



LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES IN RESEARCH CULTURE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study determined the levels of leadership practices and institutional strategies for research culture development in graduate nursing education programs in Central Visayas, Philippines, during the academic year 2025-2026. Utilizing a descriptive research design, data were collected from 200 academic leaders and personnel through a purposive sampling method from four CHED-accredited programs. The findings revealed that leadership practices attained an overall mean of 4.09 ("High Level"), with Quality Assurance and Ethical Leadership scoring highest (4.20) and Research Mentorship and Capacity Building scoring lowest (3.97). Similarly, institutional strategies reached a high level (Overall Mean = 4.10), where Policy, Governance, and Ethical Standards emerged as the strongest area (4.20), while Infrastructure, Resources, and Collaboration were identified as the weakest (4.06). Comparative analysis using the Mann-Whitney U test indicated significant differences in perceptions based on age, with younger leaders reporting higher scores across all dimensions ($p < 0.05$). However, no significant differences were found when respondents were grouped by sex. The study concludes that while policy frameworks are well-established, there is a critical need for enhanced mentorship structures and practical resource allocation to fully sustain a robust research culture. An innovation plan was proposed to address these gaps.

Keywords: Academic leaders, graduate nursing education, innovation plan, institutional strategies, leadership practices

Bioprofile

Ms. Joy S. Matus is a Nursing Clinical Instructor at the University of Negros Occidental–Recoletos in Bacolod City, Negros Island Region. She is a dedicated and passionate healthcare professional with over seven years of experience in nursing education and clinical practice. She is a Registered Nurse with a master’s degree in Nursing and holds a Diploma in Professional Education, major in Biological Science. She is also a certified Infusion Nurse and is currently completing her PhD in Educational Management at STI West Negros University in Bacolod City. Her research interests focus on advancing patient-centered care and strengthening healthcare education practices.





Introduction

Rationale

The contemporary healthcare landscape demands evidence-based practice and innovation to address complex health challenges and improve patient outcomes. According to Nursing Education (2024), reliable nursing practice is often based on evidence-based research. Thus, the graduate education program for nurses is the foundation upon which advanced practice nurses are built to contribute convincingly to the scientific advancement of the profession. Unfortunately, the development of a strongly research-oriented culture in these programs remains a serious challenge and calls for strategic leadership intervention (Balay-odao et al., 2024).

Research culture in nursing education has evolved significantly over the past decades, yet many graduate programs continue to struggle with integrating research as a core component of their academic identity (Sumpter et al., 2022). According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN, 2021), research competency is essential for all graduate-level nurses, whether they pursue clinical practice, education, or administrative roles. Despite this recognition, numerous studies indicate that many graduate nursing programs lack the systematic leadership practices necessary to foster an environment where research inquiry, scholarly thinking, and evidence-based practice flourish organically (McNett et al., 2021; Matlhaba, 2024; Beth, 2025).

The challenge becomes more pronounced when considering that nursing faculty themselves often arrive at academic positions with limited research experience or training in research mentorship (Sarabipour et al., 2023). Traditional clinical expertise, while valuable, does not automatically translate into the ability to cultivate research interest and competency among postgraduate nursing students (Sato et al., 2020). This gap creates a need for deliberate leadership strategies to transform educational environments into research-rich cultures in which inquiry becomes second nature to faculty and students alike.

According to Maduforo et al. (2024), leadership in academic settings extends beyond administrative functions to encompass the creation of intellectual environments that inspire curiosity, critical thinking, and scholarly pursuit. Therefore, effective educational leaders must navigate the complex terrain of balancing clinical preparation with research development, ensuring that graduates emerge not only as competent practitioners but also as contributors to the nursing knowledge base.

Literature Review

Veres et al. (2025) systematically reviewed the impact of transformational leadership on nursing work environments and its influence on organizational research culture. Leaders using all four components—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—enhanced research activity and fostered supportive environments. Intellectual stimulation prompted faculty to challenge assumptions and devise innovative research



strategies, reinforcing the role of transformational leadership in strengthening the research culture in academic nursing.

