BACKGROUND

Current issues in healthcare such as nursing shortage and turnover, health reform, and quality of care have tamed the focus to nursing leadership. Research has shown that the concept of emotional intelligence, as integrated in nursing, has positive effects on staff, patient, and organizational outcomes. Nurse leaders are in a crucial position to promote positive staff outcomes, positive patient care outcomes, and eventually, positive organizational outcomes. Emotional intelligence consists of the competencies that can enhance nurse leaders’ ability to respond to the needs of nursing system better, and reduce or prevent negative outcomes.

PURPOSE AND GOAL

The purpose of this study was to:
- describe nurse leaders’ perceptions of effective nursing leadership;
- discover the elements of effective nursing leadership;
- determine the role of emotional intelligence in nursing leadership as perceived by nurse leaders;
- find ways to support nurse leaders’ professional growth and development in the midst of the challenges of healthcare.

The goal of this study was to:
- gain information on how nurse leaders characterize effective nursing leadership;
- map the nurse leaders’ awareness of emotional intelligence and its meaning to them;
- determine whether emotional intelligence is considered as a part of effective nursing leadership.

METHODS

- Research design: Qualitative study and specifically hermeneutic phenomenological approach since it focused on another level of lived experiences, making an interpretation of those lived experiences.
- Theoretical framework: Daniel Goleman’s framework of Emotional Competencies (Goleman, 2001).
- Data collection: The participants were recruited by using purposive network sampling via the national organization for nurse leaders. Data were collected by using the qualitative questionnaire that was available on the secure SurveyMonkey™ server. The link to the questionnaire was provided for participants through the organization’s newsletter and/or weekly membership letter.
- Data analysis: Coleczik’s Method of data analysis (Coleczik, 1979).
  1. step: responses/descriptions were read for getting a common idea.
  2. step: extracting significant statements.
  3. step: formulating the meanings related to explored phenomena.
  4. step: collecting meanings to the clusters of themes and validating them.
  5. step: to form a through description of investigated topic.

FINDINGS

Five themes corresponded to the first research question and four themes were found associated with the second research question.

Effective Nursing Leadership
- Comprehensive and excellent communication skills together with attentive listening
- Coaching, mentorship, and support from colleagues and peers
- Being visionary
- Promoting professional growth and development of others
- Personal and Organizational Barriers

Emotional Intelligence in Effective Nursing Leadership
- Emotional intelligence is a component of effective nursing leadership
- Allows effective and attentive listening and humanistic communication with others
- Awareness of own and other's feelings
- Helps to connect to others and to achieve a deeper understanding of others

Respondent’s knowledge about emotional intelligence

Respondent’s knowledge about emotional intelligence

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Study questions:
1) What makes effective nursing leadership as perceived by nurse leaders?
2) What is the role of emotional intelligence in effective nursing leadership as perceived by nurse leaders?

Terms:
- Emotional Competence: “Emotional Competency, based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work” (Goleman, 2003, p. 27).
- Emotional Competence: “A person’s ability to manage and regulate emotions, in self and others” (Goleman, 2003, p. 14).

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CONCLUSIONS

The findings disclosed the characteristics, behaviors, and factors that can promote or prevent effective nursing leadership. Moreover all the discovered themes corresponded well with Goleman’s framework of emotional intelligence.

1) Emotional intelligence has a significant role in effective nursing leadership.
2) Effective nursing leadership consists of emotional intelligence competencies and qualities, such as communication and attentive listening, along with being visionary.
3) Effective nursing leadership is relationship centered.
4) Organization and its culture have a role in effective nursing leadership.
5) Business skills/finance-related skills or finance-oriented thinking were not brought up as a component of effective nursing leadership. It was seen more as a barrier that originates from the organization.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Emphasizing emotional intelligence competencies in selecting nursing leaders.
- Coaching and mentoring of nurses leaders.
- Creating and implementing a personal development program for nurse leaders in organizations.
- Adding a formal emotional intelligence education particularly to leadership-related Masters programs.
- Nursing leadership focused research could promote evidence-based nursing leadership.
- Methodology: replicating the study by using data triangulation, and addressing the homogeneity of the sample measurements.
- Researching reliable ways to measure perception of effective nursing leadership on staff outcomes, patient outcomes and organizational outcomes.
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