STUDYING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIES OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND ASSERTIVENESS OF NURSE MANAGERS IN HOSPITALS AFFILIATED TO SHIRAZ MEDICAL SCIENCE UNIVERSITY

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Objective: the present research aims to study the relationship between strategies of conflict management and assertiveness of nurse managers in hospitals affiliated to Shiraz medical science university.

Method: this is a correlative research and 110 subjects were chosen among nurse managers in hospitals affiliated to Shiraz medical science university and they completed Robbins questionnaire of conflict management styles (1991) and Aylin Gamneril & Cheryl Ricky’s assertiveness questionnaire (1998). Data obtained from the questionnaires were tested using correlation coefficient and multi-regression analysis.

Results: results showed that there is a significantly positive relationship between conflict management styles and assertiveness of nurse managers in hospitals affiliated to Shiraz medical science university and simultaneous regression indicated that 25.3% of changes in assertiveness of managers can be explained based on conflict management styles and compromising style or competing style play the highest roles in prediction of assertiveness of managers.

Conclusion: strategies of conflict management play important roles in assertiveness of nurse managers in hospitals affiliated to medical science university.

Keywords: Conflict, Strategies Of Conflict Management, Assertiveness, Nurse Managers

I. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is considered as an inseparable and inevitable part of an organizational life and it is created due to organizational features. Researches indicated that the organization where there is low conflict, fails in competitive environments because member of such organizations are so homogenous that have less preparation to adapt with environmental condition or they are very satisfied with the status quo that they do not want to improve the status quo. Studies done on managers in top levels indicate that a manager spends 20% of his/her time on conflict management. Conflict management is more important than decision making skills, leadership, and relationship (Rabins & Disenzo, 2003). Hospital, as a social organization that spends considerable times with people, faces daily challenges and conflicts of people (Fernanze, 2007). A study conducted by Dano in America in 2005 showed that turnover cost of a nurse is 156% of his/her annual salary. Therefore, cost effectiveness of keeping only one nurse is based on solving conflicts higher than 300 hours. Therefore, it is necessary to apply competency and qualification for solving, dealing and preventing conflicts of staff before they result in resign, reprising action, judicial claims and so on (Dano, 2007). Conflict management has three main strategies: competing, compromising, and avoiding. Methods such as negotiation, mediation, and judgment are helpful for managers for solving conflict. Negotiation is the least method for accepting others (Stoner, 1996). Among different jobs such as general and specialized doctors, radiologists and other health jobs in a treatment center, each one may experience conflict but according to classification of Robbins, nursing profession is one of the most stressful jobs (Robbins, 2000). In addition to the conflict hidden in nursing job, nurses working in educational and therapeutic centers experience high level of conflict due to organizational structure, presence of different medical classes and their instructions, presence of students and manipulation of patients (Whitenead, 2007). Nurses involve different types of conflict due to several reasons. Their reaction to these conflicts may lead to a detrimental setting and higher level of conflict or they can act in a way that leads to growth and coordination which depends on how they think and their skills in management (Hotking, 2006). Nurses’ conflict may appear in different forms such as depression, job leaving, improper behavior with patient and his/her companions. Conflict management requires strategies that are emotionally based on self-confidence, flexibility, vision, open thinking, and action to different methods (Kaitelidou, 2012). In fact, strategies of conflict management are the individual’s response to conflict situations that may change in different conditions although they are continuous (Fridmans, 2000). Although five general methods...
have been mentioned for conflict management including competition, avoidance, accommodation, compromise and cooperation, studies conducted by Barker, Washington and Ison indicated that nurses use avoiding method when facing conflict and this method is not cooperative and decisive in conflict management resulting in lose-lose approach. After the avoiding method, accommodating and compromising methods are two mostly methods used by nurses (Robbins, 2000). If conflict is constructive, it will create creativity in the organization and helps managers to reach organizational goals and if it is detrimental, it will destroy the organization (Stephen). Another factor that can reduce nurses’ conflict along with conflict management is nurses’ assertiveness. Rasetoske believed (2013) that very assertive managers can control problems and stresses and have better behavior with nurses and patients. Assertiveness is a set of skills that everybody will attain them by practice. By increasing equal relationship between individuals, assertiveness causes that the individual becomes steadfast and expresses his/her emotions honestly without anxiety and stress and takes his/her rights without denying others ‘rights. Assertiveness and aggressiveness are concepts that are confused with each other but assertiveness means not to overwhelm others’ rights rather rights of all people are respectful. Assertiveness is a valuable means for reaching self confidence and self control (Forouzesh and Shifteh, 2007). the skill of assertiveness is necessary to present a high quality reality of patient (McCabe & Timmins, 2005). Doddis (2006) believed that assertiveness causes nurses to have an effective and positive