Sarabipour et al. (2023) conducted a faculty mentorship survey and analyzed longitudinal data from multiple institutions to assess mentorship effectiveness. They found that structured mentorship models increased research activity and engagement. Effective mentorship needs institutional policies that offer support, set clear expectations, and provide training frameworks for both mentors and mentees. Formal mentorship programs led to greater role satisfaction and positive identity shifts among scholars.

Bedinghaus and Hillman (2024) offered empirical support for structured faculty development in research through their assessment of a comprehensive mentorship program. Tracking faculty over two years, they found participants increased research skills, publication rates, and grant funding. The program's multi-tiered peer mentoring, involving senior faculty and resources, improved all indicators of research culture.

In the Philippine context, Dayon and Dagoc (2025) examined the competencies and pedagogical performance of clinical instructors, finding persistent gaps in integrating research into clinical education. Barriers to research engagement included weak institutional frameworks and insufficient research training at faculty recruitment. The Philippine Association of Accrediting Schools, Colleges, and Universities (PAASCU, 2021) developed a nursing graduate education survey instrument that incorporates criteria specific to the research culture in Philippine institutions, establishing standards for graduate nursing education assessment.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is anchored on Avolio and Bass's transformational leadership theory, which argues that effective leaders encourage their followers to go beyond self-interest for the common good of the organization and, in the process, achieve organizational innovation and development (Bass & Avolio, 1994). According to the model, there are four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In graduate nursing education, these dimensions appear when academic leaders exemplify research-informed behaviors, articulate research aspirations, encourage critical inquiry and innovation, and provide research-focused mentoring and support for faculty and students (Veres et al., 2025; Patterson, 2025; Mozzarelli et al., 2025).

Additionally, Benner's Novice to Expert theory, grounded in the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition, offers a developmental perspective for analyzing the manner in which research proficiency develops among nursing faculty and students (Benner, 1984). According to Benner's model, there is a continuum starting from the novice stage, then advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and finally expert; each stage requires a diverse set of support and learning facilitation.





The incorporation of these two theories provides a solid foundation for the systematic establishment of a research culture in graduate nursing education.

Objectives

This study determined the levels of leadership practices and institutional strategies in research culture development in graduate nursing education programs in Central Visayas, Philippines, during the school year 2025-2026. Specifically, it sought to 1) determine the level of leadership practices in terms of Research Mentorship and Capacity Building, Visionary and Strategic Leadership, Collaborative and Networking Leadership, and Quality Assurance and Ethical Leadership; 2) assess the level of institutional strategies in the areas of Policy, Governance, and Ethical Standards, Faculty and Student Support Systems, Infrastructure, Resources, and Collaboration, and Research Dissemination, Utilization, and Sustainability; and 3) examine whether significant differences exist when grouped according to the aforementioned variables; and propose an innovation plan for research culture development based on the findings.

Methodology

This section presents the research design, respondents, instrument, data-gathering procedure, ethical considerations, and statistical tools used in the study.

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design to systematically describe and analyze leadership practices and institutional strategies for developing a research culture within graduate nursing education programs. According to Vale (2023), descriptive research enables the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the current condition of a population or phenomenon in a non-controlling manner. This design was the best fit for the study because the purpose was to determine the situation regarding leadership practices and institutional strategies without testing or developing any interventions.

Study Respondents

A total of 200 respondents, comprising academic leaders, coordinators, and personnel from four CHED-accredited graduate nursing programs in Central Visayas, Philippines, participated using purposive sampling. The programs offered MAN, MN, DNP, and PhD degrees.

Instrument

An 80-item researcher-made questionnaire was used, divided into three parts: Part I (Profile), Part II (Leadership Practices – 40 items across four areas), and Part III (Institutional Strategies – 40 items across four areas), rated on a 5-point Likert scale where 5 represents "Very High Level" and 1 represents "Very Low Level." The instrument underwent face and content





validation by a panel of five experts, yielding an overall validity index of 4.04 ("Good"). Pilot testing with 30 academic leaders yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .986 for the Leadership Practices subscale and .953 for the Institutional Strategies subscale, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Data Gathering and Procedure

