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## Contribution Of Student Led Council In The Development Of Leadership Skill Among Professional Students: A Mixed Method Study

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**Abstract:** All professions, including the medical area, need to undergo radical adjustments due to worldwide advancements. In the complicated and evolving medical system, competent nurse leadership brings adaptable actions. Give professional students the chance to hone their leadership, decision-making, and effective communication skills over the training term. Previous studies have shown the beneficial effects of student-led conferences on students' development of 21st century skills, including leadership, self-expression, self-management, responsibility, and communication abilities.

**Objectives of the study are** 1. To explore impact of student led council on perceived leadership skill among nursing student leaders of Student led Council 2. To find out the association between perceived leadership skill and selected sociodemographic variables among nursing student leaders of Student led Council. **Methodology** followed is mixed method QUANT → qual with a descriptive cross-sectional design and journaling. **Findings:** Mean score was  $59.2 \pm 4.27$  indicating high variability within the sample. Inferential analysis proved that there is a statistically significant contribution of student-led activities in the development of leadership skills among students as the calculated t-value (5.38)  $df = 29$ . Hence H1 is accepted. *The thematic analysis* identified perceived improvement in planning, delegating, organising, executing, evaluating and conflict management which reflect their management skill (Rank 1). Being the leader, they experienced self motivation, ability to empathize with others, positive self concept, self awareness, communication skill, interpersonal skill and ability to inspire self and others which all together reveal emotional intelligence. Integrity, forward movement and wide goal indicate their visionary. Strength, confidence and decisiveness manifested their personality development. They acquired financial management skill also. Recommended to Offer structured platform for each student based on their strength to plan and lead task focused activities

**Index Terms :** Student Led Council, Leadership Skill, Professional Students

## I. INTRODUCTION

A profession is an occupation that demands specialized knowledge and skills, gained through rigorous education and training. Beyond expertise, it requires a commitment to competence, integrity, and service to the public. To fulfill its multifaceted responsibilities, leadership plays a vital role in any profession, as it inspires individuals, provides vision and direction, and fosters a positive working environment. Effective leaders guide teams toward shared goals, navigate challenges and change, and cultivate a culture rooted in communication and collaboration.

The healthcare system, along with the various professions within it, continues to evolve in response to society's changing needs—and the nursing profession is no exception. Therefore, it is essential that nursing students are offered opportunities during their training to develop leadership skills, enabling them to emerge as future leaders in healthcare. A strong leadership foundation empowers them to initiate positive change and advance the profession.

Recognizing the importance of leadership development, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing highlighted leadership competencies as essential components in both the baccalaureate and master's curricula in 2008 and 2011. The Institute of Medicine<sup>1</sup> (2011) report, 'The Future of Nursing' explores how nurses' roles, responsibilities, and education should change significantly to meet the increased demand for care. Furthermore, Scammell et al. (2020) emphasize that the direct link between leadership and the quality of care underscores the need to adequately prepare undergraduate nursing students for leadership roles, ensuring they are equipped to become effective leaders of the future. Change in health care and the sharp focus on quality care create a need for the development of leadership capacity in the baccalaureate level education. Buckwell-Nutt K, Francis SJ<sup>2</sup> (2014) proposed that, for students to understand and demonstrate leadership knowledge, skills and attributes effectively, they need to: learn concepts, experience leadership roles, analyze their capabilities and develop these skills.

The student-led council, a body of student representatives, typically elected by their peers, that serves to address institutional issues, organize events, and brings nursing students together to take on leadership positions. It help to develop key skills including communication, decision making and teamwork. Research findings have shown that student-led conferences have a positive effect on helping students acquire 21st century skills, like responsibility, self-management, self-expression, communication skills and leadership qualities.<sup>3</sup>This study investigates the extent to which professional student members develop leadership competencies through active participation in council activities as measured through both self-assessment and reflective experiences.

## II. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

**Student led Council** refers to an association of student nurses run by their elected body and organize academic, social and cultural activities under the guidance of teachers.

**Perceived leadership skill** refers to self-experienced ability to lead; in terms of Critical and Strategic Thinking, Emotional Intelligence, Impact and Influence (or Communication and Relational Influence) and Teamwork Skills as evidenced by the score obtained by Self-Assessment Leadership Instrument (SALI), and by integrating this with the theme obtained from qualitative data.

