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Nursing Leaders' Challenge in Providing Quality Education to Nursing Students: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Nursing education plays an important role in preparing competent healthcare professionals. However, nursing leaders encounter multiple challenges in ensuring high-quality education for nursing students. This systematic review synthesizes existing published research studies to identify barriers affecting nursing education leadership. The following are based on the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Databases including PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, Cochrane Library, ResearchGate, and Medline Mesh Database were searched for relevant studies published between 2015 and 2025. A total of 1,010 records were identified, and after screening and eligibility assessment, 45 studies were included in the final synthesis. Thematic analysis revealed five major challenges faced by nursing leaders: faculty shortages, limited clinical placements, insufficient educational resources, technological adaptation barriers, and student diversity challenges. Findings highlight the need for policy reforms, faculty development programs, and enhanced collaboration between academic institutions and healthcare organizations to improve the quality of nursing education. Strengthening leadership capacity in nursing education is essential for preparing competent nurses to meet global healthcare demands.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing education plays a vital role in preparing competent healthcare professionals. However, nursing leaders particularly educators, face multiple challenges in ensuring high-quality education from building and molding, nursing students to be efficient and effective in giving care to their patients. Nursing leaders are bound to ensure that education for nursing students is maintained with high standards to produce competent graduates. The increasing complexity of healthcare systems, faculty shortage, and rapid technological advancements have created significant challenges to nursing education leadership.

Globally, nursing schools are facing increasing pressure to accommodate a growing number of nursing students while ensuring educational quality. A nursing educator who leads within the scope of teaching nursing addresses curriculum development, faculty recruitment, clinical placement coordination, and integration of technology into teaching practices. These responsibilities have become increasingly demanding as healthcare systems evolve.

According to the multiple challenges that affect the ability of nursing leaders to deliver high-quality education. These include faculty shortage, inadequate educational resources, limited clinical training opportunities, and difficulties adapting to technological innovations. Additionally, nursing educators must respond to diverse student needs and varying levels of academic preparedness.

Despite increasing research on nursing education

leadership, there is a limited synthesis of the evidence regarding the challenges faced by nursing leaders in providing quality education. A systematic review is therefore necessary to consolidate existing research and identify common barriers and potential strategies for improvement.

The purpose of this systematic review is to identify and synthesize evidence regarding the challenges faced by nursing leaders in providing quality education to nursing students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The systematic review used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) guidelines to examine nursing leadership challenges related to providing quality education to nursing students. The search covered the available years from 2015 - 2025. It is focused on nursing education leadership and addresses challenges affecting education quality. Literature searches were conducted across multiple academic databases including PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, Cochrane Library, Research Gate, Medline Mesh Database, and Scribe. The content of included articles was hand searched to review and summarize their whole picture and main point to determine the relevance of conducting a systematic review. Furthermore, if the reviewer was unable to determine if the article pertained to the study by the title the abstract was reviewed. In the assurance of the quality of the study findings common results that have impacts on problem resolution related to the systematic review have been noted.

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Data Exclusion

The systematic review exclusion criteria were opinion articles or editorials, articles that are not focused on nursing leadership, and unrelated to nursing education. Records identified through database searching: PubMed (n=320), Scopus (n=210), Google Scholar (n=280) Cochrane Library (n=50) Research Gate (n=90) Scribd/Mesh/Hand-search (n=60) with total records identified (n=1,010), duplicates removed (n=250) Records after duplicates were removed (n=760) Records screened (title/abstract) (n=760) Records excluded (n=600) eligibility of full-text article assessed for eligibility (n=160), full-text articles excluded (n=115) with the reason of not leadership/educational focus, not primarily research and outcome not relevant. In the 45 reviewed articles the researcher was able to validate each by reading the content, and organize each article to use, synthesizing data from past studies to recent studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Studies of published articles regarding the challenges faced by nursing leaders in providing quality education would include faculty shortage, work burnout, imbalance in work-life balance, a culture in the workplace, and unsupportive administrators in faculty development and training enhancement. However, current studies from 2021 to 2025 reveal that challenges of nursing leaders in quality education entail both dynamic changes and retention of skilled clinical educators, and attending to the needs of each member of the organizational structure in the implementation of educational nursing programs. Synthesis of past challenges of nursing leaders in providing quality education and current diverse problems encountered at present are related. The result of doing the systematic review gives a general view on how solutions and resolutions in upholding high standards of education for nursing students can be provided.

