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The relationship between transformational leadership style, job satisfaction, and employee retention among healthcare workers in hospitals during COVID-19 Crisis.

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 crisis has presented unique challenges for hospitals and healthcare workers around the world. In this context, transformational leadership may be an important factor in promoting job satisfaction and employee retention during the COVID-19 crisis. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the existing literature to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee retention in the context of hospitals, considering the role of job satisfaction as a mediator and developing a conceptual framework between these variables. Searching the database initially yielded 150 articles and after careful examination and application of inclusion criteria, it was reduced to 17 articles which were included in the review. Four themes were generated. This study concluded that leaders who exhibit transformational leadership behaviors have been more successful in maintaining high levels of job satisfaction and employee retention among their staff compared to those with leaders who exhibit transactional leadership behaviors, which focus on rules and regulations.

Keywords : Job Satisfaction; Employee Retention; Transformational Leadership style; and COVID-19 crisis.

The COVID-19 crisis has presented unique challenges for hospitals and healthcare workers around the world (World Health Organization, 2020a). Like other countries, Jordan has had to deal with the challenges of treating large numbers of COVID-19 patients, while also

trying to maintain the delivery of other essential healthcare services (World Health Organization, 2020b). The demands on the healthcare system have been unprecedented, with hospitals and other healthcare facilities facing challenges such as shortages of personal protective equipment, increased patient volume, and staff burnout. This has put a strain on hospital resources and staff and has highlighted the importance of effective leadership in managing these challenges (Abdi et al., 2022). The role of leadership in promoting employee satisfaction and retention has become even more important, as leaders must navigate these challenges and support their teams in providing high-quality care (Alafeshat & Aboud, 2019; Saeed & Jun 2021). Research has shown that transformational leadership, which focuses on the development and motivation of individual team members, can be particularly effective in promoting job satisfaction and retention in the healthcare setting (Wayerski, 2018). Transformational leadership has been shown to be effective in increasing job satisfaction and employee retention in a variety of settings, including hospitals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, transformational leadership may be especially important in hospitals as it can help to foster a sense of purpose and meaning among employees as they face difficult and challenging circumstances (Zhang et al., 2022). In addition, transformational leaders may be more successful at communicating the importance of their work to their teams and providing support and resources to help them perform at their best (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Khan et al., 2020). There is some evidence to suggest that transformational leadership may be associated with increased employee retention among healthcare workers in hospitals during the COVID-19 crisis (Yücel, 2021; Boamah, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022).

Previous research on this topic has not adequately considered the influence of job satisfaction on the relationship between leadership styles and employee retention, particularly in the context of hospitals. Further research is needed to understand the specific ways in which transformational leadership may promote job satisfaction and employee retention among healthcare workers in hospitals in Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic. This could include examining the specific strategies that transformational leaders use to support their teams and the impact of these strategies on job satisfaction and employee retention. It could also involve looking at how transformational leadership may be affected by the unique challenges and constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic in Jordan. Several theories can help explain the relationship between job satisfaction, employee retention, and leadership. For example, Transformational leadership theory suggests that leaders who motivate and inspire their followers with a sense of purpose and vision are more likely to increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Gan & Voon, 2021; Yücel, 2021). While Social exchange theory suggests that employees are more likely to be satisfied and remain with an organization when they perceive a fair exchange of rewards and benefits in return for their

contributions (Blau, 2017). This study aims to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee retention in the context of hospitals, considering the role of job satisfaction as a mediator.

Methodology

The search strategy commenced with a search of numerous electronic databases, namely PubMed, science direct, as well as Google Scholar search engine, and was conducted in December 2022. The keywords and terms used were: "Job Satisfaction; Employee Retention; Transformational Leadership style; and COVID-19 crisis.". Inclusion criteria encompassed all scientific qualitative and quantitative empirical research study designs that were published between 2019 to 2022. The studies were to be written in English. All the studies were to be presented in peer-reviewed journals and were to study job satisfaction, employee retention, and transformational leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies conducted not during COVID-19 were excluded as well as those not specifically related to healthcare workers. To identify potentially eligible studies, two members of the research team screened all titles and abstracts. The two reviewers independently read the abstracts and titles selected for possible inclusion. The author and independent reviewer conferred once they had individually decided which papers should be included in the review.

Results

In total, 153 articles were identified, and of those, 17 were applicable and met the inclusion criteria and were therefore included in the integrative review. Further, different designs were applied. However, all the included articles were experimental in nature. The sample participants greatly varied, with the minimum being 54 and the biggest being 3607. All the included articles were published between 2019 to 2022. The findings of the literature were then organized into four themes.

Discussion

The concepts of job satisfaction, transformational leadership, and employee retention have been widely studied and applied in the field of management. It is important to understand the relationship between these concepts to develop comprehensive strategies for retaining employees in the healthcare industry during the pandemic.