relationship with their coworkers and to support patients well. In the study conducted by Grown (1991) with aim of investigating the attitude of nursing students towards their role as patient supporters, 47% of participants believed that holding educational courses for assertiveness is necessary for playing an effectively supportive role (Oconnor & Davis & Bruckenthal & War, 2011). A study was conducted with aim of determining educational requirements of nurses and their obstacles for supporting patients who experience pain. In this study, a weak relationship was seen between support given by nurses and their assertiveness and it is in disagreement with results of Grown (1991). Kobestch, Hovarter and Sternard (2004) concluded in their study that assertiveness had no significant effect on support of patient. Nurses interact with patients, coworkers and other health care staff. Such interactions will promote when the individual has good relational skills (Deltsidou, 2009). Assertiveness is one of components of skill of interpersonal relationship and plays important role in promotion of mental health status such that it increases self confidence in interpersonal relationships and performance and also improvement of quality of human relations (Dibayee, 2005). Assertiveness is considered as a valuable behavior in nursing leading to positive results such as promotion of leadership skills, increase of job satisfaction, avoidance of compromising when caring patients, reduction of work stresses and increase of effectiveness of nurses in changes. Ability of responding assertively to crises or dangerous situations is patient’s life rescuing skill (Deltsidou, 2009). Evidences indicate that assertiveness has been applied as a means for effective control of stress perceived in nurses and nursing students who require high level of assertiveness in order to cope with possible stresses in their trainings. Deltsidou (2009) believed that since nurses are playing roles beyond their traditional ones, they require more assertive behavior in order to be successful in their tasks meaning defining patient’s right and managerial responsibilities (Deltsidou, 2009). Therefore, high assertiveness is necessary for nurses and nursing students who present services to individuals, family, and society in order to use effectively their professional knowledge and skills (Kave & Koc & Adamisoglo & Karog Ozoglu, 2008). Studies state that nurses and midwives are not generally assertive resulting in weakness in nursing system (Hargie & McCartan, 2004). Amicone & Miller (2015) studied assertiveness of nursing students and showed that assertiveness of M.S nursing students was low such that nursing students (level 2) obtained higher scores in assertiveness than M.S nursing students. Ebrahim, Dahshan and Ismail Keshk (2014) studied styles of conflict management and their effects on nursing personnel and indicated that avoiding conflict management has been mostly used by managers and competing management style has been hardly used by managers. Generally conflict management style of managers has been reported non-optimally. Rasetsoke (2013) studied assertive behavior of professional nurses and nurse managers in hospital management department in Pretoria region and showed that assertiveness perceived by managers and nurses is non-optimal. Both managers and professional nurses require assertiveness for effective management and control of work setting such that Castledine stated his concern on nursing position in the society as follows: Nursing is a vague, unstable, and transient role and nurses are losers against doctors (Castledine 1997). Dargon (cited from Timmins and McCabe) stated that both nurses and midwives are under oppression due to their gender and dominance of doctors (McCobe & Timmins, 2005). Farrel believed that nursing is an oppressed discipline (Farrell, 2001). On the other hand, nursing redefines itself and again it tries to become more independent from medical discipline. Extension of special roles for nurses and midwives causes that doctors lose some of their authorities and powers (Finloy, 2000). Timmins and McCabe believed that it is not clear whether today nurses are assertive or not (Timmins, McCabe, 2005). Therefore, researching about nurses’ assertiveness is...
proper concerning change of their traditional roles and conditions. It can be said that determining assertiveness of nurse managers and their conflict management are necessary but these are twice important when we know the relationship between conflict management and assertiveness in nurse managers because by studying research literatures, it was evident that some research on styles of conflict management has been conducted in Iran and world and most of them have been about educative science and educational management. But few researches have been done about the relationship between styles of conflict management and assertiveness of nursing managers. Therefore, responding the question whether there is a significant relationship between conflict management and assertiveness if nurse managers or not can result in reduction of nurses' stresses and better interaction with management and patients.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In studies conducted outside the country, Ebrahim, Dahshan and Ismai Keshk (2014) indicated that managers mostly used avoiding conflict management and they rarely used competing management style. Generally, style of conflict management of managers has not been reported properly. Deltsidou (2009) clarified that assertiveness has been optimal in nursing students. He concluded that since nurses are playing roles beyond their traditional ones, they require more assertive behavior in order to be successful in their tasks meaning defending patient's right and managerial responsibilities. Timmins and McCabe (2005) determined that management can be either a factor for assertive behavior or an obstacle for it. In the studies conducted inside the country, Fatemi et al (2014) indicated that assertiveness in a moderate level and high level of problem solving skill associates with high level of assertiveness skill and no difference has been observed between two genders for assertiveness.

