

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

PERCEPTION OF INTELLECTUAL STIMULATION, CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION AMONG HEALTH MANAGERS WORKING IN TERTIARY LEVEL HOSPITALS

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Background: Management in health sector is becoming focus of attention world over being an important subject due to resource crunch particularly in developing countries. Beside socio-demographic factors, poor management in health sector is also an important factor responsible for poor health in developing countries. Moreover, there is gross lack of effective leadership in our national setup. It is necessary for health managers to be well versed with the knowledge about emerging theories, concepts and new philosophies of management/administration and leadership. This anthropological study was done to assess the perception and knowledge of Intellectual stimulation, creativity and innovation among the health managers working in the tertiary level hospitals of Lahore. **Methods:** This qualitative study was conducted in two public sector tertiary care hospitals of Lahore. Observation and in-depth interviews were conducted for data collection. Open ended questionnaire, developed on the lines of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was used. One main domain of Intellectual stimulation and its variables were developed and emergence of different themes was noted. **Results:** In the domain of Intellectual stimulation all the participants of the study showed positive themes for the variable of creativity. Seven of the health managers showed positive themes for the variable of innovation, where as three health managers showed negative responses. **Conclusion:** Health managers with management/administration qualification had better concept about the key ideas of Intellectual stimulation, creativity and innovation; as compared to those who were working at these managerial posts on the basis of their long term experience only. Female health managers were stronger in building their team members on a broader horizon as a wholesome personality and not just taking the daily routine work.

Keywords: Intellectual stimulation, creativity, innovation, health managers

INTRODUCTION

Intellectual stimulation basically means new, creative and innovative ways of doing the conventional. It is defined as the degree to which you encourage others to be creative in looking at old problems in new ways, create an environment that is tolerant.¹ According to another definition intellectual stimulation is questioning old assumptions and the status quo.²

Gigantic work has been done upon intellectual stimulation and leadership at global level. Role of intellectual stimulation in effective management has also been studied in other areas like education, leadership, personality development and business besides health. Intellectual stimulation also effects leadership style. Leaders alone cannot solve all problems. In today's complex world problems call for expertise of multiple resource assistance.³ In today's dynamic global world of competition, organizations must compete successfully.^{4,5} In any big organization different factors influence the generation of creativity at the individual and organization level. At the individual level, extensive body of research suggests that individual creativity requires expertise, creative thinking skills and intrinsic task motivation.⁶ Expertise refers to

knowledge, proficiencies and abilities of employees to make a contribution to their fields. Creative thinking skills include cognitive skills and strategies as well as personality variables that influence the application of these creative thinking skills. Task motivation is crucial in turning creative potential into actual creative ideas. Studies confirm that higher the level of each of these three components, higher the creativity. At the organization level, researchers have also included individual characteristics as part of the broader frame work explaining creativity in the work place. Research in social psychology suggests that supportive behaviour on the part of the co-workers and supervisors in the work place enhances employee's creativity.⁷ Leadership style also influences the generation of creativity at individual and organization level. Transformation leadership style creates work environment conducive to creativity by focusing on specific techniques, such as involving employees in decision making process and problem solving; empowering and supporting them to develop greater autonomy, coaching and teaching them to work at old problems in new ways.⁸⁻¹⁰ Creativity and innovation are major variables of intellectual stimulation, often interchangeable. Without these particular dimensions of intellectual stimulation it is

very difficult to move ahead and give quality output in today's dynamic world. Quality matters in all walks of life and provision of quality standard services to the community in health sector is related to transformation leadership. One of the important problems in health sector is lack of Total Quality Management (TQM), resulting in dissatisfaction of the clients. In a study focus was on the use of transformational leadership as a strategy to move health care organizations beyond traditional values and approaches by building upon the core values of TQM. Transformational values and competencies have an important role in achieving a health system that fosters community well being and basic care for all.¹¹ Newer concepts argue that client satisfaction cannot be achieved without adoption of transformational leadership behaviour and practical application of intellectual stimulation. Use of these two tools leads to new ways of improving the situation and enhancing the productivity of health professionals by virtue of its professional competency, innovation, creativity, knowledge and skills that in turn results in client satisfaction.¹² Specific problem that has been observed is lack of true transformational leadership in health sector in developing countries; in the form of practical application of intellectually stimulated behaviour on part of the health managers. This in turn affects the quality of services. Pakistan as a developing country has been taken as case study for this research. Focus of this article was to assess the perception of health managers regarding the key variables of intellectual stimulation, with special emphasis upon the knowledge, opinion and experience. Present study will open avenues for further researches in this area.

