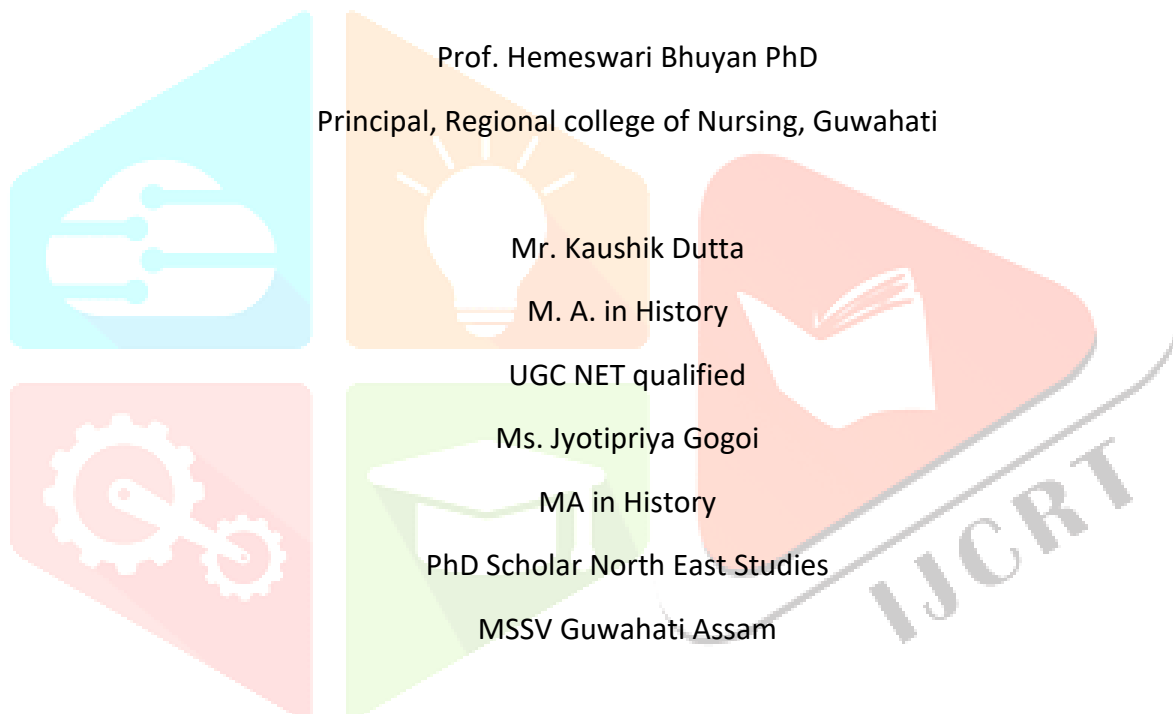




# Unveiling The Void: Investigating The Absence Of Nurse Leaders In Decision-Making And Its Consequences In Healthcare Institutions Of Assam



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**Abstract:** Leadership and management are important components of the nursing profession, essential to the delivery of high-quality patient care. The review works aims to explore the status of Nurse Leaders and their involvement in the process of decision making in the state of Assam. It has been observed that non availability of Nurse Leaders in the state of Assam coupled with non-involvement of them in the process of decision making jeopardized the health care delivery and the health indicators as well. Conclusion: Leaders play a key role in effective management of professionals, create good working environment and influence in positive outcomes of health indicators. Quality nursing education forms the backbone of professionally sound nurses and midwives in the country.

## Introduction

Leadership and involvement of nurse leaders in the process of decision making within healthcare organisations provides opportunity to express specific professional points of view and increases a sense of mutually esteem teamwork within the group. Leaders play a key role in effective management of professionals, create good working environment and influence in positive outcomes of health indicators.

Women comprise almost 70% of the global health workforce, 89% of the nursing workforce and 93% of the midwifery workforce but hold only 25% of the senior roles in health organizations<sup>1</sup>.

## Materials and methods

This work aims to explore the existence of state level leaders in the state of Assam in current scenario and their involvement in the process of decision for a quality health care services based on the review of related literature in this regard. According to National Family Health Survey Assam-5 (2019-20) mothers who had at least 4 antenatal care visits been 50.7%, mothers who consumed iron and folic acid for 100 or more days when they were pregnant is 18.5% whereas pregnant women age 15-49 years who are anemic (<11.0g/dl) is 54.2% moreover anemia is the leading cause of maternal death<sup>2</sup>. Lack of competent nurse especially at the primary level of health care delivery coupled with lack of supervision and monitoring system with a clear hierarchy starting from state level to grass root level is the root cause of maternal death due to iron deficiency anemia.

Undermining the importance of nursing leaders at the state level in the process of decision-making leads to lack of accountability for the working nurses. In such scenarios nursing services at primary, secondary and tertiary level were impacted greatly.

Quality nursing education forms the backbone of professionally sound nurses and midwives in the country. Nursing education is also being afflicted by increasing privatisation and a scanty number of government institutions. Almost 88 per cent of nursing and midwifery education is provided by the private health sector. Lack of quality education, low enrolment due to faculty shortages, lack of focus on soft skills and leadership development coupled with lack of a proper career progression pathway for nursing and midwifery are some of the challenges needed to be addressed<sup>3</sup>.

