

Transformational Leadership and Work Engagement among Clinical Nursing Educators

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Abstract: Higher education institutions are facing many challenges for preparing students to assume future societal roles. Transformational leadership is one of the most effective leadership models to deal with these challenges. The aim of this study was to assess transformational leadership and work engagement among clinical nursing educators. A descriptive correlational research design was utilized in this study. The subjects include all (78) clinical nursing educators working in six academic departments at the Faculty of Nursing Tanta University. Data of the current study was collected by utilizing the following two tools: Transformational Leadership and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. The results of this study demonstrated that there was a significant positive correlation between transformational leadership and work engagement among clinical nursing educators. Establishing the practical use of transformational leadership and work engagement concepts in nursing education and designing an educational program that focuses on fostering work engagement among clinical nursing educators.

Keywords: Clinical Nursing Educators; Transformational Leadership; Work Engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Clinical nursing educators are responsible for managing, educating and supporting nursing students during their clinical learning process. They are full-time clinical teaching staff employed by the University for providing clinical supervision and training nursing students (Ismail, Aboushady and Eswi, 2016). Clinical nursing educator's leadership is the process by which he/she directs clinical training activities to influence nursing students' engagement and achievement (Edrees, 2018).

Transformational leadership is defined as an intrinsically based motivational process whereby nursing clinical educators engage with nursing students in their learning and raise the level of motivation and moral aspiration in both (Sohrabi et al., 2016). Transformational leadership consists of four dimensions which are an idealized influence, intellectual stimulation; individual consideration and inspirational motivation (Sohrabi, Kheirkhah, Sahebzaad, et al., 2016 and Marshall, 2017). Idealized influence helps clinical nursing educators to provide a vision and a sense of mission, gain respect and trust, stimulate nursing student's enthusiasm about clinical training and demonstrate integrity and high ethical standards. Also, they influence nursing students in a positive way leading to improving their performance (Ahmed, Mohamed, and Abdul Manaf, 2017).

Through intellectual stimulation transformational clinical nursing educators can motivate nursing students to rethink using an innovative way of thinking (Bawlat, Stephan and Birdi, 2014). This dimension is concerned with the degree to which the clinical nursing educators take risks and the degree to which nursing students are stimulated with challenging tasks and encouraged to solve problems in a new prospective according to their abilities (Bryant, 2015).

Individualized consideration dimension means transformational clinical nursing educators treat each student as an individual, respect for individual student's concerns and their personal feelings and needs and offers personal attention and

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advice to their students (**Sankaran and Sindhu, 2012**). Finally, inspirational motivation through it clinical nursing educators can provide challenging goals and communicate a vision of the future in a way that inspires their students to take action to fulfill the vision (**Harrison, 2011**).

Transformational leadership contributes to work engagement when leaders are inspiring their followers. Thus, leadership has a positive effect on increasing follower's engagement and interest in their job (**Passion – Caiani, 2015**). Work engagement is defined as a persistent, positive and satisfying state of mind and an effective motivational state of work-related wellbeing (**Thian et al., 2015**).

Work engagement is divided into three domains which are vigor, dedication and absorption. Vigor (physical domain) refers to the willingness to put the effort in one's work. It is a high level of mental resilience while working and capable to persevere when dealing with challenging tasks (**Kocjan, 2015**). Dedication (emotional domain) refers to a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge. Finally, absorption refers to being fully focused and intensely engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work (**Vaksalla and Hashimah, 2015**).

Significance of the study

In the recent years, the higher education institutions are facing many challenges such as political, economic, social and technological pressures to be more responsive to students' needs and concerned about how well students are prepared to assume future societal roles (**Donald, Robert, Michael, Abbie and Darcy, 2016**). The ability to deal with these changes requires effective leaders. Leaders are considered as the backbone of any educational organization. One of the most effective models of leadership is a transformational leadership that focuses on motivating and inspiring their followers and engaging in organizational activities (**Mostfa, El-hosany and Fekry, 2018**).

The researchers noticed that most of the research studies are carried out about transformational leadership and work engagement on nursing staff in hospital settings. Few studies in nursing have been concerned with these two variables within educational settings. Therefore, from the researchers' point of view, it is a timely topic for research. It is important to assess transformational leadership and work engagement among clinical nursing educators.

