

The Impact Of The Leadership Style Of Middle Managers To The Job Enjoyment Of Nurses In A Tertiary Hospital In Riyadh

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Abstract:

Background:

Nurse managers play a vital role in shaping nurses' job enjoyment, which influences retention, satisfaction, and patient care outcomes. Transformational leadership has been shown to enhance motivation and satisfaction, while passive or authoritarian styles contribute to stress and turnover. However, limited research has examined how leadership styles specifically affect job enjoyment in Saudi tertiary hospitals.

Objective:

This study investigated the leadership styles of middle nurse managers at KSUMC-King Abdulaziz University Hospital and their relationship with nurses' job enjoyment. The objectives were to: (1) identify the predominant leadership style, (2) assess nurses' job enjoyment, and (3) determine associations between leadership style, job enjoyment, and staff retention.

Methods:

A descriptive quantitative correlational design was employed. Eighty-five registered nurses from a Riyadh tertiary hospital participated. Data were collected using two validated instruments: the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) and the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). Descriptive statistics summarized participant demographics, leadership styles, and job satisfaction, while correlational analyses examined relationships between variables.

Results:

Most participants were female (80%), aged 35–44 years (43.5%), and non-Saudi (82.4%). Transformational leadership ($M = 2.57$) and transactional leadership ($M = 2.55$) were the most prevalent styles, whereas passive-avoidant leadership was least common ($M = 1.30$). The overall job satisfaction score was 3.75, with highest ratings in "nature of work," "supervision," and "coworkers," and lowest in "operating conditions" and "fringe benefits." Significant correlations were identified: transformational leadership positively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = .388, p < .001$), transactional leadership showed a weaker positive association ($r = .262, p = .015$), while passive-avoidant leadership was negatively correlated ($r = -.259, p = .017$).

Conclusion:

Leadership style strongly influences nurses' job enjoyment in tertiary hospitals. Transformational leadership was most closely linked to higher job satisfaction, while passive-avoidant leadership diminished it. These findings underscore the importance of fostering transformational leadership among nurse managers to enhance nurse well-being, retention, and quality of patient care within Saudi Arabia's healthcare system.

Key Word: Leadership style, Middle manager, Job satisfaction, Staff Retention

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I. Introduction

Leadership is often understood to be the skill of motivating others to reach their full potential in order to complete any work, goal, or project. Since people and historical situations have shifted over the years, concepts of leadership have evolved and taken on new forms, each with its own unique characteristics (Charteris-Black, 2019)

The role of nurse managers is pivotal in shaping the work experience of healthcare professionals, in the complex and high stakes environment of a tertiary hospital. Nurse managers are often positioned between senior

leadership and frontline staff, significant influence over organizational culture, effective operation, and employee satisfaction.

In Riyadh, where there is rapid growth and modern healthcare advancement, understanding the fluctuation between the leadership style and job enjoyment is crucial. Working in a tertiary hospital, nurses face different challenges and responsibilities, and nurse managers have a big part in this in which approaches of leadership style to be adopted to mitigate those challenges.

Given that nurses make up the biggest occupational group of employees in medical institutions, job enjoyment ought to be a major priority for healthcare organisations and their constituents. Numerous research demonstrates that enhancing their level of job happiness ought to be a top priority when tackling issues pertaining to meeting and upholding quality requirements, guaranteeing patient contentment, and retaining personnel. While numerous published studies have emphasized the value of leadership, very few have linked different leadership philosophies to how much nurses enjoy their jobs.

This study aims to examine the impact of different leadership styles of nurse managers on the job enjoyment of nurses in tertiary hospitals. It seeks to identify the leadership approaches commonly utilized and to determine the relationship between leadership style and nurses' level of job enjoyment.

II. Material And Methods

This study utilized a descriptive, quantitative, correlational research design to examine the relationship between the leadership styles of nurse middle managers and nurses' job enjoyment. The design aimed to provide a comprehensive description of nurses' levels of job enjoyment in relation to their perceptions of their managers' leadership behaviors. The analyses focused on identifying significant differences and relationships among variables rather than predicting outcomes or establishing causal links.

Study Design: Descriptive, quantitative, correlational research design

Study Location: This study was conducted in a specialized tertiary hospital in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, focusing on ophthalmology and otorhinolaryngology services.

Study Duration: The research was carried out over a seven-month period, from March to October 2025.

