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## Factors affecting the skills and competencies of nurse educators

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### Article Information

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### ABSTRACT

There are many guidelines and studies about nurse educator competencies, but most research focuses on general standards or educators in big cities and well-equipped schools. There is not much information about the challenges faced by nurse educators in regions like Bicol, where resources and training opportunities may be fewer. This study aims to fill that gap by looking at the personal, professional, and institutional factors that affect the skills and competencies of nurse educators in the Bicol Region. This study used a qualitative design, employing interviews to explore the factors affecting the skills and competencies of nurse educators in selected nursing schools in the Bicol Region. Participants were 10, selected through purposive sampling, composed of nurse educators and their supervisors who shared their experiences and insights through guided, open-ended questions. The data collected were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and factors influencing the educators' competencies, while ensuring ethical standards of confidentiality and informed consent were strictly followed. The study showed that personal, professional, and institutional factors shaped the skills and competencies of nurse educators in the Bicol Region. Personal commitment, teaching experience, and continuous learning, along with institutional support and access to modern resources, played a key role in enhancing their effectiveness. Strengthening these areas through mentorship, professional development, and collaboration can help ensure quality nursing education.

### INTRODUCTION

Nurse educators help prepare future nurses who can provide safe, effective, and compassionate care. The World Health Organization (2016) explained that a strong health workforce is needed to achieve universal health coverage, and this starts with competent nurse educators. To guide nurse educators, the WHO created core competencies that focus on important areas like curriculum development, teaching methods, communication, ethics, leadership, and research (World Health Organization, 2016). The National League for Nursing also pointed out that nurse educators should keep improving their skills, act as leaders, and engage in research to ensure students receive quality education (Oermann & Frank, 2023). These global frameworks show how important it is for nurse educators to have the right knowledge, skills, and attitude to meet the changing needs of healthcare.

In the Philippines, nurse educators follow clear guidelines based on national policies. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 15, series of 2017, states that nurse educators must have a master's degree in nursing, clinical experience, and be part of professional nursing groups to ensure they can give effective instruction (CHED, 2017). The Philippine Qualifications Framework also supports these standards by promoting lifelong learning and aligning the country's qualifications with international standards (DepEd, TESDA, CHED, PRC & DOLE, 2017). Research has shown that many factors affect how well nurse educators can do their job. These include teaching experience, emotional intelligence, communication skills, the use of

technology, cultural sensitivity, and access to training (Goleman, 1995; Jeffries, 2005; Oermann & Gaberson, 2016; Loughlin *et al.*, 2021).

Even though there are many guidelines and studies about nurse educator competencies, most research focuses on general standards or educators in big cities and well-equipped schools (Billings and Halstead, 2019; Biggs & Tang, 2012). There is not much information about the challenges faced by nurse educators in regions like Bicol, where resources and training opportunities may be fewer. This study aims to fill that gap by looking at the personal, professional, and institutional factors that affect the skills and competencies of nurse educators in the Bicol Region. The results can help schools create better support systems for educators in similar areas.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design to explore and understand the factors affecting the skills and competencies of nurse educators. The design aimed to collect the views, experiences, and insights of participants, focusing on the "how" and "why" behind their skills development and teaching practices. This approach helped provide a deeper understanding of the real-life situations and challenges faced by nurse educators (Tenny, Brannan and Brannan, 2022). The study used interviews and focus group discussions as data collection methods to gather rich, detailed information directly from the educators and their supervisors.

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### Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected state universities and colleges (SUCs) offering Bachelor of Science in Nursing programs in the Bicol Region. These institutions included Bicol University College of Nursing Main Campus, Bicol University Tabaco Campus, Bicol University Polangui Campus, Catanduanes State University, and Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges.

### Population and Sampling

The participants included 10 nurse educators currently teaching in the nursing programs of the selected SUCs. The study also involved key supervisors such as the dean, assistant dean, year-level coordinator, and program coordinator who provided their perspectives on the educators' competencies. The study used purposive sampling to select participants with relevant experience and knowledge about the topic (Polit and Beck, 2017). All participants signed informed consent forms before taking part in the interviews.

### Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect information. The guide was designed to explore the personal, professional, and institutional factors influencing the skills and competencies of nurse educators. It included open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share their experiences and opinions in detail.

### Data Collection Procedure

After obtaining ethics approval, the researcher coordinated with the deans and program heads of the selected schools to identify and invite participants. The researcher and assistant introduced themselves, explained the study's purpose, and secured informed consent. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted at a time and place convenient for the participants. Each session was audio-recorded (with permission) and later transcribed for analysis. The researcher also took notes during the sessions to capture important points and non-verbal cues.

### Data Analysis Procedure

The data gathered from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-step process (Braun and Clarke, 2012). This involved familiarization with the data through repeated reading, generating codes, grouping codes into themes, reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and identifying key examples that illustrated each theme. This process helped ensure that the analysis was thorough and the themes accurately represented the participants' experiences.

### Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical guidelines to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants. No personal identifiers were collected, and all data were kept secure

and confidential. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. The study carried minimal risk, as it involved only sharing views and experiences during interviews and discussions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Factors affecting the skills and competencies of nurse educators

Analyzing factors affecting the skills and competencies of nurse educators in the Bicol Region involves examining various elements that influence their ability to deliver effective education and maintain professional growth. These factors can be broadly categorized into personal, institutional, and external influences. The primary objective is to identify and understand the various factors influencing the skills and competencies of nurse educators. This included gathering qualitative insights from educators about their experiences, challenges, and perceived needs. Findings of the focus group discussion are discussed in this section, organized in thematic areas integrating the direct quotes extracted from the respondents.

#### Personal Factors

During the conduct of the focus group discussion, selected nurse educators were asked about the personal factors that affect their skills and competencies.

Educator 1: "If we develop the level of confidence of nurse educators the more, we engage in particular situation, example they would be thinking a lot of situations in the hospital work, were they have to apply critical thinking, one of the C's aside from being compassionate having the commitment the confidence, is one of vital ingredient so that they can achieve what has to be implemented for our stake holders, especially for our students."

Educators with high levels of preparedness and commitment report greater satisfaction and effectiveness in teaching. Challenges include balancing teaching duties with personal commitments and staying updated with nursing advancements. In terms of preparedness and commitment, institutions should support educators in developing thorough course materials and provide resources to enhance their preparedness. Also, promoting a culture of commitment through recognition and incentives can further motivate educators.

Nurse educators' proficiency in using technology-enhanced learning tools, digital resources, simulation technologies, and online platforms can enhance their competency levels. Incorporating innovative teaching methods, multimedia resources, virtual simulations, and interactive learning activities improves student engagement, learning experiences, and educational outcomes.

Personal commitment to professionalism, ethical standards, academic integrity, and nursing values influences nurse educators' competency levels. Upholding ethical principles, promoting diversity and inclusion, respecting students' rights, maintaining confidentiality, and adhering

to professional standards contribute to effective teaching and role modeling.

Educator 2: “For us to foster the knowledge of our students we have to be expert in our areas of expertise. Example we teach clinical, we have a good background in the psychiatric ward as well so that we integrate the theory that we teach to the students as will the skills they need to be developed in specific area so this is very much appreciated if the faculties also is a longer experience in expertise particularly in the field of teaching.”

In terms of clinical experience and expertise, educators must be encouraged to gain diverse clinical experiences and specialties and at the same time, institutions should facilitate opportunities for practical engagement and advanced clinical training to enrich educators’ expertise. Participants with extensive clinical experience feel more confident in teaching practical skills but struggle with integrating recent clinical changes into their teaching.

Nurse educators’ previous clinical experience and expertise in various healthcare settings can influence their competency levels. Extensive clinical experience enhances educators’ ability to teach clinical skills, apply evidence-based practice, integrate real-world experiences into education, and provide practical insights to students. Educator 3: “Teaching experience can affect how we give knowledge to our students, we say that experience is the best teacher if you have your teacher experience from other universities or schools of nursing and then you the edge of giving the topics deliver the concepts and the principles to your students well.”

