

Factors of Positive Leadership Affecting Optimistic Attitude toward Self-Efficacy in Clinic Staff in Universities

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Abstract

Nursing department workers are the largest group in a school clinic. They are also the most important of the human resources. The emotional burden of witnessing the stages of life is accompanied by the heavy work that creates an extremely high level of pressure. This is also an obstacle to a good doctor-patient relationship. Therefore, it emerges as an important research topic that can help to improve the situation as well as promote psychological health and self-efficacy of the school clinic staff. In order to fill in this research gap, school clinic staff of universities in Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region were selected as the research participants. A total of 450 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the potential respondents. After removing the invalid and incomplete ones, 364 valid copies were retrieved, with a retrieval rate of 81%. The collected data were tested using Amos to understand the relationships among positive leadership, optimistic attitude, and self-efficacy. As a result of the analyses, it was found out that when they have a positive attitude, leaders of the clinic staff in universities can improve the attachment and self-confidence of the school clinic staff. This encourages them to have a higher level of willingness to contribute to the development of the institution. Another finding of the study was that a university leader should adopt a hands-on, positive paradigm to enable continuous development and create a positive working environment. Finally, it was found out that if a university leader builds a positive energy network, he can improve the coherence among the staff and encourage them to be willing to contribute by modelling other workers. According to the results, it is expected that this study will help clinic staff to generate optimistic attitude which promotes self-efficacy.

Keywords: optimistic attitude, psychological health, school clinic, self-efficacy, university positive leadership

1. Introduction

A hospital is a high-pressure work environment. In this environment, nurses are exposed to constant pressure, which leads to physical and mental fatigue. These result in reduced work performance. This threatens the operations in a university as nursing workers are the largest group in the team of a medical institution and are an important component of human resources. Although nurses have professional nursing knowledge, they are not given enough importance in the medical system. Patients are the main group served by nurses. Nurses are often confronted with the four stages of life during constant interaction with patients. These stages are namely birth, old ages, illness, and death. The emotional burden of witnessing these stages of life is accompanied by the heavy work that creates an extremely high level of pressure. This is also an obstacle to a good doctor-patient relationship. This negative mood affects nurses' work performance and service quality which result in a "vicious circle" [1]. This situation is similar for physicians too. As a result, it emerges as a research topic that can help to improve the

situation and promote psychological health as well as self-efficacy of the school clinic staff. The positive power stems from positive thinking. It can be described as treating the situation with a proactive and positive attitude as well as looking at problems positively from the perspective of cause and effect, or action and reaction [2]. From this point of view, it can be stated that positive thinking can guide people to go up and do good. Additionally, positive leadership has recently been an emerging leadership trend [3, 4]. Different leadership behaviors lead to different organizational climate and different levels of work performance [5]. To be clearer, a leader who exhibits positive leadership behaviors evoke positive reactions from subordinates [6,7]. On the contrary, a leader who exhibits negative leadership behaviors may cause negative reactions from the subordinates [8, 9, 10]. Accordingly, it can be stated that a leader can promote the development of the organization through positive leadership [11,12]. In the process of organizational management, optimism can be a powerful tool to construct a good life, to help individuals avoid depression [13]. Additionally, optimism can increase performance, and promote physical and mental health as well as develop new self-understanding which supports employees' self-efficacy and psychological health [14,15]. In the related studies, it was mentioned that most research on positive leadership focused on school supervisors' leadership [16,17]. Nevertheless, the effect of supervisors' positive leadership on clinic staff was ignored. This is a topic that is worth of researching. Considering this, this study was designed as an attempt to discuss the effects of positive leadership on the university clinic staff's optimistic attitude and self-efficacy. With this purpose in mind, this study is expected to help the clinic staff to show optimistic attitude and promote their self-efficacy.