Sample Size: The target population comprised registered nurses working in the nursing units of King Saud University Medical City–King Abdulaziz University Hospital (KSUMC-KAUH). A purposive sampling method was initially planned to ensure that participants possessed characteristics relevant to the research objectives, particularly nurses with direct experience under middle managers. However, due to time constraints and limited response rates, a convenience sampling approach was ultimately adopted. A total of 85 nurses participated in the study, representing over 30% of the total nursing workforce in the hospital. Although this number did not reach the calculated sample size of 163 (based on the Raosoft online calculator, Raosoft, 2004), it was considered sufficiently representative of the target population for meaningful analysis.

Subject & selection method: Participant recruitment was coordinated with the KSUMC Nursing Research Unit. A link to the online survey was distributed through institutional email to nurses at KSUMC-KAUH and further shared via community messaging platforms such as WhatsApp to encourage participation.

Inclusion criteria consisted of

1. Registered staff nurses currently assigned to the nursing units of KSUMC-KAUH,
2. Supervised by a head nurse or acting head nurse, and
3. Completed at least an 80-day probationary period.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Nurses who were not affiliated with KSUMC-KAUH or were non-nursing personnel were excluded from the study.

Procedure methodology:

After obtaining the necessary ethical and institutional approvals, the research team communicated with the developers and copyright holders of the survey instruments via email and other official channels to secure permission for their use. Following authorization, data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to eligible participants. Participation was voluntary, and responses were collected anonymously to ensure confidentiality. All data were stored securely and accessible only to the research team.

Data Collection

A structured electronic questionnaire was developed to gather both demographic and study-related data. The instrument included questions on participants' demographic characteristics as well as validated measures assessing leadership style and job enjoyment. Clear instructions were provided to guide participants through completion of the survey.

Invitations to participate were distributed via email in coordination with the Corporate Nursing Affairs–Nursing Research Unit, emphasizing the purpose of the study and the importance of the participants' input. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) was used to assess leadership style, administered through Google Forms to maximize accessibility and response convenience. The data collection period spanned from April to June 2025. Upon completion of the survey period, data were exported and reviewed for completeness and accuracy.

Job satisfaction was measured using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), a validated instrument that assesses nine facets of job satisfaction: pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, coworkers, nature of work, and communication. The JSS consists of 36 items rated on a Likert scale, capturing the extent to which participants agree or disagree with statements about their work experiences. This instrument has been widely used in nursing and organizational research to provide a comprehensive understanding of employees' job satisfaction.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analyzed using statistical software, SPSS version 29. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) were calculated to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and the main study variables. Inferential analyses included an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare mean scores among leadership styles, Pearson correlation analysis to examine the relationships between leadership styles and job satisfaction. Statistical significance was established at $p < .05$.

III. Result

A total of 85 nurses participated in the study. The majority were female (80%), within the age group of 35–44 years (43.5%). Most respondents held a bachelor's degree in nursing (87.1%) and were non-Saudi nationals (82.4%). Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table no 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 85)

Variable	n	%
Age		
18-24	2	2.4
25-34	29	34.1
35-44	37	43.5
45-54	14	16.5
55-64	3	3.5
Nationality		
Saudi	15	17.6
Non-Saudi	70	82.4
Gender		
Male	17	20.0
Female	68	80.0
Educational Attainment		
Associate/Diploma	11	12.9
Bachelor	74	87.1

The internal consistency of the study instruments was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = .956$), indicating a very high degree of internal consistency among its 45 items. Similarly, the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) exhibited good reliability ($\alpha = .810$) across 36 items. These results confirm that both instruments were reliable measures for assessing leadership styles and job satisfaction among nurses in this study.

Descriptive analysis of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) revealed that transformational leadership ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 0.78$) was the most commonly perceived style among nurse managers, followed closely by transactional leadership ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 0.75$). In contrast, passive-avoidant leadership ($M = 1.30$, $SD = 0.86$) and laissez-faire leadership ($M = 1.21$, $SD = 0.97$) were the least reported. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for leadership styles.

Table no 2: Descriptive Statistics of Leadership Styles Among Nurse Middle Managers.

Leadership Style	Mean (M)	Std Deviation (SD)
Transformational	2.57	0.78

Transactional	2.55	0.75
Passive-Avoidant	1.30	0.86
Laissez-Faire	1.21	0.97

The Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) indicated an overall moderate level of job satisfaction among nurses ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.49$). Among the subscales, the highest satisfaction was noted in nature of work ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.90$) and supervision ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.95$). Conversely, the lowest satisfaction was reported in operating conditions ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.67$) and fringe benefits ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.91$). Preliminary assessment of the data distribution was conducted to verify the assumptions of normality. Descriptive statistics in Table 3 showed that data were normally distributed, with acceptable skewness and kurtosis values. The results confirmed the goodness of the scale and the normality of the distribution.

