

# The Importance of Leadership Skills in Nursing: Building Resilient Teams

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## ABSTRACT

### Background

The UK healthcare sector is facing a significant issue of employee burnout which has increased the employee especially nurses' turnover rate. This research aimed to assess the importance of leadership skills in nursing regarding development of team resilience.

The objectives of this research are,

- To assess the existing leadership styles in the UK healthcare services, especially in the NHS.
- To identify the challenges faced by the nursing leaders when developing a resilient team.
- To recommend strategies to improve the effectiveness of nursing leadership in the NHS to build resilient teams.

### Methods

Both qualitative and quantitative data collection has been used in this research to collect information from the primary data sources. 21 nurses from the National Healthcare Services (NHS) UK have been selected through purposive sampling as per their written consent for participating in this research. 6 close-ended and 2 open-ended questionnaires have been sent to them via email and responses were collected via email which were stored in cloud storage with limited access. All the information has been used in this research anonymously.

### Results

The research has identified that age groups have no significant relationship with the perception that leadership is a fundamental skill for resilient team development ( $p > 0.05$ ). For the other variables like age group and years of experience, the relationship was not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). The research found that decision-making skills followed by conflict management skills, empathy and communication skills are four important skills for resilient team development. Some challenges faced by the nurses include staff shortages, burnout, stress, inadequate training and inadequate resources. Some strategies found include offering stress management workshops and consultancy, rewards and recognition programs and a better staffing ratio.

### Conclusion

The leadership skills help improve communication among team members which helps enhance team resilience and overcome the issues regarding work stress, burnout and anxiety.

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## 1. Introduction

Leadership skills play an important role in nursing which ensures effective healthcare delivery to patients by fostering team collaboration. This helps promote resilience to face challenges. Effective nursing leadership promotes collaboration and teamwork which fosters a workplace environment where all team members feel respected and valued (1). On the other hand, building resilience in healthcare workers and nurses can help protect them from negative outcomes which are related to their jobs such as anxiety, burnout and depression (2). This helps improve patient outcomes.

Leadership skills in nursing help improve staff morale which helps improve the job satisfaction of nurses and reduce high turnover issues. A study published in recent times has shown that the rate of nurse turnover globally varies between 8% to 36.6% with a combined rate of 16% (3). In the case of the UK, the statistics are significant as over the past 12 months, above 34,000 nurses left their role in the National Healthcare Services (NHS), an increase of 25% on the previous year (4). Therefore leadership skills are important to improve workplace engagement of healthcare workers to improve their retention rate and improve the quality of healthcare services.

In healthcare services, leadership skills play an important role in improving emotional intelligence, understanding and managing their own emotions and becoming sensitive to others' emotions which helps empathy towards healthcare services. Higher emotional intelligence helps improve the communication of nurses with patients which helps improve the quality of healthcare services along with patient satisfaction (5).

Proper leadership in healthcare services helps improve the adaptability of nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The issues regarding stress and burnout in the UK healthcare workers were an important issue. Adaptive leadership prepares a nursing team to face these challenges and enables them to adjust as well as thrive amid adversity (6).

The aim of this research is to assess the importance of leadership skills in nursing in the UK which helps build a resilient team that is capable of working collaboratively within critical situations and deliver the best healthcare services to the patients which helps improve brand awareness.

### The objectives of this research are

- To assess the existing leadership styles in the UK healthcare services, especially in the NHS.
- To identify the challenges faced by the nursing leaders when developing a resilient team.
- To recommend strategies to improve the effectiveness of nursing leadership in the NHS to build resilient teams.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Study Design

The nurses in the UK healthcare sector have been exploring how leadership skills have helped them improve their resilience to deal with any type of emergency to deliver the best possible healthcare services. The exploratory research design is a methodological approach that investigates the research questions which have not been studied in-depth previously (7). The exploratory research design has been implemented in this study which has helped assess the information regarding the nursing leadership in the UK based on the challenges faced by the nursing leaders and feasible strategies to overcome those challenges.

### 2.2 Participants and Sampling

There are several research sampling methods such as Simple Random Sampling, purposive sampling, convenient sampling, snowball sampling and many others (8). In this research **Purposive sampling** has been implemented to select the nurses employed in the NHS

irrespective of their experience, age and gender. Here 21 nurses have been selected for the survey which has helped gather an overall scenario of the nursing leadership challenges in the UK and their feasible solutions.

