

Original Paper

Analysis of the Chain-Mediated Effects of Narrative Care Skills and Evidence-Based Nursing Competencies between Clinical Nurse Core Competencies and Sense of Career Benefit

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Abstract

Background: To understand the current status of clinical nurses' narrative care skills and evidence-based nursing competence, and to explore their chain-mediated roles between nurses' core competence and sense of career benefit, so as to provide references for improving nurses' sense of career benefit and positively developing nursing teams. **Methods:** A general information questionnaire, narrative competence scale for healthcare professionals, evidence-based nursing competency scale, registered nurse core competency scale, and nurses' sense of career benefit questionnaire were used to survey 716 nurses, and the chain mediation model was constructed and tested. **Results:** The total evidence-based nursing competency score of clinical nurses was (65.53 ± 9.17) , which was at a moderate level. The total score of narrative care skills (113.57 ± 18.52) , the total score of nurses' core competence (179.15 ± 33.37) , and the total score of nurses' sense of career benefit (109.37 ± 20.81) were in the middle level; narrative care skills and evidence-based nursing competence acted as chain mediators between nurses' core competence and their sense of career benefit, and the mediation effects were respectively 0.006, 0.014. **Conclusion:** Narrative care skills and evidence-based nursing competency were at intermediate level, and the chain mediating effect of narrative care skills and evidence-based nursing competency indirectly predicted nurses' sense of professional benefit. It is suggested that nursing leaders can carry out lectures and training courses to improve nurses' narrative care skills and evidence-based nursing competence, to promote nurses' sense of career identity and to create a good nurse-patient

relationship, which will be conducive to the positive development of the nursing team in the modern healthcare environment.

Keywords

nurses, narrative care skills, evidence-based nursing competencies, nurse core competencies, sense of career benefit, chain-mediated effects

1. Introduction

As an endogenous motivational factor that promotes nurses' career development, the sense of occupational benefit is composed of positive occupational emotional experience and cognitive appraisal, with the former originating from nurses' own satisfaction of spiritual growth and material feedback in their work, and the latter referring to their ability to adopt a positive and beneficial cognitive way of evaluating the nursing profession in the face of negative events, such as work pressure (Ge, Zhang, Chu, Ge, Shi, Guo, & Teng, 2022). Nurses' core competence is the ability of nurses to synthesize knowledge, skills, and judgment in their daily work. Liu Mingxiu and other scholars (Liu, Li, Hu, & Wu, 2016) showed that specialty nurses' professional identity is positively correlated with core competencies. Nurses' core competence, as an important part of measuring nurses' mastery of work level, is one of the indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of nurse training. Nurses' professional identity is closely related to the degree of mastery of work competence, and the two show a certain degree of correlation, nurses with high core competence have a high degree of self-identification of their profession and can effectively realize their self-worth. Li, Wang, Mou, Jiang, and Liao (2019) showed that the burnout of clinical nurses is negatively correlated with the core competence, clinical nurses are in a long-term high workload, resulting in the degradation of their interpersonal communication ability, weakened thinking and judgment, the core competence of nurses and the sense of burnout is a bi-directional correlation. And Zhang, Wang, Chen, Wu, Wang, and Ma, (2020), found that nurse burnout was negatively correlated with the sense of career benefit, and nurse professional identity was positively correlated with the sense of career benefit. Narrative care skills: narrative care skills is also the ability to recognize, assimilate, interpret and be moved by the story of disease, which is a new perspective, a new way of thinking, and a new way of bridging medicine and humanities, advancing humanistic care towards clinical practice, and enhancing the perceptions of both nurses and patients. Evidence-based nursing competence refers to the integration of evidence-based nursing knowledge, skills, judgment, attitudes and values that nurses possess in the process of accomplishing evidence-based nursing practice activities (Yang, Ye, & Sun, 2023). It emphasizes the importance of healthcare professionals treating patients based on the best currently available research evidence, incorporating empirical and clinical information about the patient, and respecting the patient's wishes, thus ensuring the best current outcomes for the patient. Evidence-based and narrative care skills play an important role in improving nurses' core competencies. However, there are fewer reports describing the mechanisms of influence among core competencies, sense of career benefit, narrative care skills, and evidence-based nursing competency among clinical

nurses. The aim of this study is to propose a chain mediation model between nurses' core competencies, sense of career benefit, narrative care skills, and evidence-based nursing competency from a positive psychology perspective, aiming to explore the mechanism of action among the four, and to provide reference and basis for the positive development of nursing teams in modern healthcare environments.

