

## **Harmonising Nurses' Roles to Clinical Environment: A Synergy to Theory-Based Nursing Practice**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Nursing theory constitutes a body of knowledge that supports nursing practice. It earns nursing a scientific development, help enhance the care nurses provide to clients and serves as basis for nursing practice.

**Purpose:** This study aimed to showcase the harmonisation of the nurses' roles to clinical environment as a synergy to theory based nursing practice.

**Methods:** The position paper used theoretical and empirical evidences in drawing its stance through literature review. It addresses certain issues related to theory-based nursing practice.

**Results:** The issues addressed by the paper includes: theory-practice artificial gap, research, evidence based practice, and nursing students learning in the application of nursing theories respectively. The paper revealed harmonisation of nurse academicians and practitioners roles to clinical environment as a solution.

**Conclusion:** Nurses need to harmonise the roles of academicians and clinicians as a synergy that can yield a favourable outcome to nursing profession.

**Keywords:** Clinical Environment, Harmonising, Nurses, Nursing Practice, Roles, Theory.

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**BACKGROUND**

Theory is a symbolic representation of aspects of reality that are discovered or invented to describe, explain, predict, or prescribe responses, occurrences, situations, conditions, or relationship ([Brandão et al., 2019](#)). Nursing theory constitutes a body of knowledge that supports nursing practice. It is applicable in all aspects of nursing in a continual use. It earns nursing a scientific development, help enhance the care that nurses provide to clients and serves as basis for nursing practice. “The primary purpose of theory in the profession of nursing is to improve practice by positively influencing the health and quality of life of patients” ([Saleh, 2018](#)). The relationship between theory and practice is complementary, practice forms the basis of nursing theory development and nursing theory must be applied in practice ([Saleh, 2018](#)).

Applying nursing theory to control the service rendered by nurses in clinical environment can be one of the important ways of developing professionalism and autonomy in nursing. [McCrae \(2011\)](#) claimed that a profession is legalised by its strength of creating and applying theory to its practice. However an anti-intellectualist stance in nursing makes it very difficult to encourage nurses to embrace what is seen as the academic side of the profession ([Colley, 2003](#)). Nevertheless nurse academicians (when found in practice setting) are in a good position to bring positive changes, influence rapid professional development, and maintain standards in nursing practice ([Omisakin, 2016](#)). This can be achieved by harmonising the roles of nurse researchers, theorists and practitioners to clinical environment. This paper therefore, scrutinised the harmonisation of nurses’ roles to clinical environment and its synergic effects on theory-based nursing practice.

**Theory-practice artificial gap and application of nursing theory**

Though nursing as a profession, produces its own original body of knowledge, but there is also an existence of a certain gap between theory and practice ([Brandão et al., 2019](#)). This gap limits the usability of the knowledge developed by nursing scholars. Nursing theory is one of such kind of nursing knowledge that suffers the effects of the gap. Theories in nursing have the objective of uniting nursing as a science and art in the health field ([Schaurich & Crossetti, 2010](#)). Smith and Parker ([Smith & Parker, 2015](#)) opined that nursing profession and its practice benefit from working together of clinicians and academicians and this harmony enhances nursing care rendered to clients. Thus, in the development of nursing profession, detachment of theory and the practice is problematic and need to be looked into.

It should be clear or more clear that all nurses are clinicians and at the same time academicians. This is because “The discipline of nursing is formed by a community of scholars, including nurses in all nursing venues, who share a commitment to values, knowledge, and processes to guide the thought and work of the discipline” ([Smith & Parker, 2015, P. 4](#)). The gap between clinicians and academicians is superimposed or artificial as it is called by ([Smith & Parker, 2015](#)) that lack of integrating practice and theory is artificial and one of the important issues facing nursing profession. The authors asserted that nursing can no longer tolerate the two dimensions as separate entities. However, nursing theory still means very little to most practicing nurses ([Colley, 2003](#)). This may be attributed by the fact that majority of nursing theories are developed by nursing academics ([Lathlean, 1994](#)). Therefore lack of input from nurse practitioners made nursing theories more difficult to apply to practice ([Colley, 2003](#)).