METHODS

This qualitative study was conducted in two public sector tertiary care hospitals in Lahore namely; Lahore General Hospital (LGH) and Ganga Ram Hospital (GRH). Convenient sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 17 willing health managers including one Medical superintendent (MS), nine Additional Medical superintendents (AMS), and seven Deputy Medical superintendents (DMS). Inclusion criteria were set at health managers working at administrative levels (decision and policy making level), and work experience of more than three years at one managerial post. Exclusion criteria included health managers at the supervisory level, and those who had taken part in a research study in the past two years. MS and two DMS of Lahore General Hospital did not consent to participate in the study. Data was collected through observation and in- depth interviews. Voice recording was planned to record the interviews but due to refusal by all study subjects this technique was dropped. In-depth interview technique was used to assess the perception of Intellectual stimulation by using

a well designed questionnaire prepared on the analogy of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ).¹³ Data was collected in one month time period. In the domain of Intellectual stimulation, themes were developed upon two variables, i.e., creativity and innovation. Universal sampling technique was used to acquire the study population working at administrative levels of the two hospitals. Categorization of the responses in the domain of Intellectual stimulation was done in a flexible manner. Emerging themes and categories were noted. Consistencies and dissimilarities were categorized. Analytical objectives were: A) to describe and explain the relationship of the responses to different questions in order to develop themes/ patterns in the main domain. B) To describe any other variation that emerged during the in- depth interview.

Questionnaire format was open ended and flexibility was applied to add or exclude a question, phrasing of the question, as well as order of the question could be changed. Recruitment strategy adopted for the study was to take help and direction from one of the health manager amongst the administrative team in order to recruit the participants. With permission of the Medical Superintendent, time was taken from each participant for interview. Informed oral consent was taken from each participant. Researcher followed the procedural steps as: open ended in- depth interview was carried out and extensive field notes were taken with his/ her permission. After completing each interview day, the researcher used to put down all the responses on paper in all detail. Each interview took approximately one and a half hour with unavoidable interruptions in between. Medium of communication was English mostly but at one or two occasions Urdu was used as few health managers were not very fluent in communicating in English. Documentation of the interview was the most important part of data collection as it had to be done at the end of each day so as not to miss any detail from going into black and white. In- depth interview with each respondent started with questions about general bio-data and then building onto the core concept of the study. Data analysis was done with the evolving themes and patterns in the main domain of Intellectual stimulation with the variables of creativity and innovation. All themes and patterns were explicitly penned down. Consistencies and differences were categorized among the participants with explanation of any variation.

RESULTS

All the health managers had basic medical education degree (MBBS). Among the 17 participants, 2 were female health managers. Nine managers had major degree in management/ administrative qualification (MPH, MHM, MHA, DPH, and MBA), and 8 of them had management experience of more than 10

years. Eight participants had done minor courses in management and only 3 had management experience of more than 10 years. Health managers with Management/ Administration degree showed positive leadership traits by showing their knowledge, opinion and experience about creativity and innovation. Health managers without such degree did show positive themes supporting creativity but they did not have knowledge about innovation.

Knowledge, opinion and perception about Intellectual stimulation were assessed through two main variables; creativity and innovation.

Present study found that female health managers had very strong views about looking after the personal needs of the team members, work facilitation and encouragement. They strongly advocated that personal needs, problems and

aspirations of the workers must be met duly within the limits, in order to have satisfied worker rather than a disgruntled worker at hand. In contrast the male health managers did not place much stress upon meeting the personal needs of the workers.

Knowledge and opinion about creativity was assessed through open ended questions about problem solving attitude, new ways of completing an assignment and creativity in building team work. Responses from health managers of both the hospitals are described in Table-1.

