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STUDYING THE ROLE OF MANAGERS' COMMUNICATION BEHAVIORS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NURSES' JOB PERFORMANCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment of human resources is considered one of the main attitudes of contemporary management in improving job performance. Thus, the psychological empowerment of nurses to modify their job performance has been given specific attention by the senior managers of the health system, because the improvement of the job performance of nurses causes better treatment of patients, improvement of the medical services quality, and generally improves the general health of the society. The present research method is descriptive-correlation according to the regression analysis. The statistical population of this research was 366 people, of which 188 people were selected by stratified random sampling. The data of the research was collected using three standard questionnaires and was carried out by the statistical methods of correlation test and hierarchical regression analysis through SPSS23 software. Based on the results of this study, the psychological empowerment of nurses has a positive and significant relationship with their job performance. Also, each dimension of nursing managers' communication behaviors has a moderating role in the relationship between nurses' job performance and psychological empowerment ($P < 0.05$). It is suggested that nursing managers take actions such as: giving nurses delegation of authority and freedom of action, trying to reform the payment system, holding psychological training courses, maintaining and managing health psychiatric nurses, holding periodical meetings, and involving nurses in exchanging opinions on disputed issues, and supporting and encouraging nurses in organizations, increase their ability and job performance.

Keywords: Human resources, Psychological empowerment, Nurses' job performance, Health system.

INTRODUCTION

Human resources are considered the most valuable organizational intangible asset, the most important competitive advantage, and the rarest resource in the knowledge-based economy (Chang & Liu, 2008; Li *et al.*, 2021). In the meantime, nurses as the main members of the medical care team, along with the medical team, endure many hardships in treating patients; Understanding nurses' behaviors to better perform their roles and duties improves their job

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performance. Therefore, one of the most basic issues of nursing managers is how to improve the job performance of nurses and thus increase the productivity of the healthcare sector. Organizations are always seeking to upgrade and improve their performance, and job performance is considered one of the most important constructs in human resource management research (Na *et al.*, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2022).

The occupational behavior of employees at different times and job positions that create value in the organization is defined as job performance (Borman *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, the researchers of organizational behavior and organizational psychology believe that to show the real performance of employees in the organization, attention should also be paid to extra-professional behaviors (Hui-Hua & Schutte, 2015). Various variables including perceived organizational support, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational learning, organizational trust, organizational factors, organizational justice, quality of work life, intrinsic motivation, emotional intelligence, mental health, and empowerment are related to job performance (Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Edwards *et al.*, 2002; Carmeli & Josman, 2006; Erat *et al.*, 2012; Lindebaum, 2012; Shamsuddin & Rahman, 2014).

According to the definition of Hui-Hua and Schutte (2015), psychological empowerment is a set of psychological states that emphasizes how employees gain focus and experience in their work, as well as how employees gain self-confidence in their role and influence in the organization and make them have a sense of self-confidence and a desire to succeed (Hui-Hua & Schutte, 2015).

The research conducted by Chikeung *et al.* (2010) in the field of psychological empowerment and job performance in the industry showed that psychological empowerment begins with a change in the beliefs and assumptions of employees, which means that they should be convinced that independence, freedom of action, the ability, and competence necessary to perform the tasks successfully, as well as the ability to influence and control the job results. If employees achieve this feeling in their jobs and organizations, it will result in many organizational and individual resources such as creativity, flexibility, problem-solving, job satisfaction, mental health, and high job performance. Also, this category of employees are self-control and self-regulating people, they easily accept responsibility and have a positive attitude toward others and the surrounding environment (Chi Keung Chan *et al.*, 2010). Based on the conducted research, employees' psychological empowerment can be divided into four dimensions: sense of competence, sense of autonomy, and sense of meaning and acceptance of personal consequences (Dimitriades, 2005; Amichai-Hamburger *et al.*, 2008; Hall, 2008).