III. METHODOLOGY

It is a correlative and applied study regarding goal. Statistical population is all nurse managers in Shiraz governmental hospitals affiliated to medical science university. 110 subjects were chosen among all nurse managers of Shiraz governmental hospitals. Data were gathered as follows: Robbins’ conflict management questionnaire has been used to evaluate strategies of conflict management (1991). This questionnaire includes 30 items that was used by subjects applying Likert 7 point scale ranging from one (never) to seven (always). Robbins’ conflict management questionnaire measures three competing, compromising, avoiding strategies. In this research, reliability of assertiveness questionnaire was estimated 0.83 by Cronbach alpha. Aylin Gammeril & Cheryl Ricky’s assertiveness questionnaire was used to measure assertiveness of managers (1998). This questionnaire includes 40 items and the subjects responded the questions using Likert’s 5 point scale ranging from one (never) to five (very high). The minimum score is 40 and the maximum is 200. In this research, reliability of assertiveness questionnaire was estimated 0.90 by Cronbach alpha. Information related to research literature was gathered via library including different books and papers, academic theses and research theses, domestic and foreign journals. Like other field studies, the questionnaire was used to gather data and information related to research variables.

IV. RESULTS

As seen in table 1, Skewness and kurtosis are between (2, -2) suggesting normal data

| Table 1-4: descriptive indices of research variables |
|-----------------|-------|----------------|----------------|
|                 | Frequency | Mean | Standard deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis |
| Competing management | 110      | 28.52 | 7.48              | 0.430     | -0.420   |
| Compromising management | 110      | 36.03 | 10.57             | 1.40      | 0.963    |
| Avoiding management    | 110      | 50.86 | 13.63             | 0.600     | 0.075    |
| Total conflict management | 110     | 115.41| 23.17             | 0.610     | 0.896    |
| Manager’s assertiveness | 110      | 105.47| 21.92             | -0.139    | -0.618   |

As seen in table 2, all significance levels of P-value are less than 0.05 (alpha). Therefore, the main hypothesis is accepted and no reason is found for its rejection. There is a statistically significant relationship between styles of conflict management and assertiveness of nurse managers in hospitals affiliated to Shiraz medical science university.
Table 2: correlation coefficients between styles of conflict management and assertiveness of nurse managers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Freedom degree</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
<th>result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competing management</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.324</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>H1 was confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising management</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>H1 was confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding management</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>H1 was confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total conflict management</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>H1 was confirmed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After confirmation of the relationship between independent variables (styles of conflict management and dependent variables (managers’ assertiveness), regression analysis was used to study the role of variables of conflict management styles and assertiveness. As seen in table 3, the relationship between conflict management and assertiveness is positive and significant. F- 11.98 and testing probability smaller than alpha of 0.05 suggest that significance of fitted regression model is in confident level of 95% (F= 11.98, p= 0.000). It means that 25.3% of changes in managers’ assertiveness are explainable based on conflict management styles. In other words, conflict styles of managers can predict their assertiveness.

Table 3: regression of managers’ assertiveness based on conflict management styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictive variable</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>DW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict management styles</td>
<td>0.503</td>
<td>0.253</td>
<td>11.98</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to determine which style of conflict management plays more role in prediction of managers’ assertiveness, simultaneous regression analysis of assertiveness was done based on styles of conflict management. Results are shown in table 4.

