

*Original Article***Delegation as Experienced by Nurse Managers***HA. Abedi*, J. Eslamian**, Sh. Salehi***, M. Alame*******Abstract**

BACKGROUND: Since it is impossible to carry out organizational activities effectively without trust, managers are recommended to expand trust atmosphere throughout their organizations due to its effect on all human's communication aspects. Delegation of authority leads to the promotion of trust throughout organization and it would be the best tool for managers to prove their trust to their personnel. Therefore, it is the nurse managers' responsibility to have adequate knowledge of delegation and to apply it. Unfortunately, no comprehensive research has been carried out in this field in Iran yet, and there is an informational gap in this field. The goal of this study was to determine the delegation as experienced by nurse managers.

METHODS: This study was a type of phenomenological qualitative research has been carried out in four selected subordinates of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences in March/June 2001. The sample size of this research consisted of 14 managers as the information sources from three different ranks of superior level (matron), mid level (supervisor) and executive level (head nurse). All participants underwent unstructured interviews as the data collecting technique for this study. The obtained results analyzed using collizie method.

RESULTS: Nurse Managers had three forms of experiences on delegation phenomenon that were as the following: Lack of authority for delegation and frustration experiences, delegation in minor affairs and lack of authority with superior's sporadic unessential interference while neither of them was perfectly acquainted with this phenomenon. Managers' experienced benefits were categorized in four dimensions as benefits concerning superiors, subordinates, hospitals and patients. Experienced barriers were barriers pertaining to superiors, subordinates and situation.

DISCUSSION: In order to apply art and skill of delegation much better in nursing management it is necessary not only for all nurse managers to get acquainted with delegation through educational services but also for nursing students as the future nurse managers. Thus, the attitude of delegation can be inserted in nursing management. Obviously a change in the attitude of matrons and superiors seems to be essential in this regard. It also should be mentioned that more qualitative and quantitative researches in this field are needed.

KEY WORDS: Delegation, time management, metrons.

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Surely, the most important source in every organization is employed manpower and occupied person that utilizes his professional talent and power when he has high motivation and engagement. So organizations should always seek the methods to promote talent and power of the staffs because no organization can meet its goals without powerful

and talented manpower ⁽¹⁾. One of the most essential and obvious methods to extract talent of personnel is confident on them, because it affects all dimensions of man's interactions ⁽²⁾. The staffs do their jobs better with confidence ⁽³⁾. Delegation is the most effective tool to attract the confidence of personnel ⁽⁴⁾. Many talented persons in every organization seek

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an opportunity to show their capacities; so more delegation leads to more possibility to appear and employ these talents. On the other hand, delegation can also make the work more attractive for managers and give them a chance to utilize their creativity and also help the managers to pay all of their attention to important cases ⁽⁵⁾. The essence of management is to achieve goals by others' help ⁽⁶⁾, because no head alone can do all organizational duties perfectly ⁽⁷⁾. Mitty consider delegation as a success key in management ⁽⁸⁾ and others regard it as blood circulation of the organization ⁽⁹⁾.

Moreover, delegation is an economic movement, because if the works which can be done by subordinates were done by superiors, it would take more expense and this shows the hidden expenses of management ⁽¹⁰⁾. In 1980s, managers were advised to allow the staffs and members of the organization to participate in decision making process, while in 1990s it stepped forward and whole options of many affairs were given to staffs ⁽¹¹⁾. A worthy and powerful manager using delegation allows the subordinates to carry out the work to the end based on their recognitions ⁽¹²⁾. Moreover, other ideas on progress and development emphasize on progression of if the duties give to them to increase their skills and abilities during working ⁽¹³⁾.

Some studies identified the employees who were not delegated are lazy, wearied and tired ⁽¹⁴⁾. Another study showed 52 percent of nurses' time work spend in subjects need no professional knowledge, so giving these cases to subordinates provide them a chance to profit more time and do the more important works ⁽¹⁵⁾. On the other hand, though delegation seems so simple but the studies have shown that the failure and disappointment of the most managers derived from inadequate delegation ⁽¹⁶⁾. In nursing, for variety of duties and plurality of the nursing wards many opportunities have been delegated in presentation system for patient care. Not only it is necessary for matrons to be familiarized with this phenomenon more than ever but they should know how to use the important skills of delegation ⁽¹⁷⁾ as delegation has been used less in matrons ⁽¹⁸⁾.

On the other hand, the lack of a comprehensive research and existed information demanded doing a research on this ground. There are limited studies in nursing management which use qualitative methods so this nursing domain demands to carry out more qualitative researches ⁽¹⁹⁾.

Determining the experiences of matrons includes the concepts, advantages and obstacles of delegation. So the main aim of the study was to evaluate how matrons experienced delegation and what the matrons' experiences are in the field of advantages and obstacles of delegation.

