

Self-assessment of Administrators' Managerial Skills and their Relationship with Effective Management in Hospitals of Tehran University of Medical Sciences

Hossein Dargahi ^{1*}, Golsa Shaham ¹

¹ Department of Healthcare Management, School of Allied Medical Sciences, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

Abstract

Background and Objectives: Today, management is one of the most important factors in hospital effectiveness and performance. The objective of this study was to assess the management skills of administrators in hospitals of Tehran University of Medical Sciences and to identify how these skills are related to effective management.

Methods: A cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out over the period of February to April 2011 by enrolling 15 administrators from hospitals of Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS). The tool for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire of managerial skills containing the measures of leadership ability, effective use of organizational teams, employee motivation, change management, and effective management. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by expert opinion method. The reliability of the scale was also confirmed by obtaining a Chronbach's alpha of 0.81 for all items. The collected data was analyzed using correlation analysis.

Findings: Our results identified relatively high self-assessment score on leadership ability and effective management, but the scores for effective use of organizational teams, employee motivation and change management were low. In addition, among considered dimensions of management skills, only leadership ability showed significant correlation with effective management.

Conclusions: A lack of relationship between effective management and most assessed managerial skills depicts an unsatisfactory picture of the overall management skills in hospitals' administrators, which in turn suggests the need for relevant training programs.

Keywords: Hospital Administrator, Health Facility Administration, Managerial Skills, Self-assessment, Effective Management

Background and Objectives

Reinforcing health systems is a globally urgent requirement as declared by the World Health Organization [1, 2] and the World Bank [3, 4]. At the core of this requirement lies the need for improving management capacity within healthcare delivery systems [5]. Although, the majority of management improvement efforts are directed toward enhancing medical and public health skills, less attention has been given to developing professional and accomplished healthcare administrators who are crucial to efficient and productive operation of healthcare systems [6]. Hospitals are complex organizations with magnitudes of high sensitivity functions, which directly contribute to people's

health and lives. Therefore, a hospital administrator must be able to understand a broad range of health issues and provide insight into the organization on how to cope with them. Healthcare organizations are undergoing unprecedented and profound changes. Influence of information and communication technologies and eHealth paradigm is reshaping the nature of healthcare delivery [7]. This climate of change requires CEOs with distinct skills, capabilities and competencies to effectively lead and manage the various components of updated healthcare delivery systems [8]. On the other hand, hospital administrators are faced with resource limitations. Hospitals absorb over half of total healthcare expenditures in most countries [9]. This highlights the need for effective managers with the ability to provide high quality healthcare services delivery while maintaining hospital financial efficiency.

The first step towards developing management capabilities in hospitals is to assess the current managerial skills

*Corresponding author: Department of Healthcare Management, School of Allied Medical Sciences, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tel: + 98 21 88622755, Fax: + 98 21 88622533, E-mail: hdargahi@sina.tums.ac.ir

Table 1 The scores of managerial skills dimensions of administrators of Tehran University of Medical Sciences hospitals

Hospital ID	Effective Management	Leadership power	Effective use of organizational teams	Motivating of employees	Change management
H1	75	78	57.5	30	59
H2	25	37	42.5	32	65
H3	92.5	90	84	29	83
H4	70	62	61	41	80
H5	70	87	65	31	62
H6	90	96	65	24	77
H7	80	85	65	25	68
H8	80	77	74	40	75
H9	87.5	93	61	16	65
H10	70	76	72.5	20	83
H11	77.5	84	72.5	23	77
H12	82.5	80	35	27	59
H13	92.5	93	69	15	83
H14	87.5	92	65	10.5	71
H15	97.5	91	72.5	8	17
Mean	78.5	81	64	25	68

of administrators. Self-assessment of managerial skills can lead to identification of management strengths as well as skill inadequacies that require urgent improvement. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the managerial skills of administrators of hospitals affiliated to Tehran University of Medical Sciences. We also investigated the relationship between these skills and effective management.

Methods

A cross-sectional study was carried out over the period of February to April 2011. The study enrolled 15 administrators from the entire hospitals of Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS). The tool for data collection involved a self-constructed questionnaire of managerial skills developed by the authors. The first section of the questionnaire included seven questions devoted to demographic data. In the second section, 51 questions were specified to measure management skills dimensions as follows: 22 questions on leadership ability, eight questions on effective use of organizational teams, 19 questions on employee motivation, and 10 questions for change management. Management effectiveness was assessed in the third part of the questionnaire with 10 specified questions.

A five-point Likert-type scale was used to measure the level of each item ranging from 1 = strong agreement (score of 100) to 5 = strong disagreement (score of 0). Scores of 75-100 were considered as "good", and scores in the range of 50-75 were labeled as "moderate" and anything below 50 was regarded as "weak". The questionnaire underwent evaluation by three experts in the management science,

and its validity was confirmed after applying modifications. The questionnaires were delivered to hospital administrators and they were asked to fill the forms in their work environment within a work day. All participants filled and returned the questionnaires (response rate = 100%). The reliability of the measurement tool was confirmed by obtaining a Chronbach's alpha of 0.81. The collected data was then analyzed using correlation analysis. Statistical analysis was performed in SPSS Software version 17.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

All hospital administrators were male and married. While most participants (46.7 %) were between 40-50 years, the lowest percentage (20%) were between 50 to 60 years of age. While 46.67% of the respondents held MS degree, 20% had a certificate of health services management, and 86.66% had passed at least one training course related to their career.