2. Literature Review

Datu and Yuen [18] indicated that positive leadership can encourage and stimulate people's potential. It can not only be explained with its contribution to organizational profit, but is also related to the excellence and improvement of an organization to create the best conditions for people [19,20]. Self-actualization of employees is also supported by positive leadership. In other words, the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs can be reached with the help of positive leadership. In this respect, a leader must support the subordinates in building self-efficacy, and positive leadership is the best route to improve individual self-efficacy [21,22]. Additionally, organizational members with higher self-efficacy are better able to carry the organization from good to excellent [14,23]. In line with this, it can be proposed that self-efficacy can be the best program for managers to improve organizational performance, and managers can promote employees' self-efficacy and psychological health through leadership [24,25]. Another important area is R&D practices in an organization. In this sense, Andres [26] considered R&D activities as an advantage for the sustainable development of a company [27,28]. Similarly, increasing the R&D personnel's work effectiveness has become an important issue. Creating an incentive mechanism is also important for managers [29]. All of these are related to the leadership style and the literature mainly discussed the effect of supervisors' leadership style on employees' self-efficacy [30,31]. The results of the previous studies in the literature were found to be positive and significant [32,33,34]. At this point, it is the supervisor's duty to find a leadership style that is suitable for the subordinates to improve their self-efficacy and promote

their R&D performance [1,35]. To contribute to this claim, Park and Johnson [36] pointed out that teachers' effectiveness is measured by their self-efficacy, which means that teachers' belief in their teaching positively correlates with their teaching skills [37]. Also, the effect of teachers' teaching on students is in line with their knowledge and experience in dealing with students' learning problems. Their professional field knowledge and competencies are the predictors of successful teaching. Correspondingly, Gaeta et al. [38] explained self-efficacy as employees' confidence in their professional knowledge and belief in their ability to solve the problems they encounter. Accordingly, self-efficacy was considered as an indicator of positive leadership. A high self-efficacy of the employees may imply the effective help of school leaders to the individuals to promote their self-efficacy. Therefore, we expect that Positive leadership shows significant and positive effects on optimistic attitude (H1).

Su et al. [39] conducted a study with full time workers and discussed the effects of positive psychology on self-efficacy, optimism, and well-being in workplaces. Their study showed that the well-being of the individuals with higher self-efficacy can also be higher. In consistence with Su et al.'s [39] studies, Garg [40] studied the relationships among optimism, creativity, self-efficacy, physical and mental health, and innovative behavior of college students. Garg's [41] study revealed that optimistic thinking was affected by creative self-efficacy. This in turn affected their innovative behaviors [42]. The results revealed a remarkable positive relationship between college students' optimism and their creative self-efficacy [8]. In this respect, Benito et al. [43] studied the correlations among personality traits, self-efficacy, and job burnout of nurses. Accordingly, they found out that nurses are workers who are typically under high pressure and emotional labor, therefore they can easily experience job burnout. Accordingly, it can be argued that effects of personality traits on individual work are equally important when the correlation between individual self-efficacy and job burnout is considered. The motivation of the study was to help enterprises reduce the effect of job burnout by supporting employees' optimistic attitudes and their perceived self-efficacy. In line with this, research results revealed a notably positive correlation between optimistic attitude and self-efficacy [44]. Given the evidence, we hypothesize that optimistic attitude has significant and positive effects on self-efficacy (H2).

Wu and Mok [45] conducted a study on elementary school principals and found significant direct effects of principals' positive leadership on academic optimism [46]. It was found out in their study that the use of positive communication can encourage teachers and promote teacher effectiveness. Similarly, Mahipalan and Sheena [47] discussed the relations between kindergarten directors' positive leadership and school teachers' self-efficacy [48,49]. The results of their study revealed that public kindergarten directors' positive leadership yielded "high satisfaction". Positive leadership was also found to have a strong positive correlation with teacher self-efficacy and to have a high explanatory power for school effectiveness [50]. To illustrate this, Broeren et al. [51] studied the relationships between junior high school principals' positive leadership and teachers' self-efficacy [33]. The results of their study revealed high perceived positive leadership of junior high school principals. To be specific, their study revealed that positive communication received the highest score and positive meaning had the

lowest score. Moreover, positive leadership of principals was found to have remarkable and highly positive correlations with teachers' self-efficacy. Additionally, it was found out that positive communication in positive leadership had the highest predictability on teachers' self-efficacy [52]. Accordingly, it was expected that positive leadership has significant and positive effects on self-efficacy (H3).

