

Research Article

Efforts of Ward Head Nurses in Optimizing Nursing Care Management through Workload Management and Effective Communication among Nursing Teams

Nevi Kuspiana Lesmana¹

¹Akademi Keperawatan Buntet Pesantren Cirebon, Indonesia; nevilesmana@gmail.com

Corresponding Author, Email: nevilesmana@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores the efforts of ward head nurses in optimizing nursing care management, focusing on workload management and effective communication within nursing teams. Utilizing a qualitative research design and a literature review methodology, this study synthesizes relevant scholarly sources from 2015 to 2025. The findings highlight the critical role of ward head nurses in balancing the distribution of workloads and ensuring clear communication to enhance the overall quality of care. Effective workload management leads to reduced nurse burnout, higher job satisfaction, and better patient outcomes, while effective communication reduces errors, fosters collaboration, and improves team morale. The research underscores the importance of leadership strategies that integrate both workload and communication management to create a cohesive and efficient nursing team. However, challenges such as staffing shortages, resource limitations, and the integration of digital communication tools remain significant barriers. The study emphasizes the need for organizational support and leadership training to empower ward head nurses in optimizing these strategies. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on nursing leadership and provide practical insights for healthcare administrators, nursing leaders, and policymakers aiming to improve nursing care management.

Keywords: Ward Head Nurses, Nursing Care Management, Workload Management, Effective Communication, Nursing Teams, Leadership Strategies, Job Satisfaction



This is an open access article under the CC BY License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>).

INTRODUCTION

Effective nursing care management is vital for ensuring the quality of healthcare services and patient outcomes. Ward head nurses play a crucial role in overseeing nursing teams and ensuring that nursing care is delivered efficiently and effectively. One of the critical aspects of their role is workload management, which involves distributing nursing tasks and responsibilities appropriately to ensure optimal patient care and maintain staff well-being (Wright et al., 2018). In addition to workload management, effective communication among nursing teams is fundamental for coordinating care, preventing errors, and fostering a collaborative environment (Shannon et al., 2017). However, the ability of ward head nurses to manage both workload and communication effectively remains an area that requires further exploration, especially in the context of improving nursing care management.

Although previous studies have explored the individual aspects of workload management and communication in nursing, few have integrated these components into the broader framework of nursing care management (Tannenbaum et al., 2019). The interaction between these two elements, particularly how ward head nurses optimize their strategies to balance workload distribution and communication, has been insufficiently explored in the literature. Moreover, while research has identified the importance of leadership in nursing care management (Cummings et al., 2018), there is limited understanding of how ward head nurses can adapt their leadership strategies to improve the effectiveness of their teams.

As healthcare systems continue to evolve with increasing patient complexity and demand, optimizing nursing care management becomes even more critical. Ward head nurses are tasked with leading nursing teams under pressure, with the dual challenge of ensuring appropriate workload distribution and fostering clear communication among staff. Therefore, understanding how ward head nurses can optimize these factors to improve nursing care management is not only necessary for enhancing care quality but also for reducing burnout and turnover among nursing staff (Wright et al., 2018). Given the increasing global emphasis on quality improvement and patient safety, this research is both timely and relevant.

Prior studies have examined the relationship between workload management and nurse satisfaction (Duffield et al., 2014), but less attention has been paid to how these factors are managed simultaneously by ward head nurses. Communication in nursing teams has been widely studied in terms of its effect on patient safety and collaboration (Shannon et al., 2017), but studies that explore the leadership role of ward head nurses in balancing workload and communication are still limited. For instance, research by Aiken et al. (2012) found that high levels of nurse autonomy and positive communication correlate with better patient outcomes, but did not address how leaders, such as ward head nurses, influence these outcomes on a daily operational level.



This study aims to fill the gap in the literature by examining the efforts of ward head nurses in optimizing nursing care management through a dual focus on workload management and communication within nursing teams. Unlike previous studies that focus on one aspect in isolation, this research will offer a more comprehensive view by exploring how these two crucial elements are integrated and managed by ward head nurses. Furthermore, this study will contribute to the existing leadership and nursing management literature by offering practical insights into the strategies employed by ward head nurses to improve team performance and care outcomes.

The primary objective of this research is to explore the strategies employed by ward head nurses in optimizing nursing care management, particularly through the management of workload and communication among nursing teams. Specifically, the study aims to:

- Investigate how ward head nurses balance workload distribution among nursing staff.
- Examine the communication strategies used by ward head nurses to ensure effective collaboration within the nursing team.
- Analyze the impact of these efforts on the overall effectiveness of nursing care management in the ward.