Previous studies have shown that good oral communication between managers and employees causes them to be more motivated and job-satisfied and causes better performance and retention of employees in their jobs. In general, the way managers communicate with work motivation is related to reducing psychological distress and increasing job satisfaction and performance of employees (Kunie *et al.*, 2017). How managers communicate verbally with employees helps clarify the goals and work priorities of the organization. Also, the way managers communicate is different depending on the leadership style of people. Therefore, the characteristics of the organization, including the size of the organization, the type of services provided, the way the employees work, and the amount of training received by the employees cause trends in the way managers communicate with employees (Mayfield *et al.*, 1995; Bakker *et al.*, 2008).



Understanding the impact of managers' communication behaviors with nurses can help nursing managers to improve their management skills. Communication behaviors of nursing managers have a positive relationship with work belonging, psychological distress, intrinsic motivation, performance feedback, and reward (Rowley Mayfield *et al.*, 1998). Most of the previous studies that focused on the relationship between manager's communication behaviors and nurses' mental health were based on self-report assessments of these communication behaviors. Now, with the revelation of the importance of the relationship between psychological empowerment and job performance, as well as the effective role of communication behaviors of nursing managers in this regard, it is possible to enable managers to increase the development of human resources and the overall performance of the organization by explaining the existing relationships between the aforementioned variables. The present study was conducted to investigate the moderating role of communication behaviors (directive time, empathic language, and meaningful language) of nursing managers on the relationship between nurses' psychological empowerment and nurses' job performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the current study, the descriptive-correlation research method is based on hierarchical regression analysis, because the effect of one variable on another variable is measured. It is practical in terms of purpose, because the research results can be used in organizations and hospitals, and it can test theoretical concepts in real situations. In the conceptual model of the research, the psychological empowerment of nurses is considered as an independent variable, the job performance of nurses as a dependent variables, and the variable of communication behaviors of nursing managers as a moderating variable.

The statistical population of this research was the nurses working in the hospital with the number of about 366 people. According to Morgan's table, the statistical sample was estimated at 187 people. Due to the existence of different hospital departments with different populations and because it was thought that some nurses would not answer the questionnaires, using a stratified random sampling method from each internal department, a total of 200 people were selected by simple random method. Out of this number, 188 people completed the relevant questionnaires. To comply with ethical considerations and ensure the confidentiality of data, all questionnaires were explained and distributed by one of the researchers working in the same hospital. In addition to identifying demographic characteristics, these questionnaires measured nurses' psychological empowerment, nursing managers' communication behaviors, and nurses' job performance in the hospital.

The tool for collecting data and information needed in this research consists of three standard questionnaires as follows: A) The variable of psychological empowerment was measured using the Spreitzer Psychological Empowerment Questionnaire including 5 components of competence, autonomy, influence, meaningfulness, and trust. This questionnaire was prepared by Spritzer and Mishra (1995) and includes 15 items (questions) with a five-point Likert scale from (1) completely disagree to 5 (completely agree). B) The questionnaire used to measure the communication behaviors of nursing managers includes 24 items (questions) with a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) completely disagree to (5) completely agree, the reliability of which is confirmed by Kunie *et al.* (2017) calculated with Cronbach's alpha coefficient and reported



its value as 0.90. C) Job performance variable was measured using Patterson's job performance questionnaire (1992) based on a five-point Likert scale from (1) never to 5 (always). This questionnaire includes two forms, one for evaluating employees and the other for evaluating managers. In this research, the employee evaluation form (6 items) was used.

In this research, the content validity of the questionnaires was done through theoretical foundations and asking opinions from experts and experts, which was approved. Statistical methods of correlation tests and hierarchical regression analysis were used to analyze the data collected through the questionnaire. Statistical analyses were also performed at two descriptive and inferential levels through SPSS23 software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic characteristics of the studied community are given in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the society.

