



Nursing leadership in hospital practice. A research program into perceptions, experiences, and self-assessment of leadership competencies of nurses in a top-clinical hospital in the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

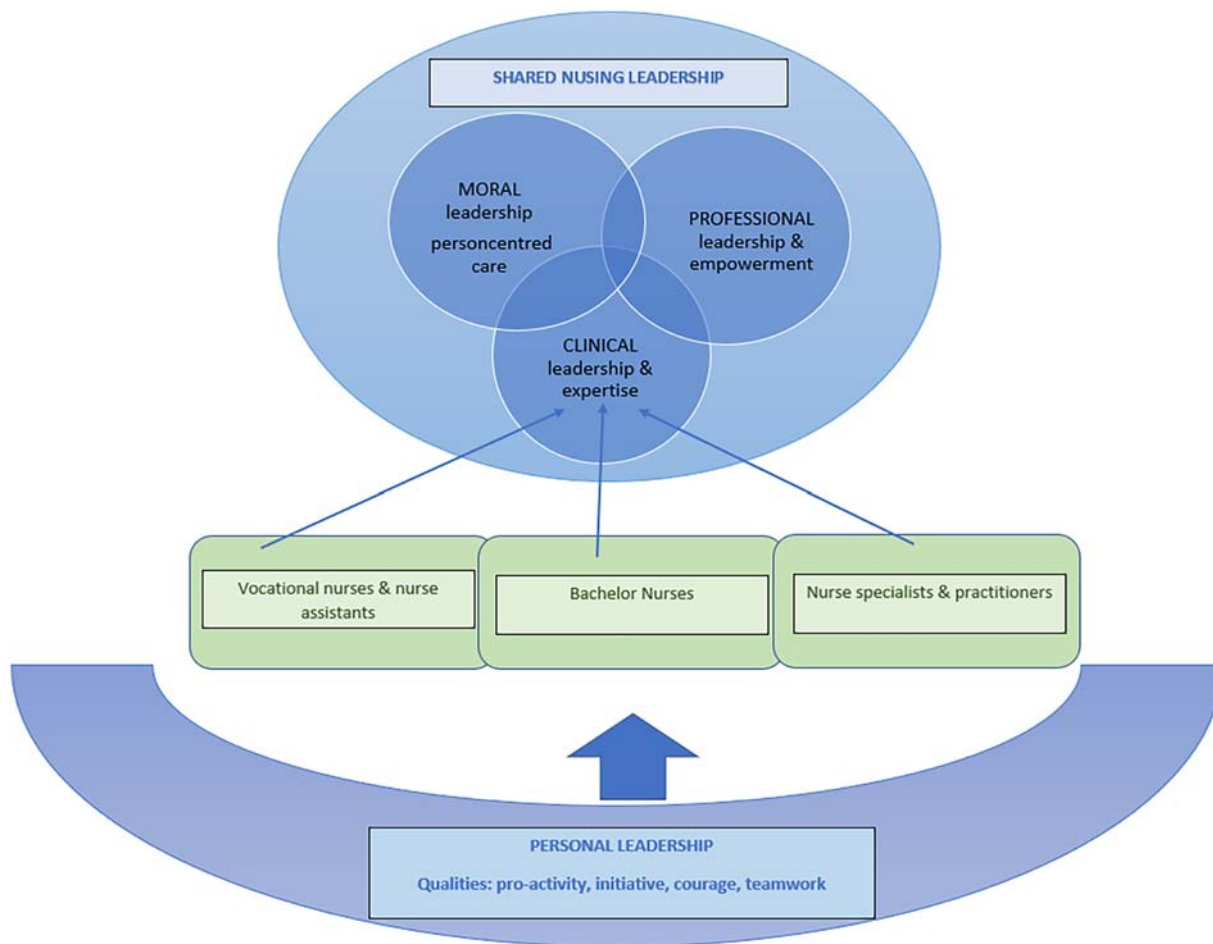
Nursing Leadership is an important competence to develop in order to provide quality of care and prevent attrition of nurses. This research program looked into the perceptions and experiences of nurses on practising leadership. Next to that supporting the development of nursing leadership was addressed. The program has a mixed-method, action research design in which 75 in-depth interviews and 24 focus group interviews and quantitative data of 435 nurses form the backbone. According to hospital nurses, nursing leadership is related to proactiveness and voicing expertise in order to deliver good nursing care. Nevertheless, they do not feel fully competent and knowledge deficits were detected on aspects of the bachelor nursing profile, such as evidence based practice. Working-culture factors can either inhibit or encourage nursing leadership. The further awareness of unconsciously using expertise and knowledge deficits as well as team development towards a continuous safe learning environment are necessary steps for the enhancement of nursing leadership. A Nursing Leadership model was developed in which generic personal leadership competencies combined with expertise of the nurses' level of education and degrees form the essence of shared leadership in teams focussed on the realisation of good nursing care.

