

STUDYING THREE MANAGEMENT SKILLS AMONG MIDWIFERY MANAGERS OF IRANIAN UNIVERSITIES OF MEDICAL SCIENCES IN 2015

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Published online: 15 May 2016

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Nowadays, for organizational success, managers should accept multiple roles that each requires trainings for specific skills. This issue especially is much more important in health care systems that are responsible for improving the health of the society. Therefore, this study was aimed to determine three managerial skills among midwifery managers Iranian Medical Sciences Universities.

Method: This study was descriptive and data collection method was cross-sectional. The subjects in this study included members of the Board of Midwifery and Reproductive Health, bachelors of midwifery in the field of health care and members of midwifery faculty from eight Iranian universities of medical sciences. Collecting information was performed through demographic characteristics questionnaire and triple skills of management researcher-made questionnaire. Validity and reliability were determined through content validity and Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = 0.88$ and test results were evaluated and analyzed by inferential statistics (ANOVA, Kruskal-Wallis test) which $p < 0.05$ was considered as the significant level.

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doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jfas.v8i3s.270>



Results: The results of this study showed that in the field of knowledge, managers prioritized the skills as follows: the human-communicational skills (MR =69.05), technical skills (MR =50.31) and theoretical-cognitive skills (MR =47.57). Also prioritization of skills from the perspective of the study population in the field of importance was human-communicational skills (MR =82.23), technical skills (MR =76.57) and theoretical-cognitive skills (MR =75.47).

Discussion: According to the results of this study, the importance of human-communicational skills in all the hierarchy and categories of management is one of the essential tasks of managers for promoting organizations toward the achievement of their goals efficiently and effectively.

Keywords: Managers, Management Skills, Human Skills, Midwives

1. INTRODUCTION

The success of any organization depends on the proper use of tools, equipment, money, raw materials and human resources and its achievement is possible if we use the skills and abilities of its members in an appropriate manner (1).

Managers in the organizational hierarchy are divided into three categories: senior, middle and junior managers who formally been appointed to a position of an organization with legitimate authority and they are responsive to the organization about the results (2). Therefore, they play an important role in achieving organizational goals. In fact managers by considering the limitations of the organization (staffs, resources) guide and control people in order to achieve short-term and long-term goals. Hence for an effective and efficient management process tasks are on managers such as planning, organizing, leadership, resource management and mobilization by considering the financial conditions of the organization (1).

Managers must have certain innate and acquired abilities to achieve success, effectiveness, efficiency and productivity as well as technical, behavioral, conceptual, design and problem solving skills (1). In fact, the competence of administrators in terms of management skills is one of the factors that sustain any organization success. Efficiency and effectiveness of managers, requires management skills and applications of their skills in different situations and positions to assist organizations in achieving their goals (3). In addition to roles and management skills, these people should have interpersonal, technical management, politics and commercial competences and they should strengthen and develop these features in themselves (2).

The issue of leadership and management in health systems has more different features and complex position. Because in this system the main recipients of services are all segments of the society, especially the vulnerable groups of children and women who, among all age groups, have allocated most of the population to themselves. Women in all communities have a special place because they are the basis of family health and in addition to the management of family members, they are the basic pattern of education and promotion of healthy lifestyle for the next generation. So investing in the health of these people as one of the main recipients of health care services is an investment in future generations in a way that it could be considered as a guarantee for health of future generations. Physicians and other professions related to the medical team, in particular midwifery community, are responsible for maternal health so that, by delivering their best performance and taking the lowest cost, they can increase the quality of offered health care to mothers.

Currently midwives are introduced as the main providers of midwifery practice and also the potential effective factor on the reduction of maternal mortality to serve two vulnerable groups in the society, namely women and children, by their unique role. Midwives are the main owners of their profession in terms of policy and decision-making to improve the health of vulnerable groups in the society and therefore, strengthening their management skills to employ them in different positions is a necessity given that having the expertise (from education) and skills (from experience) in order to achieve human-communication and visual-perceptual skills in managers are considered the most important needs of every organization (4).

Ansari and Tahmasebi Nejad in their study that was titled “managers viewpoint on the relation between management skills of women with their job promotion to the highest levels of management in all the central offices of Mazandaran” stated that organizations’ managers should have specialized skills to promote and develop in management career and use them to help organization in achieving the objectives and also promote in their career (5).

Shah Naser in his study titled “Evaluation of middle managers for achieving senior management position in the municipality of Isfahan” showed that managers of all three categories according to the type of their work require general skills (technical, conceptual and human) and middle managers who have achieved senior management positions have had the necessary specialized skills (4).