3. Research Method

Operational definition and measurement of variables

(1) Positive leadership - Following Li and Liu [53], the positive leadership scale with four dimensions of positive leadership was used.

- a. Positive vibes: This refers to positive feelings that exceed the negative feelings in the work environment.
- b. Positive relationship: This is considered as purposively avoiding dangerous areas or topics when getting along or interacting with people.
- c. Positive communication: This can be explained as the affirmative and supportive language that replaces the negative and critical language in an organization.
- d. Positive meaning: Emphasizing positive influence, combining work and individual core values, highlighting the long-term impact of work, and building a sense of community.

(2) Optimistic attitude - The Life Orientation Test (LOT) proposed by Jin and Wang [54] was utilized in this study to determine optimistic attitude.

(3) Self-efficacy - Chen et al.' [55] self-efficacy promotion scale which includes the intention to participate in work-related development activities and career-related development activities was used in this study.

Conceptual framework of this study. The conceptual framework (Figure 1) for this study was developed based on the literature above. It was designed to discuss the relationships among positive leadership, optimistic attitude, and self-efficacy.

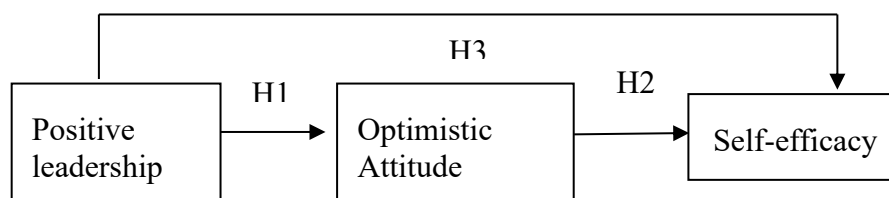


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Participants. School clinic staff of universities in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region were selected as the research participants. Participants were selected with random sampling, and a total 450 copies of questionnaire were distributed. After removing the invalid and incomplete ones, 364 copies were found valid, with a retrieval rate of 81%. A “background information questionnaire” was used, and the data on the demographic information of the participants can be seen as below.

- (1) Gender: 106 males and 258 females.
- (2) Age: 89 participants were 20-30 years old, 121 of them were 31-40 years old, 104 participants were 41-50 years old, and 50 of the participants were above 50 years old.
- (3) Experience: 127 participants had less than 10 years, 143 of them had 11-20 years, and 94 participants had more than 20 years.
- (4) Marital status: 233 participants were married and 131 participants were single.

Data collection procedure. A questionnaire survey was conducted in this study. Before the implementation of the questionnaire the school address and a contact person were confirmed first so that the response rate of questionnaire could be ensured. The researcher first asked the consent of the school for the distribution of the questionnaire. After that, the contact person was reminded to enable a balanced inclusion of teachers in terms of their genders, age groups, and level of experience. This was done to reach a proportion of the population that matched the natural distribution, and to avoid focusing on a single personal background or community variable. The written notice was attached to the questionnaire and delivered to the school.

Structural equation model is a favorable method for social science studies. The method had matured by the 1980s. In research areas such as the social sciences, economics, marketing, and management, multiple factors and outcomes must be considered. Otherwise, variables that cannot be directly observed (i.e., latent variables) may occur. These are the problems that cannot be properly solved with traditional statistics. Since the 1980s, the structural equation model has been rapidly developed to compensate for the shortcomings of traditional statistics and it has become an important tool for multi-faceted data analyses. Amos is a powerful structural equation modeling (SEM) software that assists and supports research and theory. It extends standard multivariate analysis (including regression, factor analysis, correlation, and analysis of variance). The model, which reflects complex attitudes and behaviors is created with intuitive graphics or a programmed user interface. The accuracy of this test is higher than that of using standard multivariate analysis. Amos was implemented on the questionnaire data to understand the relationships among positive leadership, optimistic attitude, and self-efficacy. Structural equation modeling combines factor analysis and path analysis from the traditional statistics and adds simultaneous equations from the field of econometrics. Therefore, it can simultaneously calculate multiple factors and multiple causal paths. The test for goodness-of-fit in structural equation modeling can generally be measured from overall model fit (i.e., the extrinsic quality of the model) and the intrinsic quality of the model. The commonly used goodness-of-fit indices for testing overall model fit include (1) “ χ^2 ratio” (Chi-Square ratio) which stands for the gap between the actual theoretical model and the expected value, and is better if it is less than 3. (2)

Goodness of fit index (GFI) and adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), which indicate better fit when close to 1, (3) Root mean square residual (RMR) of the square root of “fit residual variance/covariance mean”, which is better smaller than 0.05, and (4) incremental fit index (IFI), which shows good model fit when higher than 0.9.