Nurses carry out 80 per cent of patient care. Presently India has over three million registered nurses and midwives for more than 1.3 billion population in the country. In spite of Nursing professionals has multiplied over the years involvement of nurses in decision-making and policy framing is lacking for decades<sup>2</sup>.

A qualitative Study conducted by [Shaymaa Najm Abed](#) , [Amir A Abdulmuhsin](#) , [Abeer F Alkhwalidi](#) (2021) on the factors influencing the innovative performance of leaders in nurses' professional: a developing country perspective among nurses came from two large general hospitals in Iraq.

Results indicated that nursing leaders in Iraq are not adequately trained to lead the profession and have limited involvement in decision-making. Workload, personal relationship with nursing staff, and professional recognition of nursing and selection criteria of leaders were the influencing factors. There were significant differences in views of the nurses toward nurse leaders' performance<sup>4</sup>.

Sally Chan conducted a study to investigate the factors that influenced the effectiveness of nursing leadership in the reform of nursing education in Hong Kong from the year 1985 to 2000. Results showed Situational variables that impacted on leadership effectiveness were categorized as barriers and facilitators. Barriers were related to nursing professional socialization in a health care system that was dominated by the medical profession. Facilitators were related to socio-politic-economical changes in the wider environment. This study suggests the importance of education, positive socialization and unity in promoting nursing leadership development.

Study conducted by Audenaert A. (2023) with the objective of roles and management functions in nursing: theory and application. Leadership and management are critical components of the nursing profession, essential to the delivery of high-quality patient care.

Transformational leadership theory is highly effective in healthcare settings to create a culture of collaboration, respect, innovation and inspiration to work together towards a common goal to improve patient outcomes and foster a positive work environment. In contrast, transactional leader may not promote the kind of collaboration and teamwork necessary for delivering high-quality patient care.

Management functions such as planning, organizing, leading, and controlling are essential to achieving organizational goals and ensuring the delivery of high-quality patient care. By understanding these theories and applications, nursing professionals can develop the skills and knowledge necessary to become effective leaders and managers in their field.

Management theories and frameworks are essential tools for nursing practice. They provide a basis for understanding and improving organizational behavior and performance, as well as guiding decision-making and quality improvement initiatives. By applying these theories and frameworks to nursing practice, nurse managers can create a positive work environment, improve patient outcomes, and contribute to the overall success of the healthcare organization<sup>6,7,8,9,10</sup>.

Leadership plays a key role, affecting outcomes for professionals, patients and work environment. Keeping in view the relation between leadership styles and job satisfaction, we can say that nursing leaders are indispensable in creating positive work environments, empowered and motivated workforce. Positive and supportive leadership styles can improve nurses' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to stay in their position while simultaneously reducing emotional exhaustion<sup>11</sup>.

## Discussion

Health care organizations (HCOs), with hospitals at the center, are considered as large and complex contemporary organizations, owing to their advanced procedures and different resources<sup>12</sup>. HCOs' performance depends on knowledge, skills, and personal incentives of human resources<sup>13,14,15</sup>. Given the importance of this resource, a consistent leadership is needed to achieve high performance and enhance employees' capabilities to improve the quality of care and outcomes<sup>16,17</sup>. Leading quality improvement process requires leaders who manage uncertainty and foster cultural and behavioral changes<sup>18,19,20</sup>. The state of Assam possesses the prestigious posts of Joint Director Nursing, Assistant Joint Director Nursing and Deputy Director of Nursing under the Director of Health Services Assam. The state also possesses the post of Registrar at Assam Nurses' Midwives' and Health Visitors' Council. The post of Joint Director Nursing, Assistant Joint Director Nursing and Deputy Director of Nursing are the key state level posts were lying vacant for a few years. Consequent upon which key state level decisions in regards to nursing have been taken at the Directorate level by the professionals other than nursing.

One of the main challenges mentioned in the leadership process was the leaders themselves. Dye & Garman stated that one of the biggest challenges of the health system in the coming decades would be the selection and development of leaders who are trained and prepared for leading in the complex health system, by relying on their proper and accurate leadership skills, reduce the cost of health care system and enhance the achievement of the objectives<sup>21</sup>.

Nursing Council is a statutory body constituted under State Nursing Council Act 1953. The Council is responsible for regulation and maintenance of a uniform standard of training for Nurses, Midwives, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives and Health Visitors. Assam possesses the post of Registrar at Assam Nurses' Midwives' and Health Visitors' Council. The post is lying vacant for long years and the activities were performed with a Principal ANM School of Nursing. The procedure of appointment of registrar in the state is not relevantly transparent.

The state has a sizable number of schools and colleges in the public and private sector as well. Regulation and maintenance of uniform standard of training itself is a challenging task. In the absence permanent registrar appointed by the state government expectation of uniform education standard can never be possible. More over most of the government and private institutions were running with acute shortage of faculties, infrastructure and teaching learning materials in the state.

## Conclusion

Nurses, midwives and nursing professionals being the cornerstone of the healthcare delivery system. Effective nursing leaders able to inspire, motivate, and empower their team members to achieve a shared vision by promoting emotional intelligence and fostering a positive work environment. A robust health care system complying with obligations, protecting public interest, positive outcome over the health indicators of the state always demand for skilled and competent nurse, able leader, proper supervision, monitoring and strong regulatory mechanism.

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