### **2.3 Data Collection**

#### **2.3.1 Literature Review**

The information on the importance of leadership in UK nursing to build team resilience has been collected from Databases such as PubMed within the timeframe 2019 to 2024. The books from these databases have been collected within the timeframe of the last 10 years. All types of doctoral thesis papers have been avoided in this research. The keywords for searching these journals were, nursing leadership, empathy, collaboration, resilience, emotional intelligence and adaptability.

#### **2.3.2 Semi-structured survey:**

The semi-structured survey was based on 6 close-ended questionnaires and 2 open-ended questions which also included demographic questions [*Refer to Appendix 1*]. All these questions were sent to the participants via email and their responses have also been collected through email.

#### **2.3.3 Data Analysis**

There are several data analysis processes such as thematic, graphical, statistical and axial coding (9). In this research, the thematic, and graphical data analysis methods have been used based on descriptive statistics.

#### **2.3.4 Ethical Considerations**

The key principles of the “General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)” include purpose limitation, data minimisation and storage limitation (10). The demographic information of the survey participants has been stored in the cloud storage with restricted access to ensure data privacy and data security. All this information has been used in this research anonymously and the participation of the nurses has been allowed based on their written consent. All the personal information has been erased after completion of the research to maintain key provisions of the GDPR.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristics are important for research because they enable the researcher and the reader the target audience of the research findings. Moreover, during policy implementation, the demographic information helps identify for whom the strategies mentioned in the research can be effective. The demographic characteristics of the current research are mentioned below.

<i>Demographic characteristics</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Age group	20-29: 42.9% 30-39: 42.9% 40-49: 14.3% 50 and above: 0%
Current role in nursing	Staff Nurse: 52.4% Senior Nurse: 42.9% Manager: 4.8%
Years of experience	Less than 5 years: 38.1% 5-10 years: 33.3% 11-20 years: 28.6% More than 20 years: 0%

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the participants**

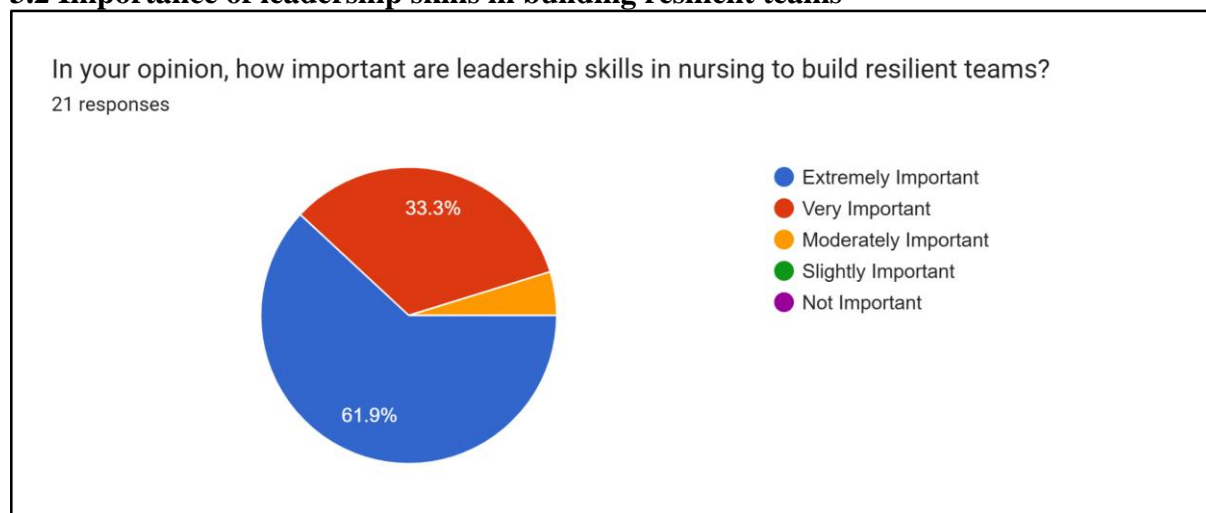
(Source: Google Forms)

The table above shows that 42.9% of the nurses belonged to the 20-29 years age group; 42.9% belonged to the 30-39% age group as well. 14.3% of the nurses were in the age group 40-49. However, no participants who were age 50 or above, participated.

In terms of the current role in nursing, 52.4% of the nurses had a role as a staff nurse, 42.9% of nurses had a senior nursing role and 4.8% of the nurses were managers.