COVID-19 And Its Effect On Employees In The Healthcare Industry

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on hospital business organizations, and it has placed a considerable emotional and psychological burden on managers, decision-makers, and employees. Research has shown that the stress and

uncertainty caused by the pandemic have decreased job satisfaction among healthcare workers (Doherty & Callaghan, 2020; Dyer et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022). One study found that healthcare workers who were working in hospitals specified for COVID-19 patients had significantly lower levels of job satisfaction compared to those who work at other hospitals (Said & El-Shafei, 2021). Similarly, another study conducted in Ireland found that healthcare workers who were working in hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic had lower levels of psychological well-being and job satisfaction compared to before the pandemic (Mcloughlin et al., 2022). In addition to the impact on healthcare workers, the pandemic has also had a significant impact on hospital managers and decision-makers. Hospital managers were facing many challenges during the pandemic, including a lack of resources, high levels of stress and uncertainty, and difficulties in maintaining continuity of care (Kelley, E. J., Chen, L. H., & Sorenson, 2020; Ness et al., 2021). This study highlights the importance of providing support and resources to hospital managers during the pandemic.

Employee Retention During COVID-19

Maintaining employee retention in hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic can be challenging due to the high levels of stress and uncertainty that healthcare workers are facing. Research has shown that the pandemic has led to increased levels of burnout and turnover intentions among healthcare workers (Mat Rifin & Danaee, 2022; Opoku et al., 2022). This is evident in the work of Nal et al., (2022) who investigated the effect of COVID-19 on burnout and turnover intentions. They found that medical practitioners had significantly higher levels of burnout and turnover intentions compared to those who were not medical practitioners.

To support employee retention in hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to implement strategies such as providing adequate personal protective equipment and testing supplies, promoting work-life balance, and offering support for mental health and well-being. It may also be helpful to provide additional training and resources to help healthcare workers cope with the challenges of the pandemic (Halms et al., 2022; Robertson et al., 2020).

Job Satisfaction During COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, job satisfaction among healthcare workers may have been impacted by a variety of factors, including increased workload and stress, increased risk of infection, and lack of personal protective equipment. Studies have shown that healthcare workers have experienced high levels of burnout and job dissatisfaction during the pandemic. Dymecka et al., (2021) confirmed that healthcare workers who reported lower job satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic also reported higher levels of burnout, anxiety, and depression. Another study found that healthcare workers who were exposed to COVID-19 patients reported lower job satisfaction, higher levels of burnout, and more physical and mental symptoms compared to non-exposed workers (Magnavita et al., 2021).

Transformational Leadership During COVID-19

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that focuses on inspiring and motivating employees to achieve their full potential and work towards a shared vision or goal (Meiryani et al., 2022). Transformational leadership has been widely studied and is well-established as an effective leadership style, particularly in the healthcare industry (ALFadhlah & Elamir, 2021; Avolio & Bass, 2004; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Bass, 1985). However, there has been relatively little research specifically focused on the role of transformational leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Irshad et al., (2021) asserted that transformational leadership can play a key role in helping healthcare workers cope with the stress of working during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study surveyed a sample of healthcare workers in Pakistan and found that those who reported higher levels of transformational leadership from their supervisors also reported better mental health outcomes.

Widanti & Sunaryo (2022), found that transformational leadership played a crucial role in protecting workers' well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that leaders who provided clear direction, emotional support, and opportunities for employee input were more likely to foster a positive work environment and promote well-being among employees. Furthermore, a recent study, conducted by (Raveendran, 2022), aimed at highlighting the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement during the pandemic. Results of the study showed that transformational leadership style positively influences employee engagement, and thus, organizational performance.

During the COVID-19 crisis, transformational leaders in hospitals can help to increase employee retention by fostering a positive and resilient culture, communicating effectively, and providing support and recognition for their efforts. Additionally, transformational leaders can help to mitigate the stress and uncertainty caused by the crisis by providing clear direction, promoting a sense of purpose and meaning, and fostering a sense of community among employees.

The role of job satisfaction as a mediator in the connection between transformational leadership style (independent variable) and employee retention (dependent variable) is summarized in the following propositions and illustrated in figure 1 :

Proposition 1: Transformational leadership style will be positively related to job satisfaction among healthcare workers in hospitals during the COVID-19 Crisis.

Proposition 2: job satisfaction will be positively related to employee retention among healthcare workers in hospitals during the COVID-19 Crisis.

Proposition 3: Transformational leadership style will be positively related to employee retention among healthcare workers in hospitals during the COVID-19 Crisis.

Proposition 4: job satisfaction mediates the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee retention among healthcare workers in hospitals during the COVID-19 Crisis.

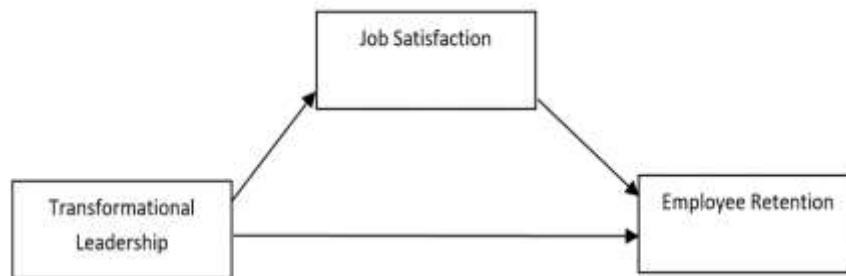


Figure 1. Depicts the Proposed Model and the Relationships between the Variables

Conclusion

Transformational leadership style, characterized by leaders who inspire and motivate employees, may have been particularly important for maintaining high levels of job satisfaction and employee retention among hospital staff. This study concluded that leaders who exhibit transformational leadership behaviors have been more successful in maintaining high levels of job satisfaction and employee retention among their staff compared to those with leaders who exhibit transactional leadership behaviors, which focus on rules and regulations.

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