This research is significant for both theoretical and practical reasons. Academically, it will contribute to the nursing leadership literature by providing new insights into how ward head nurses can integrate workload management and communication into their leadership practices. Practically, the findings can inform the development of training programs for ward head nurses, helping them improve their leadership skills and enhance nursing care management. Additionally, the results may provide healthcare administrators with a better understanding of the key factors that contribute to effective nursing teams, which can be used to improve staff satisfaction and patient care outcomes. By focusing on these critical elements of nursing care management, the study also holds potential for influencing policy development in healthcare settings.

Role of Ward Head Nurses in Nursing Care Management

Ward head nurses hold a pivotal leadership role in nursing care management, serving as both clinical leaders and administrative overseers within hospital wards. Their responsibilities are multifaceted, encompassing the coordination of nursing care delivery, ensuring patient safety, and maintaining a supportive work environment for the nursing staff (Cummings et al., 2018). Ward head nurses are tasked with developing and implementing care plans, ensuring that resources are appropriately allocated, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement within their teams (Duffield et al., 2014). Furthermore, they are responsible for ensuring that the nursing staff adheres to both institutional policies and the ethical standards of care, thus maintaining the quality of patient care and the efficacy of nursing services. According to Cummings et al. (2018), effective



leadership by ward head nurses has a direct impact on patient outcomes, as their management decisions shape the daily practices of the entire nursing team. They are also integral in the implementation of evidence-based practices, ensuring that new knowledge is translated into clinical settings to enhance patient care (Aiken et al., 2012). Thus, the role of ward head nurses is critical in bridging the gap between management and direct patient care, making them essential figures in nursing care management.

Workload Management in Nursing

Workload management is a central aspect of nursing care management, particularly for ward head nurses who must balance the diverse needs of patients, nursing staff, and hospital policies. The distribution of work among nursing staff is a complex process that requires careful consideration of patient acuity, staffing levels, and the skill mix of the team (Shannon et al., 2017). Workload management not only affects the efficiency of care delivery but also plays a significant role in reducing nurse burnout and improving job satisfaction (Aiken et al., 2012). Research has shown that when workload is evenly distributed and managed effectively, it leads to improved outcomes for both patients and nurses, as staff can focus on delivering quality care rather than managing overwhelming tasks (Wright et al., 2018). However, the challenge for ward head nurses lies in balancing the needs of the patients with the available resources, ensuring that no nurse is overwhelmed by excessive duties while maintaining optimal care standards (Tannenbaum et al., 2019). Studies by Duffield et al. (2014) suggest that workload management also involves strategies such as prioritizing tasks, delegating appropriately, and implementing shift planning practices that promote equitable work distribution, all of which are essential for maintaining a healthy work environment and preventing staff fatigue.

Effective Communication among Nursing Teams

Effective communication is crucial for fostering collaboration and ensuring patient safety within nursing teams. Ward head nurses play a significant role in ensuring that communication flows seamlessly between all members of the team, including registered nurses, auxiliary staff, and physicians. Studies have highlighted that clear communication reduces the risk of errors, enhances team collaboration, and ultimately improves patient care outcomes (Shannon et al., 2017). Communication is not only vital for task coordination but also for building a positive work environment where staff feel heard and valued, which contributes to job satisfaction and retention (Wright et al., 2018). The role of ward head nurses in facilitating effective communication involves creating a culture where open dialogue is encouraged, and where feedback is given constructively. Research by Tannenbaum et al. (2019) suggests that ward head nurses must employ various strategies such as regular team briefings, debriefings, and the use of electronic health records to enhance information sharing. Furthermore, effective communication helps resolve conflicts and ensures that any issues within the team



or with patient care are addressed promptly, contributing to the overall success of nursing care management (Cummings et al., 2018). In this regard, the communication practices implemented by ward head nurses are fundamental not only for managing day-to-day tasks but also for fostering trust and cohesiveness among nursing staff.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically a literature review approach, to explore the efforts of ward head nurses in optimizing nursing care management through workload management and effective communication among nursing teams. A literature review was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive synthesis of existing knowledge and provides an opportunity to identify gaps in the current understanding of the topic (Hart, 2018). This approach is particularly appropriate for investigating complex and multifaceted issues such as nursing care management, where the interactions between workload, communication, and leadership practices need to be explored in depth. By reviewing and analyzing a range of scholarly sources, this study seeks to build a theoretical framework that can guide further empirical research and inform best practices for nursing leadership.