It can be seen that 38.1% of nurses had less than 5 years of experience. 33.3% of the nurses had 5-10 years of experience. 28.6% of nurses had 11-20 years of experience while none of the participants had more than years of experience.

#### 3.2 Importance of leadership skills in building resilient teams

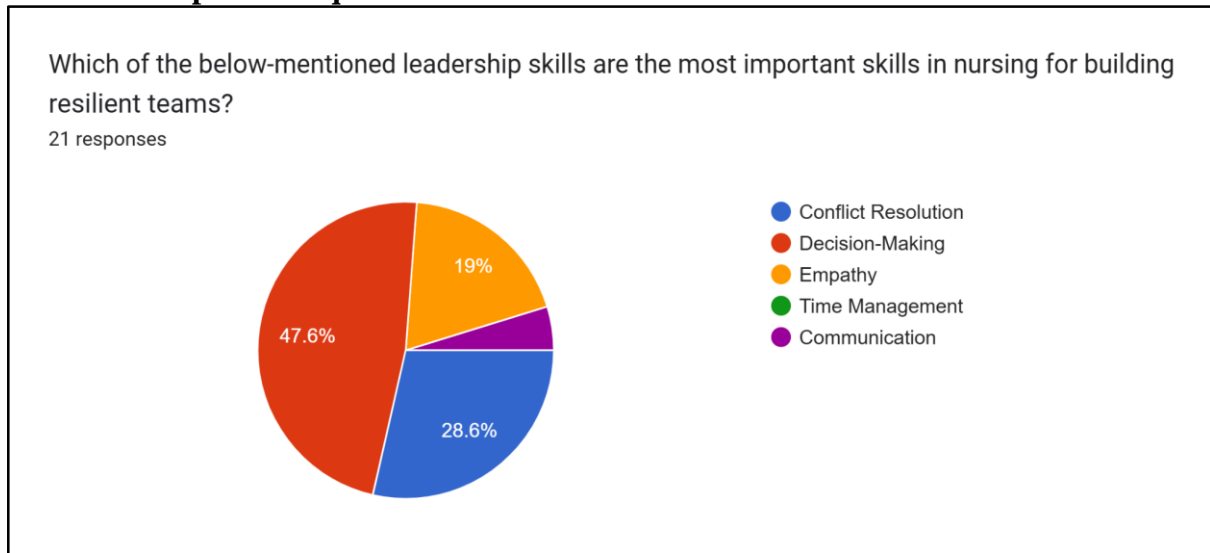


**Figure 1: Importance of leadership skills**

(Source: Google Forms)

The figure above depicts the percentage of respondents responding to particular questions regarding the importance of leadership skills in building resilient teams. 61.9% of respondents stated that leadership skill is an extremely important skill to develop resilient teams. 33.3% of respondents also responded that leadership skills are very important. However, no respondents stated that leadership is not important. This suggests that leadership is one fundamental skill when building resilient teams in nursing fields.

**3.3 Leadership skills required**



**Figure 2: Important leadership skills**

(Source: Google Forms)

The interview participants were also asked to tell the critical skills in nursing for building resilient teams. The responses showed that 47.6% of respondents stated Decision-making is the most important skill followed by Conflict Resolution skills stated by 28.6% of respondents. 19% of participants stated that Empathy is a critical skill whereas the rest participants said that communication is the most important skill when building resilient teams. Therefore, to build resilient teams, decision-making, conflict resolution, empathy and communication skills are important in nursing.

**3.4 Effective leadership courses available**

The participants were also asked about the training or resources for leadership they received in their nursing field.



**Figure 3: Relevant Leadership resources/training**

(Source: Google Forms)

In the above figure, it can be seen that 71.4% of respondents stated that they received regular leadership workshops or seminars from which they have gained leadership skills. 61.9% of respondents also stated that mentorship or coaching programmes. 19% of respondents stated that online certification or courses and 4.8% of the respondents did not receive any leadership training.

### 3.5 Challenges faced by nurses

In the semi-structured interview, the interviewees stated that they faced a “*lack of resources whether that is inadequate training, staff shortages or limited access to training can affect the adaptability of a team*”. Another challenge is burnout as one nurse responded that nurses face staff burnout because they require constant physical and emotional demands to stay focused and keep everyone motivated. The nurses also stated that “*conflict management is difficult because the stress level is high and disagreements often occur*”. In that situation, keeping everyone on the decision can be difficult and thus, conflict management is a potential challenge. Conflicts between the team members also occur which is difficult to mediate.