Table no 3: Job Satisfaction of Staff Nurses.

Job Satisfaction Subscale (N=85)	Mean (M)	Std Deviation (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis
Pay	3.41	0.86	.039	.264
Promotion	3.82	0.79	.517	.610
Supervision	4.36	0.95	.167	-1.162
Fringe Benefits	3.13	0.91	-.062	-.179
Contingent Rewards	3.52	0.80	.090	.051
Operating Conditions	3.01	0.67	-.171	.437
Coworkers	4.00	0.95	.013	.235
Nature of Work	4.43	0.90	-.159	-.224
Communication	4.10	1.04	.001	-.666
Overall Job Satisfaction	3.75	0.49		

Note. Higher scores indicate greater satisfaction.

The findings in Table 4 indicate significant relationships between middle managers' leadership styles and the job satisfaction of staff nurses. Transformational leadership showed a moderate positive correlation with job satisfaction ($r = 0.388$, $p < .001$), suggesting that nurses led by transformational leaders—those who inspire, motivate, and provide individualized support—tend to experience higher satisfaction in their roles. Transactional leadership also demonstrated a weak but significant positive correlation ($r = 0.262$, $p = .015$), implying that structured reward-based interactions contribute modestly to satisfaction. In contrast, both passive-avoidant ($r = -0.259$, $p = .017$) and laissez-faire ($r = -0.351$, $p < .001$) leadership styles were negatively correlated with job satisfaction, indicating that disengaged or non-involved leadership behaviors are associated with lower levels of satisfaction among nurses. These results highlight the importance of transformational leadership among middle managers in promoting a positive and satisfying work environment, while passive and laissez-faire approaches appear to undermine nurses' job satisfaction.

Table no 4: Correlation Between Leadership Styles and Job Satisfaction.

Leadership Style	Job Satisfaction (r)	p-value
Transformational	0.388	< .001
Transactional	0.262	.015
Passive-Avoidant	-0.259	.017
Laissez Faire	-0.351	< .001

Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Job Satisfaction

A multiple linear regression analysis (Table no 5) was conducted to examine whether nurse managers' leadership styles predicted nurses' overall job satisfaction. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(4, 80) = 7.54$, $p < .001$, indicating that the set of leadership variables significantly predicted job satisfaction. The model explained 27.4% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R = .523$, $R^2 = .274$, Adjusted $R^2 = .238$).

Among the predictors, transformational leadership emerged as a significant positive predictor of job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.63$, $t = 3.10$, $p = .003$), whereas laissez-faire leadership showed a significant negative association ($\beta = -0.73$, $t = -2.56$, $p = .013$). Transactional leadership ($\beta = -0.39$, $t = -1.88$, $p = .064$) and passive-avoidant leadership ($\beta = 0.48$, $t = 1.71$, $p = .091$) were not statistically significant predictors.

Preliminary diagnostic checks confirmed that assumptions of linearity, independence of errors (Durbin-Watson ≈ 2), homoscedasticity, multicollinearity ($VIF < 10$), and normality of residuals were met. Overall, the findings suggest that transformational leadership is positively associated with greater job satisfaction among staff nurses, whereas laissez-faire leadership is linked with lower satisfaction levels.

Table no 5: Correlation Between Leadership Styles and Job Satisfaction.

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	3.470	0.191	—	18.19	< .001

Transformational	0.394	0.127	0.63	3.10	.003
Transactional	-0.254	0.135	-0.39	-1.88	.064
Passive-Avoidant	0.275	0.161	0.48	1.71	.091
Laissez-Faire	-0.367	0.144	-0.73	-2.56	.013

IV. Discussion

This research examined the influence of nurse managers' leadership approaches on nurses' job satisfaction within tertiary hospitals in Riyadh. Its objectives were to determine the leadership style most demonstrated by nurse managers, assess overall staff satisfaction, and explore the relationship between leadership style and nurses' sense of enjoyment in their work.

Findings revealed that transformational leadership played a central role in producing positive leadership outcomes. Among the three leadership styles analyzed, transformational behaviors were most prevalent with the highest mean score ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 0.78$), followed by transactional practices ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 0.75$). This indicates that both approaches are commonly observed among the participants, with a slight preference toward transformational leadership. These results are in line with prior studies emphasizing the prominence of transformational leadership in healthcare, where it is linked to stronger staff motivation and improved performance (Goens & Giannotti, 2024). In contrast, the passive-avoidant style appeared least frequently in this study.

