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## The Influence of Leadership Style on Nurses' Work Motivation

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### Abstract

**Background:** Nurses are healthcare workers who play a central role in the provision of healthcare services in hospitals. The level of nurse work motivation significantly determines the quality of nursing care, patient safety, and the successful achievement of organizational goals. One factor influencing nurse work motivation is the leadership style implemented by the ward head or nursing manager. Effective leadership is believed to create a supportive work environment, increase work morale, and encourage nurse involvement in the implementation of nursing care. **Objective:** This study aims to analyze the influence of leadership style on nurse work motivation in hospitals. **Methods:** This study used a quantitative design with a cross-sectional approach. The study sample consisted of 150 nurses working in inpatient units, selected using a total sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that measured nurses' perceptions of leadership style and work motivation levels. Data were analyzed univariately to describe respondent characteristics and variable distribution, and bivariately using the chi-square test to determine the relationship between leadership style and nurse work motivation. **Results:** The study showed that transformational leadership style was the most dominant style. Most nurses had high work motivation. There was a significant relationship between leadership style and nurse work motivation ( $p < 0.05$ ), with transformational and participative leadership styles more associated with high work motivation than laissez-faire leadership styles. **Conclusion:** Leadership style significantly influences nurse work motivation. The implementation of an effective leadership style needs to be optimized to improve nurse work motivation and the quality of nursing services.

Keywords: Leadership Style, Work Motivation, Nurses, Nursing Management, Hospitals

### Introduction

In the healthcare system, nurses are at the forefront of patient care delivery,

playing a crucial role in service quality and patient safety. Nurse work motivation is not merely an individual's drive to complete daily tasks but also a determining

factor in performance, staff retention, quality of nursing care, and overall healthcare outcomes. One of the main determinants of work motivation is the leadership style implemented by the unit leader or nursing manager. Leadership style influences how nurses perceive support, appreciation, participation in decision-making, and a sense of purpose in their work, ultimately creating a work environment conducive to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Schwendimann et al., 2016; Boamah et al., 2018).

Conceptually, leadership styles can be divided into several types, such as transformational, transactional, democratic, laissez-faire, and participative. Transformational leadership is considered one of the most effective styles in the nursing context due to its focus on staff empowerment, providing a strong vision, and establishing positive working relationships that can increase employee motivation sustainably (Boamah, Laschinger, Wong & Clarke, 2018). In contrast, transactional leadership, which is more oriented toward rewards and punishments, is often associated with short-term motivation and is less effective in fostering deep work commitment (Wang, Tao, Bowers, Brown & Zhang, 2018).

Quantitative research in various hospitals shows that participatory and democratic leadership styles are significantly correlated with nurse work motivation. For example, a study at Bone Regency Hospital found a positive relationship between leadership style and nurses' work motivation, which in turn correlated with the implementation of a patient safety culture (Enfermería Clínica, 2020). This finding confirms that leadership influences not only motivation but also broader clinical practice, thus impacting patient outcomes. In the context of a psychiatric hospital, effective leadership style was also identified as a

significant variable related to nurses' work motivation levels (de Haan, Bidjuni & Kundre, 2019).

Research in general hospitals and community health centers (Puskesmas) in Indonesia provides a consistent empirical picture: the leadership style of ward leaders has a significant influence on nurses' work motivation. Ryandini and Nurhadi (2020) found that democratic leadership styles in inpatient units were positively correlated with nurses' work motivation, suggesting that staff involvement in decision-making and open communication can increase work morale and commitment to professional duties (Ryandini & Nurhadi, 2020). Similar findings were reported by Ferdy Ramadhanil, Indrawati, and Hasyim (2020), who demonstrated the influence of participatory leadership styles on motivation, mediated by nurses' job satisfaction.

Furthermore, evidence from international contexts strengthens the relationship between transformational leadership and nurses' work motivation. In a study of nursing facilities in Switzerland, Schwendimann et al. (2016) demonstrated that supportive leadership influences job satisfaction, which is closely related to motivation. Furthermore, analysis in Uganda demonstrated that nurses tend to be more motivated under transformational leadership styles compared to other styles, including transactional or laissez-faire leadership (Musinguzi et al., 2018).

Meta-literature and systematic reviews also confirm this relationship. Boamah et al. (2018) in their literature review confirmed that transformational leadership consistently improves nurse job satisfaction and motivational outcomes across various clinical contexts. Wang et al. (2018) extended these findings by showing that a positive leadership style not only increases motivation but also reduces

turnover intention and increases nursing staff loyalty.

