How Leadership Styles Influence among Multigenerational Nurses' Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

The nursing workforce is increasingly diverse, comprising multiple generations with distinct values, communication preferences, and expectations. Leadership styles play a crucial role in shaping nurse satisfaction, engagement, and overall well-being, particularly in a multigenerational workforce. This article explores how various leadership styles—transformational, transactional, servant, democratic, and autocratic—affect the job satisfaction of nurses from different generational groups, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z.

Transformational and servant leadership styles, which emphasize empowerment, professional growth, and supportive work environments, tend to resonate most with younger generations, such as Millennials and Generation Z. In contrast, older generations, like Baby Boomers and Generation X, may appreciate more structured, clear-cut leadership approaches, such as transactional and autocratic leadership. The findings suggest that leadership styles that are adaptable and inclusive—prioritizing communication, professional development, and work-life balance—are most likely to improve job satisfaction across all generations of nurses. This article highlights the importance of understanding generational differences in nursing leadership to foster a cohesive, motivated, and satisfied nursing team in an evolving healthcare landscape.

INTRODUCTION

In healthcare, effective leadership is essential for maintaining a motivated and cohesive nursing workforce. Leadership styles directly influence job satisfaction, retention, and performance, particularly in multigenerational teams. With Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z working together, understanding their unique needs is crucial. This article explores the relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction among these groups, supported by research and visual data.

LEADERSHIP STYLES AND INFLUENCE

Transformational Leadership: Transformational leadership is a leadership style that inspires and motivates nurses to achieve excellence, embrace change, and improve patient care outcome. This leadership model is characterized by the vision, empowerment, and a focus on the nursing team development, which are essential in the modern healthcare environments.

The Key characteristics of Transformational leadership in Nursing is 1. Visionary Thinking, 2. Inspiration and Motivation.3. Individualized Support, 4. Fostering Innovation, 5. Effective Communication, 6. Empowerment.

Benefits of Transformational Leadership in Nursing is Improved patient Outcomes, encourages adoption of evidence-based practices, resulting in higher quality care, foster teamwork and collaboration reducing errors and enhancing safety. Increased Nurse satisfaction and Retention, provides opportunities for growth and recognition, reducing burnout and turnover, Builds a positive and supportive work environment. Enhanced Team Performance, Motivated teams work cohesively toward shared goals, improving efficiency and effectiveness. Adaptability to change, Transformational leaders guide teams through healthcare reforms, technological advancements and organizational changes

Impact:

Baby Boomers feel valued due to personal recognition and alignment with long-term goals.

Gen X appreciates the autonomy and creativity this style offers.

Millennials and Gen Z thrive with mentorship, growth opportunities, and meaningful work.

Research Evidence:

Transformational leadership correlates strongly with job satisfaction, particularly among Millennials and Gen Z, due to its focus on career development and inclusion (Laschinger et al., 2021).

2. Transactional Leadership

Transactional Leadership in Nursing

Transactional leadership is a leadership style focused on structured tasks, clear roles, and the use of rewards and consequences to achieve organizational goals. In nursing, this approach is often used in settings where efficiency, adherence to policies, and immediate problem-solving are essential.

Characteristics of Transactional Leadership in Nursing Focus on Routine and Structure Leaders emphasize maintaining established policies, procedures, and standards of care. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, ensuring smooth daily operations. Reward and Punishment System, such as recognition or incentives, are given for meeting performance goals.

Consequences are enforced when standards are not met, ensuring accountability. Short-Term Goal Orientation The emphasis is on achieving immediate, measurable objectives rather than long-term development or innovation. Directive Leadership Leaders make decisions and give specific instructions, with limited input from team members. This ensures clarity and minimizes ambiguity in high-pressure situations. Performance Monitoring Leaders closely monitor tasks and provide feedback to ensure compliance and efficiency.

Benefits of Transactional Leadership in Nursing Improved Efficiency Structured workflows ensure tasks are completed on time and according to protocol. Consistency in Care Delivery Adherence to established guidelines leads to uniformity in patient care. Quick Problem Resolution Clear authority and accountability allow for rapid decision-making and issue resolution. Effective in Crisis Situations Works well in emergencies or high-stakes environments where immediate action is required.

Impact:

Baby Boomers are comfortable with its predictability and clarity.

Gen X complies but prefers more flexibility.