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Figures and tables



Model Nursing Leadership based on the results of the research program.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Margreet van der Cingel: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Supervision. **Richtsje Andela:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Supervision. **Hans Barf:** Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Writing – review & editing, Visualization.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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Declaration of interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Further reading

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Dr. Margreet van der Cingel is Professor of Nursing Leadership & Research at the University of applied sciences NHL Stenden in the Netherlands. She is a registered nurse, nurse scientist (MscN) and holds a PhD in philosophy on compassion in nursing practice, a guiding principle in quality of care. She started her career as cardiac care nurse. During and after her master study she had various jobs in nursing staff and management positions. She made a career move to teaching as a college professor and worked as a senior researcher and associate professor at several research groups, contributed to the national curriculum for nursing and supervised a research programme on person-centred care. During her career she has built up expertise in qualitative and design research; participatory action research; person centred care, care ethics and compassion, and

professional nursing leadership. Since February 2018, she runs her own research programme. The professorship is a jointed collaboration with a regional top clinical hospital. The research focus is on the empowerment of nursing, nursing leadership related to person-centred care and patient outcomes, learning communities of practice of nurses and compassion as a motivational factor within the nursing identity. She is particularly interested in care ethics and moral aspects of nursing leadership and its effects on professional care relationships. She is also President of the Dutch Rho Chi at-Large Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International since 2018.



Dr. Richtsje Andela is senior researcher of the professorship Nursing Leadership & Research at the University of applied sciences NHL Stenden and the Medical Centre Leeuwarden (MCL), the Netherlands. She is a bachelor nurse, nurse scientist (MscN) and received her PhD on research into frailty in nursing care. After graduation, she worked as a nurse on various nursing wards. From an interest in underlying reasons for nursing practice and issues in patient care, she began her master study. After completing it, she worked in various projects in the MCL, for example the development and implementation of an electronic nursing record and a project for chart abstraction in the transition of the hospital to a digital patient record. At the MCL Academy she was project leader in a project to promote clinical reasoning by nurses. In addition, she developed and taught an

Evidence Based Practice (EBP) course for nurses, supervised bachelor nursing students in their thesis, advised on medical statistics and on learning and development issues in the organisation. At the University of applied sciences NHL Stenden she was examiner for final years bachelor nursing students. On national level, she participates in a network of top clinical teaching hospitals to promote nursing research and EBP and she is referent at a scientific nursing journal. Since June 2018 she joined the professorship Nursing Leadership & Research and is involved in the research program into nursing leadership. She likes the professorship's focus on qualitative and action-research, and notes the stimulating effect on the participating nursing students and nurses. She is nursing research coordinator since 2022 when the hospital has made it a policy to appoint nurse researchers embedded in daily practice on care-units.



Dr. Hans Barf is a lecturer and researcher at the School of Nursing of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. In his work, the quality of care from a patient or client perspective has been a central theme. A study in neuropsychology laid the foundation for research and statistics. During an internship at the rehabilitation centre De Hoogstraat he helped develop diagnostic tools for persons with brain damage and speech impairments. This was followed up with a PhD study into spina bifida and the implications for cognitive functioning, disability and health in young adults. It was during this period he began to participate in projects of applied research, collaborating with nurses and physical therapists. He then worked at the University Medical Center Groningen conducted several projects and research into patient satisfaction, patient

participation and quality of care, which was followed by a position at ARGO. There he aimed to improve the care and services by conducting research ranging from multicenter quantitative studies to small and qualitative projects for e.g. assisted living facilities for mentally disabled people. Given the opportunity he started teaching evidence based practice and applied research to nursing students at the NHL Stenden University of applied sciences and participating in various research and educational development projects related to care for older persons, psychiatry or the social domain. As a post-doc researcher, he was involved in the research of frailty and the perspective of older persons as well as the attitude of nursing students towards elderly care. Since 2021 he has been a lecturer at the School of Nursing of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, mainly coaching bachelor and master students doing their thesis.