Table 4: regression coefficients of styles of conflict management on managers’ assertiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competing style</td>
<td>0.277</td>
<td>2.605</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising style</td>
<td>0.363</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding style</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.589</td>
<td>0.577</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in table 4 and concerning amounts of β and t, it is evident that compromising style (β= 0.363, t= 4.04 and p= 0.000), competing style (β= 0.277, t= 2.605 and p= 0.01) play the highest roles in prediction of managers’ assertiveness respectively.

V. DISCUSSION

One of the most complex and conflicting settings of health system is hospitals. Nursing is a part of qualitative-therapeutic care and nurses play critical role in healthcare system. Generally, nurses are working in a conflicting setting and solving such conflicts seems difficult. The role of nurse managers in health management has a more manifestation in reduction of nurses’ conflicts. Today, in spite of several studies on conflict management of nurse managers on reduction of stresses in hospital, it is observed that no study has been done on the relationship between conflict management of nurse managers and amount of their assertiveness because one of the most important factors that determine ability of managers for solving effectively conflicts is their assertive behavior. Assertiveness is one of modifiable aspects of inter-personal relationships. This skill can help individuals for a good behavior with inferior and superior coworkers. Assertiveness is defined as a verbal and non-verbal behavior and help individuals to act based on their interests, to hang on and to state their opinions, feelings, and attitudes honestly without anxiety. Assertiveness includes considering self and others’ rights. Assertive individuals respect themselves and others, they are not passive and do not let others misuse them. On the other hand, they respect others’ desires and demands and make relationship with others thoughtfully. On this basis, the present research aims to study the relationship between strategies of conflict management and assertiveness of nurse managers in hospitals affiliated to Shiraz medical science university. When studying the main hypothesis of research “there is a statistically significant relationship between styles of conflict management and Assertiveness of nurse managers in hospitals..."
affiliated to Shiraz medical science university”, results of Pearson correlation coefficient and simultaneous regression showed that there is a positively significant relationship between styles of conflict management and assertiveness of nurse managers in hospitals affiliated to Shiraz medical science university and 25.3% of changes in assertiveness of managers can be explained based on styles of conflict management. In other words, conflict styles of managers can predict their assertiveness and compromising and competing styles play the highest roles in perception of managers’ assertiveness. By studying research literature, it is evident that no study has been conducted on the relationship between variables of the present research. It can be said that this result can be in agreement with results of Rasetsoke (2013), Deltsidou (2009), Timmins & McCabe (2005), and Fatemi et al (2014). In exploration of results of the main hypothesis, it can be said that those managers who use conflict styles well, their behavior with conflict is fair. In addition, researches indicate that the presence of conflict in organizations can have positive or detrimental results. The most important damages of conflict are waste of time and energy of the organization, dissatisfaction with the organization, reduction of effectiveness of the group, forgetting main goals of the organization, incorrect judgment of people, weakness of coordination and difference between organizational groups. Also, there are some losers in the organization who escape from each other and the organization will be collapsed. When a conflict is occurred in the organization, some positive outcomes are brought about such as creation of changes, creativity, and innovation, clarification of discussions, goals, views, and opinions, increase of energy in organization, evaluation of abilities and talents of staff, possibility of better communication, solution of secret and stagnant problems, creation of good views and opinions (Tyosvald & Poon-1998). Conflict control and management result in fair and respectable behaviors to others’ rights which provide a ground for assertiveness because assertive behavior leads to better skills of inter-personal relationships. In one hand, Canter & Anglo believed that conflict management is synonym of forgiveness and sacrifice resulting in reduction of relationship between conflicting parties, creation of trust and mutual respect between staff and manager, change of organizational relations and separation of sources and association of personal units and other ones. It indicates that conflict management increases fair and respectable behavior to views of parties and it is considered as a type of assertive behavior. Concerning the results, it is suggested that Shiraz medical science university provides condition for nurse managers to promote their assertiveness and conflict management. It is possible by holding educational sessions and in-service educations. Also, the present research showed that fair management style plays a considerable role in managers’ assertiveness. Therefore, those who use more highly this managerial style should be selected as nurse managers.

CONCLUSION

The present study showed that styles of conflict management and managers’ assertiveness have a significant relationship. Therefore, conflict management can be used in hospitals to promote assertive behavior of nurse managers.

REFERENCES

the degree Master in Nursing, Department of Nursing Sciences, University Of Johannesburg.


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