Millennials and Gen Z find it too rigid and less engaging.

Research Evidence:

While effective for task-oriented environments, transactional leadership is less favored by younger generations seeking autonomy and creativity (Wong et al., 2020).

3. Servant Leadership

Servant Leadership in Nursing is a leadership philosophy that prioritizes the needs of others—team members, patients, and the organization—before the leader's own. In nursing, this approach emphasizes empathy, support, and empowerment to create a nurturing environment where nurses and patients thrive.

Characteristics of Servant Leadership in Nursing. Empathy Servant leaders actively listen to and understand the feelings and concerns of their team members and patients. They create a safe space for open communication. Focus on Team Development Supporting nurses' professional and personal growth through mentorship, training, and opportunities for advancement. Recognizing individual strengths and fostering skill development. Commitment to Patient-Centered Care Ensuring that all decisions align with the best interests of the patients. Advocating for patient needs and fostering a culture of compassion and respect. Empowerment Encouraging nurses to take initiative and make decisions within their scope of practice. Providing resources and tools to help them succeed in their roles. Ethical and Selfless Leadership Servant leaders act with integrity and prioritize the well-being of their team and patient's over personal gain. Building Community Fostering collaboration and teamwork within the unit. Promoting a sense of belonging and shared purpose among staff.

Benefits of Servant Leadership in Nursing Improved Nurse Satisfaction and Retention A supportive and nurturing environment reduces burnout and enhances job satisfaction. Better Patient Outcomes A focus on holistic, patient-centered care leads to higher quality care and improved satisfaction. Enhanced Team Collaboration Empowered and valued team members work more cohesively, resulting in better communication and efficiency. Increased Trust and Loyalty Nurses are more likely to trust leaders who demonstrate care and support, fostering a positive workplace culture. Professional Growth Nurses develop leadership skills and confidence, contributing to a stronger workforce.

Impact:

Baby Boomers feel respected and supported.

Gen X values the focus on loyalty and trust.

Millennials and Gen Z are highly satisfied with the collaborative and supportive approach.

Research Evidence:

Servant leadership significantly improves job satisfaction across all generations, especially younger nurses who value mentorship and inclusivity (Hunter et al., 2022).

4. Autocratic Leadership in Nursing is not a formally recognized leadership style but may refer to autocratic leadership, which is a directive and highly centralized leadership approach. In nursing, this style involves a leader making decisions independently with minimal input from team members. It is often used in situations requiring quick decision-making or strict adherence to protocols.

Characteristics of Autocratic Leadership in Nursing Centralized Decision-Making The leader makes decisions independently without consulting the nursing team. Authority and control are concentrated in the leader. Clear

Direction and Expectations Nurses are given specific instructions and are expected to follow them precisely. There is little room for deviation from established policies and procedures. Strict Supervision The leader closely monitors performance to ensure compliance and accuracy. Limited Team Involvement Feedback from nurses and staff is rarely sought or incorporated into decision-making. Focus on Rules and Discipline Policies, standards, and protocols are strictly enforced. When Autocratic Leadership is Effective Crisis Situations In emergencies, such as a code blue or disaster response, quick and decisive actions are required. A single authority ensures clarity and avoids confusion. New or Inexperienced Staff When nurses are new to the unit or inexperienced, clear direction helps build confidence and competence. High-Stakes Environments In critical care or operating rooms, strict adherence to protocols minimizes errors.

Benefits of Autocratic Leadership in Nursing Efficiency Decisions are made quickly without delays caused by consultation or discussion. Consistency in Practice Ensures compliance with established guidelines, leading to uniform care delivery. Clear Accountability Roles and responsibilities are well-defined, making it easier to identify and address issues.

Impact:

Baby Boomers may tolerate it due to traditional norms.

Gen X resists, preferring autonomy.

Millennials and Gen Z are the least satisfied, as it stifles collaboration and innovation.

Research Evidence:

This style is associated with low satisfaction and higher turnover rates, particularly in Millennials and Gen Z (Henderson et al., 2019).

5. Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership, also known as participative leadership, is a collaborative style that involves team members in decision-making and fosters an environment of shared responsibility. In nursing, this approach encourages input from staff, enhances teamwork, and promotes professional growth, ultimately improving patient care and satisfaction.