After obtaining ethical clearance and institutional permissions, the online survey was administered over two months during the 2025-2026 academic year, achieving a 100% retrieval rate. The data gathered from the responses were tallied, tabulated, and processed using SPSS version 29.0.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objective 1 used the descriptive statistics and mean as a statistical tool to determine the level of leadership practices in terms of Research Mentorship and Capacity Building, Visionary and Strategic Leadership, Collaborative and Networking Leadership, and Quality Assurance and Ethical Leadership. Objective 2 also used the descriptive statistic and mean as statistical tool to assess the level of institutional strategies in the areas of Policy, Governance, and Ethical Standards, Faculty and Student Support Systems, Infrastructure, Resources, and Collaboration, and Research Dissemination, Utilization, and Sustainability. Finally, Objective 3 used the comparative statistics and Mann-Whitney U test to examine whether significant differences exist when grouped according to the aforementioned variables.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical standards, including voluntary participation, informed consent, minimal risk of harm, confidentiality, and anonymity, with institution names coded in all reports in accordance with R. A. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Results and Discussion

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data gathered to carry out the predetermined objectives of this study.

Profile of Respondents



**Table 1***Profile of Respondents*

Variables	Categories	Frequ	Percent
Age	Younger (below 37 years old)	101	50.50
	Older (37 years old and above)	99	49.50
Sex	Male	57	28.50
	Female	143	71.50
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower (Bachelor's Degree)	85	42.50
	Higher (Post Graduate)	115	57.50
Number of Research Trainings	Few (less than 3)	114	57.00
	Many (3 and more)	86	43.00
Total		200	100

Table 1 presents the profile of respondents. The data shows almost equal age distribution with 101 (50.50%) younger respondents and 99 (49.50%) older respondents, indicating a good combination of both emerging and experienced academic leaders. In terms of sex, more respondents are female (143, 71.50%) than male (57, 28.50%), which corresponds to the gender distribution of nursing education personnel. More than half of the respondents (115, 57.50%) hold postgraduate degrees, while 85 (42.50%) have bachelor's degrees. Regarding research training attendance, 114 (57%) respondents attended fewer than three training sessions, while 86 (43%) attended three or more. This profile indicates that while respondents meet academic qualification criteria, a significant proportion still have relatively low exposure to formal research training, suggesting additional capacity-building is needed.

These findings align with Dayon and Dagoc (2025), who noted that younger faculty show greater engagement in teaching and evidence-based research than older faculty in the Philippine



nursing education context. The predominance of females corresponds with the global and Philippine gender distribution in nursing. The greater proportion of respondents with postgraduate degrees aligns with Commission on Higher Education (CHED) expectations for graduate nursing program faculty. However, as Ghasemi et al. (2020) noted, advanced degrees may not automatically contribute to research skill development.

Table 2*Leadership Practices Across All Areas*

Leadership Practice Areas	Mean	Interpretation
Research Mentorship and Capacity Building	3.97	High Level
Visionary and Strategic Leadership	4.08	High Level
Collaborative and Networking Leadership	4.10	High Level
Quality Assurance and Ethical Leadership	4.20	High Level
Overall	4.09	High Level

Table 2 shows that the overall mean for leadership practices was 4.09, interpreted as High Level. Among the four dimensions, Quality Assurance and Ethical Leadership obtained the highest mean of 4.20, indicating that academic leaders strongly uphold research integrity, ethical standards, and quality control mechanisms. Conversely, Research Mentorship and Capacity Building yielded the lowest mean of 3.97, suggesting that structured mentoring frameworks and systematic capacity-building workshops require further strengthening compared to other leadership domains.

Salazar-Clemeña (2006, updated 2021) found that Philippine HEIs are highly structured in terms of "Ethical Standards" because of the strict requirements from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). This explains why academic leaders score highest in upholding research integrity—it is a matter of institutional accreditation.