## III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore impact of student led council on perceived leadership skill among nursing student leaders of Student led Council
- To find out the association between perceived leadership skill and selected sociodemographic variables among nursing student leaders of Student led Council

#### IV. HYPOTHESES AND METHODOLOGY

- H1: There is significant impact of student led council on perceived leadership skill among nursing students' leaders of Student led Council at 0.05 level of significance
- H2: There is significant association between perceived leadership skill and selected socio demographic variables at 0.05 level of significance

##### *Methodology*

Research methodology used in the present study is mixed method that combines the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The type of mixed method design followed is QUANT → qual. The study used a descriptive cross-sectional design to obtain quantitative data and journaling for qualitative data. Sequential data is done and integrated with the findings of core analysis.

#### V. POPULATION, SAMPLING, SETTING, VARIABLES

##### *Target Population*

All nursing student leaders of Student led Council

##### *Accessible Population*

Nursing student leaders of Student led Council in selected nursing college

##### *Sampling technique and sample size*

Convenient sampling was adopted for quantitative (the core part) research and purposive sampling for journaling to obtain qualitative data. Sample size is calculated using power analysis using G\*power as 24.7. Hence 30 sample size was considered for quantitative study. For journaling, samples are selected through purposive sampling and sample size will be up to the level of saturation (9 students).

*Setting of the study* is selected nursing colleges

*Variable of the study* is perceived leadership skill of nursing student leaders

##### *Inclusion Criteria*

Nursing Students who are

- Holding leadership roles of student led council since at least past 3 months
  - Willing voluntarily for the study
- For Journaling, those who hold leading roles of different committees are included

##### *Exclusion Criteria*

Nursing Students who are

- Absent on the day of data collection
- Holding leading role in any other organization
- Having communication problems

#### VI. SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF INSTRUMENT

Structured tool to assess perceived leadership skill was developed through review of literatures, analyzing the reliability of the tool and performing validity with experts.

**Self-Assessment Leadership Instrument (SALI0)** is a 40-item questionnaire developed by Bonnie Smola in 1988 specifically to measure leadership behaviors and skills in **nurses and nursing students**. The SALI consists of 40 self-report items, typically rated on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 0, "I don't usually behave in this manner," to 4, "I almost always behave in this manner"). The total score can range from 0 to 160 with higher scores indicating increased occurrence of leadership behavior. The reliability of the instrument was assessed and reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.94<sup>4</sup>.

*Data collection* was done through questionnaire method for quantitative data and journaling for qualitative data based on open ended questions.

## VII. PLAN FOR DATA ANALYSIS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Descriptive analysis, one paired t test and chi square are done for quantitative analysis and theme analysis for qualitative analysis.

**Ethical consideration** the study was reviewed and approved by the Nursing College Research Committee and organizers of Student Led Council. The study questionnaire was distributed to the students after obtaining well explained consent from participants and adoption of steps to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the information.

## VIII. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

NACE<sup>5</sup>, 2022 reported that soft skills competencies such as communication, collaboration, leadership, problem-solving, and self-management important foundation for the career readiness of higher education graduates. Hence necessary steps to be widely adopted in higher education policies and practices. Student-led organizations encourage students to carry out roles, manage responsibilities, and interact in team dynamics, thus facilitating the internalization of leadership values<sup>6</sup>.

Dewanti L, Soelistiyono A, Astuty SH<sup>7</sup> proved that organizations makes a significant positive contribution to leadership skills of students. The regression coefficient value of  $\beta = 0.412$  with a significance level of  $p < 0.001$  confirms that the higher the level of student involvement in the organization, the better the leadership skills they develop. This means that organizational experience has a real role in shaping students' capacity to lead, not just a coincidental effect. It not only improves leadership skills, but also contributes significantly to the development of soft skills. The regression analysis yielded a coefficient of  $\beta = 0.378$  with a significance level of  $p < 0.01$ , which confirmed the positive relationship between the level of involvement in the organization and the students' soft skills ability. The  $R^2$  value = 0.27 indicates that almost 27% of the variation in soft skills can be explained by organizational participation, while other factors outside of this study also influence, such as academic experience, social activities, and part-time work environment.