### 3.5 Strategies for Addressing the Challenges

The participants were also asked to tell some strategies to overcome the barriers and effectively develop resilient teams. They responded that leaders should provide constant mental health support like stress management workshops and counselling to manage their stress and burnout. Nurses should maintain transparent and clear communication to ensure the subordinates feel safe in sharing their concerns and thoughts. Regularly rewarding and recognising the employees also helps boost their morale and help them feel appreciated and valued. Some other strategies include fostering a culture of inclusivity and mutual respect so that they feel more resilient and connected. Since nurse burnout is a growing concern, a better staffing ratio is also required and adequate resources are needed in order to balance the workload and refrain the nurses from being overwhelmed. Some other strategies include considering individual needs in the team to manage the challenges on an individual level and build a resilient team.

### 3.6 Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis below represents the regression analysis of the responses collected from the semi-structured interview. The independent variables considered for the analysis are age group, current role in nursing and years of experience while the dependent variable was “how important is leadership skill to develop resilient teams”.

	<i>P-value</i>
<b>Intercept</b>	4.79E-09
<b>Your age group?</b>	0.49
<b>Your current role in nursing</b>	0.825
<b>How many years of experience do you have in nursing?</b>	0.301

**Table 2: Regression coefficient values**

(Source: Self-analysed)

The table above shows that age groups have no significant relationship with the perception that leadership skill is an important trait for resilient team development ( $p = 0.49$ ). This indicates that nurses of all age groups have perceived the importance of leadership skills in developing resilient teams. It has also been found that despite the current role in nursing they stated that leadership is an important skill ( $p = 0.825$ ). Therefore, for all roles in nursing, whether it is staff nurse, manager or senior nurse, leadership is important. The Table also depicts that the years of experience of the participants do not have any significant relationships with the perception that leadership skill is an important trait ( $p = 0.301$ ). This indicates that nurses having 0 or 15 years of experience in the field, perceive that leadership skill is important for the nurses to build resilient teams.

#### 4. Discussion

##### 4.1 Key Findings and Implications

Statistical analysis identified that despite the age group, role in nursing and experiences, leadership is a fundamental skill for building resilient teams. It has been found that decision-making skill is the most important skill followed by conflict resolution, empathy and communication skills to build resilient teams. Some of the challenges faced by the nurses while building resilient teams include limited access to resources, staff shortages, inadequate training which act as barriers. Besides, conflict management is difficult, disagreement occurs, and nurse burnout also occurs. These can have practical implications for healthcare as these challenges are ongoing.

The research has identified some strategies which have practical implications. For instance, the nurses can provide consultancy and stress management workshops through which the nurses can manage their stress. Other than this, the nurses should also maintain transparency and clear communication. Some other implications include, rewarding and recognising the nurses can improve the morale and feeling of appreciation in the workplace.

##### 4.2 Comparison with Literature

This past study has helped identify that leadership plays an important role in improving interpersonal relationships among team members to improve the quality of healthcare services (11). In this context, proper understanding of emotions can help improve empathy which helps understand patients' issues more precisely to improve healthcare services (12). From the survey responses it has been found that most of the participants have mentioned that leadership skills are extremely important to build resilience among team members [*Refer to Appendix 2*]. This has also been identified that regular leadership workshops play an important role in improving the productivity and resilience of the nurse's teams in the NHS. From the past studies, it has also been identified that leadership skills help enhance communication among team members which helps improve conflict resolution by providing clear direction to the team towards delivering expected healthcare services (13). It has also found that leadership in healthcare services helps improve decision-making which is important for improving team efficiency and overall patient care (14). From the survey responses it has been identified that most of the participants have agreed that leadership skills play an important role to improve conflict resolution and decision-making which helps enhance team resilience.

From the primary responses it has been identified that the participants have faced challenges regarding staff shortage, inadequate training which lead towards high workforce burnout that is affecting the quality of healthcare services in the NHS [*Refer to Appendix 2*]. It is also found that tricky communication can make conflict resolution tough. In order to overcome these issues, consistent healthcare support is necessary. In this context, the rewarding and recognition of team efforts is important. From the past studies it has been identified that the mental health training can help improve productivity of nurses in the UK which can also overcome the issues regarding employee burnout (15). Therefore, it can be stated that this research has met all its objective to identify that leadership skills helps improve emotional intelligence and improve mental wellbeing of employees to enhance team resilience.

