

A Narrative Review on the Effects of Nurse's Communication and Self-Leadership on Nursing Performance

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Abstract

Effective communication and self-leadership are pivotal factors influencing nursing performance and the quality of patient care. This narrative review explores the critical roles these two elements play in nursing practice. Communication, both interpersonal and public, serves as the bridge for transferring information, emotions, and knowledge between nurses, patients, and healthcare teams. Barriers to clear communication, including contextual, communicational, and personal factors, are discussed, alongside strategies to overcome them. Additionally, the concept of self-leadership is examined in the context of nursing, highlighting how self-regulation, motivation, and decision-making contribute to nursing performance. The review emphasizes the importance of developing strong communication skills and self-leadership behaviors through continuous training and professional development. Furthermore, it addresses how nurses can adapt their communication approaches to diverse patient populations and navigate challenges posed by technological advancements. By integrating these skills into everyday practice, nurses can enhance patient outcomes, improve care quality, and promote a safer healthcare environment. The review concludes by emphasizing the need for organizational support and ongoing professional education to equip nurses with the necessary tools for effective communication and self-leadership.

Keywords: Nursing communication, self-leadership, nursing performance, patient care, healthcare communication, active listening, empathy, trust in nursing, cultural competence, professional development, communication barriers, nurse-patient relationship, healthcare organizations, nursing training, technological impact on nursing, leadership in nursing.

Introduction

Nursing is a profession that must communicate all the time and tends to be surrounded by complicated situations. Communication works as a bridge when one tries to cross over a distance, as it enables the transfer of feelings, thoughts, experiences, ideas, and knowledge through verbal and non-verbal messages. Communication cannot be easily defined, as it varies according to different contexts, cultural backgrounds, and social systems. However, the general concept of communication consists of the communicators (senders and receivers), encoded messages, channels, contexts, and feedbacks (received messages) (Maurissa et al., 2012). For nurses, both interpersonal communication and public communication are needed to perform nursing care for patients effectively. Interpersonal communication is a verbal or non-verbal interaction that takes place between two or more people while public communication is a one-way information dissemination to a large number of people with the use of technology-enhanced media.

Nurses need to focus on systematic and organized communication in order to establish clear communication. Generally, clear communication can be established through understanding and consideration on communicators, contexts, channels, messages, and feedbacks. Nevertheless, there are many barriers that make it difficult to create a clear communication. Systematically, a barrier can be divided into three main aspects: (i) contextual aspects, which include health care policies, institutional systems, and social rules; (ii) communicational aspects, which include medical terms, language skills, and differences in perceptions; and (iii) personal aspects, which include mental states and attitudes of individual nurses and patients. These barriers may cause nurses tackle difficulties in implementing clear communication with patients, families, and other healthcare providers. Therefore, it is essential to discuss how a nurse's communication affects nursing performance. In addition, a nurse should lead oneself in order to perform the best care. Self-leadership refers to a person's capacity to influence and lead oneself in achieving the desired outcomes and it includes behaviors based on strategies that shape thoughts, feelings, and actions to enhance self-influence. A nurse's self-leadership may influence sentiments and actions toward health care situations. Thus, it needs to be discussed how a nurse's self-leadership affects nursing performance. Finally, this review aims to discuss the influence of a nurse's communication and self-leadership on nursing performance and also bring some insight on how to overcome the barriers of a clear communication.

The Importance of Effective Communication in Nursing

Nursing is a complex profession that involves providing care for individuals, families, and communities, promoting health, and preventing illness or injury throughout the lifespan. Nurses play a critical role in the healthcare system, with their responsibilities and roles continuously expanding. The economic and social conditions in society can also affect nurses' roles. Effective communication is an essential tool for nurses in performing their roles and provides numerous benefits to patients. Therefore, it is imperative for nursing professionals to develop skilled

communication. The communication skills of nurses, including both verbal and non-verbal approaches, play a significant role in the treatment and care of patients (Ralph, 2015). Nurses should nurture communication skills and promote adequate avenues for training in this regard. Nurses are required to develop an understanding of the importance of communication in promoting safety and patient care. Good communication can prevent adverse events from happening in the first place as it acts as a safeguard (Jantzen & J. Ford, 2012). Conversely, poor communication is a significant contributor to errors. The specific effects of nurses' communication on the quality of care given to patients should therefore be examined.

Health professionals should be supported in developing and improving their communication practice and given the freedom to decide how to implement this development. Organizations should find ways to better support the improvement of communication practice in their services. Organizations should also consider undertaking a review of their current communication practices and whether they meet patients' needs for understanding, supporting, and gathering their informed consent. Health professionals should check patients' understanding of treatment decisions and information, as well as patients' consent (to ensure patients actively agree to the treatment based on their understanding and intention). Ongoing discourse is also necessary in examining how mutual understanding is established within different professional health communication practices. Communication should be integrated into the nursing profession and thoroughly examined across medical fields in improving patient safety and care quality. Active listening and empathizing with the patient help the nurse understand the patient better. Engagement in communication with the patients increases the holistic care of the patients.

Key Elements of Nurse-Patient Communication

Nurse-patient communication has been the focus of research studies across the globe. It refers to the verbal and non-verbal interactions between the patient and the nurse during the care. It creates a mutual understanding and helps the individuals involved in care delivery to share information, feelings and thoughts (Steckler, 2012). Communication is a two-way process that includes transmitting and receiving messages. There are both sender and receiver roles in communication. If one party sends the message and the other party fails to receive it, communication cannot be said to have occurred. There are many factors that can affect nurse patient communication such as gender, age cultural background, and profession differences. However, there are some fundamental elements that make the communication process effective.