The results entail four (4) factors to consider when looking into the challenges of nursing leaders encountered in providing quality education. First, an organizational structure that entails transcultural and transformational leadership. This synthesis is anchored to the study of Derungs (2010). Further, it is a challenge to nursing leadership to provide quality education if nursing leaders and educators are not able to implement positive change and do not know how to adapt to the culture of support with diverse cultures within the organization. Second, the core competencies that the students should have within the process of gaining quality nursing education remain a challenge when the structure of nursing education is not able to foster interprofessional collaboration in clinical areas, simulation learning process, and basic or advanced nursing concepts to nursing administrators. Third, diverse adaptation to learning of nursing students remains a challenge to nursing leaders because manual or traditional teaching strategies and technological competencies remain an evolving need for quality assurance. Its effectiveness and efficient impact on learners is a problem as it often

varies depending on the objectives and applications of the users. And, it would remain a question whether to develop the quality of nursing education or just resolve superficial needs to comply with the requirements. Lastly, nursing leadership includes leading and mentoring students to enhance knowledge, skills, and critical thinking ability. As mentoring is a need for clinical preceptorship in any training institution, it also promotes safe and quality nursing care to patients. Moreover, it remains a challenge for nursing leaders to retain qualified nursing leaders to mentor because of the different factors that imbalance work life balance. However, for those organizations that retain qualified nursing educators who enable them to promote and apply mentorship in academia, it remains effective as it guides mentees to develop their own critical thinking skills, boosts confidence in practical clinical practice, and upholds quality research outputs.

Discussion

The systematic reviews of the 45 articles included in the review entail discussion of vital points that make the study robust. Common points were clustered in each paragraph and discussed thoroughly.

Factors Affecting the Quality of Nursing Education

The quality of nursing education is influenced by multiple interrelated factors involving workforce conditions, educator well – being, institutional support, and technological capacities. Some factors directly affect the competence of nursing graduates and ultimately the quality of healthcare delivery. Evidence from recent studies highlights that shortages, stress, job dissatisfaction, unclear roles, salary concerns, and digital barriers significantly shape nursing education outcomes, Tamata, A.T., & Mohammadnezhad, M. (2022).

Shortage of Nursing Educators and Workforce

One of the most critical issues affecting nursing education quality is the shortage of qualified nurse educators and clinical staff. A systematic review found that nursing workforce shortages stem from policy, training limitations, staff turnover, and burnout, which collectively weaken educational systems. Shortage leads to increase student-to-teacher ratios, reduced supervision in clinical training, and overburdened educators. Additionally, shortages of faculty are linked to retirement, insufficient recruitment, and limited advanced-degree holders, which restrict the capacity of nursing schools to admit and train students effectively. The impact is reducing instructional quality, limited mentorship, and compromised clinical competence of students, Sibuea, Z.M., *et al.* (2024).

Stress and Burnout Among Educators

Stress is a major psychological factor influencing both educators and students. Research shows that job stress and burnout significantly reduce nurses' quality of work-life productivity. The sources of stress would include the following, heavy workloads, clinical and teaching

responsibilities, emotional demands of patient care, and administrative pressures. The stress not only affects teaching performance but also leads to burnout, which is associated with decreased engagement and teaching effectiveness. The impact is lower teaching quality, reduced motivation, and impaired learning environment, Vagharseyyedin *et al.* (2022).

Job Dissatisfaction

Job dissatisfaction among nurse educators negatively impacts educational outcomes. Studies indicate that dissatisfaction can lead to turnover, absenteeism, and reduced performance, ultimately affecting the quality of education delivered. The common causes include, heavy workload, lack of recognition, poor working conditions, and limited career advancement. Moreover, dissatisfaction is closely linked to educator shortages, creating a cycle that further weakens nursing education systems. Its impact is high faculty turnover and inconsistency in teaching quality (2024).

Lack of Clarity in Roles and Responsibilities

Clear role definition is essential in nursing education, where educators balance teaching, clinical supervision, research, and administrative duties. Ambiguity in roles leads to the following, confusion in expectations, inefficient task management, and increased stress and dissatisfaction. Every nurse educator is expected to demonstrate competencies in curriculum design, research, clinical expertise, and communication, and a lack of clarity in these responsibilities can hinder performance. The impact will reduce the effectiveness of delivering structured and outcome-based education.

Salaries and Higher Pay Opportunities

Compensation plays a significant role in attracting and retaining qualified nurse educators. Evidence shows that salary, promotion opportunities, and job security are key determinants of nurses' work-life quality. The issue of low salaries discourages nurses from entering or staying in academic roles. Its impact is the difficulty in recruiting qualified educators and maintaining faculty stability.

Digital Teaching Barriers

It is with the increasing integration of technology in education; digital barriers have become a significant concern. Research on technology integration highlights that challenges include the following, lack of training for educators, insufficient technological infrastructure, limited institutional support, and inadequate digital resources. In nursing education, these barriers affect the online learning training, simulation-based training, and access to updated medical information which results in reduced quality of instruction and limited student engagement in a modern learning environment (2019).

The quality of nursing education is shaped by a complex interaction of workforce, organizational, and technological factors. Shortages, stress, job dissatisfaction, unclear roles,

inadequate salaries, and digital barriers all contribute to a weakened educational system. Addressing requires, strategic workforce planning, improved compensation and incentives, clear role definitions, and investment in digital infrastructure and training. Improving these factors is essential to ensure the preparation of competent nurses capable of delivering high-quality healthcare.

Leadership Solution to Challenges in Nursing Education

Leadership plays a central role in addressing persistent challenges in nursing education, including faculty shortages, burnout, low retention, and inconsistent educational quality. Effective academic leadership – particularly, transformational and supportive leadership – has been shown to improve faculty outcomes, organizational performance, and student learning environments.