Ndung'u J, Okemasisi K<sup>8</sup>, in 2011 did a study in Kenya and found that student council positively contributes to academic performance and the overall school environment. Peer mentorship involvement in school operations contributed significantly to students' personal and academic development. While 14.7% teachers disagree, the majority (80.9%) agree that the student council's coordination of discussion groups contributes to academic performance; 66.6% of teachers either strongly agreed (38.4%) or agreed (28.2%) that student council involvement in policy formulation enhances the discipline of students. Lastly, the study revealed that student council involvement helps in building self-confidence among the students. All teachers (100%) either strongly agreed (51.3%) or agreed (48.7%) that student council assignment of duties helps them to gain self-confidence. This finding highlights the importance of student council involvement in fostering personal growth and development among students, which can ultimately contribute to improved academic performance.

## IX. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Table 1.  
*Sociodemographic details of subjects*

Variables		Frequency(n)	Percentage(%)
Type of schooling	Private	18	60
	Government	12	40
Medium of instruction	English	9	30
	Hindi	21	70
	High school	2	6.6
	Higher secondary school	8	26.6
	Graduate and above	20	66.6
Highest Educational qualification of mother			
	Primary school	2	6.6
	Middle school	1	3.3
	High school	8	26.6
	Higher secondary school	6	20
	Graduate and above	13	43.3
Perceived financial status	Sufficient to meet all demands	11	36.6
	Sufficient to meet unavoidable need	19	63.3

Among 30 student leaders involved in the study, 60% had their basic schooling from private school and 63.3% (n=19) from English medium. A notable finding was that all their parents had minimum of high school education however 66.6% of fathers and 63.3% of mothers were graduate and above. With regard to their perceived financial status majority (63.3%) of them had sufficient to meet unavoidable need and the rest had sufficient to meet all the needs.

#### *Contribution of student led council in the development of leadership skill*

Distribution of data was assessed for its skewness and was found to be moderate negatively skewed approximately at -0.83 indicating a distribution with a longer tail on the left side meaning lower values are more spread out.

Leadership skill was assessed in various domains like decision making skills, communication skills, emotional intelligence, drive for excellence, keeping ethics and values, professionalism and mentorship skill.

High means ( $\geq 1.63$ ) was noticed in relation to **decision making skills** like delegating tasks, collaborative decision making and planning ahead suggesting strong leadership development whereas staying focused with follow-up had the lowest mean (1.53), indicating students may struggle with task continuity.

**With regard to communication skills, in the area of** enjoying communication and listening students scored high (1.80); reflecting positive interpersonal engagement while ability to ensure understandability was minimum, indicating a few students may have faced significant difficulty with clarity in communication.

**In the area of emotional intelligence quality of** empathy and motivation despite obstacles scored well. However reflecting and staying calm under pressure scored lowest, suggesting that managing emotions in stress needs more attention.

**With respect to drive for excellence** setting high goals and seeking feedback were top performers. Persistence with obstacles had a slightly lower mean, suggesting resilience development is ongoing. Percentage analysis in the Area of **Ethics and Values** depicts that honesty in decision-making, fairness, and responsibility had strong scores.

In the area of professionalism, **highest mean and lowest SD** indicating almost universal agreement and internalization of respect for others whereas the **minimum of 0** suggests that some students **do not feel confident** to speak out about unethical practices.

In the **Mentorship** domain, creating a supportive team atmosphere and collaborating during challenges showed the highest development (Mean = 1.90, SD = 0.31), indicating strong team leadership skills. However, mentor-like guidance (Mean = 1.57) requires further emphasis in training to enhance students' ability to guide peers constructively.

**Table 2**  
**Areawise analysis of contribution of student led council in the development of leadership skill among nursing students**

Area	Mean	Standard Deviation	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)
Decision Making	1.66	0.10	1.57	1.75
Communication Skill	1.66	0.10	1.57	1.75
Emotional Intelligence	1.65	0.11	1.54	1.76
Drive for Excellence	1.77	0.12	1.65	1.89
Ethics and Values	1.78	0.08	1.70	1.86
Professionalism	1.76	0.14	1.62	1.90
Mentorship	1.81	0.14	1.67	1.95

As shown in Table 1, the greatest mean score, showing positive mentorship and collaboration, was at 1.81 while the lowest mean score of 1.65 in emotional Intelligence particularly related to staying calm under pressure. Following Ethics and values was the most consistent area with a standard deviation of 0.08 depicting uniform response while the widest variability was in professionalism with a standard deviation of 0.14 which is attributed to low confidence in speaking out against unethical behavior. Professionalism and mentorship was relatively higher but not consistent.

