the iconic qualities of personality that the leader possesses [10][12].

Ethical leaders drive organizations with great awe to the ethics. They contemplate accomplishing fairness while respecting all parties [8][9].

In transformational leadership style, the leader understands the needs of the employees and works on broadening their horizon [6]. Further explaining, the transformational leaders develop each employee's intellectual ability to understand the major concerns of the organization with charisma and inspiration [13].

In transactional leadership, as its name suggests, there are transactions of rewards and targets between the leader and the followers [6]. In other words, the leader rewards the followers for the targets achieved by them.

III. DISCUSSION

As in any other organization, change management is important for healthcare management. According to a cross sectional quantitative study done in Saudi Arabia [14], it was discovered that there was a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and readiness to change among the healthcare employees. Similarly, by doing a self-perception study on leadership styles on primary health care managers in Spain, researchers discussed the suitability of transformational leadership style for dynamic work environments [15]. Due to various reasons including research and development, advancement of technology and changes in disease patterns, today's health systems undergo constant change. Therefore, change management is an inevitable function that a healthcare manager has to perform. For instance, resistant to change has been identified as one of the barriers to replace paper records with electronic medical records in healthcare institutions [16], and the success of such initiatives depend on the way that the management handles them with a proper leadership style. Hence, further researches are suggested to test the supremacy of transformational

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leadership style in the management of change in healthcare organizations.

Employee job satisfaction is a great concern to a healthcare manager as it affects healthcare outcome. Therefore, it is an advantage to a healthcare manager to possess a leadership style which is favourable for employee job satisfaction. Researches have been carried out to study the relationship between job satisfaction and different leadership styles. According to a quantitative study done in Uganda, it was found that transformational leadership style had positive relationship on healthcare workers' job satisfaction, but it could not be seen with the transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles [17]. Correspondingly, according to another quantitative study, to which nursing officers contributed as participants, a significant positive correlational relationship was observed between their job satisfaction levels and their supervisor's transformational nature in leadership [18]. In addition, a longitudinal survey study carried out in Denmark also have concluded that transformational leadership has a relationship between employs' positive affective well-being [19], which is necessary for job satisfaction. A mixed method study carried out in a mental health setting has given similar results, i.e. compared to the transactional style, it was the transformational leadership style that was suitable for addressing satisfaction of healthcare workers [20]. Furthermore, this study [20] concludes that transformational leadership style is the choice out of those two styles for correcting absenteeism. In accordance with this finding, a case study points out that transactional leadership style can make nurses leave the system causing shortages of nurses and therefore adapting transformational leadership style is suggested as a remedial measure to this shortage [21]. A cross sectional study done in Saudi Arabia showed positive correlation between transformational leadership style and employees' commitment [22]. Moreover, according to a qualitative study done in a healthcare setting [23], it was observed that autocratic leadership style had not been capable of ensuring work-life balance among healthcare workers. However, a correlational study on the transformational leadership style and job satisfaction among healthcare workers in the United States did not establish a relationship between them [24]. Meanwhile, according to a correlational study done in Pakistan, it has been concluded that Laissez-Faire style is also not effective in motivating employees [25]. In this scenario, it is worth considering that mediating factors can also influence the relationship between the transformational leadership style and employee satisfaction [26][19]. It has been stated that the level of maturity of the employees also has an effect on the leadership style [27] and those may be the reasons for contrasting conclusions.

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A healthcare manager's final expectation is to bring about quality healthcare to the community together with good efficiency and effectiveness. It has been reported that quality of patient care [28] and efficiency [5] is influenced by the style of the leadership. Therefore, it is worthwhile to assess the way that the healthcare results relate with different leadership styles. According to a systematic review done for the purpose of finding an association between the quality of care and the leadership style, transformational leadership style showed positive relationship with the effective organizational culture. Transactional leadership style showed weak relationship, and it was a negative relationship that could be observed with the laissez-faire leadership style [29]. Furthermore, literature mentions that transformational leadership not only increases efficiency but also the innovativeness in healthcare environments [5]. According to another study done in Iran, leaders who self-perceived their leadership style as transformational, showed positive correlation with their perceived effectiveness and readiness [30].

In healthcare provision, there are some areas in which policies and guidelines should be strictly followed. For instance, even a minor deviation to the protocol is seriously attended in the area of finance management in a government healthcare institution. Therefore, bureaucratic leadership style seems to have an upper hand in occasions and places where handling money [7] takes place in healthcare institutions. Furthermore, literature highlights the appropriateness of bureaucratic style for setups where there are routine tasks and high safety risks [7]. Being high reliable organizations [31], hospitals need to thoroughly concern on patient safety, and therefore the applicability of this leadership style to suitable setups has to be worked out. Meanwhile, the healthcare institutions may face sudden unexpected situations where the management has to make quick remedial decisions based on the situational judgments in order to secure patient lives as their first priority. Most importantly, those decisions are needed to be implemented efficiently by the employees. The literature shows that it is the autocratic leadership style that suits such instances [7].

In healthcare organizations, there are certain areas where the legitimate power of the manager alone does not suffice to get all the institutional endeavours done. Sometimes, it may be difficult for a healthcare manager to come into a solution because of the complexity of a particular work setup. Sometimes, in managing healthcare institutions, a lot of creativity and brainstorming is needed to invent a solution. In order to overcome such instances, many tools such as Work Improvement Teams are being widely established in

healthcare settings. Therefore, in such contexts, the democratic leadership style seems to be more beneficial to achieve healthcare results.

Healthcare institutions are very sensitive to ethical issues, and therefore, satisfactory level of goodwill and mutual understanding has to be maintained with all stakeholders including the public. That highlights the importance of public relations for a health care institution [32]. It has been shown that the ethical leadership is much constructive in maintaining the image of the organization [8], suggesting further studies on the suitability of the ethical leadership and the public relations in healthcare institutions.

Even though there are contradictory findings in similar kind of studies, it is notable that some leadership styles have relationships with different aspects of healthcare management. That may be the reason why some researchers believe in the necessity of different leadership styles for the purpose of achieving different healthcare outcomes [33][34]. It has also been suggested by the scholars to adopt a leadership style based on the organizational goals instead of practicing a particular leadership style universally [11]. Besides, in 1969, Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard developed a theory called 'Life Cycle Theory of Leadership', which was later renamed as 'Situational Leadership'. As that theory states, the leadership style has to be changed according to the development level of the employee [35] [36]. Furthermore, in the field of healthcare, a model has been suggested by researchers for selecting leadership styles for occupational therapists [37], but it was meant for a selected category of healthcare providers and therefore it may not be applicable to all situations in healthcare organizations.

IV. CONCLUSION

According to literature, there are advantages and disadvantages of almost all the explored leadership styles. Based on the studies carried out in healthcare settings, it is noteworthy that different leadership styles have associated with different outcomes in the system. These studies imply the need of the adaption of varying leadership styles for settings with different contextual factors in healthcare organizations.

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