The aim of the study:

The study aimed to assess transformational leadership and work engagement among clinical nursing educators.

Research questions:

- What is the level of transformational leadership among clinical nursing educators?
- What is the level of work engagement among clinical nursing educators?
- Is there a relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement among clinical nursing educators?

Study design:

Descriptive correlational study design was used in this research.

Setting:

The present study was conducted in six academic departments (Obstetrics and Gynecological Nursing, Pediatric Nursing, Community Health Nursing, Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing, Nursing Services Administration and Medical-Surgical Nursing) at Faculty of Nursing, Tanta University, which constructed at 1982/ 1983 as the High Institute of Nursing, then converted officially to Faculty of Nursing at 29/4/2000.

Subjects:

All clinical nursing educators (N=78) who are working in the previously mentioned setting were included.

Tools

To fulfill the aim of this study two tools were used

Tool I: Clinical Nursing Educators' Transformational Leadership Questionnaire

This tool was developed by the researchers based on **Noland (2005)**, **Ali and Yadav (2014)**, **Conell (2005)** and **Edress (2018)**. It was utilized to assess clinical nursing educators' transformational leadership. It consisted of two parts as follow:

Part I: Clinical nursing educator's personal characteristics include age, marital status, residence, academic position, academic years of experience and department.

Part II: Clinical nursing educators' transformational leadership questionnaire included 37 items divided into four dimensions as follows: Idealized influence included 13 items, intellectual stimulation included 6 items, individualized consideration included 9 items and inspirational motivation included 9 items. The responses were measured using a five points Likert Scale ranging from (1) never to (5) always. Never= 1, rarely= 2, sometimes= 3, often= 4, and always= 5. The total score was calculated by summing scores of all categories. The total score represented varying levels of clinical nursing educators' transformational leadership as follows: High level of transformational leadership > 75 %, moderate level of transformational leadership 60-75% and low level of transformational leadership < 60% (**Edress, 2018**).

Tool II: Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

This tool was developed by **Schaufeli and Bakker (2003)** and modified by the researchers. It was used to assess clinical nursing educators' work engagement levels. It includes 17 items divided into three sub-scales as follow: Vigor six items, dedication five items and absorption six items. The responses were measured on a five points Likert Scale ranging from (1) never to (5) always. The total score was calculated by summing scores of all categories. The total score represented varying levels of clinical nursing educators' work engagement as follows: High level of work engagement > 75 %, moderate level of work engagement 60-75% and low level of work engagement < 60% (**Al-Sayed, 2015**).

Method

1. Official permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Dean of Faculty of Nursing, Tanta University.
2. **Ethical consideration:** Clinical nursing educators' consent for participation was obtained after explanation the nature and the purpose of the study. Confidentiality of the information and the right to withdrawal were preserved.
3. The tools were translated into the Arabic language and submitted to five experts for testing the face validity. They were classified into two professors of nursing administration at Faculty of Nursing, Menoufia University, one assistant professor, one lecturer of nursing service administration, and one assistance professor of community health nursing at Faculty of Nursing, Tanta University.
4. The experts' responses were represented in four points rating score ranging from; 4 =strongly relevant, 3 = relevant, 2= little relevant, and 1= not relevant. Necessary modifications were done, included clarification, the omission of certain items and simplifying work-related words. The face validity value of **tool (1)** Clinical nursing educators' transformational leadership questionnaire = 93.59% and **tool (2)** Clinical nursing educators' work engagement scale = 94.06%.
5. A pilot study was carried out on a sample (10%) of clinical nursing educators (n=8), and they excluded from the main study sample during the actual collection of data. A pilot study was carried out after the experts' opinion and before starting the actual data collection. The pilot study aimed to test the sequence of items, clarity, applicability, and relevance of the questions. Necessary modifications were done. The pilot study serves to estimate the time required for filling the questionnaire sheet. The estimated time needed to complete the questionnaire items from clinical nursing educators was 20 - 30 minutes.
6. The reliability of tools was tested using the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient test. Reliability of **tool (1)** Clinical nursing educators' transformational leadership questionnaire = 0.97% and **tool (2)** Clinical nursing educators' work engagement scale = 0.94%.
7. Data collection phase: the data was collected from the clinical nursing educators by the researchers. The researchers met clinical nursing educators during teaching hours to distribute the questionnaire. The subjects recorded the answer in the presence of the researchers to ascertain that all questions were answered. The data were collected over three months started from November 2017 until January 2018.

2. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Data were collected, organized, tabulated and statistically analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. For quantitative data, the range, mean and standard deviation were calculated. Correlation between variables was evaluated using Pearson and Spearman's correlation coefficient (r). A significance was adopted at $P < 0.05$ for the interpretation of the results of tests of significance (*). Moreover, highly significance was adopted at $P < 0.01$.

3. RESULTS

Table (1): Frequency distribution of clinical nursing educators personal characteristics (N=78)

Personal characteristics	n	%
Age		
≤30	43	55.1
>30	35	44.9
Range	13	Min =24 max =37
Mean ±SD	29.03±3.26	
Marital status		
Married	60	76.9
unmarried	18	23.1
Residence		
Urban	38	48.7
Rural	40	51.3
Academic position		
Demonstrator	38	48.7
Assistant lecturer	40	51.3
Years of experience		
<5	32	41.0
>5	46	59.0
Range	11	Min =1 max =12
Mean ±SD	5.24±3.06	
Department		
Obstetric & Gynecological Nursing Dep.	8	10.3
Pediatric Nursing Dep.	11	14.1
Community Health Nursing Dep.	15	19.2
Psychiatric & Mental Health Nursing Dep.	11	14.1
Nursing Services Administration Dep	14	17.9
Medical-Surgical Nursing Dep.	19	24.4

Table (2): Clinical nursing educators' levels regarding transformational leadership dimensions (N=78)

Transformational leadership dimensions	High		Moderate		Low	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Idealized influence	68	87.2	7	9.0	3	3.8
Intellectual stimulation	64	82.1	11	14.1	3	3.8
Individualized consideration	68	87.1	8	10.3	2	2.6
Inspirational motivation	70	89.7	6	7.7	2	2.6

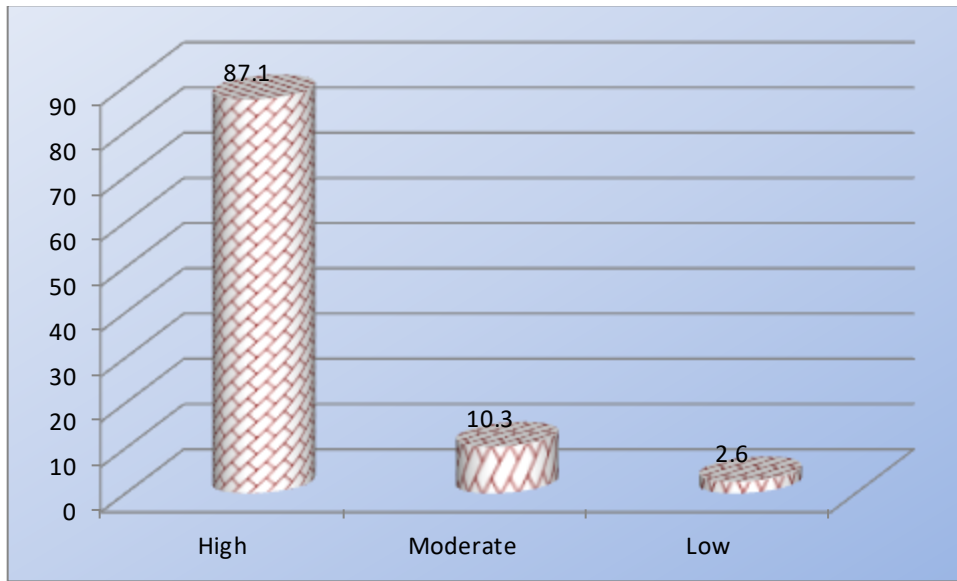


Figure (1): Frequency distribution of clinical nursing educators regarding total transformational leadership

Table (3): Levels of clinical nursing educators' work engagement (N=78)

Work engagement dimensions	High		Moderate		Low	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Vigor	61	78.2	15	19.2	2	2.6
Dedication	63	80.8	11	14.1	4	5.1
Absorption	65	83.3	9	11.5	4	5.1