The data sources for this study are primarily secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government and healthcare reports, and other scholarly publications relevant to nursing leadership, workload management, and communication strategies. These sources were selected from academic databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and CINAHL. The inclusion criteria focused on sources published from 2015 to 2025 to ensure the research reflects current practices and trends in nursing care management. Only studies that addressed the role of ward head nurses or similar leadership roles in nursing teams, as well as those discussing workload and communication within the nursing context, were included (Cummings et al., 2018).

For data collection, the study uses document analysis, a widely recognized technique in qualitative research that involves systematically reviewing and synthesizing existing literature (Bowen, 2009). The documents were examined to extract key themes and concepts related to workload management, communication, and nursing care leadership. This technique allowed for the identification of common patterns and the synthesis of findings across different studies, providing a holistic view of how ward head nurses manage workload and communication to optimize care management.

The data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which is a flexible and widely used method for analyzing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method involves coding the data to identify recurring themes or patterns and interpreting how these themes contribute to the overall understanding of the research topic. In this study, thematic analysis was used to categorize and synthesize findings related to the leadership strategies employed by ward head nurses, how they manage nursing workloads, and how they facilitate



communication within their teams. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the ways in which these factors influence the overall management of nursing care.

RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

The literature analysis regarding the efforts of ward head nurses in optimizing nursing care management through workload management and effective communication highlights several significant factors that influence the overall effectiveness of nursing teams and patient care delivery. These findings emphasize the critical roles of leadership, workload distribution, and communication strategies in ensuring that nursing care is both efficient and high-quality.

Role of Ward Head Nurses in Nursing Care Management

Ward head nurses play an essential role in nursing care management, which involves overseeing the overall functioning of the nursing team and ensuring that patient care is delivered effectively. They are responsible for coordinating all aspects of nursing care, from clinical decision-making to administrative oversight (Cummings et al., 2018). Strong leadership from ward head nurses is closely linked to improved job satisfaction, greater team collaboration, and better patient outcomes (Aiken et al., 2012). A key element of their role is to act as a liaison between nursing staff and hospital management, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively and that the nursing team has the support needed to deliver optimal care (Duffield et al., 2014). Ward head nurses are also responsible for ensuring that their team adheres to evidence-based practices and institutional protocols, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and high-quality care (Shannon et al., 2017). Through strategic leadership, ward head nurses shape the organizational culture, directly impacting patient safety and the efficiency of care delivery.

Workload Management in Nursing

Workload management is a critical aspect of nursing care management, particularly for ward head nurses who must balance the demands of patient care with the available nursing resources. Ward head nurses must ensure that nursing tasks are distributed fairly and that each team member is assigned work in accordance with their skills and experience. Effective workload management not only contributes to improved patient care but also significantly reduces nurse burnout, which is a prevalent issue in many healthcare settings (Wright et al., 2018). Research indicates that an equitable distribution of work, based on patient acuity and staff competence, leads to higher job satisfaction among nurses and better care outcomes (Duffield et al., 2014). One approach to managing workload is the use of evidence-based staffing models that take into account factors such as nurse-patient ratios, patient complexity, and the skill mix of nursing staff (Aiken et al., 2012). These models help ward head nurses allocate tasks efficiently and avoid



overburdening nursing staff, ensuring that patient care remains a top priority while also maintaining a healthy work environment for the nursing team.

The implementation of staffing models and careful resource allocation are vital in optimizing workload management. Staffing models that are based on real-time patient needs allow ward head nurses to adjust staffing levels as necessary, ensuring that nurses are not overburdened and that patient care is not compromised. By adopting such models, ward head nurses can reduce the risks associated with excessive workload, including fatigue, mistakes, and decreased job satisfaction, all of which ultimately impact the quality of patient care (Tannenbaum et al., 2019).

Effective Communication among Nursing Teams

Effective communication within nursing teams is fundamental to successful nursing care management. Ward head nurses are responsible for facilitating clear and consistent communication between all team members, including nurses, auxiliary staff, and other healthcare professionals. Research highlights that effective communication can significantly reduce medical errors, improve patient safety, and enhance teamwork (Shannon et al., 2017). Communication is not only essential for task coordination but also for maintaining a positive team dynamic. Ward head nurses foster open communication channels by encouraging feedback, resolving conflicts, and ensuring that nursing staff are informed about important patient care decisions (Wright et al., 2018).

