
Original Article

Leadership Practices of Head Nurses as Expected and Perceived by Staff Nurses in Public Hospitals in Banda Aceh, Indonesia

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Abstract

Purposes: This study aimed to identify the levels of leadership practices among head nurses as expected and perceived by staff nurses and to compare the differences between expectation and perception of staff nurses toward leadership practices of head nurses in public hospitals of Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

Method: This descriptive comparative study was conducted in three public hospitals in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. Proportional random sampling was used to recruit 290 staff nurses. The data collection instruments were: the Demographic Data Questionnaire (DDQ) and the Head Nurses' Leadership Practices Questionnaire (HNL PQ) developed by the researchers based on Kouzes and Posner's concept of leadership practices (2007).

Results: The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test. The results showed that the mean score of staff nurses' expectation of head nurses' leadership practices was at a high level ($M = 4.64$, $S.D. = 0.34$). The mean score of staff nurses' perception of head nurses' leadership practices was at a moderate level ($M = 3.16$, $S.D. = 0.40$). The mean rank of staff nurses' expectation was statistically significant higher than the mean rank of perception (Mean rank = 7.93, $Z = -14.83$, $p \leq 0.001$).

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Conclusion: *This study identified the gap between expectation and perception of staff nurses toward head nurses' leadership practices. The results of the study will serve as essential information for public hospitals in Indonesia to improve leadership practices of head nurses which may result in higher quality of nursing services to patients.*

Keywords: leadership; leadership practices; head nurses

Background

Leadership has been one of the most common areas being studied in the field of nursing administration (Huber, 2010). This is due to the constant changes in healthcare environment, expecting high quality nursing services. Nurse leaders are inevitably expected to lead their nurses, including those who are at the bottom level of patient care at bedside, to the top level of the organizational decision making. In many countries, nurse leaders are involved in decision making in areas of patient safety such as reducing medication errors, and improving quality of care, promoting health status, and expanding preventive care (Hassmiller, 2011). The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has highlighted the importance of training nurses to have leadership skills by offering a particular training program: The Leadership for Change (LFC) Programme. The ICN launched the LFC network since 2003 (ICN, 2010). This effort demonstrates that leadership has received attention from the international nurse leadership organization. Leadership can be defined as the ability to assess, develop, maintain, and change organization and strategic systems to optimally meet the needs and expectations of stake-

holders and the outside environment (Huber, 2010). It is a process of influencing staffs to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively. Moreover, leadership is also the process of facilitating individuals and their collective efforts to accomplish their goals through their own actions (Daft, 2005; Yukl, 2002). Head nurses are at the middle level of a nursing management system. They work closely with staff nurses as well as carry out day-to-day operations. They are also involved in all kinds of planning and in establishing unit policies (Marquis & Huston, 2009). Their major roles include dealing with issues related to the delivery of care, shortages of staff, and staff's behavior in order to maintain and promote quality of care (Savage, 2003). They must have leadership ability so that any innovative changes for the quality of care can be effectively implemented. For example, Touveneau, Clack, Ginet, Stewardson, Schindler, & Bourrier et al., (2013) conducted a case study to understand the role of head nurses in the implementation of hand hygiene promotion involving a patient participation. They found that head nurses' leadership