
Decision-Making Experiences of Nurse Managers Handling Multicultural Staff in Tertiary Hospitals: A Qualitative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

Cultural diversity in healthcare presents challenges for nurse managers, particularly when leading multicultural teams. This study explored the decision-making experiences of nurse managers working with multicultural staff in tertiary hospitals. A qualitative approach was used, with data collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings showed that nurse managers rely on cultural awareness, effective communication, fairness, and flexible leadership when making decisions. Common challenges included communication barriers, cultural differences, and organizational constraints. The study highlights the importance of cultural competence, leadership development, and organizational support in improving decision-making, team performance, and patient care in multicultural healthcare settings.

Keywords: Multicultural leadership, nurse managers, Decision-making, Cultural competence, Healthcare management.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing cultural diversity in healthcare has created new challenges for nurse managers, especially in decision-making and leading multicultural teams. Differences in language, values, beliefs, and communication styles can affect teamwork, staff relationships, and patient care outcomes. Nurse managers must balance organizational policies with the diverse needs of their staff while maintaining a supportive and productive work environment.

Effective decision-making in multicultural healthcare settings requires cultural awareness, flexibility, and strong communication skills. Despite the increasing diversity of the healthcare workforce, limited research has explored the experiences of nurse managers leading multicultural teams. This study aims to understand their decision-making experiences and identify strategies that support effective leadership.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to explore the decision-making experiences of nurse managers handling multicultural staff in tertiary hospitals. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do nurse managers describe their typical decision-making processes when managing culturally diverse nursing teams?
2. What challenges do nurse managers encounter in making decisions that affect staff performance, patient care, and team dynamics in multicultural settings?

3. How do nurse managers perceive the influence of their personal leadership traits, cultural competence, and communication skills on their decision-making?
4. What strategies do nurse managers employ to address conflicts, ethical dilemmas, and staff needs in culturally diverse teams?
5. How do organizational culture, policies, and support systems shape nurse managers' decision-making experiences in multicultural healthcare environments?

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This study explored the decision-making experiences of nurse managers leading multicultural nursing teams in tertiary hospitals. It focused on the challenges, strategies, and factors influencing their decisions. The study was limited to participating nurse managers and relied on their self-reported experiences; therefore, the findings may not generalize to all healthcare settings or to nurse managers in other institutions.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Recent studies show that nurse managers play an important role in leading multicultural healthcare teams. Strong communication skills, cultural competence, supportive leadership, and transformational leadership contribute to better staff performance and patient care (Gaspar, 2024). Research also shows that giving nurses more responsibility, autonomy, and opportunities for open communication can improve the quality and safety of care. However, nurse managers may face challenges in balancing leadership responsibilities and patient care demands (Van Bogaert et al., 2021).

Studies also highlight the importance of organizational culture and leadership in nursing practice. Factors such as poor communication, limited leadership support, and hierarchical structures can hinder professional growth and evidence-based practice, whereas positive relationships and peer support foster improvement (Alodhialah, 2025). Leadership qualities such as integrity, competence, empathy, inclusion, and effective communication are valued by both nurse leaders and staff nurses and contribute to quality patient care and organizational success (Flores et al., 2023).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on four theories: Transformational Leadership Theory, Leininger's Culture Care Theory, Benner's Novice to Expert Theory, and the Rochester Model of Nursing Competency. These theories help explain how nurse managers make decisions when leading multicultural teams. They focus on leadership, cultural understanding, nursing experience, and professional competency.

Together, these theories show that effective decision-making requires strong leadership, cultural awareness, and staff competence. They help nurse managers promote teamwork, manage cultural differences, and improve patient care in multicultural healthcare settings.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with nurse managers to explore their decision-making experiences while leading multicultural teams.

Research Design

The qualitative approach allowed the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of participants lived experiences, perspectives, and reasoning processes when making decisions in culturally diverse teams. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which enabled participants to provide detailed accounts of their decision-making practices, challenges, and strategies in managing staff from different cultural backgrounds. This design was appropriate for capturing the complexity, context-specific factors, and nuanced nature of decision-making that could not be fully addressed through quantitative methods.

