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The relationship between nurse leader emotional intelligence and executive leadership performance

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Problem: Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognize, understand, manage one's emotions, and influence the emotions of others. The impact of EI on employee turnover, employee engagement, and patient satisfaction within a complex culturally diverse healthcare environment has not been examined.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to explore relationships between nurse leaders' emotional intelligence, personal and professional characteristics, and executive leadership performance. Findings may be used to refine nurse leader recruitment protocols, leadership development, and succession planning within complex, culturally diverse healthcare organizations.

Research Questions: (1) Is there a relationship between the nurse leader personal and professional characteristics and emotional intelligence scores? (2) Is there a relationship between nurse leadership performance measures and emotional intelligence scores? (3) Are there differences in nurse leader performance measures between nurse leaders reporting high EI compared to nurse leaders reporting low EI?

Methods: This study used a descriptive cross-sectional design. A convenience sample of 108 nurse leaders employed by a 5-hospital health system in Arizona was included.

Outcomes: There was a significant correlation between nurse leader education and perception of emotion. Additionally, there was a relationship between nurse leader position and perception of emotion. Employee engagement was significantly correlated with managing one's own emotions, utilization of emotions, and emotional intelligence. Employees reported higher engagement in departments where nurse leaders reported higher emotional intelligence compared to nurses reporting lower emotional intelligence. Lastly, employee engagement and patient satisfaction were significantly higher in departments where nurse leaders reported high emotional intelligence scores.

Significance: By becoming aware of one's EI, nurse leaders can explore how situational awareness may lead to improved leadership performance. The extent and awareness of EI may have a significant influence on the challenges that leaders manage, including the need to retain staff, keep employees engaged, all while ensuring that patients receive the optimal care.

Biography

Kristina Zimmermann has completed her MSN from Ball State University and is completing her Doctoral studies from Old Dominion University. She is the Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer of HonorHealth John C Lincoln Medical Center, USA.

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