Indices of intrinsic quality of the model with structural equation modeling include (1) SMC (square multiple correlation) of the individual manifest variables, which is similar to the R² of manifest variable and latent variable, and it should be higher than 0.5, (2) composite reliability (ρ) of the latent variables, which is similar to the Cronbach's α of the observed indices in the latent variable, and it should be higher than 0.6, and (3) average variance extracted of the latent variable, which is calculated by the R² sum of the manifest variables in a latent variable that is divided by the number of manifest variables, this reveals the percentage of latent variable being measured with manifest variables, and it is better when higher than 0.5.

4. Finding and Discussion

Factor analysis. The positive leadership scale was analyzed through factor analysis (Table 1). The cumulative variance explained was found as 75.491%. The optimistic attitude scale, which was analyzed through factor analysis, yielded a single-factor structure (eigenvalue=2.841, α =0.91), with 82.166% of the cumulative variance explained. Similarly, factor analysis for the self-efficacy scale yielded a single-factor structure (eigenvalue=3.762, α =0.90), with 85.537% of cumulative variance explained

Table 1. Results of the factor analysis

Variable	Factor	Eigenvalue	α	Cumulative variance explained
Positive leadership	positive vibes	4.163	0.87	75.491
	positive relationship	3.577	0.90	
	positive communication	2.186	0.92	
	positive meaning	1.569	0.89	
Optimistic attitude		2.841	0.91	82.166
Self-efficacy		3.762	0.90	85.537

Correlation analysis. As can be seen in Table 2, there are significant correlations among positive leadership, optimistic attitude, and self-efficacy. The results revealed that H1, H2, and H3 were supported.

Table 2. The results of the correlation analysis

Research dimension	α	Positive leadership	Optimistic attitude	Self-efficacy
Positive leadership	0.90			
Optimistic attitude	0.91	0.31**(P<0.00)		
Self-efficacy	0.90	0.25**(P<0.00)	0.29**(P<0.00)	

** p<0.01.

The “maximum likelihood” estimation was utilized in this study, and the analysis results achieved convergence. At the end of the analyses, it can be stated that the overall model fit indicators in this study reflect a good extrinsic quality of the model (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of model analysis

	Indicator	Judgment standard	Result
Overall fit	p -value	p -value > 0.05	0.000
	$\chi^2/d.f.$	< 3	1.383
	GFI	> 0.9	0.977
	AGFI	> 0.9	0.936
	CFI	> 0.9	0.975
	RMR	< 0.05, < 0.025 Excellent	0.016
	RMSEA	0.05~0.08 Good < 0.05 Excellent	0.023
	NFI	> 0.9	0.964
	IFI	> 0.9	0.951

Figure 1 illustrates the overall results of the study. It is obvious that all path coefficients reached significance, which reveals the convergent validity. The model fit was therefore verified, to be clearer, the research model conforms to the theory and it is valid. The research results supported the following hypotheses: H1: Positive leadership shows significant and positive effects on optimistic attitude, H2: Optimistic attitude has significant and positive effects on self-efficacy, and H3: Positive leadership has significant and positive effects on self-efficacy.

