The Supervision of School Nurses in New Jersey: Parallel Needs, Actions, and Impacts on Student Care

A Mixed Methods Research Study

Lee-Ann Halbert, EdD, JD, RN, CNM, NCSN, CNE
New Jersey City University
October 12, 2017
Lhalbert@njcu.edu
Agenda

- Problem Summary
- Purpose of the Study
- Study Methodology
- Survey Questions
- Results
- Interpretation of Findings
- Implications
- Recommendations
- Questions and Discussion
Problem Summary

- Serious and frequent health needs of New Jersey school students
  - Up to 20% have mental health issue
  - Chronic health issues such as asthma, diabetes, ADHD (American Diabetes Association, 2011; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012)
  - Medication administration (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008)
  - Supporting students who are victims of violence (King, 2014)
  - Most frequent contact with a health care provider (Rice, Biordi, & Zeller, 2005)

- Differences in understandings of supervision in education and nursing
  - Pedagogy versus clinical nursing practice (Butterworth & Faugier, 1992; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011)

- Significance of relationship between subordinate and supervisor on nursing practice
  - Commitment to the institution (Brunetto, Farr-Wharton, & Shacklock, 2011; Brunetto, Shriberg, Farr-Wharton, Shacklock, Newman, & Dienger, 2013)
  - Improving skills as a nurse (Landmark, Hansen, Bjones, & Bohler, 2003)
  - Nurses’ emotional state (Brunetto et al., 2011)

- Viewed through the lens of role conflict from Organizational Role Theory (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964):
  - Interplay of (1) organizational, (2) personal, and (3) professional expectations to perform work (Biddle, 1986; Kahn et al, 1964; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970)
Purpose of the Study

Understand the relationship between:

- The professional background of the school nurse’s direct supervisor, and

- The NJ-CSN’s ability to practice to his or her fullest professional scope

- As viewed from a focus of role conflict within Organizational Role Theory:

  - Why?: Education and nursing have different definitions of supervision
    - Work to support student health, growth, and academic achievement (ANA and NASN, 2011)
Research Questions

1. How do the school nurses’ understandings of their roles affect their clinical practice?

2. How does the nursing supervisor’s professional and educational background relate to how the nurse provides services in the school setting?
Study Methodology

- Mixed Methods Research
  - Hybrid of Qual and Quant
  - Provides information on how findings can be used in daily life (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004)
  - Quant findings combined with context of qual (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004)

- Explanatory Study
  - Qual findings are used to explain the quant results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Ivankova & Stick, 2007)

- Concurrent Design
  - Integrated in timing, avoids running two parallel studies (Bryman, 2007; Yin, 2006)

- Personal Biases: Addressed in methodology, informed consent, and confidentiality
Array Statements: Present Study

Based on original Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman scale (1970)

- Likert-type scale
- Response choices of 1, 2, 3, 4
- 1 = “very false”
- 4 = “very true”

“Respondents appear adept at intuiting the middlemost selection options” (Froman, 2014, p. 449)

- 2 = somewhat false
- 3 = somewhat true

Array questions divided between RQ 1 and RQ 2:

1. How do the school nurses’ understandings of their roles affect their clinical practice?

2. How does the nursing supervisor’s professional and educational background relate to how the nurse provides services in the school setting?
Research Question 1: How do the school nurses’ understandings of their roles affect their clinical practice?

1. I have enough time to complete my work.

3. I have experienced situations in which a student’s nursing needs and educational requirements have been in conflict.

4. There are times I work under education policies and/or guidelines that are incompatible with evidence-based nursing practice.

5. I sometimes receive an assignment without the support staff to complete it.

6. I have compromised on a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.

7. I have to miss student support meetings (504, I & RS, Child Study Team, or other similar support teams) because that would leave the health office without a nurse.

8. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.
Research Question 2: How does the nursing supervisor’s professional and educational background relate to how the nurse provides services in the school setting?

2. My immediate supervisor directs me to complete at least part of my work in a manner that should be done differently, according to evidence based nursing practice.