Methods

Adequate method to study the concept of delegation is qualitative method which is a regular issue to describe the life experiences and give sense to them ⁽²⁰⁾. In this study phenomenological method was used because the research tried to understand the basic structure of delegation phenomenon. The purpose of the phenomenological research is to describe the life experiences as they were experienced ⁽²¹⁾. The research population included all matrons as a source of information. The sample size was calculated regarding to the obtained information of primary interviews and data saturation during the study and no special formula was used. Data saturation has been also gained by repeated subjects and adding any new subjects to the previous results. Generally, the number of samples is not extensive in qualitative researches because a limited number of samples may be sufficient to detect all different aspects of the phenomenon in this kind of the research as 10 persons or more is usually enter in phenomenological studies ⁽²²⁾. In present study, the number of samples reached 14 matrons in different ranks regarding their identifications means having sufficient years of service in nursing management, having long and brilliant records in management were considered as data sources. The common tool of data collection in qualitative studies is usually open interview in which the basic and axial questions of the research are designed ⁽²³⁾. A mean

time of 40 minutes was taken for any interview with matrons of dependent hospitals of Isfahan University of medical science in a calm environment. Anymore, for more concentration on questions, disturbance of plying clients, secretors or other partners was prevented. All participants were assured from the secret of tapes' content.

After this stage, all of the recorded interviews without any separated part were transferred on the paper. Data analysis was done using collaizzi method.

Analysis stage resulted in extracting 81 codes and in the next stages these codes were divided to 7 categories. The reliability and validity of extracted findings were acknowledged by referring to the participants and presenting provided general descriptions. In this stage some cases were added or omitted to the previous subjects with the participants' idea.

Results

The participants consisted of 9 women and 5 men with the mean age of 43. They had a mean of 20.3 years of nursing services and a mean of 16.6 years of management record. All women had Bachelor of Science (BS) and 3 of men had Master of Science (MS). The findings of this study included: having no experience of delegation and sense of privation, experience of delegation in minor matters and the experience of rarely full delegation advantages (the advantages of superiors, subordinates, related to the patient and hospital) and the experienced obstacles of delegation (related to superiors, subordinates and situation).

The findings showed that matrons have not been familiarized with this phenomenon during their education meanwhile services period and they emphasized on necessity of teaching it. They have also experienced delegation in written form besides interaction with their superiors, especially matrons with administrators of hospitals. The findings also identified that none of the matrons have experienced delegation phenomenon basically and correctly in delegated status despite a long records in services and managing. On the other hand, ma-

trons in role of persons who delegate others for lacking an adequate delegation follow their superiors put down this situation for their subordinates. In this case we mention some examples of matrons' experiences related to the delegation phenomenon. "Some authorities apparently are given to head nurse, but his/her ideas will be changed in much extent" (participant 9). "I have no authority, so my personnel are inconvenienced; they think I have authority but I can do nothing" (participant 13).

"We were not delegated as a supervisor, I want some authorities to differentiate between good and bad personnel, our options are limited even we disable to give a slight promise to our personnel" (participant 12) and "We have no delegation experience and sense of privation. Some authorities are given to head nurse but his ideas will be changed in much extent" (participant 9) and "Some slight authorities were given to me, in fact I have delegation experience in slight matters" (participant 1). "Fortunately, every where I have been delegated but I had no authority on personnel of surgical room because administrator of hospital was surgeon and he himself decided about them" (participant 10).

"Some delegations were very good. I had almost whole options and I used them well" (participant 1). Experiencing little complete delegation, occasional non-based intervention of superiors and analyzing the experiences of matrons stated three forms of their delegation experiences as follows: 1- having no experience of delegation and the sense of privation, 2- having delegation in minor matters (not motivating one), 3- the experience of rarely complete delegation with occasional intervention of superiors. Participants' ideas related to the advantages of delegation are presented for examples. "Delegation makes the manager tireless" (participant 7), "manager can do important subjects when he delegates minor subjects" (participant 13), "These are the advantages of individual. I have experienced that the delegated person feels possession and consider the work for himself" (participant 3), "My ex-

perience of delegation shows that it promotes self-confidence and motivate person's creativity easily" (participant 4), "I felt active when I was delegated and this would promote quality" (participant 6)

Some advantages related to subordinates are mentioned here. "I want to train a manager with delegation and valuate him" (participant 1), "Delegation minimizes energy wasting" (participant 5), and the advantages related to hospital as following; "Delegation advantages include increasing job satisfaction and quality of cares, for instance person who selected as a staff and is delegated work better than previous and visit patients more, I myself work better with delegation" (participant 11), "delegation promotes quality of cares and patients' satisfaction" (participant 5). After analyzing, experienced advantages of delegation were classified in following format: The advantages of individual as following; clarifying manager's duties, preventing his physical weariness, checking unfinished important matters and also taking more important subjects into consideration. The advantages of subordinates included: feeling to be active, increasing job satisfaction, appraising and extracting initiative and creativity potentials, feeling possession in organization. The advantages of hospital consisted of: training future managers, speeding in performing affairs, increasing quality of works, preventing from energy waste and increasing profitability of manpower. The advantages of patient included an increase in quality of cares and the sense of more satisfaction in patient.