2. Objects and Methods

2.1 Subject of the Study

From April to July 2023, 750 clinical nursing staff from one of the five hospitals in Xi'an were selected for the survey using convenience sampling method. Inclusion criteria: ① Obtained and registered with the certificate of nursing practice; ② Clinical work experience ≥ 1 year; ③ Title were all nurses; ④ Informed consent and voluntary participation in this study. Exclusion Criteria: ① Study, training and internship personnel in the department; ② Nursing personnel working in administrative posts; ③ Personnel who were not on duty at the time of the survey.

2.2 Research Tools

(1) General information questionnaire. Designed by the researcher, the content includes gender, age, years of working experience, marital status, education level, working department, job title, nature of employment, knowledge of narrative care, knowledge of evidence-based nursing, and job satisfaction.

(2) Narrative Competence Scale (NCS). The scale developed by Ma, Gu, Zhang, and Yi (2020) in 2020 was used to study the competence level of healthcare workers in carrying out narrative medicine and narrative care. The scale includes attention listening (9 items), understanding response (12 items), and reflection reproduction (6 items), totaling 27 items in 3 dimensions, and each entry adopts the Likert 7 scale, with a total score of 27-189, and the higher the score, the higher their level of competence in medical narrative.

(3) Evidence-based Nursing Competency Scale developed by Wang, Hu, Zhou, and Xing (2017). This scale is mainly used to measure the evidence-based nursing competency of nurses in China, including evidence retrieval and evaluation (7 items), evidence integration (5 items), evidence dissemination (3 items), scenario assessment and evidence application (8 items), with a total of 4 dimensions and 23 items. All were scored on a 5-point Likert scale, with unclear to fully compliant assigned a value of 0 to 4 points, respectively, and a total score of 0 to 92 points, with higher scores indicating that the nurses were more competent in evidence-based nursing.

(4) Registered Nurse Core Competency Scale. This questionnaire was developed in 2008 by Liu, Yin, Ma, and Luo (2008) on the basis of the concept and framework of core competencies of registered nurses. The questionnaire consists of 58 items in the areas of clinical nursing, ethics and law, professional development, education and counseling, critical thinking, leadership, interpersonal relationships, and research skills. The scale was based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from no competence (0) to very competent (4), with the total score ranging from 0 to 232, and the higher the total score, the stronger the competence.

(5) Nurses' Sense of Career Benefit Questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed by Hu and Liu (2013). The questionnaire includes five dimensions, namely, positive career perception, harmonious nurse-patient relationship, family and friends' recognition, sense of team belonging and self-growth, with a total of 34 items, using the Likert scale of 5, with each item from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Each item was scored from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", with a total score of 34-170, with higher scores indicating higher levels of nurses' sense of career benefit.

2.3 Survey Method

The researcher entered the scale and questionnaire-related content into the questionnaire star, generated the QR code, and set it to be mandatory for each question in order to avoid omission and indiscriminate filling. Adopting a unified guideline, the QR code was pushed to the survey respondents to scan the code and fill in after explaining the purpose of filling in the questionnaire and the precautions in the WeChat workgroup. The survey data were collected by the Questionnaire Star program and exported in Excel format. A total of 738 questionnaires were recovered, checked by two people, and after eliminating the unqualified questionnaires such as regular filling, there were 716 valid questionnaires, with an effective recovery rate of 95.4%.

2.4 Statistical Methods

SPSS 22.0 software was used to analyze the data. Measurement information conforming to normal distribution was described by means \pm SD, and counting information was described by frequency and constitutive ratio; correlation between variables was analyzed by Pearson correlation analysis; bias-corrected percentile Bootstrap method was used for the mediated effect test, and process macro prepared by Hayes was used for the mediated moderated effect analysis. The process macro prepared by Hayes was used to analyze the mediation effect. The two-sided test level was $\alpha=0.05$.