#### **4.3 Strategies for Improvement**

Based on the above findings, the strategies for improvement include implementing **reward and recognition programs** for the nurses where the nurses can be given rewards and recognitions based on their performance and additional workloads. In addition, **stress management workshops or consultancy** can be prioritised for the nurses who face burnout due to staff shortages. In that case, a better staffing ratio is essential while an individual stress management programme should also be established in healthcare. An inclusive culture is important for the nursing workforce to show and take respect. This will help motivate the nurses to work.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion it can be stated that nursing leadership skills in the UK healthcare sector helps improve adaptivity of nurses which helps reduce burnout, stress and anxiety and improve team resilience. This helps deliver a better productivity of nursing in the UK. The nurses of the NHS face several issues regarding stress which reduce their engagement with the workplace. The leadership helps improve communication and emotional engagement of nurses in this organisation that reduces its nurse turnover rate.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

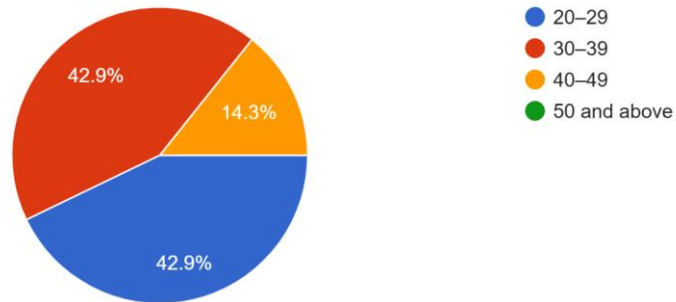
- 1. Your age groups?**
  - a. 20–29
  - b. 30–39
  - c. 40–49
  - d. 50 and above
- 2. Your current role in nursing**
  - a. Senior Nurse
  - b. Staff Nurse
  - c. Manager
  - d. Others Please specify\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. How many years of experience do you have in nursing?**
  - a. Less than 5 years
  - b. 5–10 years
  - c. 11–20 years
  - d. More than 20 years
- 4. In your opinion, how important are leadership skills in nursing to build resilient teams?**
  - a. Extremely Important
  - b. Very Important
  - c. Moderately Important
  - d. Slightly Important
  - e. Not Important
- 5. Which of the below-mentioned leadership skills are the most important skills in nursing for building resilient teams?**
  - a. Conflict Resolution
  - b. Decision-Making
  - c. Empathy
  - d. Time Management
  - e. Communication
- 6. Which of the below-mentioned leadership resources or training has been provided to you?**
  - a. Mentorship or coaching programs
  - b. Regular leadership workshops or seminars
  - c. Online certification or courses
  - d. None
  - e. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. What challenges do you think nursing leaders face when developing resilient teams?**
- 8. What strategies would you like to recommend to improve the effectiveness of the leadership for building resilient teams?**

**Appendix 2: Responses**

Survey Link: <https://forms.gle/3hBEM6Kpe2wkZVwg8>

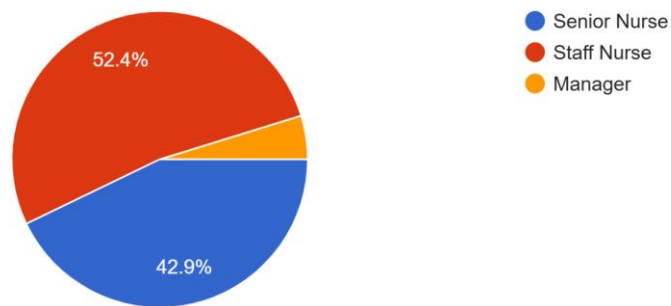
Your age group?

