

# Nursing leadership, student behavior and development

That they say "good job" or "well done" a few times during your shift. See, that boosts your confidence. When you have more self-confidence, you also dare to show more leadership behavior.

## Background

Nursing leadership behavior is assumed to be necessary for good care. Therefore, nursing leadership is already included in nursing curricula. However, role models in daily practice find it difficult to demonstrate nursing leadership behavior for themselves. Also, there is poor empirical evidence on what nursing leadership consists of in terms of practical behavior.

## Aim

The aim of this study was to explore nursing students' perspectives on how nursing leadership is demonstrated in daily practice, and their needs in developing nursing leadership behavior.

## Method

This study is part of a larger research project concerning Nursing Leadership (Van der Cingel et al, 2022). Semi-structured interviews were performed with 38 last year bachelor nursing students in the spring of 2020. Due to the corona pandemic the interviews were conducted with Microsoft Teams. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis and the Nursing Leadership research code tree.

## Results

**Personal leadership as part of nursing leadership for good patient care.** This includes taking initiative, proactive attitude, feeling responsible, daring to stand up for the patient and adapting to the patients' care needs.

*Nursing leadership, I really think that as a nurse you have to know what you are doing, know where you are needed and can adapt to each patient*

**Developing leadership for good care and deploying expertise for clinical leadership.** Feeling responsible for their own learning process, students increase their knowledge and skills by asking questions, experimenting, and reflecting on their activities. On the other hand, wanting to make a good impression, setting boundaries and asking for help creates a field of tension due to students' dependency on their (nursing) supervisors' assessment of their internship. They let them guide by knowledge from the training, protocols and

the supervisors. Working together and keeping the supervisors well informed is needed. They also try to discuss variation in practice, partly to inform the supervisors about new insights and partly to gain insight in decisions in practice.

*If you want to show nursing leadership, you must gain confidence and a supervisor must dare to let go of you.*

**Stimulating environment to develop leadership.** Safe work environment, support and guidance, positive feedback, and role models who effectively exert their influence on patient care and interprofessional collaboration are important to nursing students. More awareness of nursing leadership behavior is needed, for example, with more practical examples and training in leadership behavior.

*I always try to think of a colleague who did this and I have learned from it. So I try to do that more myself.*

## Discussion

Where graduated nurses consider nursing leadership a shared team responsibility (Van der Cingel et al, 2022; see figure below), nursing students are more likely focused on personal leadership development, improving their own knowledge and (technical)nursing skills. This may be due to not feeling like a member of the team during their internship.

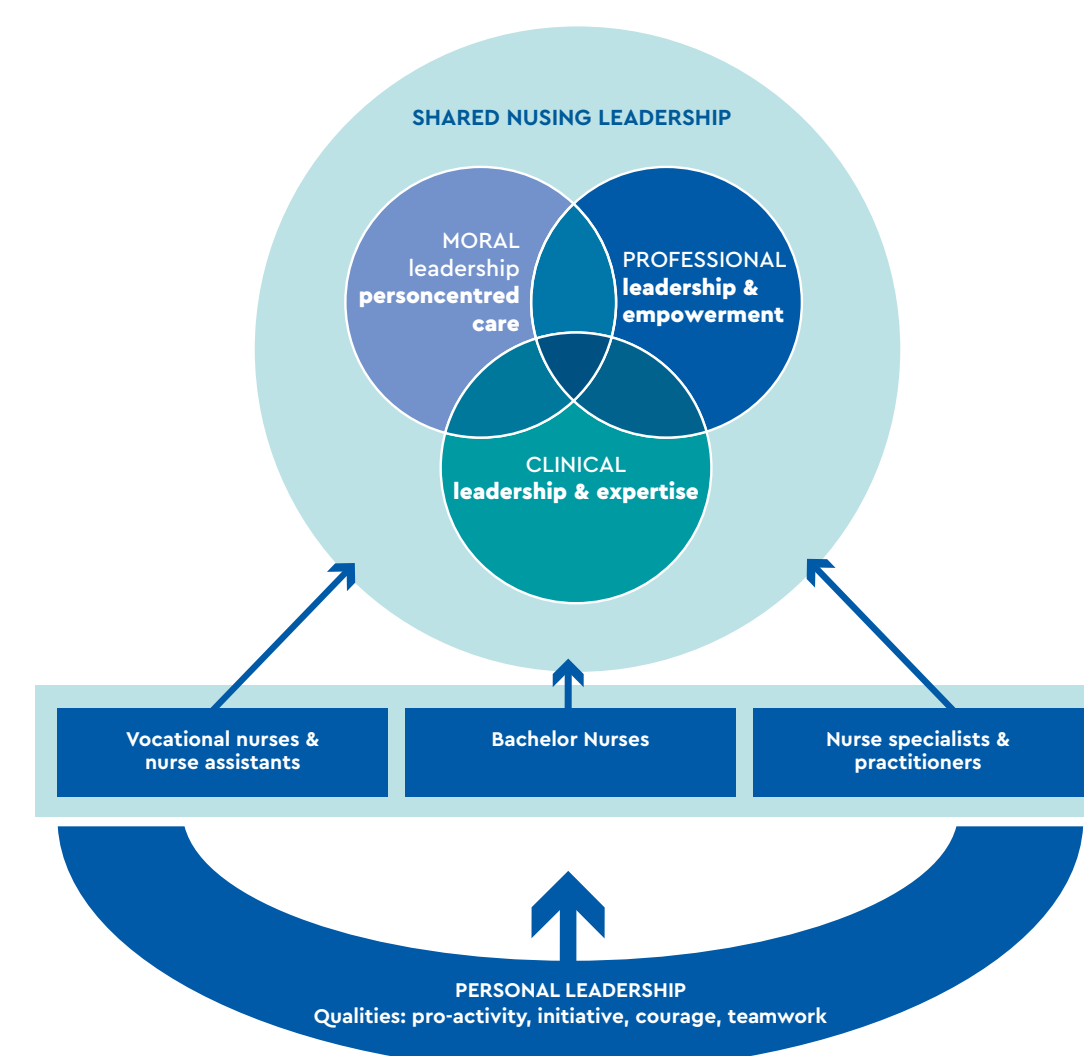


Figure. Model Nursing Leadership based on empirical results (Van der Cingel et al, 2022).

## Conclusion and implication for practice

Nursing students certainly associate nursing leadership to good patient care and their own performance. To further develop nursing leadership during their internship, they are, however, dependent of their supervising nurses and teachers at school. A closer cooperation between students, supervising nurses and teachers during internships is recommended.

Reference: Van der Cingel M., Andela R.M. & Barf H. (2022). Nursing Leadership in Hospital Practice. Verpleegkunde 37(3) p.32-46. (article in Dutch)



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Professorship Nursing Leadership & Research  
NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences/ Medical Center Leeuwarden  
Research Group Care & Wellbeing  
Leeuwarden, The Netherlands



## More information?

Send an email to: [vlogz@nhlstenden.com](mailto:vlogz@nhlstenden.com)

[nhlstenden.com](https://nhlstenden.com)