9. My supervisor has me asked to provide non-emergency medication to a teacher to give to a student on a class trip.

10. My supervisor has asked me to disclose confidential medical information that I am not permitted to share.
Distribution and Completion of Survey

- Opened Link: 835
- Started Survey: 712
- Qualified and Completed Survey: 557

85.3% completion rate

66.7% completion rate
Demographics: Years of Experience

- Less than 1: 16 (2.9%)
- 1-5 Years: 92 (16.5%)
- 6-10 Years: 104 (18.7%)
- More than 10 years: 345 (61.9%)
### Number of Schools Assigned to Weekly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number of Students Served

- 1-100: 5 (0.9%)
- 101-500: 296 (53.1%)
- 501-1000: 171 (30.7%)
- 1001-1500: 53 (9.5%)
- more than 1500: 32 (5.7%)
Survey Results
School Nursing Specific Questions
Demographics - Presence of a Lead or Head Nurse

- Yes: 188 (33.8%)
- No: 368 (66.1%)
- No Answer: 1 (0.2%)
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE SUPERVISOR

- Did not respond: 1.4%
- Educational Supervisor With RN Background: 6.3%
- Educational Supervisor With No RN: 92.3%

N = 557
- RN Background: n = 35
- No RN Background: n = 514
- Did not answer: n = 8
Supervisor Title and Educational Background

- **Building Admin.**:RN: 14, Not RN: 304, Did not answer: 6
- **Student Services**:RN: 4, Not RN: 94, Did not answer: 0
- **Athletics or PE**:RN: 1, Not RN: 44, Did not answer: 1
- **Other or Not Noted**:RN: 1, Not RN: 29, Did not answer: 0
- **CSA**:RN: 1, Not RN: 0, Did not answer: 0
- **Curriculum Dept.**:RN: 0, Not RN: 13, Did not answer: 1
- **Nursing Supv.**:RN: 14, Not RN: 11, Did not answer: 0

Legend:
- Green: Supervisor is RN
- Light Green: Supervisor is not RN
- Orange: Did not answer
Supervisor’s Background and Presence of a Lead or Head Nurse

\[ N = 548^* \]

- Supervisor is RN and has lead/head nurse: \( n = 32 \) (5.8%)
- Supervisor is not RN and has lead/head nurse: \( n = 154 \) (28.1%)
- Supervisor is RN and does not have lead/head nurse: \( n = 3 \) (0.5%)
- Supervisor is not RN and does not have lead/head nurse: \( n = 359 \) (65.5%)

*Does not include 9 respondents who either did not provide supervisor’s background or information on the presence of a lead/head nurse
Years of Experience and Array Statements:
1 - I have enough time to complete my work.
3 - I have experienced situations in which a student's nursing needs and educational requirements have been in conflict.
4 - There are times I work under education policies and/or guidelines that are incompatible with evidence-based nursing practice.
5 - I sometimes receive an assignment without the support staff to complete it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>No Answer</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 YEAR</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 YEARS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 YEARS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 YEARS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10 YEARS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10 YEARS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supv is not RN

No Answer

4

3

2

1
6 - I have compromised on a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.
7 - I have to miss student support meetings (504, I & RS, Child Study Team, or other similar support teams) because that would leave the health office without a nurse.
8 - I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.
2 - My immediate supervisor directs me to complete at least part of my work in a manner that should be done differently, according to evidence based nursing practice.
9 - My supervisor has me asked to provide non-emergency medication to a teacher to give to a student on a class trip.
10 - My supervisor has asked me to disclose confidential medical information that I am not permitted to share.
Conflict Experiences

- Misunderstanding of NJ-CSN Work: 10
- Requested Breach of Confidentiality: 16
- Fear of Reprisal: 1
- Inadequate Staffing: 39
- Nursing P&P without Nsg Input: 5
- SGOs Unrelated to Nsg Practice: 1
- Usurp Professional Nsg Judgement: 68