Descriptive specifications		N	%
Gender	Male	49	26.06
	Female	139	73.94
Age	<30 years	46	24.47
	30-40 years	93	49.47
	>40 years	49	26.06
Degree of education	BSc	183	97.34
	MSc	5	2.66
	PhD	0	0
Work experience	<5 years	33	17.55
	6-10 years	47	25
	11-15 years	56	29.79
	> 15 years	52	27.66

According to the results, there is a positive and significant relationship between the variable of psychological empowerment (independent variable) and the variable of job performance (dependent variable) ($r = 0.68$) at a confidence level of 0.99. There is a positive and significant relationship between each of the moderator variables, i.e. directive language ($r = 0.51$), empathic language ($r = 0.67$), and meaningful language ($r = 0.79$) with the independent variable at a confidence level of 0.99. Also, there is a positive and significant relationship between each variable of directive language ($r = 0.64$), empathic language ($r = 0.78$), and meaning-making language ($r = 0.67$) with the dependent variable at a confidence level of 0.99. By the research methodology, simple linear regression analysis was used to investigate the first hypothesis of the research, and two-stage hierarchical regression analysis was used to investigate the second to fourth hypotheses.

Table 2 shows the results of the first hypothesis test based on simple linear regression analysis.

Table 2. Results of simple linear regression analysis to test the first hypothesis.

Hypothesis	Model	Non-standard coefficient		Standardized coefficient	T-value	Significance level	The result of the hypothesis
		B	Std. Error	β			
The first hypothesis	Constant	2.972	0.151	-	19.695	0.000	Confirmed
	Psychological Empowerment	0.384	0.043	0.680	8.852	0.000	

Dependent variable: Job performance
The regression coefficient is significant at the 95% level

According to the results of the statistical test of the first hypothesis, it can be stated that at the confidence level of 95%, the psychological empowerment of nurses has a significant effect on their job performance. **Table 3** shows the results of the two-stage hierarchical regression analysis to test the second to fourth hypotheses. In all these hypotheses, the significance level of the regression term, which is shown by the standardized beta coefficient (β), is considered the basis of inference to show the existence and intensity of relationships between variables. In this analysis, first, in each hypothesis, in the first stage, two variables of psychological empowerment and each of the dimensions of communication behaviors are entered into the model, and in the second stage, the mutual effect of psychological empowerment and each dimension of communication behaviors is also added to the model. If this interaction is significant, the moderating relationship will be confirmed.

**Table 3.** Hierarchical regression analysis results to test the second to fourth hypotheses.

Hypothesis	Regression stages	Variable	Modified R ²	ΔR^2	ΔF	β
The second hypothesis	1	Features of the model	0.474*	0.479*	86.708*	-
		Psychological Empowerment	-	-	-	0.541*
		Guide language	-	-	-	0.483*
	2	Features of the model	0.483*	0.011*	4.653*	-
		Psychological Empowerment	-	-	-	0.435*
		Guide language	-	-	-	0.379*
		Psychological empowerment + guiding language	-	-	-	0.183*
The third hypothesis	1	Features of the model	0.571*	0.577*	145.025*	-
		Psychological Empowerment	-	-	-	0.480*
		Empathic language	-	-	-	0.594*
	2	Features of the model	0.592*	0.024*	8.693*	-

		Psychological Empowerment	-	-	-	0.396*
		Empathic language	-	-	-	0.502*
		Psychological empowerment + empathetic language	-	-	-	0.252*
		Features of the model	0.509*	0.512*	107.322*	-
	1	Psychological Empowerment	-	-	-	0.528*
		Meaningful language	-	-	-	0.511*
The Fourth hypothesis		Features of the model	0.521*	0.015*	5.981*	-
		Psychological Empowerment	-	-	-	0.436*
	2	Meaningful language	-	-	-	0.407*
		Psychological empowerment + meaningful language	-	-	-	0.196*
Dependent variable: Job performance The regression coefficient is significant at the 95% level						