Strength of Administrators in Policy Implementation and Outcome

Strong leadership from nursing administrators is essential for translating policies into meaningful outcomes. Academic leaders are responsible for the following, strategic planning, policy implementation, resource allocation, and faculty development. Research emphasizes that effective academic leadership improves faculty support, retention, and educational standards (ScienceDirect). Leaders who demonstrate vision, advocacy, and decision-making competence can successfully implement institutional policies that enhance curriculum quality and faculty performance.

However, leadership gaps exist. Many nurse educators assume leadership roles without formal preparation in administration or systems leadership, which weakens policy implementation and institutional outcomes, (ScienceDirect). The solution is to develop structured leadership training programs and competency-based leadership development for administrators to ensure effective policy execution and measurable educational outcomes.

Leadership Culture and Organizational Vision – Mission Alignment

Leadership culture shapes how effectively an organization achieves its mission and vision. A positive leadership environment that fosters, collaboration, shared governance, accountability, and innovation in teaching. Transformational leadership, in particular, creates a culture that motivates faculty and aligns organizational goals with daily educational practices. Studies show that leadership styles directly influence job satisfaction, retention, and overall organizational effectiveness, (ScienceDirect). Moreover, a leadership-driven culture ensures that nursing programs remain aligned with their mission of producing competent, ethical, and patient-centered nurses. The solution is to promote transformational and servant leadership styles that strengthen organizational

culture and ensure alignment with institutional vision and mission.

Mentorship Support and Faculty Retention

Mentorship is a key leadership strategy in addressing faculty shortages and improving retention. Academic leaders act as mentors, coaches, and professional role models. Research highlights that mentorship programs and professional development opportunities enhance growth and retention among nurses (SpringerLink). Mentorship also helps novice educators' transition into academic roles more effectively. Additionally, lack of support is identified as a major barrier to faculty retention, limiting their ability to implement innovative teaching practices, (PubMed). The solution is to establish formal mentorship programs, peer support systems, and continuous professional development initiatives.

Work-Life Balance and Its Influence on Retention

Work-life balance is a critical factor influencing faculty retention in nursing education. Evidence shows that work-life balance is a strong predictor of retention and poor balance contributes to burnout and turnover. A 2025 study found that work-life balance significantly improves nurse retention and reduces burnout, highlighting its importance in workforce stability, (SpringerLink). Leadership plays a crucial role in promoting balance through flexible workloads, supportive scheduling, and mental health initiatives. The solution is always implemented policies that promote work-life balance, such as flexible teaching loads, wellness programs, and workload redistribution, (AbdElhay, E.S., *et al.*, 2025).

Faculty Competencies and Their Influence on Outcomes

Faculty competencies directly affect educational quality and student outcomes. Effective nurse educators must demonstrate clinical expertise, teaching competence, research skills, and leadership abilities. However, research indicates that many educators lack preparation in leadership and administrative competencies, affecting institutional performance, (ScienceDirect). Leadership must ensure competency development through, training programs, continuing education, and a competency-based evaluation system. The solution should adopt competency-based frameworks for faculty development to enhance teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

Leadership Intervention to Address Burnout and Improve Outcomes

Leadership interventions are essential in reducing burnout and improving faculty well-being. Studies identify several effective interventions such as a). Burnout Reduction Strategies (workload redistribution, mental health support and positive work environments); Burnout among nursing faculty is widespread, with high levels linked to workload, incivility, and lack of support; b) Organizational and Leadership Interventions

(leadership support systems, professional development programs and compensation and recognition strategies); Evidence shows that leadership support, mentorship, and policy reforms are key solution to burnout issues); c) Evidence-Based Interventions. Systematic reviews highlight the importance of stress management programs, resilience training, and academic support systems. These interventions improve both faculty and student outcomes in nursing education, (PubMed). The solution is to implement multi-level leadership interventions addressing both individual well-being and organizational systems. Leadership is a critical factor in overcoming challenges in nursing education. Strong administrative capacity, supportive leadership culture, mentorship, work-life balance, faculty competency development, and targeted interventions collectively enhance faculty retention and educational quality. In ensuring sustainable improvements, nursing education institutions must invest in leadership development, foster supportive organizational cultures, prioritize faculty well-being, and implement evidence interventions. Ultimately, effective leadership transforms challenges into opportunities, ensuring the preparation of highly competent nurses and strengthening healthcare systems.

CONCLUSION

Nursing leadership faces significant challenges in ensuring quality education, including faculty shortages, burnout, job dissatisfaction, unclear roles, and limited institutional and digital support, (Tamata, A.T., & Mohammadnezhad, M., 2022). These issues hinder effective policy implementation, faculty retention, and overall educational outcomes. Evidence suggests that inadequate leadership preparation and poor work-life balance further weaken the ability of leaders to sustain a productive academic environment. Addressing these challenges requires strengthened leadership competencies, supportive organizational cultures, and targeted interventions to improve faculty well-being performance, ultimately enhancing the quality of nursing education, (Nurse Education Today, 2024).

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