21 responses



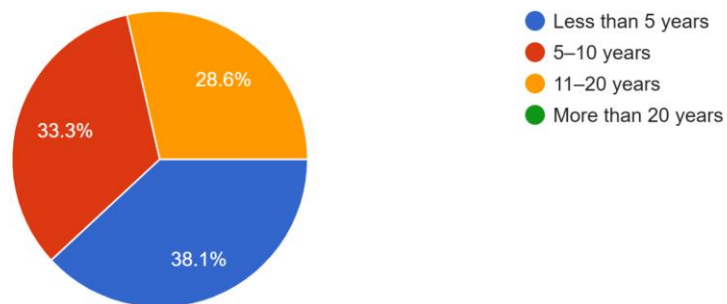
Your current role in nursing

21 responses



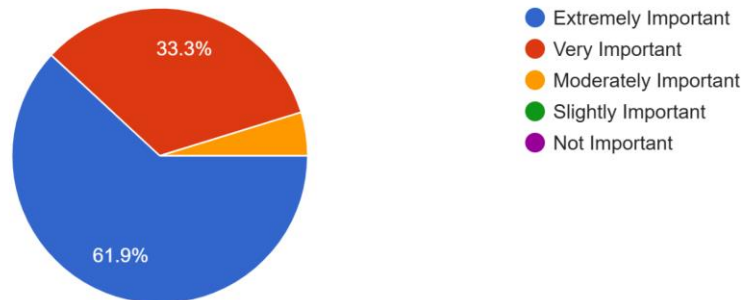
How many years of experience do you have in nursing?

21 responses



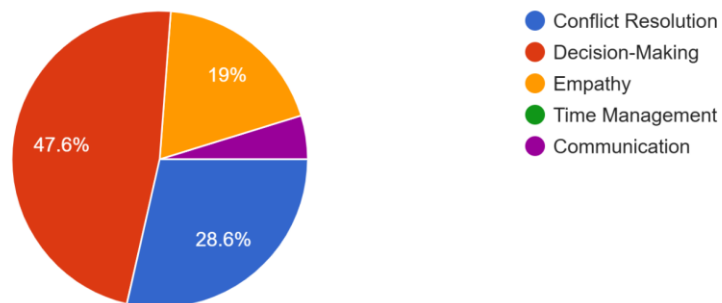
In your opinion, how important are leadership skills in nursing to build resilient teams?

21 responses



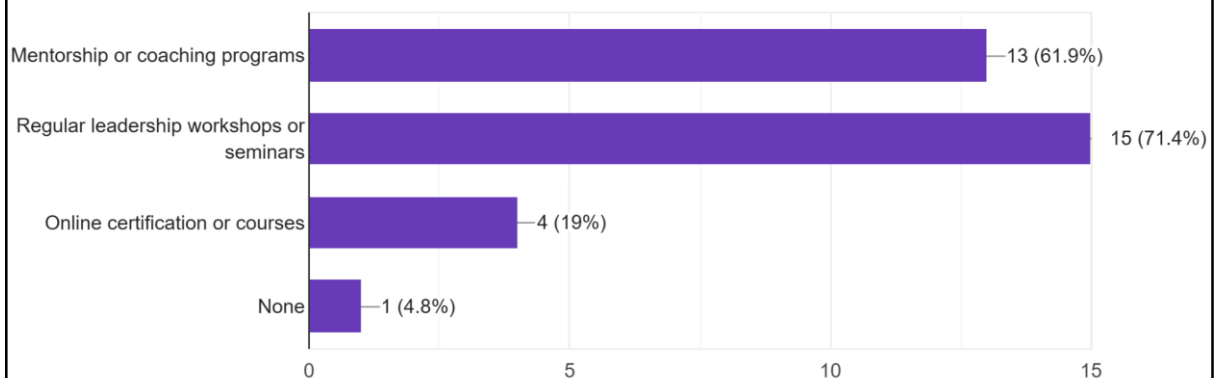
Which of the below-mentioned leadership skills are the most important skills in nursing for building resilient teams?

21 responses



Which of the below-mentioned leadership resources or training has been provided to you?

21 responses



## The Importance of Leadership Skills in Nursing: Building Resilient Teams

What challenges do you think nursing leaders face when developing resilient teams?

21 responses

There's often a lack of resources, whether it's staffing shortages, inadequate training, or limited access to tools. That really affects how well a team can adapt.

One major challenge is dealing with staff burnout. The constant emotional and physical demands of nursing make it hard to keep everyone motivated and focused

Communication can be tricky, especially when you're leading a diverse team with varying personalities, work styles, and levels of experience.

It's a constant challenge to balance my responsibilities to provide exceptional patient care while also dedicating enough time and energy to support and build a resilient team. I often feel like I'm being pulled in two directions.

Managing conflicts is tough. When stress levels are high, disagreements happen more often, and as a leader, it's hard to keep everyone on the same page.

Leaders have to balance administrative duties with team-building, and that leaves little time for personal interactions to truly connect with the team.