Analysis of cumulative data shows that 25% of data fall below the score of 57 (Q1) half of the study subjects (Q2) fall below 60 and 75% (Q3) had scored upto 62.

**TABLE 3**  
**ONE-SAMPLE T-TEST TO IDENTIFY CONTRIBUTION OF STUDENT-LED ACTIVITIES TO LEADERSHIP SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

Sample Size (n)	Sample Mean (M)	Assumed Population Mean ( $\mu_0$ )	Standard Deviation (SD)	Calculated t Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Critical t-value (from table)	Level of significance at $p > 0.05$
30	59.2	55	4.27	5.38	29	2.045	Significant

The above table depicts that the total mean score was 59.2 with a median of 60 and mode 62. The above table total mean score was ( $\bar{x} \pm sd$ )  $59.2 \pm 4.27$  indicating high variability within the sample. Inferential analysis proved that there is a statistically significant contribution of student-led activities in the development of leadership skills among students as the calculated t-value (5.38) is greater than the critical table value (2.045) at  $p < 0.05$  with  $df = 29$ . Hence it was proved that there is significant impact of student led council on perceived leadership skill among nursing students leaders of Student led Council.

**The thematic analysis** of journaling of leaders of student led council identified perceived improvement in planning, delegating, organising, executing, evaluating and conflict management which reflect their management skill (Rank 1). Being the leader, they experienced self motivation, ability to empathize with

others, positive self concept, self awareness, communication skill, interpersonal skill and ability to inspire self and others which all together reveal emotional intelligence (Rank II). Integrity, forward movement and wide goal indicate their visionary (Rank III). Strength, confidence and decisiveness manifested their personality development (Rank IV). Though least in rank order, they acquired financial management skill also.

### ***Integrating quantitative data with Qualitative information***

Open discussion confirmed the findings of core study. Additional skills identified were Integrity, personality development and financial management skill.

### ***Association between perceived leadership skill and selected sociodemographic variables***

Chi square analysis indicated that the association between medium of instruction in school ( $\chi^2_{cal} 8.8 > \chi^2_{tab} 5.99$  (df=2) and year of placement in nursing as  $\chi^2_{cal} 6.1 > \chi^2_{tab} 5.99$  (df=2) at  $p < 0.05$  level of significance. **Hence H2 that is there is association between medium of instruction and year of placement in nursing are accepted.** Whereas type of schooling, education of parents, academic performance and previous leadership skills were proved to be insignificantly associated with socio demographic variables.

## **X. DISCUSSION**

Total mean score of leadership skill among students involved in student led council was ( $x \pm sd$ )  $59.2 \pm 4.27$  indicating high variability within the sample and One-Sample t-Test proved a statistically significant contribution of student-led activities in the development of leadership skills at  $p > 0.05$ .

Kim J, Wargo E<sup>9</sup> in 2022 also explored that students involved in the state or national level leadership scored high in community values of leadership development, and those who were members and committee members scored relatively low. Overall, the difference in leadership development according to the highest level of participation in extracurricular activity organizations/clubs while in college showed significant differences ( $p < .05$ ).

Another study in Malaysia to examine the leadership and motivational experiences of students engaged in group work gathered through individual interviews with ten students selected by purposive sampling. The results of this study indicate that the ten students who participated in group work activities had positive leadership and motivational experiences, including defined roles and responsibilities as well as enhanced confidence and communication skills<sup>10</sup>

## **XI. RECOMMENDATION**

- Offer structured platform for each student based on their strength to plan and lead task focused activities.
- Utilize peer critique, role-playing, and reflection activities to improve clarity in teams' communication.
- Encourage students to achieve their best with short term achievable goals and practice self assessment to foster emotional resilience.
- Encourage reflective journaling and case discussion in order to build persistence and goal orientation.
- Embed reflective practice sessions after student-led activities to help students analyze their leadership behaviors and set personal development goals.
- Implement formative, behavior-based assessments to provide continuous feedback on leadership skills in action during student-led initiatives.

## **XII. CONCLUSION**

The present study concludes that a platform for students to elicit their leadership skill will nurture them with all its components and develop tomorrow's efficient leader. It is recommended that all professional students should be consistently provided with opportunity to grow. It is preferable to integrate the concept of leadership throughout the nursing education curricula with extracurricular, in the trainers' training time to provide leadership skills for nurses.

### **Conflict of interest**

No Conflict of interest

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