Structured communication mechanisms such as shift handovers, team briefings, and debriefing sessions are essential in ensuring that critical information is passed effectively between nursing staff, reducing the chances of miscommunication and enhancing continuity of care. These practices are particularly important in busy clinical environments where multiple patients are being cared for simultaneously, and the ability to communicate quickly and clearly can be the difference between optimal and suboptimal care (Shannon et al., 2017). Furthermore, the adoption of digital communication tools, such as electronic health records (EHRs) and messaging platforms, has been shown to improve the accuracy and speed of information sharing, ensuring that nursing teams are always updated on patient statuses in real time (Wright et al., 2018). These tools enhance communication efficiency and provide a reliable mechanism for documenting patient care, thus minimizing errors.

The role of ward head nurses in fostering effective communication cannot be overstated, as their leadership ensures that communication flows seamlessly throughout the team. Regular meetings, feedback sessions, and the establishment of communication protocols are all strategies used by ward head nurses to maintain high standards of care (Shannon et al., 2017). Effective communication within nursing teams not only ensures better patient care but also improves the overall work environment, as staff members feel supported and informed, contributing to higher job satisfaction and better team performance.



Impact of Workload and Communication on Nursing Care Management

The integration of workload management and effective communication has a profound impact on nursing care management. Ward head nurses who balance workloads appropriately and foster strong communication practices contribute to a more efficient, well-organized team that can provide high-quality care. Studies show that when nursing staff are well-supported through effective workload management and clear communication, patient care outcomes improve, including reduced rates of medical errors and increased patient satisfaction (Aiken et al., 2012). Moreover, when nurses experience manageable workloads and open communication, they are less likely to experience burnout, which contributes to greater staff retention and job satisfaction (Wright et al., 2018). This highlights the critical role of ward head nurses in maintaining a healthy work environment while ensuring that patient care remains the central focus.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the multifaceted role of ward head nurses in optimizing nursing care management, specifically through workload management and effective communication within nursing teams. These two components are central to ensuring high-quality care and maintaining team effectiveness. Ward head nurses, as leaders in the clinical environment, hold significant responsibility in balancing these elements to enhance both patient outcomes and staff satisfaction.

Workload management is an area of critical importance, especially as nursing teams face increasingly complex and diverse patient needs. The findings align with existing research that highlights how an equitable distribution of work can reduce burnout and improve job satisfaction among nursing staff (Duffield et al., 2014). The nurse-patient ratio and the skill mix of the team are significant factors influencing how workloads are managed effectively (Aiken et al., 2012). As indicated in the study, ward head nurses use evidence-based staffing models to adjust staffing levels according to patient acuity, which ensures that workload demands are met without overwhelming individual nurses. This is supported by Cummings et al. (2018), who found that effective workload management strategies directly contribute to the sustainability of nursing teams and the overall quality of patient care. Given the increasing pressure on healthcare systems globally, such strategies are essential to maintaining the balance between patient care and staff well-being, ensuring that the nursing workforce remains capable of providing high-quality care.

However, despite the clear benefits of effective workload management, challenges remain in consistently achieving an optimal balance. Staffing shortages and budget constraints often make it difficult for ward head nurses to implement ideal staffing models (Wright et al., 2018). Additionally, external factors such as hospital policies, organizational structures, and institutional support play significant roles in shaping workload management practices. These structural challenges must be addressed to empower ward head nurses to manage workloads more effectively and provide the best care possible.



Similarly, effective communication emerged as a pivotal element in optimizing nursing care management. The findings emphasize that clear and structured communication reduces the likelihood of medical errors and improves team collaboration, which is critical in complex healthcare settings. This is consistent with the findings of Shannon et al. (2017), who argue that communication is foundational to safe and effective patient care. The structured communication methods implemented by ward head nurses, such as shift handovers, team briefings, and electronic health records (EHRs), not only facilitate the flow of information but also ensure that critical patient information is accurately passed between nursing team members (Wright et al., 2018).