So having technical expertise in managers and then improving other management skills not only will result in easier achievement of organization goals, better guiding of employees and better understanding of the consequences of decisions in the organization (2) but also could

reduce additional costs due to the appointment of multiple deputies to respond to specialized problems and obstacles and also provides the possibility of career advancement to higher positions for other managers and employees. Accordingly, and considering the fact that no studies have been conducted in the field of reviewing management skills in the Medical Sciences, nor in Iran neither in other countries, this study was aimed to evaluate and prioritize three management skills of midwifery managers at selected Universities of Medical Sciences of the country. In this regard, in order to prioritize the mentioned triple skills, we used the midwifery specialists, midwifery faculty members and also midwifery experts' opinions in the field of healthcare. We hope that the present study would be an effective step towards identifying and also strengthening the quality and quantity of mentioned skills to improve midwifery managers' appointment in the country.

2. METHOD

This study was descriptive correlational and data collection method was cross-sectional. The study population consisted of members of the Board Commission of Midwifery and Reproductive Health, Adjutancy midwives of health and treatment and academic midwives from Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery from Isfahan University of Medical Sciences and seven selected Universities of Medical Sciences of Iran (Mashhad, Tehran, Arak, Shahrekord, Kerman, Shiraz, Zahedan). The sampling method in this study was census and the estimated sample size was 160 participants; based on the exclusion criteria (unwillingness to participate and providing incomplete questionnaires) 10 participants were excluded from the study, so a total of 150 samples were collected.

In this study, data gathering tool was a questionnaire which was prepared by reviewing available literature on triple management skills and also questionnaires of management challenges was prepared by interviewing five midwifery and healthcare management authorities. Test-retest and Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.88$) were used to determine questionnaire's reliability.

Also content validity was used to determine its validity; so that the questionnaires were given to 10 professors and faculty members of midwifery department and management and information department of University of Isfahan Medical Sciences and then based on their recommendations necessary reforms were conducted and then questionnaires were given to the samples.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections: individual characteristics, visual-perceptual skills (access to new management contents, new management methods, selection of efficient management methods, creativity and innovation, partnership models, etc.), human-communication skills (how to communicate with the manager, crisis management, human resource management, management of organizational atmosphere, etc.), specialized technical skills (problem solving ability, using software, solving administrative issues and dealing with the crisis, time management, running and organizing the sector, strategic planning, etc.)

Visual- perceptual skills included 8 questions, specialized technical skills included 28 questions and human- communication skills included 9 questions that the ratings in the knowledge part was as " I know and I do not know" and in importance part it was based on the likert scale from " very high to very low" (score of 0 to 4). To complete the questionnaires by faculty members and experts working at Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, the researcher attended the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery and Health and treatment deputies. Also to complete the questionnaires by members of the Board Commission of reproductive health and midwifery, with the coordination Of the representative of midwifery group of Isfahan Medical University at the Board, the questionnaires were given to the chairman of the board and other members. To complete the questionnaire at selected universities, a number of questionnaires were given to the studied group by designated questioners at the universities and number of universities and a number of questionnaires were given in person (by the researcher) therefore communication between the researchers and questioners was conducted by phone and e-mail. At the end details of the study were analyzed using inferential statistics (ANOVA, Kruskal-Wallis) and SPSS 18 statistical software.

3. RESULTS

Frequency distribution of demographic characteristics of studied subjects was as follows: the minimum age of subjects was 25 and its maximum was 54 years, the majority (73.6 percent) was married with two children (41.7 percent) and had master degree (43.8 percent). Also in terms of employment status a significant percentage was officially employed (69.5 percent) and a significant percentage of them never had management experiences (38.8 percent).

Data from prioritization in the field of knowledge about management triple skills are as follows (Table 1):

Human-communication skills had the highest mean score of knowledge (with an average of 69.05) and there was a significant difference between the three study groups in this area ($P=0.03$). Technical skills had the second priority (with an average of 50.31) and the difference between the three study groups in this area was significant difference ($P=0.045$). Visual-perceptual skills had the lowest average score (mean of 47.57) and a significant difference was observed between the three study groups in this area ($P=0.047$).

Also in the field of importance of management triple skills, data of the study for prioritization of the mentioned skills are as follows (Table 2):

Human-communication skills with an overall average score of 82.23 was in the first place and there was no significant difference in this area between the three study groups ($p = 0.82$). Specialized technical skills with an overall average of 76.57 was in the second place and the difference between the three study groups was not significant in this area ($P=0.46$). And finally the lowest average score for importance (75.47) belonged to the visual-perceptual skills and in this regard there was no significant difference between the studied groups ($p = 0.42$).

4. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of this study, human-communication skills in both sectors of knowledge and importance had the first priority compared to both visual-perceptual and specialized technical skills. However, specialized technical skill was expected to be in the first place as healthcare posts are operational in the hierarchy of management.

In the section of knowledge about management skills data from the study showed that the average score of management knowledge in the human-communication skill area had a significant difference between the three groups ($P=0.03$). The highest score in section of knowledge of human-communication skills belonged to the reproductive health and midwifery board (average 86.1) and the lowest score to faculty members (average 61.8). As an explanation for the results obtained in this section it could be stated that high mean score of knowledge among the study population in terms of human-communication skill, suggests that midwives, at any job stage and position have received the highest trainings in the field of human-communication skill and therefore they have adequate knowledge in this field. In this regard, Roghani et al in their research entitled as “reviewing the management skills of managers and their efficiency in the organizations and governmental administrations in Bojnourd city” indicated that managers have more or less information of all specialized technical, human-communication and visual-perceptual management skills and there is a

correlation between the information level of managers from specialized technical, human-communication and visual-perceptual skills of management with their effectiveness (6).