Table 1 presents the self-assessed scores of managerial skills for administrators of TUMS hospitals. As seen, the hospitals administrators have received good scores in the dimension of 'Leadership ability' and moderate scores in the dimensions of 'Change management' and 'Effective use of organizational teams'. However, average score in the dimension of employee motivation is low.

Eighty seven percent of TUMS hospital administrators gained good scores in 'Leadership power', followed by 73%, and 47% rated good in 'Effective management', and 'Change management', respectively. Eighty percent

Table 2 Correlation analysis among dimensions of managerial skills and effective management

	Effective management	Leadership power	Effective use of organizational teams	Motivating employees	Change management
Effective management	1				
	1				
Leadership power	0.942**	1			
	0.800**	1			
Effective use of organizational teams	0.511**	0.501**	1		
	0.395**	0.213**	1		
Motivating employees	-0.469**	-0.562**	-0.169	1	
	-0.634**	-0.671**	-0.269	1	
Change management	-0.116	-0.073	0.202**	0.366**	1
	0.052	0.014	0.509**	-0.004	1

** P < 0.01

of the administrators evaluated themselves moderate in use of organizational teams while none of them scored themselves as good or moderate in motivating their staff.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 represents the results of correlation analysis among managerial skills and effective management. Weak or moderate linear relationship is observed among the skills themselves. However, 'leadership ability' shows a strong relationship with effective management.

In most cases, Pearson coefficients are higher than Spearman coefficients, suggesting that scores are more inter-related than ranks. However, correlations between ranks are stronger in relationship between employee motivation skills and leadership power, effective use of organizational teams, and effective management. This is also true for the relationship between change management and effective use of organizational teams.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the level and the inter-relation of managerial skills in administrators of hospitals affiliated to Tehran University of Medical Sciences. The administrators differ in managerial skills with respect to their personal characters, organizational status, attitudes, and policies [10]. However, the managers' skills play a determining role in management effectiveness and organizational performance [11].

The highest score was given to leadership ability, reflecting high perception of respondents on their leadership power. In addition, a high positive significant correlation between leadership ability and effective management

was identified, which suggests that the administrators perceive leadership ability as an influential factor in their professional effectiveness. Leadership also showed positive relationship with effective use of organizational teams. This suggests that the administrators view their team working ability as a contributor to strong leadership. A lack of significant correlation between leadership ability and change management skill, by contrast, indicates that the administrators do not regard their current leadership power sufficient to bring fundamental change to the organization.

Change management received the second highest score among managerial skills. However, the magnitude of the mean score was moderate. Birkinshaw et al. (2008) defined change management and innovation as implementation of management with novel practices, processes and techniques that lead to better approaching organizational goals [12]. The theories from social and behavioural sciences emphasize the impact of managerial skills on the administrator's ability to encourage adoption of clinical guidelines and manage behavioral changes [13]. Our results, however, reflect low self-assessment of change management skills by the hospital administrators. Moreover, the correlation analysis shows that the respondents underrated the role of change management skills in effective administration of health facilities.

Similarly, the scores of the effective use of organizational teams are not satisfactory. The importance of the team approach to leadership and management is stressed in literature [14, 15]. Administrators must be able to work effectively within a team, promoting cooperation among other members of management. The skill is of particular importance from the 'conflict' point of view. Sapienza and

Amason (1997) have shown that team management can limit affective conflict in the organization [14]. In addition, Eisenhardt et al. (1997) found that team management can help executives overcome the cognitive, emotional, and political barriers of engaging in conflict [15]. Therefore, the low level of such a skill can leave conflicts in the investigated hospitals unsolved, thereby damaging organizational performance. Our results however, show a moderate significant correlation between effective management and effective use of teams. This carries a desired implication as it indicates that the administrators regard the ability to effectively interact and manage the organizational teams as an important factor influencing their effectiveness. In addition, the score ranks of efficient use of teams showed a moderate significant correlation with the score ranks of change management, which implies that the administrators perceive change management dependent upon appropriate use of teams.

The lowest score of managerial skills was received by employee motivation. Studies show that motivation skills highly contribute to effective management; it provides the manager with the ability to stimulate the employees and revive the spirit of endeavor in stressful and burnt-out staff, thereby improving human resources efficiency [16]. Bantel & Jackson (1989) found that organizations with higher level of employee motivation are administered by managers who possess higher motivation skills [17]. The low assessment of the TUMS hospital administrators regarding their motivation skills is therefore, an indication for low efficiency of human resources management. This hypothesis finds corroboration by the negative association of motivation skills with effective management as perceived by the respondents.

Conclusions

The findings of the present study indicated overall unsatisfactory managerial skills of administrators of TUMS hospitals. These findings showed that with the exception of leadership ability, other dimensions of managerial skills, including effective use of organizational teams, the skill of motivating employees and the skill of change management were at low to moderate levels. The only managerial skill with considerable association with effective management was leadership ability. This indicates that the administrators of TUMS hospitals consider leadership ability as the single factor (among the evaluated factors) that can significantly contribute to their effective management. This notion calls for launching urgent initiative programs to enhance the managerial skills of TUMS hospital administrators in order to improve hospital effectiveness and performance.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions

HD designed the study. GS collected the data. HD and GS analyzed the data and interpreted the results. GS provided the draft manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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