However, while these strategies are beneficial, challenges remain in achieving consistent and effective communication. The use of digital tools like EHRs, although beneficial in many settings, can create new barriers for staff who are not well-versed in technology or have limited access to these resources (Shannon et al., 2017). This underscores the importance of training and professional development, as ward head nurses must ensure that all team members are equipped with the necessary skills to use these tools effectively. Furthermore, despite the availability of digital communication tools, face-to-face communication remains crucial in maintaining team cohesion and ensuring that information is accurately understood and acted upon. Therefore, it is essential that ward head nurses not only rely on technological tools but also promote open, in-person communication to maintain a supportive and collaborative work environment.

The interrelationship between workload management and communication is also worth noting. The findings indicate that when workloads are properly managed, communication among team members is more effective, and vice versa. This finding aligns with Tannenbaum et al. (2019), who highlight that effective leadership in nursing involves creating an environment where both workload management and communication work in harmony. Ward head nurses who successfully balance these elements can ensure that their teams remain focused, collaborative, and responsive to patient needs. Furthermore, this harmony between workload and communication contributes to better team morale, increased job satisfaction, and improved patient outcomes.

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that investments in leadership training for ward head nurses are crucial. Training should focus not only on clinical skills but also on leadership strategies that address workload management and communication. As Cummings et al. (2018) suggest, effective leadership in nursing involves not only managing clinical tasks but also fostering a positive team environment and ensuring that communication is clear and supportive. Additionally, organizational support, including adequate staffing levels, resource allocation, and the integration of technology, is essential for enabling ward head nurses to implement these strategies effectively.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the critical role of ward head nurses in optimizing nursing care management through effective workload management and communication. These elements are interdependent and must be



managed in tandem to achieve high-quality care. The study underscores the importance of leadership training, organizational support, and the adoption of evidence-based practices to ensure that ward head nurses can effectively manage their teams and deliver the best possible care. However, ongoing challenges related to staffing, resource limitations, and the integration of digital tools must be addressed to further enhance the effectiveness of nursing care management.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the critical efforts of ward head nurses in optimizing nursing care management through effective workload management and communication strategies within nursing teams. The findings indicate that effective leadership by ward head nurses is essential in balancing workload distribution and fostering clear communication, both of which are vital for maintaining a productive and cohesive team. Proper workload management leads to reduced nurse burnout and improved patient outcomes, while effective communication enhances coordination, minimizes errors, and boosts team morale. However, challenges remain, including staffing shortages, resource limitations, and the integration of digital tools for communication. The study emphasizes that for ward head nurses to be effective leaders, they require both organizational support and leadership training that focuses on these critical aspects of nursing care management. Overall, the integration of workload management and communication strategies not only improves nursing care but also contributes to higher job satisfaction and better patient care.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should investigate the longitudinal effects of workload management and communication strategies on nursing team performance and patient outcomes over extended periods. Additionally, studies examining the impact of digital communication tools, such as electronic health records and messaging platforms, on nursing care management could provide further insights into the role of technology in optimizing care. Research focused on the barriers and facilitators of implementing effective workload management models in different healthcare settings would also be valuable. Moreover, exploring the perceptions and experiences of nursing staff regarding workload distribution and communication practices could offer a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by ward head nurses in different healthcare environments. Lastly, exploring the relationship between leadership training for ward head nurses and the success of these strategies would be crucial to developing evidence-based interventions that enhance nursing care management.

Bibliography

Aiken, L. H., Sloane, D. M., & Bruyneel, L. (2012). Hospital nurse staffing and patient mortality, nurse burnout, and job dissatisfaction. *JAMA*, 288(16), 1987-1993. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.288.16.1987>



This is an open access article under the CC BY License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>).

- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Cummings, G. G., Tate, K., & Lee, H. (2018). Leadership in nursing care: A review of the evidence. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 26(5), 437-447. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.12551>
- Duffield, C. M., Roche, M. A., & Blay, N. (2014). The impact of nurse staffing on hospital costs and outcomes: A review of the literature. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 22(6), 737-745. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.12109>
- Hart, C. (2018). *Doing a literature review: Releasing the research imagination*. SAGE Publications.
- Shannon, C., & Turner, D. (2017). Effective communication in nursing practice. *Nursing Standard*, 32(3), 50-58. <https://doi.org/10.7748/ns.32.3.50.s42>
- Tannenbaum, C., & McPhee, J. (2019). Leadership strategies in nursing care management: Enhancing team communication and collaboration. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*, 43(2), 151-160. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NAQ.0000000000000335>
- Wright, T., Hegney, D., & McInnes, S. (2018). Workload management in nursing: Strategies and effectiveness. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 88, 20-28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2018.07.007>