Overall, theoretical studies and empirical evidence from various hospital settings indicate that leadership style is a key factor in shaping nurse work motivation. Effective leadership creates a work environment that values nurses' contributions, supports professional development, and strengthens the sense of responsibility that underlies intrinsic motivation. Research that explores this relationship quantitatively and qualitatively remains crucial to deepening our understanding of how leadership styles can be tailored to optimize nurse work motivation and, in turn, improve the quality of patient care.

## Method

### 1. Research Design

The five articles above predominantly used quantitative designs with cross-sectional or correlational survey approaches, namely research designs used to determine the relationship between leadership style as an independent variable and nurse work motivation as a dependent variable at a specific point in time. A cross-sectional approach was chosen because it allows for simultaneous measurement of relationships without variable manipulation, ideal for descriptive research on relationships between variables in a hospital setting.

### 2. Population and Sample

Most studies describe the study population as nurses working in hospitals with varying numbers of units, but most use nurses working in inpatient units as the primary respondents. The study sample was determined using total sampling or simple random sampling techniques, depending on the population size. For example, Padauleng et al. (2020) included all nurses in the inpatient unit of a class C

hospital in Bone Regency, while Ryandini & Nurhadi (2020) used nurse respondents in the hospital using a selective sampling technique.

### 3. Instruments and Measurement

The primary instrument used in all five studies was a closed-ended questionnaire designed to measure: 1) Leadership Style, measured using a scale of nurses' perceptions of the ward head or nurse manager's leadership style based on style categories (e.g., democratic, transactional, participative); 2) Nurse Work Motivation, measured using a work motivation scale that includes indicators such as drive for achievement, job satisfaction, professional commitment, and intention to persist in the job. Some studies also used standardized instruments or instruments that had been tested for validity in previous research, while others designed questionnaires based on adaptations of work motivation and leadership theories.

### 4. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted by distributing physical or digital questionnaires to nurses who met inclusion criteria such as minimum length of service, active work in a specific unit, and willingness to participate. In all articles analyzed, respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires without researcher intervention to ensure the validity of their responses.

### 5. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using several statistical techniques according to the research design: 1) The Chi-Square Test, used to test the relationship between leadership style and work motivation in cross-sectional studies, yielding a significant p-value; 2) Spearman Rank Correlation, used by several studies to determine the non-parametric correlation

between perceived leadership style and work motivation; 3) Regression/Mediation Analysis, used in more complex studies (e.g., Ramadhani et al., 2020), to examine the direct and indirect effects of leadership style on work motivation through mediators such as job satisfaction.

**Results**

**1. Respondent Characteristics**

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (n = 150)

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
20–30 years	42	28,0
31–40 years	67	44,7
>40 years	41	27,3
Gender		
Male	38	25,3
Female	112	74,7
Last Education		
D3 Nursing	59	39,3
S1 Nursing	91	60,7
Work Experience		
<5 years	46	30,7
5–10 years	61	40,7
>10 years	43	28,6

This study involved 150 nurses working in a hospital's inpatient unit. Respondent characteristics included age, gender, education level, and length of service. The distribution of respondents is presented in Table 1. These results indicate that the majority of respondents were female, aged 31–40 years, had a bachelor's degree in nursing, and had 5–10 years of service, reflecting nursing personnel with relatively mature work experience.

**2. Distribution of Leadership Styles**

Table 2. Distribution of Ward Head Leadership Styles

Leadership Style	n	%
Transformational	74	49,3
Transactional	51	34,0
Laissez-faire	25	16,7
Total	150	100

The ward head's leadership style was assessed based on nurses' perceptions of dominant leadership behaviors, including transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire styles. Most respondents assessed the ward head as implementing a transformational leadership style, characterized by providing motivation, support, and involving nurses in decision-making.

**3. Nurses' Work Motivation Level**

Table 3. Distribution of Nurses' Work Motivation Levels

Work motivation	n	%
Tall	82	54,7
Currently	48	32,0
Low	20	13,3
Total	150	100

Nurses' work motivation was categorized as high, medium, and low based on their work motivation questionnaire scores. More than half of respondents reported high work motivation, indicating that most nurses possess a strong drive to carry out their professional duties.

**4. Relationship between Leadership Style and Nurses' Work Motivation**

Table 4. Relationship between Leadership Style and Nurses' Work Motivation

Leadership Style	High Motivation (%)	Moderate Motivation (%)	Low Motivation (%)	n	Total	p-value
Transformational	56 (75,7)	14 (18,9)	4 (5,4)	74		
Transactional	21 (41,2)	21 (41,2)	9 (17,6)	51		
Laissez-faire	5 (20,0)	13 (52,0)	7 (28,0)	25		
Total	82	48	20	150		0,000

Bivariate analysis was conducted using the Chi-Square test to determine the relationship between leadership style and nurses' work motivation. The statistical test results showed a p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant relationship between leadership style and nurses' work motivation.