Knowledge and opinion about innovation; second variable of Intellectual stimulation, was assessed by asking different open ended question like: increasing work dimension to provide better service and quality output. The concepts/themes highlighted by the health managers of both hospitals are described in Table-2.

Table-1: Intellectual stimulation (Main Domain): Opinion about Creativity (Variable)

Ganga Ram Hospital	Lahore General Hospital
Problem solving attitude	
Taking different perspectives/ suggestions and views of the concerned staff	Different perspectives must be taken from the team members
Health manager should own his decision with all its consequences	Willingness of all the members must be incorporated into the finalization of a solution
Suggestions to a solution must be taken from the end user	Health managers should have frequent interactions with team members at all professional/ personal grounds
There should be co- operation among the top, middle and lower management	Team leader/ health manager should own his/her decision
Interpersonal communication must be maintained	Incorporation of focus groups who are expert upon problem solving of any nature in the organization
Brainstorming should be done to generate new ideas	Problem solving according to the nature and magnitude of the problem
	Decentralization must be done for problem solving
	Implementation of harshness/ strict action to deal with the concerned person in order to solve the problem
New ways of completing an assignment	
Status quo must be questioned	It is difficult to be creative in this regard when you are working as government employee
Sought new ideas to do an assignment	Right person for the right job at the right time
Timeline for completion of an assignment must be marked	Question status quo
Openness to change	Motivation of the workers/ team members
Use of effective/ efficient means to complete an assignment	Effective/ efficient means must be used to complete an assignment
One health manager did not give any specific answer to this question	One health manager did not give any specific idea upon it
Creativity in building team work	
Have democratic approach i.e. taking suggestion and participation of all in every activity	Regular interactions with team members at all personal/ professional grounds
Give individual importance to every team member regarding their personal/ professional needs and aspirations	Social interaction within limits must be maintained as they enable you to understand working at humane level
Right encouragement/ motivation/ acknowledgement to every team member	Give incentive to appreciate the efficient worker
Good communication/ co- ordination between the team leader/ health manager and members	Take strict action against inefficient/ non participating team member
Tolerance must be exercised by the team leader	Work facilitation, fulfilling personal/ professional needs of the members
Place right man for the right job at the right time	Good quality education on part of both enhances the team building
Team members must be mentally empowered	Mutual co- operation between the team leader/ members must be exercised
Self respect of the team members should not be hurt	Acceptance of each other in the team

Table-2: Intellectual stimulation (Main Domain): Opinion about Innovation (variable)

Ganga Ram Hospital	Lahore General Hospital
Increasing work dimension to provide better service and quality output	
Incorporation of new developments at work place	Increasing work dimension is not innovation because with increasing population work dimension automatically increases
Incorporation of practically workable/ innovative strategies in order to give quality output	Chance of getting more skilled workers is increased thus enhancing the output
Give flexible work hours as incentive to work at the enhanced work dimension	Quality output must come by ensuring quality control in services
Enhancement of existing systems with an element of value added to it	One health manager did not give any specific idea upon it
Three health managers did not give any specific response upon it	

DISCUSSION

Quality of health services largely depend on how managers are well versed with the concept of evidence based management, team and group approach in achieving organizational objectives. Making an effective health system addressing the double burden of diseases coupled with resource crunch in developing countries is a big challenge for policy makers and health managers. Comprehensive concepts and application knowledge of Intellectual stimulation and leadership is very important for health managers in the present day health sector working in order to get best output that satisfies all the stakeholders.