As to the teaching experience, there should be provision of mentorship and professional development for less experienced educators to accelerate their growth. Experienced educators should be encouraged to share best practices and mentor newer faculty. Experienced educators have developed effective teaching strategies and classroom management skills. However, less experienced educators express a need for mentorship and support in developing these skills.

The amount of teaching experience and pedagogical skills developed by nurse educators can impact their competency levels in educational practices. Experienced educators often refine their teaching methods, instructional design skills, assessment strategies, and student engagement techniques, leading to enhanced teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes.

Educator 7: “Because positive attitude towards can affect the competency.”

Focusing on the attitude and commitment to nursing, educators and their workplace must foster a supportive environment that reinforces the importance of dedication to the profession. Recognizing and celebrating educators’ commitment to inspire others is also vital to uplift their personal perspective towards teaching nursing. A positive attitude towards nursing enhances educators’ motivation and engagement. Those with a strong commitment are more likely to seek additional training and contribute to the nursing profession beyond their teaching roles.

Nurse educators with strong leadership and management abilities demonstrate competency in program coordination, curriculum development, faculty governance, and educational administration. Effective leadership skills contribute to strategic planning, quality improvement, resource management, team collaboration, and fostering a positive learning environment.

Educator 4: “Part of being nursing educator is the seminars and trainings or workshops of finances so this focuses on improving the skills knowledge and competencies of others educators, this is ensuring that educators are stay up to date with the latest research pedagogical practices and best approaches in education especially the nurse educators.”

In terms of professional development and continuing education, nurse educators must be supported with ongoing education through funding, flexible schedules, and access to resources. Participation in relevant professional development activities must be encouraged as ongoing professional development is seen as crucial for maintaining and enhancing competencies. Participants highlight the need for more accessible and relevant professional development opportunities.

The level of education attained by nurse educators, such as a master’s degree, doctoral degree, or specialized certifications, can impact their skills competencies. Advanced education often equips educators with in-depth knowledge, research skills, critical thinking abilities, and specialized expertise in nursing education, clinical practice, leadership, or a specific nursing specialty.

Nurse educators’ engagement in ongoing professional development, continuing education, and lifelong learning activities can contribute to their skills competencies. Participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, and advanced training programs helps educators stay updated on best practices, emerging trends, technological advancements, and evidence-based teaching strategies.

Educator 6: “Very effective communication and interpersonal skills that would go along with nursing students, climate of trust and respect that supports the learning and student growth is very important which in turn the teachers and the learners should have the responsibility in maintaining this kind of environment. Challenge for us and using the learning modality especially during the pandemic time we had the use of online learning system or strategies, our administrator or the university implemented the blended learning strategy for us to adept on the learning modalities and give emphasis on the access of the students from all other platforms maybe online or face to face lecture.”

Nurse educators must be offered training in communication and interpersonal skills along with effective communication and interpersonal skills. This would create opportunities for educators to practice these skills and provide feedback to help them improve. Strong communication and interpersonal skills are essential for effective teaching and student engagement. Challenges include dealing with diverse student needs

and maintaining professional relationships in a busy work environment.

Personal communication skills, empathy, cultural competence, and interpersonal abilities play a crucial role in nurse educators' competency levels. Effective communication fosters positive relationships with students, colleagues, healthcare teams, and community stakeholders, leading to better collaboration, mentorship, and support for learners.

### Professional Factors

This section discusses the professional factors that affects the nurse educator's skills and competencies.

The competency levels of nurse educators are higher when they possess advanced educational qualifications, such as a master's degree, doctoral degree (Ph.D. or DNP), or specialized certifications in nursing education. Educators are provided with specialized training in nursing education principles and practices, pedagogical expertise, research skills, and in-depth knowledge through advanced education.

Educator 7: "The training of specifically the training of the OB outcome-based education now during our workshop it could and enhance the syllabus and the curriculum the particular thereby increasing the skills competency of this educators. Another would be mentoring new faculty by the level coordinators, which is ongoing.