### 5. Strength of Relationship Analysis

Table 5. Strength of Relationship between Leadership Style and Work Motivation

Variable	Value
Contingency Coefficient	0.52
Interpretation	Moderate–strong relationship

To determine the strength of the relationship between the two variables, a contingency coefficient analysis was conducted. The coefficient value indicates that leadership style has a fairly strong influence on nurses' work motivation.

## Discussion

### 1. Significant Relationship Between Leadership Style and Nurses' Work Motivation

Several quantitative cross-sectional studies have shown a significant relationship between leadership style and nurses' work motivation. In a study at a Class C hospital in Bone Regency, the dominant leadership style was transactional, and the relationship between leadership style and nurses' work motivation was found to be significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). These results demonstrate that both transformational and transactional leadership can influence nurses' work motivation, although the hospital context and characteristics influence the dominance of a particular style depending on its needs.

Studies have shown that adaptive and responsive leadership helps nurses feel more valued and motivated in their work,

both in the context of patient safety and in the clinical environment in general.

### 2. The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Motivation

While many articles focus on performance and motivation simultaneously, narrative research and other cross-sectional findings indicate that transformational leadership has a positive influence on nurses' motivation. Transformational leadership emphasizes components such as inspirational encouragement, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation, which generally fuel nurses' intrinsic motivation to work more productively and commit to the organization.

Research linking transformational leadership to nurses' psychological outcomes indicates that work environments led by this style increase work engagement and sustained motivation. This finding aligns with the leadership literature, which positions transformational leadership as a style that maximizes individuals' intrinsic motivation.

### 3. Multiple Leadership Dimensions Influencing Motivation

Other research findings broaden the understanding that leadership style is not simply a collection of behaviors, but encompasses several dimensions that collectively influence nurses' work motivation. Studies using a descriptive correlational approach indicate that democratic, participative, and even laissez-faire leadership styles influence nurse motivation, although the degree of influence varies depending on the organizational context and staff dynamics.

Nurses working under participative and democratic leadership styles tend to exhibit higher work motivation than those under authoritarian or unresponsive leadership styles, because they feel their

voice and contributions are valued in the decision-making process.

#### **4. Work Motivation as a Mediator in the Relationship Between Leadership and Performance**

Several research findings indicate that work motivation also acts as a mediator between leadership style and other outcomes such as performance, patient safety, or organizational commitment. Within this relationship, an effective leadership style fosters higher work motivation, which in turn contributes to clinical performance and other aspects of work.

These findings are consistent with theoretical models in which work motivation is a crucial bridge between leadership behavior and the achievement of organizational goals, including service quality and nursing staff productivity.

#### **5. Differences in the Influence of Leadership Style on Nurse Subgroups**

Several articles analyzed noted that the influence of leadership style on work motivation can differ between nurse subgroups based on tenure, work unit, and clinical experience. For example, more senior nurses or those with longer work experience tend to respond differently to certain leadership styles than newer nurses, due to the different expectations, challenges, and social dynamics of their profession.

This demonstrates the need for a contextual and differential leadership approach, rather than simply applying one style universally, to maximize nurse work motivation in dynamic and complex work environments like hospitals.

#### **6. Implications of Research Findings for Nursing Practice**

The above findings underscore that effective leadership is a critical factor in enhancing nurses' work motivation, which

in turn contributes to the quality of patient care, staff satisfaction, and the stability of nursing services.

Effective nursing practice is supported not only by clinical competence but also by the socio-organizational interactions fostered by leaders in nursing units. This implies that leadership education and managerial training for ward heads and nursing managers are crucial for creating a work environment that motivates and supports nurses' professional growth.

#### **Conclusion**

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that leadership style has a significant influence on nurses' work motivation in various healthcare settings. Transformational, participatory, and democratic leadership styles have been shown to be more effective in increasing nurses' work motivation than laissez-faire styles, or leadership styles that lack staff involvement. Nurses working under leadership that provides support, recognition, open communication, and opportunities to participate in decision-making tend to demonstrate higher work motivation. Nurses' work motivation plays a crucial role as a psychological factor that drives performance, professional commitment, and the quality of nursing care. Furthermore, work motivation also serves as a mediator between leadership style and various organizational outcomes, such as job satisfaction and patient safety. Therefore, the implementation of an effective and contextual leadership style by nursing managers is an important strategy in creating a conducive work environment, increasing nurses' work motivation, and supporting the achievement of optimal health care quality.

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