About obstacles of delegation we also stated ideas of 5 participants as following; "I have experienced many obstacles about delegation, managers may think the works will be done better if they, themselves, do them" (participant 2), "One of the obstacles which I have experienced is negative look of internal managers to head nurses in the field of delegation" (participant 8). Some obstacles of superiors consisted of: "One of the delegation obstacles is misuse of subordinate, I experienced that delegation sometimes caused creating a dictatorial

characteristic in delegated person" (participant 4), "Incapability of subordinates is also one of the obstacles of delegation" (participant 14). The obstacles of subordinates: "One of delegation obstacles is legal limits of superiors and plurality of decision making centers which makes us confused about what we do or what authorities we have" (participant 11).

The obstacles of situation: experienced obstacles of matrons were classified in three categories; **A:** obstacles of superiors considered as the most important experienced obstacles included: existing inadequate delegation view in administrators, believing that the manager himself can do the work better, inadequate information of head about delegation phenomenon, inexperienced head, fear of better performance by subordinate makes superior manager feels danger of a successor or competitor which is unfavorable for him; **B:** obstacles of subordinates is in the next ranking of importance regarding to participants' experiences and included: misuse of delegated options by subordinates, incapability of subordinate, accepting no responsibility and its accompanied authorities to comfort and renew subordinates; **C:** obstacles of situation included: legal limitation of superiors, plurality of decision making centers, lack of personnel and existing inadequate correlation between superior and subordinate.

Discussion

One of the findings of present study was extracting the sense of privation in matrons which was also mentioned in a qualitative research by Ingersoll et al in 1999. He believed that it derives from ambiguity of fulfillment in managers' roles related to the decision making in hospital ⁽²⁴⁾. About experienced advantages of delegation related to subordinates and their job satisfaction, in a study of Acron et al entitled "Decentralization as a determinant of autonomy, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment among nurse managers" the concept of decentralization was defined as delegation to decide in operative levels which increased authority, job satisfaction, and organ-

ized engagement ⁽²⁵⁾. Moreover, one of the experienced advantages of delegation related to the patient in present study was improvement the quality of cares that is compatible with Jung's et al study entitled that their results showed delegating some duties from nurses to aid – nurses caused a significant improvement in nursing cares ⁽²⁶⁾.

Besides the emphasis of all participants in this study on necessity of training and more familiarity with this important managing skill, Almaaith and Momani in their training needs evaluation of Jordan nurse in 1999 perceived that they should specialize their forth priority of education to delegation training ⁽²⁷⁾, so it demands more attention . The first focus is that matrons should participate in training during services period, and second, this subject should be added to education curriculum of nursing students as future managers. Experienced advantages of participated matrons in this study showed the great effect of delegation advantages in which minor experience or improper delegation may be resulted to experience disadvantages, and researchers have tried to draw attention of all managers of health and treatment centers to this point till using complete and basic delegation would not deprive patient, organization and his staff from its profits. The most important delegation obstacles experienced by participants of this study were non existence of delegation attitude in both superior matrons and internal nursing management hierarchy which demand a special attention to change this viewpoint. Of course, it should be always consider that delegation performs during a gradual process. A comparison between context of general management and nursing management with the findings of this study showed some cases such as subordinates' misuse, plurality of decision

making centers and non existence of an adequate correlation between superior and subordinate which were new aspects of this study. These subjects were not mentioned by the participants in previous reviewed context by the researchers. Therefore, it is necessary for administrators of health and treatment centers to remove mentioned obstacles in management context besides eliminating new discussed obstacles in this study by writing delegated cases, mentioning the limitation to perform work by two delegated sides to clarify any ambiguity, preventing future misuses, decreasing decision making centers and also proper and basic correlation between subordinates and superiors. Totally, in future as well as today controlling hidden processes of management will be the only way of success in all organizations and one controlling way is delegation. It should be mentioned that present study is the first one regarding its method (phenomenology in nursing management) and further qualitative and quantitative researches is needed.

The results of this study follow by some suggestions: 1- Creating and holding training plans for more familiarity of matrons and their superiors with this important management skill and consequently changing their views and spreading delegation phenomenon in management of hospitals. 2- Presenting subordinates' abilities to their superiors in every situation to improve confidence in superiors and encourage them to delegate minors, consequently this result in a bilateral confidence in both which is the best form of collaboration. 3- Making a correct and basic correlation to clarify expects, eliminate vague points and present feed back 4- Writing delegation cases of subordinates 5- Holding periodic monitoring to carry out reforming to do the next stages of delegation.

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