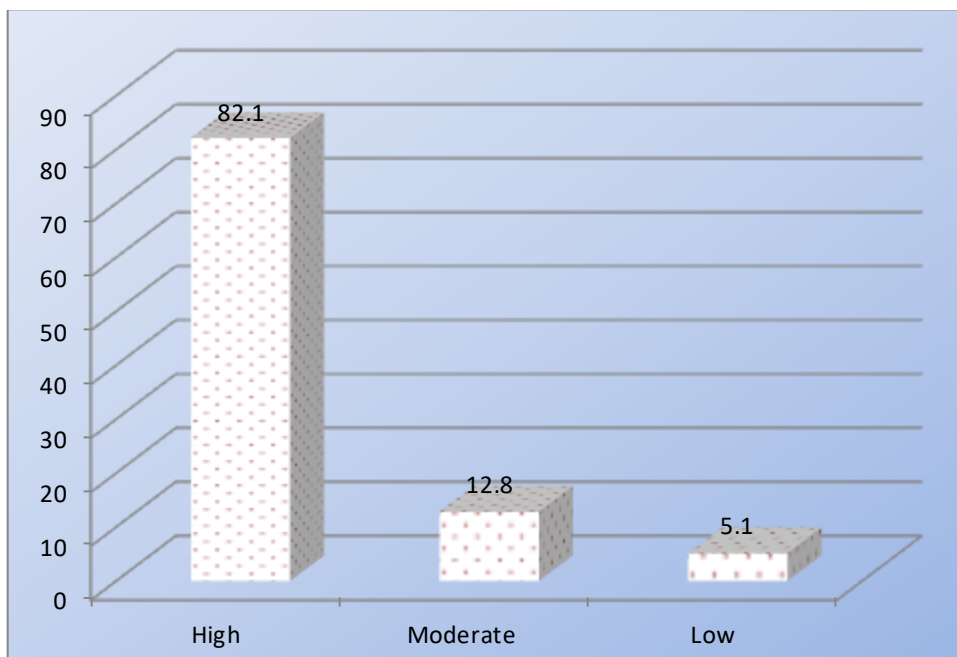


Figure (2): Frequency distribution of clinical nursing educators regarding total work engagement

Table (4): Correlation between work engagement and transformational leadership dimensions among clinical nursing educators (N=78)

Work engagement and transformational leadership dimensions	Vigor		Dedication		Absorption		Total	
	r	p-value	r	p-value	r	p-value	r	p-value
Idealized influence	0.64	0.000**	0.68	0.000**	0.67	0.000	0.71	0.000**
Intellectual stimulation	0.65	0.000**	0.76	0.000**	0.67	0.000**	0.74	0.000**
Individualized consideration	0.71	0.000**	0.80	0.000**	0.78	0.000**	0.82	0.000**
Inspirational motivation	0.76	0.000**	0.77	0.000**	0.82	0.000**	0.84	0.000**