Staff turnover is a big issue. When experienced nurses leave, it's hard to maintain a sense of stability and continuity within the team.

One of the hardest things is seeing my team members struggle with burnout. Despite my efforts to promote work-life balance and provide support, the demands of the job sometimes feel relentless for everyone

Adapting to constant changes in healthcare policies and procedures is stressful for everyone. As a leader, you have to ensure the team doesn't feel overwhelmed.

When conflicts arise between team members, it can be difficult to mediate effectively. I want to ensure everyone feels heard, but resolving disputes while maintaining trust and morale is a delicate process.

Some of my team members are resistant to new processes or technologies. It's challenging to get everyone on board, especially when they feel overwhelmed by constant changes in our field.

Building trust takes time, but in a high-pressure environment like nursing, there's rarely enough time to focus on relationship-building.

Helping the team deal with personal losses or traumas they experience on the job can be emotionally draining for leaders themselves.

I often struggle with working within tight budgets and limited resources. It's hard to meet the needs of both my team and our patients when we're stretched so thin.

Finding ways to make everyone feel valued and heard is tough, especially when leaders have to prioritize operational efficiency.

Our team spans multiple generations, and sometimes, the differences in work styles and communication preferences can create misunderstandings. Bridging those gaps while fostering mutual respect is not always easy.

During times of crisis, like the pandemic, maintaining morale becomes incredibly challenging. The emotional toll on the team is immense, and I often feel like I can't do enough to lift their spirits.

I see my team dealing with compassion fatigue and emotional exhaustion, and it's heartbreaking. Finding ways to support their mental health while ensuring we meet patient care demands is a constant challenge.

Our team is incredibly diverse, which is a strength, but it also means I need to work harder to ensure everyone feels valued and included. Building that level of trust takes time and intentional effort.

The high turnover rates in nursing are particularly difficult. Every time we lose a team member, it disrupts our dynamics, and I have to rebuild cohesion while training new staff.

What strategies would you like to recommend to improve the effectiveness of the leadership for building resilient teams?

21 responses

Leaders should provide consistent mental health support, like counseling or stress management workshops, to help nurses cope better.

I think open and transparent communication is key. Leaders should make sure team members feel safe sharing their thoughts and concerns.

Encouraging team bonding outside of work through social events or team-building exercises could go a long way in improving trust and collaboration.

It's a constant challenge to balance my responsibilities to provide exceptional patient care while also dedicating enough time and energy to support and build a resilient team. I often feel like I'm being pulled in two directions.

Regularly recognizing and rewarding the team's efforts can boost morale and help them feel appreciated.

Investing in training programs to build both technical and emotional resilience skills can help the team adapt to challenges more effectively.

Fostering a culture of mutual respect and inclusivity can make the team feel more connected and resilient.

I make it a point to give constructive feedback regularly. Acknowledging achievements and guiding improvement areas not only boosts morale but also builds trust and mutual respect.

Providing mentorship opportunities, where experienced nurses guide newer ones, can strengthen both individual and team resilience.

I think it's crucial to advocate for better staffing ratios and sufficient resources. When the workload is balanced, the team feels less overwhelmed, which directly impacts resilience.

Offering training opportunities and encouraging professional growth can empower my team. When they feel skilled and confident, they are better equipped to handle challenges.

Leaders need to advocate for better resources and ensure that their team has everything they need to perform their jobs well.

Sometimes, just being present and approachable can make all the difference. Leaders should be visible and available to their team members.

As a leader, I strive to lead by example. Showing calmness and adaptability in difficult situations inspires my team to do the same and trust in their ability to navigate adversity.

Encouraging self-care and work-life balance for the team, and leading by example in this regard, can reduce stress and increase resilience.

I believe in supporting my team's emotional and physical well-being by offering wellness programs, mindfulness workshops, or stress management training to reduce burnout.

I work to cultivate a culture where collaboration, inclusivity, and respect are the norm. A positive environment makes it easier for teams to bounce back from challenges together.

I like to organize team-building activities that strengthen relationships and trust among members. These activities create a sense of camaraderie and unity, which is key to resilience.

Flexibility is essential in today's demanding healthcare settings. I advocate for schedules that consider individual needs, which helps my team manage personal and professional challenges effectively.

I make it a point to self-reflect on my leadership style and seek feedback from my team. By continuously learning and adapting, I can better meet their needs and support their growth.