Characteristics of Democratic Leadership in Nursing Collaborative Decision-Making The leader seeks input from nurses and other team members before making decisions. Emphasis is placed on group consensus while maintaining the leader's final accountability. Open Communication Leaders actively listen to team members and create a culture where feedback is valued. Transparent communication fosters trust and mutual respect. Empowerment and Delegations are empowered to take ownership of their roles and contribute to problem-solving and innovation. Tasks and responsibilities are shared, fostering skill development and confidence. Focus on Teamwork Leaders encourage collaboration, ensuring every team member feels included and valued. Adaptability and Flexibility Decisions are made considering diverse perspectives, making the approach adaptable to changing circumstances.

Benefits of Democratic Leadership in Nursing Improved Nurse Satisfaction Involvement in decision-making increases job satisfaction and a sense of belonging. Enhanced Team Collaboration Open communication and shared goals strengthen teamwork and mutual respect. Increased Innovation and Creativity Encouraging

Impact:

Baby Boomers appreciate their expertise being considered.

Gen X thrives with participatory processes.

Millennials and Gen Z are highly satisfied, as this style aligns with their values.

Research Evidence:

Democratic leadership is strongly correlated with high job satisfaction, particularly in diverse teams (Chang et al., 2021).

job satisfaction levels among different generations of nurses based on leadership styles. Key observations include:

Transformational Leadership is universally satisfying, especially for Millennials and Gen Z.

Transactional Leadership is moderately satisfying for Baby Boomers but less so for younger generations.

Servant Leadership achieves high satisfaction across all age groups, with Millennials and Gen Z responding particularly well.

Autocratic Leadership is the least satisfying, especially for Millennials and Gen Z.
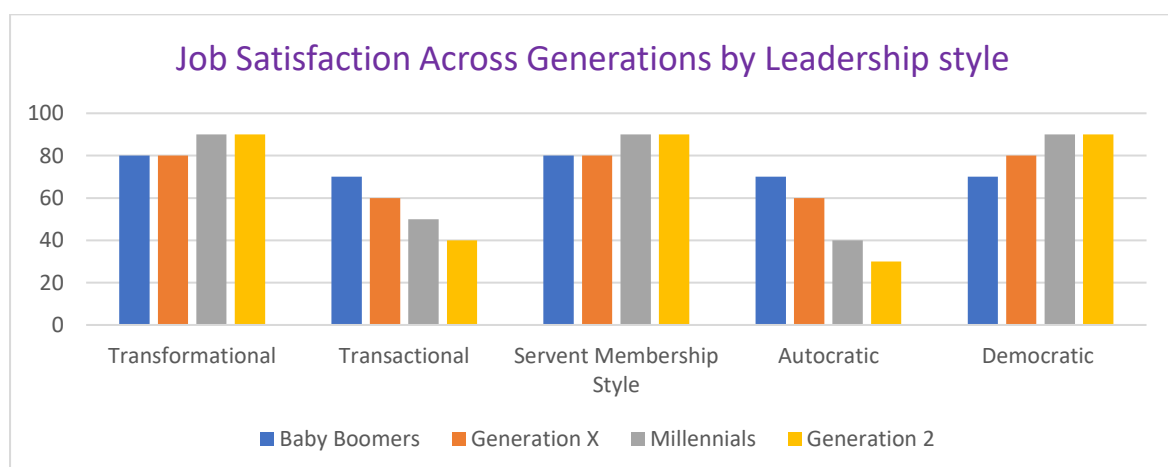
Democratic Leadership shows high satisfaction across all generations, aligning with the collaborative preferences of younger nurses.

Recommendations

1. **Leaders should adopt a flexible approach**, combining transformational, servant, and democratic styles to cater to diverse preferences.

2. **Focus on mentorship and inclusion** to engage Millennials and Gen Z while recognizing the experience of Baby Boomers.

3. **Avoid overly rigid or autocratic practices**, which lead to dissatisfaction and turnover, especially among younger nurses.

Tailoring leadership styles to multigenerational teams fosters greater job satisfaction, cohesion, and improved patient outcomes.

Below is a graphical representation of job satisfaction levels among different generations based on leadership styles

The graph above illustrates job satisfaction levels among different generations of nurses based on leadership styles. Key observations include:

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Democratic Leadership shows high satisfaction across all generations, aligning with the collaborative preferences of younger nurses

Reference

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