3. Results

3.1 General Information of Clinical Nurses (n=716)

Table 1. General Information of Clinical Nurses

Item	n	Component ratio(%)
Gender		
Male	150	20.94
Female	566	70.06
Age		
20-25	102	14.24
26-30	201	28.07
31-35	294	41.06
36-40	119	16.62

Years of experience		
1-5	162	22.62
6-10	287	40.08
11-15	209	29.18
16-20	58	8.10
Marital status		
Married	528	73.74
Unmarried	188	26.26
Educational level		
Specialized	199	27.79
Bachelor's Degree	506	70.67
Master's Degree	11	1.54
Working Departments		
Emergency	43	6.00
ICU	89	12.43
Comprehensive Internal Medicine	276	38.54
Comprehensive Surgery	260	36.31
Psychiatry	42	5.86
Others	6	0.86
Professional title		
Nurse	184	25.69
Nurse Practitioner	402	56.14
Supervisory Nurse and above	130	18.15
Nature of Employment		
Establishment	145	20.25
Contract system	571	79.74
Narrative Care Knowledge		
Never exposed	100	13.96
Generally familiar	217	30.30
Comparatively familiar	399	55.74
Knowledge of evidence-based nursing		
Never exposed	107	14.94
Generally familiar	230	32.12
Comparatively familiar	379	52.93
Job Satisfaction		
Unsatisfactory	41	5.72

General	280	39.10
Satisfied	395	55.16

3.2 Clinical Nurses' Scores on Narrative Care Skills, Evidence-based Nursing Competency, Core Competencies for Nurses and Sense of Career Benefit

The results of the survey showed that the total score of evidence-based nursing competence of clinical nurses was (65.53 ± 9.17) , which was in the middle level. The total score of narrative care skills was (113.57 ± 18.52) , the total score of nurses' core competency was (179.15 ± 33.37) , and the total score of nurses' sense of career benefit was (109.37 ± 20.81) , which were at medium level. Their scores for each dimension are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Clinical Nurse Narrative Care Skills, Evidence-Based Nursing Competencies, Core Competencies, and Sense of Career Benefit Scores (n=716)

Dimension	Score
Narrative Care Skills	(113.57 ± 18.52)
Attentive Listening	4.17 ± 0.69
Understanding Response	4.18 ± 0.68
Reflective Reproduction	4.31 ± 0.84
Evidence-Based Nursing Competencies	(65.53 ± 9.17)
Evidence Retrieval and Evaluation	2.77 ± 0.47
Evidence Integration	2.75 ± 0.61
Evidence Dissemination	2.76 ± 0.65
Scenario Assessment and Evidence Application	2.99 ± 0.39
Core Competencies for Nurses	(179.15 ± 33.37)
Critical thinking, research	3.07 ± 0.65
Clinical Nursing	3.03 ± 0.64
Leadership	3.04 ± 0.61
Interpersonal Relationships	3.07 ± 0.59
Legal, ethical practice	3.15 ± 0.60
Professional Development	3.13 ± 0.63
Educational Counseling	3.14 ± 0.59
Sense of Career Benefit	(109.37 ± 20.81)
Positive career perceptions	3.43 ± 0.70
Family and Friends Recognition	3.36 ± 0.66
Nurse-patient relationship	3.42 ± 0.70
Self-growth	3.43 ± 0.68

Sense of belonging to the team	3.40±0.69
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3.3 Correlation Analysis of Clinical Nurses' Narrative Care Skills, Evidence-based Nursing Competence, Core Competence, and Sense of Career Benefit

The results of correlation analysis showed that clinical nurses' narrative care skills, evidence-based nursing competence, core competence and sense of career benefit were all significantly positively correlated ($r=0.882, 0.565, 0.838, P<0.001$), and narrative care skills was significantly positively correlated with evidence-based nursing competence ($r=0.580, P<0.001$), narrative care skills was significantly positively correlated with core competence of nurses ($r=0.774, P<0.001$), and nurse core competencies with evidence-based nursing competencies ($r=0.510, P<0.001$) were all two-by-two significantly positively correlated.

3.4 Common Method Bias Test

Harman's one-way analysis of variance test The results showed that for the 27 factors with an eigenroot greater than 1, the amount of variance explained by the 1st factor was 31.912% (<40%), indicating that there was no significant common method bias in this study.

3.5 Analysis of the Mediating Effect of Narrative Care Skills and Evidence-based Nursing Competence in the Relationship between Clinical Nurses' Core Competence and Sense of Career Benefit

3.5.1 Mediated Effect Model

A chained mediated effect model was established with nurses' core competencies as the independent variable, narrative care skills and evidence-based practice knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral competencies as the mediating variables, and nurses' sense of career benefit as the dependent variable, as shown in Figure 1. The results of the model fit showed that: $\chi^2/df = 3.678$, RMSEA = 0.061, GFI= 0.922, AGFI = 0.899 and NFI = 0.967, indicating an acceptable model fit.

