

The Lived Experiences of Nurses in Post-Surgical Wound Management

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of registered nurses in post-surgical wound management using a qualitative phenomenological design. Eight nurses from the surgical ward of a tertiary hospital were purposively selected and interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. Findings revealed that nurses viewed post-surgical wound management as a process of continuous professional growth while facing challenges related to workload, staffing shortages, limited resources, and complex patient conditions. Clinical decision-making was guided by evidence-based wound assessment, institutional protocols, interdisciplinary collaboration, and continuous learning. Although limited to a single clinical setting, the study provides valuable insights into nurses' experiences and underscores the importance of organizational support, continuing professional development, and collaborative practice in improving postoperative wound care and patient outcomes.

Keywords: *post-surgical wound management, nurses' lived experiences, clinical decision-making, wound care, phenomenology, surgical ward*

INTRODUCTION

Post-surgical wound management is essential in preventing surgical site infections (SSIs), promoting wound healing, and improving patient outcomes. Nurses play a vital role through wound assessment, dressing changes, infection prevention, documentation, monitoring, and patient education (Ousey et al., 2023; Singh & Kumar, 2023). Despite advances in evidence-based wound care, SSIs remain a significant global health concern, contributing to prolonged hospitalization, increased healthcare costs, and higher morbidity (Sandy-Hodgetts et al., 2025). Organizational challenges, including heavy workloads, staffing shortages, limited resources, and increasing patient complexity, further influence nurses' ability to provide optimal postoperative wound care. Although previous studies have examined wound care practices and patient outcomes, limited qualitative evidence exists on nurses' lived experiences and clinical decision-making in post-surgical wound management. Therefore, this study explored the lived experiences of registered nurses to better understand the challenges they encounter and the factors influencing their clinical decisions, with the goal of informing evidence-based nursing practice and improving postoperative wound care.

Statement of the Problem

Postoperative wound care is a critical nursing responsibility that contributes to healing and infection prevention. However, nurses often face clinical and resource-related challenges in delivering consistent wound care in surgical wards. Limited qualitative evidence exists on

how nurses experience these responsibilities in daily practice. This study aims to explore the lived experiences of registered nurses in post-surgical wound management.

Grand Tour Question

1. What are the lived experiences of nurses in post-surgical wound management?

Scope and Delimitations

This study explored the lived experiences of registered nurses involved in post-surgical wound management in the surgical ward of a tertiary teaching hospital in Muscat, Oman. It focused on nurses' experiences, challenges, and clinical decision-making in providing postoperative wound care. Participants were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in wound management, and data were collected through in-depth interviews. The findings are limited to the experiences of nurses from a single surgical ward and may not be transferable to other healthcare settings. As with most qualitative studies, the findings are based on participants' self-reported experiences and are intended to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon rather than statistical generalization.

Review of Related Literatures

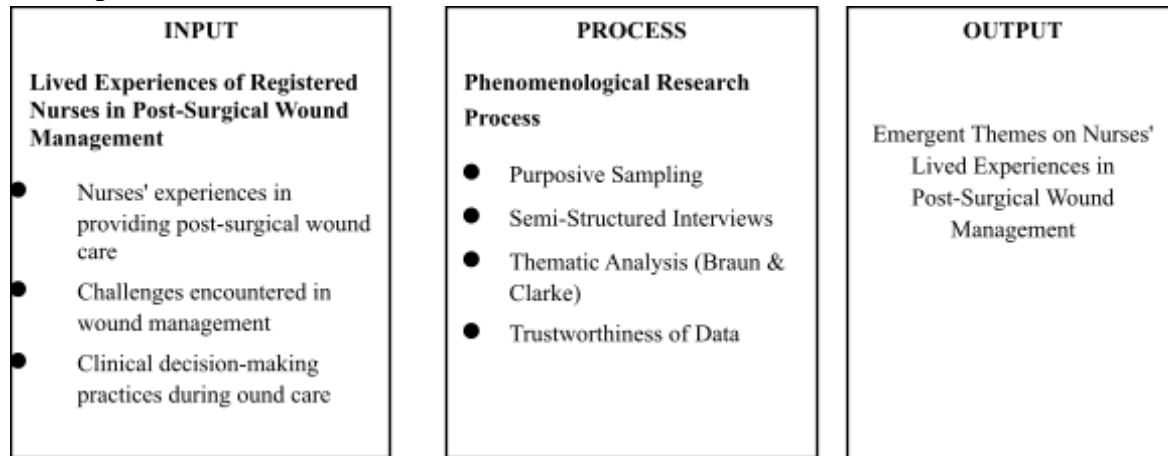
Post-surgical wound management is a critical component of nursing practice that significantly influences wound healing, surgical site infection (SSI) prevention, patient recovery, and healthcare quality. Evidence-based wound care emphasizes standardized wound assessment, infection prevention, accurate documentation, maintenance of a moist wound environment, and patient education as essential principles for improving postoperative outcomes (Ousey et al., 2023; Singh & Kumar, 2023; Hwekwete, 2025). Previous studies have shown that structured patient education, standardized wound care protocols, and quality improvement initiatives contribute to better postoperative outcomes and reduced SSI rates (Henarejos et al., 2022; Abustan et al., 2023). Similarly, international research highlights that nurses' knowledge, adherence to clinical guidelines, documentation practices, and patient education are influenced by factors such as organizational support, workload, resource availability, and continuing professional education (Basuony et al., 2023; Gamage et al., 2025; Gizaw et al., 2022; Tegegn et al., 2023). Therefore, this study explored the lived experiences of registered nurses in post-surgical wound management to provide insights that may inform nursing practice, strengthen evidence-based care, and support improvements in postoperative wound management.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Patricia Benner's Novice to Expert Theory (1984), which explains that nurses develop clinical competence through education, experience, and reflective practice. The theory proposes that as nurses gain experience, they progress from relying on rules and procedures to exercising sound clinical judgment and expertise in patient care. Benner's theory is relevant to post-surgical wound management because nurses must integrate clinical knowledge, technical skills, and critical thinking to assess wounds, prevent infections, select appropriate interventions, and manage postoperative complications. It also