The present study found that health managers with Management/Administration degree showed positive leadership traits by showing their knowledge, opinion and experience about creativity and innovation. Health managers without such degree did show positive themes supporting creativity but they did not have knowledge about innovation. These findings are consistent with a local study done in our national health setup.¹⁴

By virtue of observation the researcher found that in general the environment in one of the hospital was more calm, composed, purposeful and dignified in the administration wing. In contrast the other hospital projected a more chaotic look and environment. Management offices were a picture of utter confusion and mismanagement. Majority of the health managers in the same hospital projected a picture of casual management style. Sub-themes developing in the main thematic category of creativity support the theoretical concept of Intellectual stimulation, which is clearly defined in the introduction part of the research paper. Creativity can be defined as the production of novel ideas by individual or small groups of individuals working together.¹⁵ Subthemes like incorporation of new ideas, brainstorming, and openness to change, questioning status quo, taking different perspectives, tolerance; all support the theoretical knowledge of Intellectual stimulation. Effective leaders have a clear concept that alone they can never solve or take critical challenges and they will need other minds also to work upon the situation in collaboration. Thus a leader/ health manager has to think in a creative and innovative manner himself and by asking the team members to come out with a new solution makes them intellectually stimulated. Research shows that asking and involving people to use their creative thinking in itself is a motivating factor for them. This kind of encouragement when given by the leaders brings intrinsic motivation for the team members. They must be given the chance to come up with ideas, opinions and thoughts; and should be given due value and respect. In general usage, creativity means the availability of people and hence the

availability of employees to combine ideas in a unique way or to make usual associations between ideas.¹⁶ In the present research study development of subthemes such as satisfaction of stake holders, individual importance, encouragement/ motivation, fulfilment of professional/ personal needs; are same as the concept given in Leadership theory and practice. Transformational leadership in managers is the ability to get people to want to change, to improve and to be led. It involves assessing associates' motives, satisfying their needs and valuing them.¹⁷ Further knowledge and opinion of health managers upon creativity through their ideas upon problem solving attitude, new ways of completing an assignment, creativity in building team work strengthen the study. Strong team work building in one of the hospital is strength of our present study duly supported by the evidence based results. These findings of the present study were same as a previous research, which stated that it is imperative for the organizations to solve problems efficiently and make the most of available resources. Leaders must recognise the creativeness of all organization members across multiple disciplines. Suggestions and ideas need to be implemented quickly thus providing the role of Intellectual stimulation in producing an improved and progressive organization.¹⁸

One new subtheme of maintaining work life balance evolved in the present study, which must be maintained in order to have stress free working environment and workers in the organization. Present study also found that female health managers had very strong views about looking after the personal needs of the team members, work facilitation and encouragement. Female health managers strongly advocated the fact that personal needs, problems and aspirations of the workers must be met duly within the limits, in order to have a satisfied worker. In contrast male health managers did not place much stress upon meeting the personal needs of the worker. Rather in words of one of the health manager "It is not part of the health manager's duty that he should look after personal needs and problems of the team members". This finding is similar to a study, where the researcher had found that women tended to be more transformational than men who tend to be more transactional. She argued that women encouraged participation in power and information and sought to enhance the status of the employees.¹⁹ This finding in the present study is also augmented by another research study which stated that women are more transformational and therefore more likely to make effective leaders.²⁰

Second categorical theme for Intellectual stimulation, i.e., Innovation, is defined as the creation and implementation of new combinations.²¹ The new combinations can be related to new products, services, work processes, markets, delivery systems

and policies. Due to innovation one can create added value, not only to the firm itself but also to its stake holders and society. Another theoretical definition is successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization.¹⁵ Present study found that six health managers from one hospital had described innovation as incorporation of new ideas in the existing system in such a manner that can enhance the service provision and quality output, with an element of value added to already existing services. Another subtheme of increasing work dimension also evolved among the same group of health managers. All these subthemes were supported by their evidence based examples at their work place which projected the enhancement of existing services, improved working quality, better output and satisfaction of the stake holders in the said hospital. On the other hand health managers from the second hospital were unable to support their ideas with any implementation process; thus showing marked difference in their working, service provision, quality and stake holder satisfaction level.

CONCLUSION

Health managers from clinical background had very limited vision and approach in the management/ administration field. Responses of managers with management/ administration qualifications were more holistic in approach and showed better understanding of the key ideas. Female managers were more inclined towards development of team members as a wholesome personality fulfilling their personal and professional aspirations; thus developing them as a balanced and complete human being. They must be brought forward in the higher hierarchy of the health sector. However further study is suggested to reach a better conclusion.

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