Nursing theorists/scholars and researchers should be given opportunity to involve in clinical area and reduce the gap between the world of nursing theorists and scholars and the world of practicing nurses ([Saleh, 2018](#)). Indirectly the author is saying that the work of academicians should be found in the clinical environment. Beside all, practice is the central

and core phenomenon and focus of nursing and it is the reason for nursing existence ([Walker & Avant, 2011](#)). Thus all nurses are in ideal situation clinical practitioners.

### **Research and application of nursing theory**

The need to provide theory based nursing care is increasing, and therefore nurse practitioners have to be in the frontline in the development and application of theory through research. [EL-Hussein & Osuji \(2017\)](#) asserted that, Promotion of research among the practitioners, involving them in the research process from implementation to evaluation can enhance the integration of knowledge into practice and can draw their attention to the significance of knowledge development in their practice. Application of nursing theories in the clinical setting would be more effective if the nurse clinicians are involved in discovery and introduction of the theories. The knowledge generated by the researchers in isolation may fall short of practical application ([EL-Hussein & Osuji, 2017](#)).

Nursing theories inform practice and also emanate from practice through research. However, according to [Rodgers \(2005\)](#) nursing practice does not represent nursing knowledge due to failure in integration and application of research findings into practice. [Smith and Parker \(2015\)](#) stated that “The theories of any professional discipline are useless if they have no effect on practice” (P. 23). One important factor that contributes to this issue is lack of involvement of practitioners in research processes for knowledge development. Thus nursing theories should be rich source of new knowledge from the practitioners as they engaged in creating, as well as modifying the knowledge to respond to a specific clinical situation.

### **Evidence based practice and application of nursing theory**

Nurses use research to provide evidence-based care that promotes quality health outcomes for individuals, families, communities and health care systems. Evidence Based Practice (EBP) is globally accepted as required for health care system. However, nursing practice must not only be evidence-based but also theory-based; and validation of nursing theory provides evidence for EBP ([Chinn & Kramer, 2011](#)). Hence, theory provides nursing practice with the best way possible for meeting patients’ needs in the present competitive healthcare system that has a lot of dramatic changes.

For nursing profession to embrace EBP as its basis of practice and for effective patients’ care it must consider the application of nursing theories in the practice; this is because nursing theories and EBP are inextricable entities. EBP emanates from and legitimised nursing theory([Karnick, 2016](#)). It is crucial to know that theory guides practice and generates models of testing in research through EBP ([McEwen & Wills, 2014](#)). Thus applying nursing theories to practice indicates the application of EBP and vice versa.

### **Nursing students learning in the application of nursing theories**

Nursing theories are essential in training nursing students; the theories help in developing professional attitude, value, norms and ethics that are valuable in practice even after graduation as registered nurses. Nursing students are expected to apply theory in their training and analyse its relevance, and at the same time theories are far removed from day-to-day nursing and is given low priority by nurse clinicians ([Levine, 1995](#)). Due to the limited application of theory to practice by nurses, confusion may prevail in students’ effort to apply the learnt knowledge in the class and what is obtainable in real life clinical environment.

Nurse academicians’ involvement and practicing in the clinical settings is beneficial not only to nursing profession but also to the academicians themselves. Practicing and

engaging in caring of patients will enhance nurse lecturers' knowledge base ([Wray & Wild, 2011](#)). However, it seems the role of the nurse academicians in the clinical practice and supervision of student nurses has received a limited attention. Thus, the nurse academicians should see clinical practice and skills teaching as their role (5). This will help in bringing together the academicians and clinicians for effective students learning, nursing care and profession development.

## CONCLUSION

The application of nursing theories is necessary for development of the profession; it determines the quality of nursing care, the power of the profession, the effectiveness of the health care system, and the efficiency of outcomes of the individual patient's care. Thus, nurses need to harmonise the roles of academicians and clinicians as a synergy that can yield a favourable outcome to nursing profession

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