Active listening is the most important constituent of nurse patient communication. Active listening means being attentive to the speakers and trying to decipher their situations and feelings (Ralph, 2015). The listener pays attention to what the speaker is communicating instead of merely hearing the words. Studies suggest that active listening is significant in achieving a deeper understanding of patient needs, a supportive environment, patient trust in nursing care and effective prevention of

health deterioration. It urges the listeners to motivate the speakers to elaborate by using expressions such as “go on” and “please tell me more”. Empathy is another key element in communication. The purpose of injecting empathy into communication is to make the other person feel understood and valued. This is done by identifying with the emotions of the speaker. The understanding can be either emotional or cognitive. In emotional understanding, the listener resonates sympathetically by feeling sad for the patient’s misfortune while in cognitive understanding, the listener puts himself in the speaker’s shoe to grasp his perspective. Empathy is said to have the ability to build rapport between the parties involved in communication and when patients feel that their thoughts and feelings matter, they are more likely to cooperate with the care.

The third important aspect is trust. Non-verbal communication such as facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, posture or eye contact can have a more significant effect on patient perceptions than the words being used. Patients may feel worried if they sense that the nurse is preoccupied with something else during the conversation. Overall, it has been revealed that trust is key in an effective therapeutic relationship and that there are factors that can influence the establishment and maintenance of trust. With regard to patients, they seek confidentiality, consistency, honesty, and openness in order to trust the caregiver. On the other hand, nurses can enhance trust by being attentive, respectful, aware of patient welfare, and responsive to their needs. Strategies aimed at improving nurse patient communication include the provision of training, practice simulations, the use of patient actors, group discussions, and role play. Adapting to a diverse patient population is also a challenge for many healthcare services. Therefore, cultural-awareness training has been introduced as a way to familiarize nurses with the beliefs and values of different cultural backgrounds.

The Role of Leadership Styles in Nursing Communication and Performance

Leadership styles play a significant role in shaping how nurses communicate with their patients, colleagues, and within their healthcare teams. Different leadership styles can impact communication patterns, which in turn affects the overall performance of nursing teams and patient outcomes. Two commonly discussed leadership styles in nursing are transformational leadership and transactional leadership.

Transformational

Leadership:

Transformational leadership is characterized by the ability to inspire and motivate others, fostering a collaborative and inclusive work environment (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This leadership style encourages open communication, active listening, and the sharing of ideas, which are crucial elements for effective nurse-patient interactions. Nurses who practice transformational leadership are more likely to encourage a positive and supportive environment, which can improve the quality of care and increase nurse job satisfaction (Laschinger et al., 2001). Additionally, transformational leadership can enhance self-leadership skills, as nurses are empowered to take initiative in their professional roles and improve their performance through self-regulation and intrinsic motivation.

Transactional Leadership:

In contrast, transactional leadership focuses on maintaining control through established procedures and expectations, offering rewards or penalties based on performance (Bass & Avolio, 1994). While this style may lead to clear communication and defined roles within a healthcare setting, it may not foster the creativity or autonomy that enhances nursing communication or self-leadership. Nurses under transactional leadership might struggle with adapting to changing patient needs or providing individualized care due to rigid protocols. Therefore, a more flexible leadership style, such as transformational leadership, might better support the development of effective communication and the enhancement of nursing performance.

Implications for Nursing Practice:

The adoption of an appropriate leadership style within nursing teams can significantly influence how nurses communicate with each other and with patients. Leaders who encourage open dialogue, feedback, and team collaboration can help reduce communication barriers and enhance overall performance (Cummings et al., 2010). Furthermore, leadership styles that promote autonomy and self-leadership in nurses may help them manage stressful situations more effectively, maintain professional competence, and improve patient outcomes. Effective leadership is essential in addressing challenges within healthcare systems, as it ensures that nurses are supported in their roles and equipped with the tools necessary to excel.

Conclusion

Effective communication and self-leadership are integral to the success of nursing practice and play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of patient care and nursing performance. Nurses rely on both interpersonal and public communication to connect with patients, their families, and healthcare teams, ensuring clear and accurate information exchange. However, barriers such as contextual, communicational, and personal factors can hinder the effectiveness of communication, affecting the overall performance of nursing teams. Additionally, self-leadership empowers nurses to take initiative, regulate their behaviors, and stay motivated, even in challenging healthcare environments. The combination of strong communication skills and the ability to lead oneself effectively is essential for delivering high-quality care and improving patient outcomes.

As the healthcare landscape evolves with advancements in technology and increasing patient diversity, the need for continued professional development in communication and self-leadership becomes even more evident. Nurses must adapt to the changing demands of their profession, overcoming communication barriers, and leveraging their leadership skills to excel in patient care.

Recommendations

To further enhance the impact of communication and self-leadership on nursing performance, healthcare organizations should prioritize ongoing training and development programs that focus on improving communication skills and fostering self-leadership behaviors among nurses. These programs should address the challenges of communicating in diverse settings and encourage the adoption of leadership styles that support autonomy, collaboration, and motivation.

Additionally, healthcare institutions should create supportive environments that encourage open dialogue, teamwork, and mutual respect. Implementing systems that promote feedback and provide opportunities for nurses to lead initiatives can enhance both personal and team performance. Moreover, integrating technology to facilitate communication rather than hinder it is crucial to ensuring that nurses maintain strong interpersonal relationships with patients while utilizing technological tools effectively.

Lastly, nursing leadership should strive to model behaviors that emphasize the importance of clear communication and self-regulation. By fostering a culture where nurses are empowered to take charge of their professional growth and contribute meaningfully to the healthcare team, patient care can be improved, and the nursing profession can continue to evolve in a positive direction.

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