emphasizes that continuous learning and clinical experience strengthen nurses' competence and confidence in delivering evidence-based care.

Conceptual Framework



METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of registered nurses in post-surgical wound management. The study was conducted in the surgical ward of Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, Muscat, Oman. Nine registered nurses with at least six months of postoperative care experience were purposively selected. Data were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews using a validated interview guide. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved. Trustworthiness was ensured using Lincoln and Guba's criteria through member checking, audit trails, reflexive journaling, and rich descriptions. Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection, and written informed consent, confidentiality, and secure data management were maintained throughout the study.

Research Design

This study intends to gain insight into nurses' experiences in post-surgical wound care management through descriptive qualitative research design.

Research Steps

The study began with a review of relevant literature, followed by development and validation of a structured interview guide, participant recruitment, data collection through Individual semi-structured face-face interviews, thematic analysis, and interpretation of findings.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

Individual semi-structured face-face interviews were used as data collection for this project on nurse's experiences with post-operative wound management. Interviews are audio-recorded with participants' consent before recording begins. Coded transcripts and themes kept.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework applied to the data that gathered from the study according to the study's Statement of the Problem. The data collected during this analysis are based solely on data provided by the participants so as to maintain the credibility, authenticity, and trustworthiness of the resultant findings of this study.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This study will adhere to established ethical principles in human research, including Respect for Persons, Beneficence, and Justice from the Belmont Report, as well as the principles of Autonomy, Nonmaleficence, Fidelity, Veracity, Data Privacy, and Informed Consent. Furthermore, ethical issues encompassed the imperative to ensure the respectful portrayal of participants' views in the final analysis and reporting

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach generated six themes reflecting nurses' lived experiences in post-surgical wound management (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Findings revealed that nurses developed clinical competence through education, clinical experience, and evidence-based practice while facing challenges related to workload, staffing shortages, limited resources, and complex patient conditions (Basuony et al., 2023; Gamage et al., 2025). Clinical decision-making was guided by systematic wound assessment, institutional protocols, interdisciplinary collaboration, and continuous learning, consistent with previous studies emphasizing evidence-based practice and multidisciplinary teamwork in postoperative wound care (Gamage et al., 2025; Gizaw et al., 2022; Ousey et al., 2023; Singh & Kumar, 2023; Tegegn et al., 2023). Overall, the findings highlight that effective post-surgical wound management depends on clinical competence, organizational support, and continuing professional development to ensure safe, evidence-based, and high-quality patient care (Basuony et al., 2023; Gamage et al., 2025).

SUMMARY

The study found that nurses viewed post-surgical wound management as a continuous learning process requiring clinical competence, evidence-based practice, and collaboration despite challenges related to workload, limited resources, and complex patient conditions. The findings emphasize the importance of organizational support and continuing professional development in improving postoperative wound care.

CONCLUSION

Post-surgical wound management requires clinical competence, sound judgment, evidence-based practice, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Strengthening organizational support, adequate resources, and continuing professional education can further enhance the quality and safety of postoperative wound care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Healthcare institutions should strengthen staffing, wound care resources, and continuing professional development while promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and patient education. Future research involving multiple healthcare settings is recommended to further improve evidence-based post-surgical wound management.

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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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