The amount and quality of teaching experience play a crucial role in nurse educators' competency levels. Experienced educators develop effective teaching methods, instructional design skills, assessment strategies, student engagement techniques, and feedback mechanisms that enhance learning outcomes.

Educator 5: "Clinical expertise/previous job experience as well as the nature of that experience this can affect the skills competencies of the nurse educators, example the longer they worked in a field or area the more time they are able to practice or hold their skills hence the more competent they become so they will be more effective as nurse educators, also regarding the nature of their clinical experience the more tasks involved or opportunities to demonstrate skill set the more that their competencies will be enhanced hence the more they will become more effective as clinical instructors."

Nurse educators' clinical expertise, specialized knowledge, and experience in specific nursing specialties or practice areas contribute to their competency levels. Clinical expertise enables educators to teach clinical skills, apply evidence-based practice, integrate real-world experiences into education, and provide practical insights to students. Educator 1: "Trainings and capacity building activities for nurse educators would contribute a lot to becoming professionally prepared thus it will directly affect their competencies to teach our student nurses, training are very effective in improving the skills of every nurse educator it expands their knowledge, that can also share to the students to the stakeholders it also boosts their motivation to work further and further, if they have this

kind or different level of entertainment and motivation then we can see also further development among our learners, I can see that continuing education and professional development would great help their in the development of their competencies."

Engagement in ongoing professional development, continuing education, and lifelong learning activities is essential for enhancing nurse educators' skills and competencies. Participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, faculty development programs, and advanced training opportunities helps educators stay updated on best practices, emerging trends, technological advancements, and evidence-based teaching strategies.

Educator 3: "Nurse educator should promote research engagement and scholarship and also my main another factor is ability to meet and manage the classroom as a nurse educator we should know how to handle the attitude of our students."

Nurse educators' research, scholarly activity, and publication involvement contributes to their competency levels. Engaging in research projects, securing research grants, publishing scholarly articles, presenting at conferences, and contributing to evidence-based practice enhances educators' knowledge base, critical thinking skills, and ability to integrate research findings into teaching.

Educator 5: "Terms of workload, having multiple roles and having heavy workload in terms of time allocation to engage in professional development, such as trainings seminars so it could affect the ability or the opportunity for the nurse educators to enhance their skill competencies Nurse educators with strong leadership and management abilities demonstrate competency in program coordination, curriculum development, faculty governance, and educational administration. Effective leadership skills contribute to strategic planning, quality improvement initiatives, resource management, team collaboration, and fostering a positive learning environment.

Educator 7: "The use of platform like A.I and other social media could also enhance the competency of a nurse educator and as a matter-of-fact other workshop I reflect and higher education levels also correlate with enhanced competency and professional development I mentioned will also improve teaching effectiveness and confidence"

Proficiency in using technology-enhanced learning tools, digital resources, simulation technologies, and online platforms is essential for nurse educators' competency levels. Incorporating innovative teaching methods, multimedia resources, virtual simulations, and interactive learning activities enhances student engagement, learning experiences, and educational outcomes.

Educator 4: "Professional factor collaboration networking is a great competency of nurse educator that promote change and individual classrooms so this results in improvement working to achieve a common goal through the sharing of practice and knowledge so we can make use of partnering with other universities and colleges to

stay part of educational standards and contributing for development”

Collaborating with colleagues, healthcare professionals, community stakeholders, and industry partners contributes to nurse educators’ competency levels. Networking opportunities, interdisciplinary collaboration, and partnerships enhance educators’ knowledge exchange, professional growth, and access to resources, expertise, and best practices.

### **Institutional Factors**

This section discusses the institutional factors that affects the nurse educator’s skills and competencies.