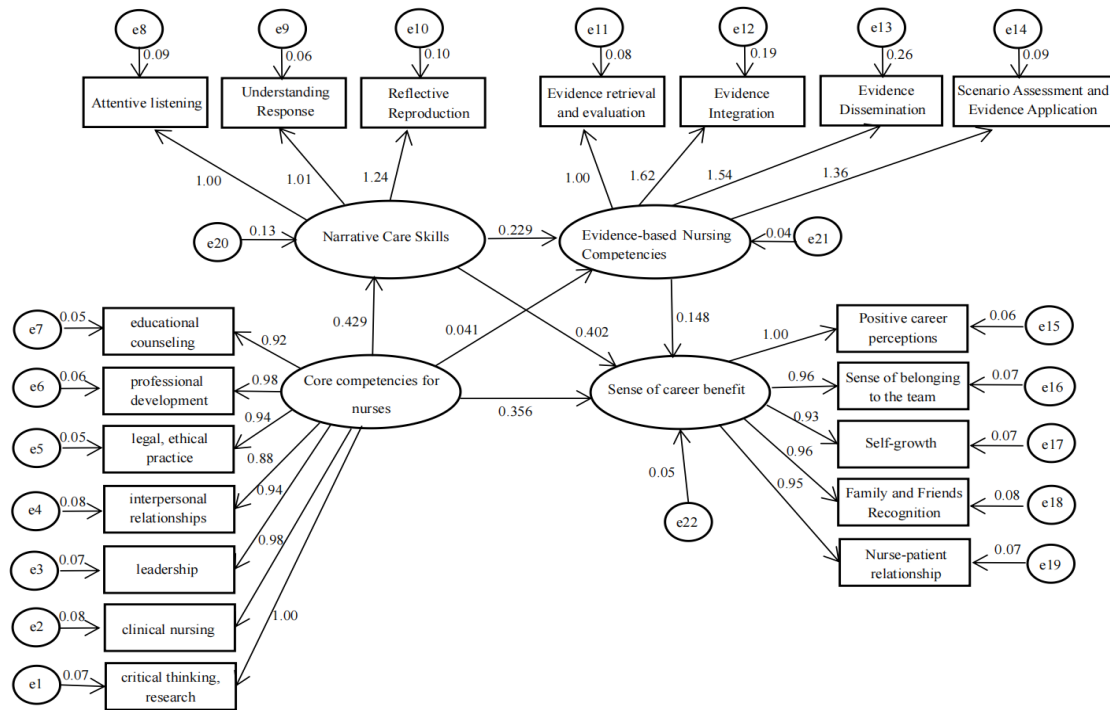


Figure 1. Chain Mediation Model of Narrative Care Skills and Evidence-based Nursing Competencies between Clinical Nurses' Core Competencies and Sense of Career Benefit

3.5.2 Mediated Effects

Under the conditions of controlling gender, age, nature of employment, department, title, marital status, years of work experience, job satisfaction and knowledge of evidence-based nursing competence to narrative care skill, regression analysis and Bootsrtap test between variables were conducted with clinical nurses' core competence as independent variable, narrative care skill and evidence-based nursing competence as mediator variables, and sense of occupational benefit as dependent variable, respectively. The regression analysis of the relationship between the variables in the model is shown in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, nurse core competence was a significant direct predictor of sense of career benefit ($\beta=0.3560$), nurse core competence positively predicted narrative care skill ($\beta=0.4294$) and evidence-based nursing competence ($\beta=0.0417$), and narrative care skill directly and positively predicted evidence-based nursing competence ($\beta=0.2290$) and sense of career benefit ($\beta=0.4028$), and medical evidence-based competence directly and positively predicted nurses' sense of career benefit ($\beta=0.1489$), both $P<0.01$. The mediating effects of narrative care skill and evidence-based nursing competence on the relationship between nurses' core competence and sense of career benefit are shown in Table 4. As shown in Table 4, the direct effect of nurses' core competence on the sense of career benefit as tested by the Bootstrap method, the direct effect of narrative care skill and evidence-based nursing competency had significant indirect mediating effect and chain mediating effect; the direct effect accounted for 64.75% of the total effect, the indirect mediating effect of narrative care skill and evidence-based nursing competency accounted for 31.45% and 1.13% of the total effect, respectively, and the chain mediating

effect of narrative care skill and evidence-based nursing competency accounted for 2.66% of the total effect.