According to **Table 3**, the results of the two-stage hierarchical regression analysis to test the second to fourth hypotheses are as follows:

Analysis of the Second Hypothesis Test: In the first stage, variables of psychological empowerment and guiding language were entered into the model separately. The coefficient of determination (R^2) modified at this stage explains 47.4% of the variance in the job performance variable. ΔR^2 also shows an increase in the ability to explain the variance to the value of 47.9% after the addition of the moderator variable (guide language) separately. The coefficient β for the variable of psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.541$) and for the variable of guiding language ($\beta = 0.483$) which is significant at the 95% confidence level, shows the positive and significant effect of both variables on the dependent variable (job performance). In the second step, the effect of the guiding language variable as a moderating variable was evaluated by entering the interactive effect of the psychological empowerment and guiding language variables and evaluating it on the job performance variable. At this stage, R^2 and ΔR^2 values show that adding the interaction of psychological empowerment and guiding language to the regression equation will explain 48.3% of the variance of job performance with 1.1% of the exclusive variance added due to the entry of the moderator variable separately. The β coefficient for the said interactive effect is 0.183, which is significant at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, the moderating role of nursing managers' guiding language in the relationship between nurses' job performance and psychological empowerment is confirmed.

Analysis of the Third Hypothesis Test: In the first stage, the variables of psychological empowerment and empathic language were entered into the model separately. The coefficient of determination (R^2) modified at this stage explains 57.1% of the variance in the variable of job performance, and ΔR^2 also shows an increase in the ability to explain the variance to the value of 57.7% after the addition of the moderator variable (sympathetic language). The coefficient β



for the variable of psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.480$) and for the variable of empathic language ($\beta = 0.594$), which is significant at the 95% confidence level, which shows the positive and significant effect of both variables on the dependent variable (job performance). In the second step, the effect of the empathic language variable as a moderating variable was evaluated by entering the interactive effect of psychological empowerment variables and empathic language and evaluating it on the job performance variable. At this stage, the values of R^2 and ΔR^2 show that adding the interaction of psychological empowerment and empathic language to the regression equation will explain 59.2% of the variance in job performance with 2.4% of the exclusive variance added due to the inclusion of the moderator variable separately. The β coefficient for the mentioned interactive effect is 0.252, which is significant at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, the moderating role of nursing managers' empathic language in the relationship between nurses' job performance and psychological empowerment is confirmed.

Analysis of the Fourth Hypothesis Test: In the first stage, the variables of psychological empowerment and meaningful language were entered into the model separately. The coefficient of determination (R^2) modified at this stage explains 50.9% of the variance in the job performance variable, and ΔR^2 also shows an increase in the ability to explain the variance to the value of 51.2% after the addition of the moderating variable (meaning-making language) as is separate. The coefficient β for the variable of psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.528$) and for the variable of meaningful language ($\beta = 0.511$) which is significant at the 95% confidence level, which shows the positive and significant effect of both variables on the dependent variable of job performance. In the second step, the effect of the meaning-making language variable as a moderating variable was evaluated by entering the interactive effect of psychological empowerment and meaning-making language variables and evaluating it on the job performance variable. At this stage, the R^2 and ΔR^2 values show that adding the interaction of psychological empowerment and meaningful language to the regression equation will explain 52.1% of the variance in job performance with 1.5% of the exclusive variance added due to the inclusion of the moderator variable separately. The β coefficient for the mentioned interactive effect is 0.196, which is significant at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, the moderating role of nursing managers' meaning-making language in the relationship between nurses' job performance and psychological empowerment is confirmed.

The present study was conducted to analyze the relationship between nurses' psychological empowerment and their job performance regarding the moderating role of communication behaviors (directive language, empathetic language, and meaning-making language) of nursing managers in the hospital.