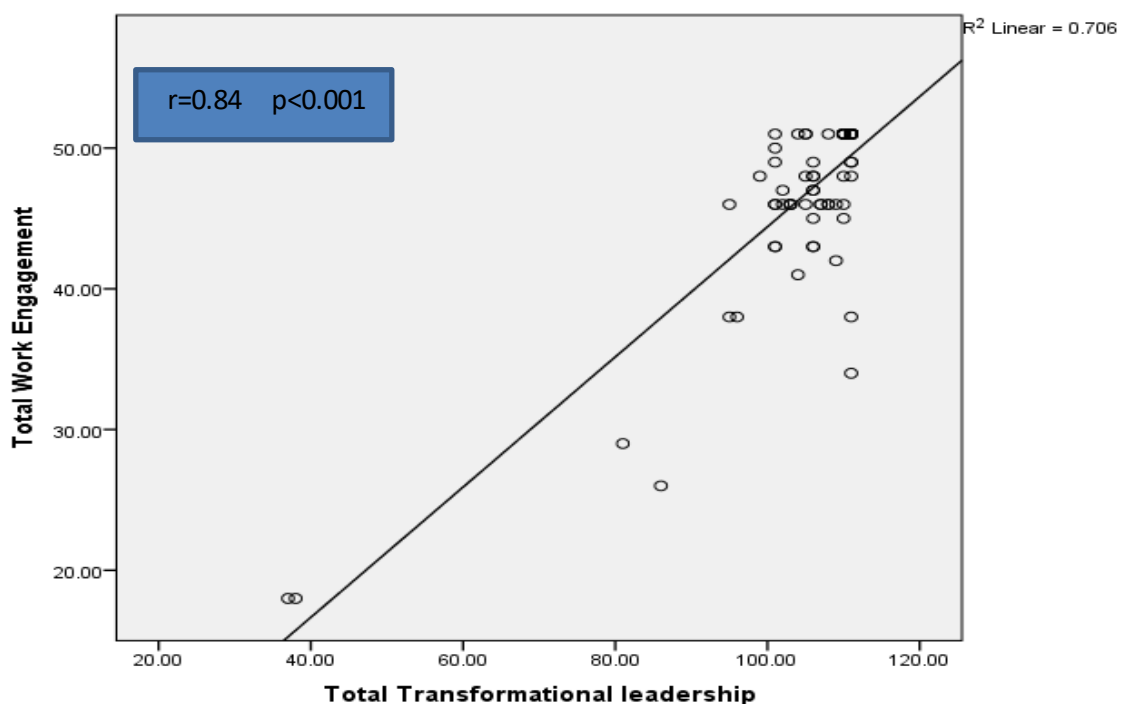


Figure (3): Correlation between total transformational and total work engagement among clinical nursing educators

Table (1) demonstrates that the age of clinical nursing educators ranged from 24 to 37 years old, with a mean age of 29.03 ± 3.26 . The majority (76.9%) of them were married and 51.3% were lived in a rural area. Concerning academic position, 51.3% of clinical nursing educators were an assistant lecturer and had experience from 1 to 12 years of experience, with mean years of experience 5.24 ± 3.06 . The highest percentage of them was working in the medical-surgical department and the lowest percentage was working in the obstetrics and gynecology department.

Table (2) and figure (1) illustrated that the majority of clinical nursing educators (87.2%) had a high level regarding transformational leadership. It was noticed that the majority of them (87.2%, 82.40%, 87.1% and 89.7%) had a high level regarding idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration and inspirational motivation dimensions of transformational leadership, respectively.

Table (3) and figure (2) show that the majority (82.1%) of clinical nursing educators had a high level regarding work engagement. The majority of them (78.2%, 80.8% and 83.3 %) had a high level regarding vigor, dedication and absorption dimensions of work engagement, respectively. Also, absorption had the highest percentage while vigor had the lowest percentage among clinical nursing educators.

As evident from the table (4) and figure (3), there was a highly statistically significant positive correlation between total clinical nursing educator's transformational leadership and their total work engagement ($p < 0.001$). Also, a highly statistically positive correlation was found between total clinical nursing educator's transformational leadership and dimensions of their work engagement ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, all dimensions of clinical nursing educators' transformational leadership were highly statistically significant correlation with all dimensions of their work engagement ($p < 0.001$).

4. DISCUSSION

The present study finding found that the majority of clinical nursing educators had a high level of transformational leadership. This finding is due to the majority of them had a high level in all dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration and inspirational motivation). This means, that clinical nursing educators are role model for their students, inspire students to think critically to find new ways for solving problems and treat their students as an individual.

This result is supported by **Bryant (2015)** study who found clinical instructors demonstrated a high level of transformational leadership. On the other hand, **Edrees (2018)** found more than one-third of nursing students rated their clinical educators' in moderate and high levels of transformational leadership.

The current study revealed that the majority of clinical nursing educators had a high level of idealized influence this result is due to they often provide a good model to follow, appreciate nursing students' hard work, try to apply new technologies in the clinical demonstration, and give equal chance to nursing students for participating clinical training. In this respect, **Bryant (2015)** stated that the clinical nursing instructor position is a unique position to educate and serve as a role model in the development of the next generation of nursing leaders. Also, the findings of **Sohrabi et al. (2016)**, **Gibbe and Kulig (2017)** and **Niederriter et al., (2017)** are congruent with the present study result which reflects that clinical instructors had idealized behavior style. While, **Ismail et al., (2016)** and **Mothobi (2017)** reported clinical instructors had the lowest means scores communication skills and they didn't have role model behavior.

