

**LEADING THROUGH CHAOS:  
UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP PRESENCE**

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**Introduction**

Healthcare systems are facing tremendous pressures as disruption is becoming the new norm and many aspects of care delivery are abruptly changing.

Aging of the workforce    Physician Shortages    Retirement of RNs    Healthcare reform implementation    COVID-19

As a result, nurse leaders have a social responsibility to lead their followers through these challenging time.

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**Background**

- Given the challenges of today's healthcare environment, leadership skills remain of utmost importance.
- The challenges that leaders face may differ among circumstances and organizations, but an event such as the COVID-19 pandemic presented issues where universal application may be relevant.
- The environment allows for differences in which challenges occur and the way leaders responded, thus creating different platforms for how organizations and individuals respond and adapt.
- Leadership may be dependent upon the maturity level of the followers involved. As a result, leadership styles may evolve over time as the maturity level of the follower increases.

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### Losty & Bailey, 2021

- Leading Through Chaos: Perspectives From Nurse Executives
- Nursing Administration Quarterly
- Descriptive qualitative study
- Purpose: To explore current challenges of COVID-19 on health care delivery and leadership styles of nurse executives that were specific to the pandemic.
- Research Questions:
  - Given the current challenges of COVID-19 on healthcare delivery, what challenges are you facing?
  - How would you describe your leadership experience and style?
  - Can you describe an example of a nursing measure that was implemented during the COVID-19 crisis?

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### Findings



COMMUNICATION IS PARAMOUNT



LEADERSHIP PRESENCE



MENTAL TOUGHNESS

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### Themes of LEADERSHIP PRESENCE

Our priorities focused on addressing the challenges of our staff...it was like building a plane and flying it at the same time. (NE01)

I had some apprehension that I would not be able to meet the staff's needs or give them the tools they needed to be successful. I learned to tell the staff that I work with lead as well. (NE02)

I quickly recognized that my job was to get out of the way as COVID-19 provided staff the opportunity to create teams, to collaborate with members from other disciplines, and to create new roles to respond to what they needed. (NE02)

Part of being a leader was allowing the nurses to make decisions that affected THEIR WORK. I learned that I needed to LISTEN to my frontline and provide them with the support and trust during these difficult times. (NE03)

Our success in dealing with COVID-19 resulted from the flexibility of the nursing leadership in being leaders and being followers. (NE03)

Our team embraced the crisis as there is an expectation for us to be successful! The leaders' challenge was to create ways to maintain this spirit among our staff. (NE04)

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### Bailey, Losty, Albert, Rodenhauen, & De Santis, 2022

- Leadership Presence: A Concept Analysis
  - Nursing Forum
  - Concept Analysis
- The term "presence" is well-defined in nursing and nursing practice.
- Leadership presence was an essential factor that nurse executives needed to engage with followers. However, leadership presence is not well defined in the literature.
- Thus, the purpose of this concept analysis was to examine the concept of leadership presence and analyze its attributes, antecedents, and consequences.

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### Defining "Presence"

Ability to connect authentically with the thoughts and feelings of others.

Ability to be "present in the moment" given today's fast-paced world and competing priorities.

Ability to listen and build relationships; be empathetic.

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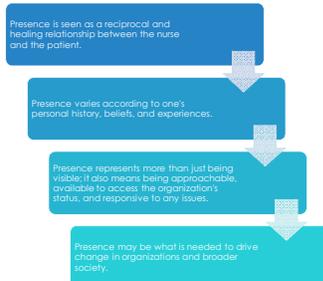
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### Nursing Presence



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## Attributes of LEADERSHIP PRESENCE

Displaying a set of key behavioral practices to achieve desired impacts. For example, emotional intelligence is a key behavior that plays a significant role in leadership and leadership development.

Emotional intelligence is defined as the awareness and capabilities of monitoring personal and others' emotions and feelings.

One may relate leadership presence to "command presence". Core components of command presence include competence, composure, decisive, perpetual energy, and problem solver.

While these leaders discussed the importance of having "a presence" in terms of being present, the understanding extended into something greater in terms of the nurse executives having a "presence" independent of their "physical" presence.

Leadership is about making others better as a result of one's presence and making sure that the impact lasts in one's absence.

Leadership presence is not as tangible as one thinks; however, when it is absent, it is easily felt and recognized.

Leadership presence can directly and indirectly influence the behavior of others regardless of the physical presence of the leader.

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## Antecedents of Leadership Presence

The internal complexity of the organization

- Nursing is independent of the "administrative" and "medical" sides of the healthcare organization.
- Nurse leaders to create a strong leadership presence in the organization is evident as they need to navigate the multifaceted, complex nature of the organization itself.
- Further, it is understood that other stakeholders exist, including patients, families, communities, and society.

The external complexity of the organization

- There are many external threats that affect care delivery.
- Nurses need leadership presence to address these external factors.

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## Consequences of Leadership Presence

Organizational Consequences

Individual Consequences

- Leaders and leadership presence influence work environments by creating a positive work culture.
- Leadership presence fosters alignment through shared goals and achievement as well as shared decision-making.

- Leadership presence encourages affirmation, loyalty, security.
- May improve the nurses' performance, satisfaction, and success, which in turn, influences patient outcomes.
- May enhance individual well-being and security.

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## Empirical Referents of Leadership Presence



POSNER AND KOUZES' LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INSTRUMENT (LPI).



POSSIBLE LINK WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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## Future Research

- A theory of leadership presence in nursing practice does not currently exist, thus the findings from our study and concept analysis may be used to develop a theory of leadership presence.
- Further understanding of the concept of leadership presence and its relationship and influences on nursing practice, strategies can be created to implement and evaluate the magnitude of these relationships and the contribution that leadership presence makes to the health and well-being of staff, patients, and families.
- This study and presentation was the result of an Academic-Practice partnership.
- Academic-Practice partnerships are an important mechanism to strengthen nursing practice and help nurses become well positioned to lead change and advance health.
- Next on the agenda...

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## Conclusion

Leaders set the tone for excellence, but nurse managers and frontline clinical nurses embrace the challenge.

Through continued conceptual and theoretical development of leadership presence, additional knowledge surrounding this important concept can be discovered, tested, and translated into nursing leadership practice.

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