The Experiences of Dutch Post-doctoral Nurses with Leadership and Career Development: A General Qualitative Explorative Study

Authors: Wendela de Lange MSc, Irina Poslawsky PhD, Thóra Hafsteinsdottir PhD

Background

Challenges in health care call for leadership to rebuild the nursing workforce and implement new models of care. Although post-doctoral nurses have an important role in the implementation of evidence based care and teaching, academic functions are lacking. It is highly important to strengthen the research capacity of nursing faculties by investing in leadership and career development of post-doctoral nurses. Therefore, the aim of the study was to explore Dutch post-doctoral nurses’ experiences with their leadership and career development in research functions.

Method

- General qualitative design
- Open interviews
- Thematic analysis

Results

- Fourteen open interviews with post-doctoral nurses
- Five themes in the thematic map (figure 1)
- Multiple functions, sometimes conflicting demands (figure 2)
- Preconditions for a successful career (support from colleagues, collaboration, appreciation, identifying as nurse, maintaining balance and leadership behavior)
- Absents of preconditions was hindering post-doctoral nurses in their career development

Conclusion and Implications

Post-doctoral nurses experience hindering- and helping aspects regarding their career development. They balance these aspects in their own way by using their leadership skills. Leadership behavior was found to be highly important in the career development of post-doctoral nurses in order to develop themselves in a positive way. This study demonstrates that the scientific world can be a complex environment. Support, collaboration, leadership behavior, nursing identity, and maintaining balance for post-doctoral nurses are needed.

**Figure 1.**
The thematic map left presents the themes and the essence of the findings. The presence of the described preconditions can be seen as “helping aspects”, while the absence of preconditions can be seen as “hindering aspects” in the career development of post-doctoral nurses.

**Figure 2.**
The multiple functions of post-doctoral nurses described by the nurses themselves.