The present study result found that the majority of clinical nursing educators had a high level of intellectual stimulation dimension. This finding is due to the majority of them often encourage students to look at the problem from different aspects, generate alternative solutions to the problem, give students the chance to rearrange their ideas and stimulate students to think about old problems. Along with the present study finding **Kgafele et al., (2015)**, **Mbirimtengerenji et al., (2015)**, and **Niederriter et al., (2017)** reported clinical educators to facilitate the mechanism that enhance critical thinking and problem solving and have a positive attitude that contributes to the development of nursing students. Also, **pierce (2016)** supported the current study result as the clinical instructors had a high level of individual support behavior. On the other hand, **Naji (2015)** and **pierce (2016)** reported clinical nursing instructors had a low level of intellectual stimulation dimension.

The present study result showed the majority of clinical nursing educators had high level regarding individual consideration dimension. These results are due to the majority of them often behave in a manner that is thoughtful of students' personal needs, try to involve students in the assessment of their training needs and provide students regular feedback about their needs. **Bryant (2015)** and **D'costa and Swarnadas (2016)** claimed clinical teachers had a high level of individual consideration dimension. In contrast, **Al-Haqwi and Taha (2015)** reported clinical teachers didn't give adequate feedback for their students. Also, **Naji (2015)** found clinical teachers had a low level of individual consideration dimension.

The present study finding revealed that the majority of clinical nursing educators had a high level of inspirational motivation dimensions. This finding is due to they often provide their students appealing descriptions about what they can accomplish, help students to find meaning in their clinical learning, recognize good performance and encourage their students to work together. Similarly, **Ismail et al., (2016)**, **Pierce (2016)** and **Gibbs and Kulig (2017)** Found clinical instructors possessed a higher level of inspirational motivation behaviors. While, the result of **Mothobi (2017)** is inconsistent with the present study and found clinical educators provide a limited motivation, guidance, and support for their students in the clinical setting

The present study result revealed that the majority of clinical nursing educators had a high level of work engagement. This finding is due to the majority of them had a high level in all dimensions of work engagement. Also, they had a high level of transformational leadership. The engaged clinical nursing educators are willing to do whatever needs to be done and viewed as a source of inspiration for themselves and their students. They have a positive attitude towards their work. Besides, the educational setting is characterized by challenges that motivate clinical nursing educators to work with these situations. Along with the present study finding **Van der Schoo, (2015)** reported that teachers who are engaged in their work had greater enthusiasm towards their work and are persistent in spite of many difficulties.

The present study result found that absorption had the highest percentage, while, vigor had the lowest percentage among clinical nursing educators. This finding is due to the distribution of clinical nursing educators according to their personal characteristics as the highest percentage of them were married, lived in rural areas and at a younger age. All of these factors may lead to a feeling of absorption and vigor. In the same line, the result of **Shusha and Abdelkader (2016)** concluded that absorption had the highest percentage more than other dimensions. While this result disagrees with the finding of **McDonald (2015) and Abdelrazek (2016)** reported that vigor had the highest percentage than others.

The result of the current study revealed that there was a highly statistically significant positive correlation between clinical nursing educator's transformational leadership and their work engagement. This finding is due to clinical nursing educators who exhibited a high level of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders are energizers through using the enthusiasm of optimistic goals and vision. In the same line, **Breevaat et al., (2014) and Cherry and Jacob,(2014)** stated that transformational leadership and work engagement are contributing to each other. Also, **Bailey et al., (2015)** mentioned that leadership is one of the work engagement antecedents especially the transformational leadership.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the current study, it can be concluded that the majority of clinical nursing educators had high transformational and work engagement. Also, there was a highly statistically significant positive correlation between clinical nursing educator's transformational leadership and their work engagement.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings obtained from the current study, the following points are recommended:

- Enhancing clinical nursing educator's transformational leadership through conducting periodic educational training programs and workshops especially for improving their intellectual stimulation dimension.
- The faculty administration boards are taking measures to improve vigor and dedication which contributes positively for improving work engagement environment. This can be implemented by increasing all Job resources as regular performance feedback associated with opportunities to learn social support and improve autonomy.
- Establishing the practical use of work engagement concept in nursing education and designing an educational program that focuses on fostering work engagement among clinical nursing educators.

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International Journal of Novel Research in Healthcare and Nursing

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