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Supervisor is Not RN</th>
<th>Supervisor is RN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Misunderstanding of NJ-CSN Work</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requested Breach of Confidentiality</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Reprisal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate Staffing</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing P&amp;P without Nsg Input</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGOs Unrelated to Nsg Practice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usurp Professional Nsg Judgement</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resolution of the Conflicts

- 170 Nurses whose Supervisor is Not an RN answered: only 140 responded to conflict question
- Compromise of nursing practice (9)
- Union or attorney involvement (9)
- Abide by State NPA, even if in conflict with directive (15)
- Educated the supervisor about the issue (34)
- Documented conflict, but no change in practice (5)
- Left the position because of the conflict (1)
- Improvement in practice (18)
- No resolution of the conflict (79)
Impact of Supervision on Job Performance

In Other Words:
How Does the Supervision of the NJ-CSN Affect the Work and Feelings of the Nurse?
Question 18: Please describe any situation in which your immediate supervisor’s professional and/or educational background might have influenced your job performance.
Impact of Supervision of Clinical Performance

In Other Words: How Does the Supervisor Affect Clinical Practice of the Nurse?
Question 20: Please describe any clinical situation(s) in which you believe the educational and/or professional background of your immediate supervisor had an impact on your school nursing practice.
Interpretation of Findings:

Effect of the Nurses’ Understandings of Their Roles on Clinical Practice
Role Conflict: Can Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child be Implemented?

- Findings:
  - Inability to complete work timely
  - *Seemingly* competing goals of SNs and educators
  - Involvement of union and/or attorney
  - Fear of reprisal
  - Ability to practice as a professional nurse

- Potential Consequences:
  - Ability to practice as a professional nurse
  - Job attrition balanced by benefits?
  - Compromised job performance: HEALTH and SAFETY of students
NJ-CSN Practice Implications Related to Supervisor Background

- **Findings:**
  - More than ¼ of the nurses whose supervisor is not an RN reported a conflict
  - Conflict related to direct clinical practice
  - Frustration for the school nurse
  - No resolution of conflict: how can practice be improved?

- **Potential impact:**
  - For the student: decreased achievement and risk to health
  - Parental impact for incorrect clinical decisions
  - Noncompliance with regulations (504, IEP, NPA)
  - Inability to improve nursing practice
  - For the community: Immunizations and health of the community
Policy Implications

- **NJ-CSN must** provide proper care within scope of RN license

- School nursing **must** support academic achievement

- Recognize that students - youth - have no voice in policy development for nursing

- NJ-CSN involvement in development of the school nursing program

- Health policies **must** be current and evidence based

- Enhance communication without fear of reprisal

- Encourage and support relevant NJ-CSN professional growth
Practice Implications for NJ-CSNs

- Take responsibility for all nursing actions
- Discuss conflicts with supervisor
- Document compromised practice to work toward improvement
- Apply NASN 21st Century Framework - QI
Research Avenues

- **Nurses**
  - Ethics of not abiding by professional expectations
  - Role ambiguity
  - Effect of supervisor background on job attrition
  - Years of experience as NJ-CSN in responding to conflicting directives
  - Interviews to compare experiences between supervision by RN to that by no RN
  - Explore confusion of lead/head nurse role
  - NJ-CSN preparation programs - readiness for conflict response
  - Ethics of supervision by non-RN

- **Supervisors**
  - Understanding of school nurse role and decisions as related to supervisor’s actions
  - Ethics of directing RN not to abide by NPA - is supervisor aware?
  - Do supervisors without RN preparation want to supervise an RN?
  - Ethics of non-RN supervising an RN
Practice Recommendations

- **Nurse:**
  - Read and understand NPA
  - Accept that supervisors have best interests of students in mind
  - Budget constraints
  - Use evidence-based practice
  - Discuss issues with supervisor
  - Recommend constructive ideas

- **Supervisor:**
  - Accept that NJ-CSNs want to support students
  - If possible, have RN background
  - Respect professional expertise of NJ-CSN
  - Hold meetings with NJ-CSN
  - Support evidence-based nursing care
  - Provide meaningful evaluations
Questions and Discussion
References