Research Steps

The study was conducted in selected tertiary hospitals where nurse managers oversaw multicultural nursing teams. The research sites included both public hospitals, representing diverse units, staffing structures, and leadership models. The hospital was chosen based on accessibility, willingness of nurse managers to participate, and the presence of culturally diverse staff, which was essential to understanding the influence of cultural differences on decision-making processes. Conducting the study in these settings provided an opportunity to capture authentic experiences and perspectives of nurse managers within their real-world work environments.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The study used purposive sampling to select nurse managers who met the inclusion criteria: actively supervising multicultural teams and being willing to share their experiences. Purposive sampling ensured that participants could provide rich, relevant, and diverse insights into decision-making processes in multicultural settings. Participants were selected from different units, shifts, and levels of experience to capture variations in leadership practices and decision-making approaches. The final sample size was determined based on data saturation, with interviews continuing until no new themes or significant information emerged.

Data Analysis Methods

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data. Interview transcripts and field notes were repeatedly reviewed to gain familiarity with the content. Significant statements related to decision-making experiences, leadership strategies, and challenges were identified and coded. Codes were then grouped into categories reflecting common patterns, which were further refined into themes capturing the core aspects of participants' experiences. The analysis was conducted iteratively to ensure consistency, accuracy, and faithful representation of the nurse managers' perspectives.

Research Hypotheses and Validation

The study ensured trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Multiple data sources, detailed documentation, clear descriptions, and reflective practices were used to enhance the accuracy, reliability, and credibility of the findings, ensuring they genuinely reflected the experiences of pediatric nurses in Qatar.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness was ensured through strategies such as credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established by conducting member checks, allowing participants to verify the accuracy of their statements. Dependability was maintained through a detailed audit trail of the research process, including data collection and analysis. Confirmability was supported by careful documentation of field notes, reflective observations, and systematic transcription of interviews, ensuring that the findings accurately represented participants' experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

THEME 1: Culturally Sensitive Decision-Making

Nurse managers said that training, support, and experience help them become better leaders. Training improves their communication and leadership skills, while support from management and available resources help them do their work more effectively. They also shared that learning from daily challenges and experiences helps them grow and become more confident in handling multicultural teams.

THEME 2: Challenges in Multicultural Leadership

The findings show that nurse managers face challenges in leading multicultural teams due to language barriers, cultural differences, and differing expectations among staff. They shared that clear communication, patience, and understanding are important for avoiding misunderstandings and improving teamwork. Nurse managers also need to respect diverse cultures while adhering to hospital policies and prioritizing patient safety. Overall, being flexible, fair, and understanding helps them manage diverse teams more effectively.

THEME 3: Adaptive Leadership and Communication

The findings show that nurse managers use flexible leadership and effective communication to lead multicultural teams. They adapt their approach based on staff needs, cultural differences, and workplace situations. Clear communication, active listening, and mutual respect help reduce misunderstandings, build trust, and improve teamwork. These strategies support a positive work environment and effective team leadership.

THEME 4: Conflict Resolution and Ethical Decision-Making

Nurse managers shared that training, experience, and hospital support help them become better leaders. Training improves their communication and leadership skills, while management support, clear policies, and adequate resources help them manage their teams effectively. They also learn from daily experiences and challenges. Overall, continuous learning and support help nurse managers lead multicultural teams successfully.

THEME 5: Organizational Support and Leadership Development

The findings show that nurse managers improve their leadership skills through training, experience, and organizational support. Training programs help strengthen their communication, leadership, and decision-making abilities. Support from management, clear policies, and adequate resources also help them lead their teams effectively. Continuous learning and workplace experience contribute to their growth and confidence in managing multicultural teams.

SUMMARY

This study explored the decision-making experiences of nurse managers leading multicultural teams in healthcare settings. The findings showed that nurse managers use culturally sensitive, fair, and flexible approaches when making decisions. Key factors that supported effective leadership included cultural awareness, clear communication, trust, respect, and professionalism. Despite challenges such as communication barriers and cultural differences, nurse managers were able to promote teamwork and maintain quality patient care through adaptive leadership strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that effective leadership in multicultural healthcare environments requires a combination of cultural competence, strong communication skills, and adaptive decision-making. Nurse managers play a vital role in creating a positive work environment and ensuring quality patient care. Continuous leadership development, cultural competence training, and organizational support are essential for strengthening leadership practices and improving outcomes in diverse healthcare settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Healthcare organizations should provide leadership training programs to improve nurse managers' decision-making, communication, cultural awareness, and conflict resolution skills. Nurse managers are encouraged to apply culturally sensitive and inclusive leadership practices in their daily work. Nursing educators should include multicultural leadership topics in nursing education programs to prepare future leaders. Future studies should involve larger samples and different healthcare settings to further improve leadership practices in multicultural teams.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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