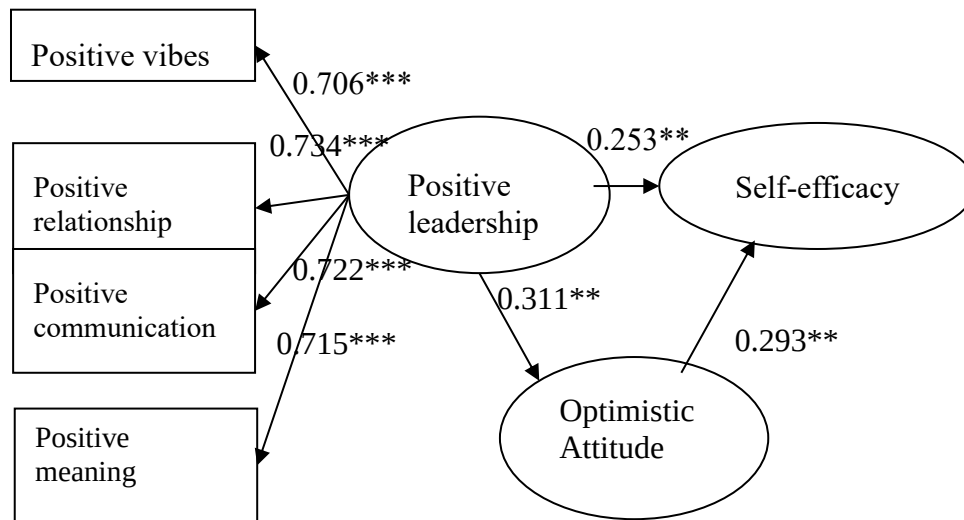


Figure 1. Path diagram

The research results showed positive correlations between supervisors' positive leadership and clinic employees' optimistic attitude and self-efficacy. In order to create a work team with high self-efficacy, enable school clinic operate with higher quality, enhance physician-patient relationship, and create a win-win situation for employees, hospital, patients, and society, a university leader should approach clinic employees with optimistic attitude [56,57]. As a result, the leader can lead the staff to be competent, to get more involved in, and to show confidence in the job. In addition, the clinic staff can be encouraged to be more willing to contribute. Therefore, a university leader should establish the positive leadership characteristics, care about subordinates' feelings, improve his relationship with the staff through sincere communication, and help clinic employees think positively during their work. Another important characteristic of a university leader is using a hands-on approach to show optimistic attitude and positive leadership [17,50]. As a result, this ensures continuous development and creates a developing work environment. A university leader should ensure that clinic employees are willing to contribute to the institution. This can be achieved by means of building a positive leadership which also enhances cohesion. In addition, the positive leadership enables reinforcing the benefits of school clinic employees by modeling their colleagues. These can make them excellent employees who are accountable for work, have self-confidence. As a result, the staff becomes more caring, and they prioritize the benefits of the organization over their personal gain. It is similar to establishing positive relationships in workplaces with two special methods. These methods are namely; establishing positive leadership and reinforcing personal strengths. Current technology can facilitate establishment of positive leadership, the use of reinforcement for members' altruism and the combining organizational outcome and personal value.

5. Conclusion

Certain positive leadership behaviors may become the convention in university organizations, while the rest are ignored. This includes, for instance, piloting of leadership strategies that conform to the environment to diagnose leaders' current leadership action, and then confirming and making policies to enhance effectiveness. This should be included in the positive leadership program which is primarily concerned with a university leader. Another important point is that supervisors should improve their positive relationships with staff and reinforce them through the positive effect of optimistic attitude [26]. Moreover, a university should actively and positively plan professional development courses on leadership, devote itself to interpreting and promoting positive leadership idea, and being in excellent leaders with positive leadership. Apart from these, a university should also generate positive leadership, create healthy optimistic attitude in school clinic which in turn promotes the self-efficacy development and progress of clinic employees [40,44]. In this respect, a university hospital that has full software/hardware resources reveals fewer limitations for leaders or school clinic employees in terms of improving their performance and the leader's positive leadership strategy. Therefore, even with limited resources, a university hospital can promote the positive leadership idea through various channels such as the promoting positive idea in the school clinic organization with new employee induction training programs or evaluation activities [47,51]. University clinic supervisors should establish a positive leadership mechanism for peer leaders. By doing so senior medical personnel with higher professional skills and optimistic attitude can make a difference with their experience. They provide assistance for school clinic employees who have less experience and insufficient professional ability. This can enhance school clinic employees' self-efficacy to create a better medical environment for patients.

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