The participating nurses offered valuable insights about their workplace through the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), which produced several notable findings. Among the areas measured, *nature of work* ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.90$) and *supervision* ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.95$) received the highest scores. These results suggest that nurses generally view their roles as meaningful and fulfilling, while also holding favorable perceptions of their supervisors. This observation aligns with earlier studies showing that supportive leadership enhances satisfaction, helps prevent burnout, lowers stress, and promotes better patient outcomes (Huday et al., 2024). Similarly, Lucas et al. (2025) highlighted that a supportive practice environment is strongly linked to higher nurse satisfaction and reduced burnout, while Lin et al. (2020) likewise noted greater satisfaction among nurses in positive work settings.

Other aspects, such as *communication* ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.04$) and *coworker relationships* ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.95$), were also rated positively. Hanafin et al. (2022) reported comparable findings, noting that nurses expressed moderate to high satisfaction with their peer relationships, as shown by a 77% mean score reflecting teamwork, encouragement from colleagues, and enjoyment of collaboration. Hahm, Gu, and Sok (2024) further found that communication skills, workplace cohesion, and mutual trust among staff were strong predictors of job satisfaction. Taken together, these results highlight that social and relational dynamics in the workplace play a critical role in motivating and sustaining employees.

In contrast, the lowest average ratings were observed in the domains of *operating conditions* ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.67$) and *fringe benefits* ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.91$). These results reflect dissatisfaction among nurses regarding workplace systems, infrastructure, and non-salary benefits. Evidence from Jordan similarly showed that insufficient fringe benefits negatively influence both retention and satisfaction levels among nurses (Hamdan et al., 2024). This suggests that these organizational aspects remain in areas of concern that warrant administrative attention.

Nurses' satisfaction is strongly shaped by the leadership approach of their managers and the extent to which they feel empowered in their roles (Bellali et al., 2023). When the relationship between perceived leadership styles and job satisfaction was examined, transformational leadership emerged as the most influential factor ($r = .388$, $p < .001$). Staff working under managers who modeled transformational and supportive leadership behaviors reported higher satisfaction and a stronger willingness to remain in their positions. This outcome supports earlier findings by Specchia et al. (2021) and Shahzad et al. (2024), who emphasized the positive impact of transformational leadership on staff morale, commitment, and overall performance. Such leadership not only fosters loyalty to the organization but also helps reduce burnout, ultimately enhancing nurse retention.

Although transactional leadership also demonstrated a positive link with job satisfaction, its effect was weaker compared to transformational leadership ($r = .262$, $p = .015$). This result contrasts with Albagawi (2019), who reported no meaningful association between transactional leadership and job satisfaction in a study conducted in Hail, Saudi Arabia. In that context, transactional behaviors from managers neither increased nor decreased staff satisfaction levels.

On the other hand, passive-avoidant leadership showed a clear negative relationship with job satisfaction, as evidenced by a significant inverse correlation ($r = -.259$, $p = .017$). This indicates that higher perceptions of passive-avoidant behaviors were associated with lower satisfaction among nurses. These findings align with Al-Bashaireh et al. (2025), whose cross-sectional research in the United Arab Emirates demonstrated that passive-avoidant leadership undermines satisfaction by pressuring staff to rigidly follow established rules without offering adequate support for individual needs.

These findings also align with the principles of the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Magnet Recognition Program®, which identifies transformational leadership as a core component of nursing excellence and organizational success. Magnet-designated hospitals are characterized by supportive leadership, structural empowerment, and environments that promote professional growth and job satisfaction among nurses (American Nurses Credentialing Center, 2023). Studies have shown that Magnet hospitals consistently demonstrate higher levels of nurse satisfaction, lower turnover, and improved patient outcomes compared with non-Magnet institutions (Aiken et al., 2011). In the context of tertiary hospitals in Riyadh, these results suggest that cultivating transformational leadership behaviors could help build a “Magnet-like” culture—one that enhances nurses’ engagement, satisfaction, and retention. Strengthening leadership development and aligning organizational practices with Magnet principles may therefore serve as an effective framework for advancing nursing excellence in Saudi Arabia.

Overall, the results highlight that supportive and empowering leadership styles are critical for improving job fulfillment. Healthcare organizations are therefore encouraged to invest in leadership training that prioritizes transformational competencies while also addressing systemic concerns such as inadequate fringe benefits and operating conditions. This could offer a comprehensive path toward building a more engaged, motivated, and resilient nursing workforce.

V. Conclusion

Leadership style strongly influences nurses’ job enjoyment in tertiary hospitals. Transformational leadership was most closely linked to higher job satisfaction, while passive-avoidant leadership diminished it. These findings underscore the importance of fostering transformational leadership among nurse managers to enhance nurse well-being, retention, and quality of patient care within Saudi Arabia’s healthcare system.

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