The analysis of research findings showed that the psychological empowerment of nurses has a positive and significant relationship with their job performance. Findings related to previous studies on the relationship between employees' psychological empowerment and organizational citizenship behavior, organizational performance, employee productivity, job satisfaction, quality of work life, and organizational trust, and investigated organizational commitment in work environments, in which a positive and meaningful relationship was obtained in all of them. The result of this hypothesis is in line with the research results of the researchers (Boyd & Bentley, 2006; Chang & Liu, 2008; Battin *et al.*, 2016; Afsar *et al.*, 2018; Kuo *et al.*, 2021). In a study, Chiang and Hsieh (2012) showed the significant effect of this relationship and stated that to



strengthen this relationship, it is necessary to improve the organizational citizenship behavior of employees through the psychological empowerment of employees to increase their job performance.

In the explanation of this research hypothesis, it can be said that the psychological empowerment of employees improves the belief and trust of employees about their role and duty in the organization, increases the efficiency of the individual, and, as a result, improves their job performance. Therefore, with the confirmation of the first hypothesis of the research as well as the results of previous studies, it can be argued that the empowerment and psychological health of nurses, while influencing their job performance, are among the concepts that directly and indirectly play a fundamental role in realizing the productivity of the health care sector. perform The results of the research also indicated that each of the components of nursing managers' communication behaviors (directive language, empathetic language, and meaning-making language) have a modifying role in the relationship between nurses' psychological distress and their job performance. Findings related to previous studies, the moderating role of emotional intelligence variables, intrinsic motivation, self-fulfillment, transformational leadership, self-esteem, organizational trust, and factors they investigated the internal organization on the job performance of employees in work environments, and the role of moderating variables was confirmed in all of them (Shamsuddin & Rahman, 2014; Howladar *et al.*, 2018; Wang *et al.*, 2020; Eriş & Kökalan, 2022; Gómez-Jorge & Díaz-Garrido, 2023).

Kunie *et al.* (2017) investigated the relationship between each of the components of managers' communication behaviors (directive language, empathic language, and meaning-making language) with each of the variables of work commitment and mental distress of nurses, in which all relationships were significant. In explaining the results of the research, it can be stated that the modulating variable of the empathic language of nursing managers has the greatest strengthening effect on the relationship between the psychological empowerment of nurses and their job performance, meaning-making language and directive language ranked second and third respectively in this they are influential. Based on this, in the implementation of the psychological empowerment of nurses in therapeutic environments, the communication behaviors of nursing managers, including the clear expression of goals, duties, laws, values, and organizational norms, as well as their support, encouragement, and attention to nurses can lead to identity and the importance of the valuable job of nursing for this hard-working group should be better interpreted and understood. It also creates mutual obligations in which nurses gain a sense of mutual respect, being loved, self-esteem, and being valued. Therefore, the increase in internal motivation, participation, sense of belonging, and passion for work, as well as the reduction of anxiety and mental distress among nurses, will lead to the improvement of their job performance.

CONCLUSION

The hypotheses of the current research can be divided into two main categories; The first category examines the relationship between nurses' psychological empowerment and their job performance, and the second category examines the moderating role of nursing managers' communication behaviors (directive language, empathetic language, and meaning-making language) in the relationship between nurses' psychological distress and job performance, the



results of regression analysis confirm this. It is said that in addition to the existence of a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and job performance, the communication behaviors of managers strengthen this relationship and correlation. In other words, the components of communication behaviors have a positive effect on job performance both directly and indirectly (with a positive effect on the relationship between psychological distress and job performance). As the results of data analysis and hypothesis testing showed, empathic language, meaning-making language, and directive language have the greatest strengthening effect on this relationship, respectively. The psychological empowerment of nurses as providers of safe care to patients is very effective on the performance and quality of care provided by them to patients; therefore, to achieve maximum productivity in nurses, they must be capable people. Therefore, managers and officials of the health system must pay special attention to the role of psychological empowerment as well as each of the components of managers' communication behaviors, including directive language, meaning-making language, and especially empathetic language.

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