Educator 1: “Institutional partners are concerned I think also another factor that will contribute to the skills development of nurse educators will be technology infrastructure, improvement of facilities and resources must also be evident in all schools and or in all organizations especially nowadays with the onset of new technology is really a necessity now among the learners and especially the nurse educators. In our college for instance if instruments, if the equipment’s and other facilities are of high-end or state of the art and we all need trainers with the presence of trainers who also know how to utilize them so definitely it will help in the acquisitions of skills of our nurse educators. So that’s why I see technology is very vital in improving the competencies of our nurse educators”

Availability of resources such as teaching facilities, technology-enhanced learning tools, simulation labs, library resources, and funding for professional development can enhance nurse educators’ skills competencies. Institutional support through mentorship programs, faculty development initiatives, access to educational materials, and opportunities for advanced training can also contribute to educators’ professional growth and teaching effectiveness.

Workload management and appropriate time allocation for teaching, curriculum development, research activities, and administrative responsibilities impact nurse educators’ skills competencies. Adequate time for lesson planning, student interactions, clinical supervision, research projects, and professional development activities allows educators to enhance their competencies and deliver high-quality education. Institutional factors such as the design and integration of the nursing curriculum, alignment with accreditation standards, incorporation of evidence-based practices, and relevance to industry demands influence educators’ skills competencies.

Access to robust technology infrastructure, including e-learning platforms, virtual classrooms, electronic health records, simulation technologies, and multimedia resources, supports nurse educators in enhancing their technological competencies. Integration of technology into teaching practices enables educators to create engaging learning experiences, facilitate distance education, and promote digital literacy among students.

Educator 6: “One of the most considerations would be

a faculty development program and mentally where there should be proper avenue for the enhancement on top of development opportunities with the university should be supportive and there should be inclusive environment and college there should be regularly faculty evaluation period which is also being implemented in our college and in the actual institution and of course there should be proper monitoring”

Institutional initiatives such as faculty development programs, workshops, seminars, conferences, and continuing education opportunities enhance nurse educators’ skills competencies. Professional development activities focused on teaching strategies, assessment methods, curriculum development, research methodologies, leadership skills, and technological advancements contribute to educators’ growth and effectiveness.

Educator 3: “Collaboration and Interdisciplinary things with other SUCs can collaborate with other universities in the terms of curriculum and also with other agencies having mobile with them for other linkages and partnerships”

Collaboration with interdisciplinary teams, healthcare professionals, industry partners, community organizations, and academic institutions fosters a supportive environment for nurse educators. Interdisciplinary collaboration provides opportunities for educators to enhance their clinical knowledge, research collaborations, teaching innovations, and networking, leading to improved skills competencies.

Educator 5: “The importance of having mentor ship program is formally mentorship program so greatly helped the newly hired faculty nurse educators so we really appreciate the experience the skills that which the senior faculty already have and what they can teach this newly hired faculty would be very practical so it would be good that they would have this team teaching together with a junior faculty or newly hired or even have research proposals so they could learn on the field in action learning and the skill competence is the acquisition of skill competencies”

Institutional support for leadership development, mentorship programs, and leadership roles within academic departments or nursing organizations empowers nurse educators to enhance their leadership competencies. Mentorship from experienced educators, nursing leaders, and industry experts facilitates professional growth, knowledge transfer, and skills development among educators.

Institutional culture that values excellence in education, research, clinical practice, and continuous improvement fosters a conducive environment for nurse educators’ skills development. Embracing innovation, creativity, evidence-based practices, and quality improvement initiatives encourages educators to enhance their competencies, explore new teaching methods, and adapt to evolving healthcare trends.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study's results revealed that the skills and competencies of nurse educators in the Bicol Region were influenced by a combination of personal, professional, and institutional factors. On a personal level, attributes such as confidence, commitment, positive attitude, clinical expertise, teaching experience, communication skills, and continuous learning played a major role in improving their teaching effectiveness and professional growth. Professional factors like advanced education, clinical background, research engagement, use of technology, collaboration, and participation in professional development activities further enhanced their competency levels. Institutional support, including access to modern facilities, technology, mentorship programs, faculty development opportunities, and collaboration with other institutions, was found to be crucial in providing a positive environment for skills development. The findings highlighted the need for comprehensive support from both the individual and institutional levels to help nurse educators strengthen their competencies and deliver quality nursing education.

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