Table 3*Institutional Strategies Across All Areas*



Institutional Strategy Areas	Me	Interpretation
Policy, Governance, and Ethical Standards	4.2	High Level
Faculty and Student Support Systems	4.0	High Level
Infrastructure, Resources, and Collaboration	4.0	High Level
Research Dissemination, Utilization, and Sustainability	4.0	High Level
Overall	4.1	High Level

Table 3 shows that the level of institutional strategies was likewise high across all four areas, with an overall mean of 4.10. Policy, Governance, and Ethical Standards emerged with the highest mean of 4.20, reflecting that institutions have well-established policies and governance frameworks supporting research activities. Infrastructure, Resources, and Collaboration obtained the lowest mean of 4.06, implying that while policies are in place, practical aspects of resource allocation, research facilities, and collaborative mechanisms need improvement to support the research culture fully.

The findings of this study mirror the national trend in Philippine Higher Education, where institutional strategies are perceived as 'High' (Mean=4.10). This aligns with the findings of Quitoras (2021), who noted that while governance and ethical frameworks are well-established, the practical implementation—specifically in Infrastructure and Resource Allocation—remains the primary challenge for sustaining a robust research culture.

Comparative Analysis of Leadership Practices by Profile Variables

Table 4

Difference in Leadership Practices by Sex

Leadership A	Male Mean	R	Female Mean	p-va	Sig. Le	Interpretation
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Quality Assurance	100.86	100.36	0.94	0.05	Not Significant
Research Mentors	105.15	98.65	0.48	0.05	Not Significant
Capacity Building	101.44	100.13	0.88	0.05	Not Significant
Ethical Leadership	100.24	100.61	0.90	0.05	Not Significant

Table 4 shows that sex does not significantly influence leadership practices indicating a gender-equitable research leadership environment in graduate nursing programs. This reflects positively on institutional efforts to maintain inclusive research cultures regardless of gender demographics

This implies that both male and female academic leaders perform leadership practices (Mentorship, Ethical Leadership, etc.) at a statistically similar level.

Table 5

Difference in Leadership Practices by Age

Leadership A	Younger Me	Older Me	p-value	Sig. Le	Interpretation
Mentorship	4.10	3.83	0.02	0.05	Significant
Strategic	4.24	3.91	0.00	0.05	Significant
Collaborative	4.23	3.95	0.02	0.05	Significant
Ethical	4.37	4.02	0.00	0.05	Significant

Table 5 shows that age significantly influenced perceptions across all leadership practice dimensions ($p < 0.05$). Younger academic leaders consistently reported higher perceptions than older respondents, with the most significant difference observed in Quality Assurance and Ethical Leadership (0.35-point difference). This suggests that younger faculty may have more recent exposure to contemporary leadership and research paradigms through their graduate training.





These findings support Dayon and Dagoc (2025), who noted that younger faculty in Philippine nursing education show greater engagement in evidence-based teaching and research than their senior counterparts.

Conclusion

Academic leaders of graduate nursing education programs are adequately qualified yet unevenly trained, particularly in research. While most respondents hold postgraduate degrees, the majority have attended only minimal research training workshops, suggesting that research training has not received considerable attention among institutions in the region.

Leadership practices that promote a research culture are generally favorable, although research mentorship and capacity building are comparatively weaker. The high mean scores across all leadership dimensions indicate a supportive research leadership climate; however, the relatively lower scores in research mentorship and capacity building suggest that many academic leaders lack adequate formal research mentoring structures and systematic capacity-building programs.

Institutional strategies for research culture are well-established at the policy level but less robust in practical implementation. High ratings for policy, governance, and ethical standards indicate comprehensive frameworks exist; however, lower scores in infrastructure, resources, and collaboration suggest that commitment to these policy frameworks, particularly in terms of funding, facilities, and operational support, remains insufficient.

Perceptions of leadership practices vary significantly by age, educational attainment, and research training attendance, but not by sex. Younger academic leaders, those with postgraduate degrees, and those who have attended more research training workshops perceive research leadership practices more favorably. The absence of gender differences indicates that leadership practices are experienced equitably.

An innovation plan targeting the lowest-scoring areas—research mentorship, financial support for graduate students, infrastructure improvements, and internal research forums—was proposed to enhance research culture development in graduate nursing education programs.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares the absence of any conflict of interest that could have influenced the content or conclusions of this paper. She affirms that no financial, personal, or professional relationships with other individuals or organizations have compromised the objectivity, integrity, or impartiality of the research work. As a final point, no external parties influenced the study design, data collection, analysis, or interpretation.





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