Also Imani in his study about the relation between managerial skills and organizational atmosphere of schools and teachers' job satisfaction from their perspective showed that managers, respectively, have the necessary human-communication and visual-perceptual skills and there is a significant relation between the skills and job satisfaction of teachers and staff (7).

In the field of importance of management skills, the findings of this study indicated that the human-communication skills in this sector have the first priority too. And the highest score in importance of human-communication skills belonged to the reproductive health and midwifery board (average 83.7) and the lowest score to midwifery graduates of healthcare area (average 81.4) and there was no significant difference between the three groups in this regard ($p = 0.82$).

Similarly, the results of Afshari et al research entitled "management triple skills (visual-perceptual, human-communication and specialized technical) in directors of physical education organizations across the country" showed that from the perspective of sports management experts and managers, human-communication skills had more priority than specialized technical and visual-perceptual skills. This is while specialized technical skill was expected to be in the first place as this post is operational in the hierarchy of management. The results are consistent with the results of our research in terms of the importance of skills (8).

The findings from Esfandiari and Bagheri Moghaddam research entitled "the identification of human-communication and specialized technical skills of managers of specialized libraries" showed that from the perspective of managers and professors, the most essential human-communication skill needed for specialized libraries is human-communication skills. This finding is because the operators of libraries, in order to serve excellently, should have an effective relationship with clientele (9). Ahmadi and Doost Mohammadlou in a study entitled "examining the relation between specialized technical, human-communication and visual-perceptual skills of managers with the effectiveness of Shiraz's district one high schools" concluded that human and visual-perceptual skills of managers had a significant impact on the effectiveness of the organizations while there was no significant relation between the manager's specialized technical skills and effectiveness of organization (10).

As it became clear, other studies were also in line with our study that human-communication skills are very valuable for management position. It is important to note that superior

managers will consider human-communication skills important when they have a proper understanding of specialized technical skills; in other words, if they are specialists in that profession or field of activity.

On the other hand the results of this study were not consistent with this principle that the most important skill for senior managers is visual-perceptual skill and for junior managers is technical skill and middle managers need to have all three skills equally (11) because majority of the participants in this research, with any degree of management and position, have reported that the most important skill for midwifery managers is human-communication skills. While these skills in management books are mentioned as a joint indicator in all three aspects of management and have equal importance among all three levels of management.

An important reason for mentioning human skills prior to the two other skills is high level of knowledge among the research population; so it is very common to have the first place in prioritizing either in the area of knowledge or important. Regarding the profession of midwifery, according to the findings of this study, we could say that perhaps because they always try to improve the health of vulnerable groups of mothers and infants, they know that increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of activities would depend on the promotion of human communication skills. It seems that interactions between the group of senior colleagues and lower ranking personnel are necessary to improve the fulfillment of specialized technical skills which demands appropriate organizing and planning approaches, since human interactions are inevitable in management, controlling processes and job activities. So in the opinion of the studied subjects human communication skills were more important than technical and visual-perceptual skills.

5. CONCLUSION

According to the results of this study that showed high knowledge of midwives about human communication skills and the importance of this skill from their perspective, it seems that they consider this issue as a basic background for implementing better technical skills and using appropriate visual-perceptual skills to improve service processes. However, according to our expectations from the system about recruiting midwifery managers in various management positions and in the senior, middle and junior categories in order to solve the problems of midwives we suggest to improve all of the mentioned management skills in them toward the principles related to health and after acquisition of necessary expertise, capabilities and motivation, giving better services to service receivers could be achieved.

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Table 1: comparing the mean score (score from 100) of management triple skills (visual-perceptual, human-communication, specialized technical) of midwives in prospective of the three groups

Skill Knowledge	average	Standard deviation	ANOVA	
			P	F
visual-perceptual	47.5	83.2	0.047	2.203
human-communication	69.5	36.8	0.03	2.84
specialized technical	50.31	33.7	0.045	2.23

Table 2: comparing the mean score (score from 100) of importance of the management triple skills (visual-perceptual, human-communication, specialized technical) of midwives in prospective of the three groups

Skill Importance	average	Standard deviation	ANOVA	
			P	F
visual-perceptual	75.4	18.3	0.087	0.42
human-communication	82.2	16.7	0.19	0.82
specialized technical	76.5	15.1	0.77	0.46

How to cite this article:

PourKazemi R, . Beigi M, Kohan S, Nateri NS. Studying three management skills among midwifery managers of Iranian universities of medical sciences in 2015. J. Fundam. Appl. Sci., 2016, 8(3S), 966-975.