Table 3. Regression Analysis between Variables in the Chained Mediation Model (n=716)

regression equation		Overall fit index			Significance of regression coefficients			
outcome variable	predictor variable	R ²	F	β	SEs	t	LLCI	ULCI
M ₁	X	0.598	1065.235	0.429	0.013	32.637	0.403	0.455
M ₂	X	0.588	188.499	0.042	0.013	3.177	0.016	0.067
Y	X	0.840	1251.871	0.356	0.015	23.997	0.326	0.385
	M ₁			0.402	0.028	14.270	0.347	0.458
	M ₂			0.042	0.042	3.544	0.066	0.231
Y	X	0.881	2490.012	0.549	0.011	49.9	0.528	0.571

Table 4. Mediating Effects of Narrative Care Skills and Evidence-based Nursing Competencies between Clinical Nurses' Core Competencies and Sense of Career Benefit (n=716)

trails	Path effects of standardization	Effect size (%)	95%CI	
			lower limit	upper limit
aggregate effect	0.549	99.90	0.528	0.571
direct effect	0.356	64.75	0.326	0.385
indirect effect	0.193	35.15	0.168	0.217
Ind1	0.173	31.5	0.147	0.197
Ind2	0.006	1.09	0.011	0.021
Ind3	0.014	2.55	0.006	0.023

4. Discussion

The results of this study showed that the total score of evidence-based nursing competence of clinical nurses was (65.53±9.16), which was at a medium level, higher than the findings of Yang, Ye, and Sun (2023)'s survey on evidence-based nursing competence of 1,386 nurses (51.72±21.93). The total score of narrative nursing competence was (113.57±18.52), which was at a medium level and similar to the findings of Li, Sun, Zhao, Feng, Gao, and Xing (2022)'s survey on 215 nurses' narrative care skills. The total score of their nurses' core competencies was (179.15±33.37), which was similar to the results of Chen, Ye, Zhong, and Zhang (2020)'s survey of 732 nurses' core competencies. The total score of nurses' sense of career benefit was (109.37±20.81), which was similar to the results of the survey of 439 nurses' sense of career benefit conducted by scholars such as Meng, Ma, Huang, and Wu (2021), both of which were in the middle level. With the increase in the improvement of nurses' core competence, their

narrative care skills, evidence-based nursing competence and the level of nurses' sense of career benefit increased, showing a significant positive correlation ($P < 0.001$), and the improvement of nurses' core competence and their narrative care and evidence-based nursing competence benefit nurses in their clinical work, which is conducive to the positive development of the nursing team in the context of modern healthcare. The level of nurses' core competence is related to nurses' cultural level, research literacy, clinical work hours, job satisfaction, and job title. The subjects of this survey were all from comprehensive tertiary teaching hospitals with excellent professional talents, scientific research basis and equipment resources. 70% of the nurses were undergraduate graduates with ≥ 10 years of working experience, with high levels of cultural degree and scientific research literacy, and a relative understanding of nursing-related laws, ethical practices and scientific research. In addition, with the increase of working years, their professional knowledge and clinical work experience were gradually mastered and skilled. Interpersonal, leadership and educational and counseling skills among nurses' core competencies were also related to satisfaction with the work environment, and the more satisfied nurses were with the work environment, the more they identified with their workplaces, and they actively exerted their work potential and demonstrated their personal abilities (He & Yu, 2013). In this study, it was found that the longer the working years of nurses, the higher their narrative care skill scores were, and it is possible that rich life experience and clinical experience make nursing staff more conscious and energetic to pay attention to other needs other than patients' physiological and therapeutic needs, such as spiritual and psychological needs, in their clinical work (Yue, Liu, Li, Liu, Huang, & Chen, 2023). It was found that those who were familiar with narrative care in the survey had read relevant books or literature and received relevant training, and a small number of nursing staff were able to demonstrate their narrative care skill in their work. This study found that nurses' evidence-based nursing competence in situational assessment and evidence application scores were the highest, indicating that clinical nurses preferred the use of evidence to the formation of evidence in the process of evidence-based practice, and the lowest score for the integration of evidence may be related to the fact that the process of integrating evidence is more difficult, and requires a certain degree of competence in searching, reading, and screening the literature (Xue, Ye, Zhang, & Zhu, 2023), and the survey in this study found that 70% of nurses had a Bachelor's degree of literacy, as opposed to Master's degree holders. Most of their literature searching and reading, professional English reading and computer network application are at an average level, and the training programs for undergraduate nursing students in most universities lack courses related to evidence-based nursing practice competencies. A high level of nurses' core competencies, narrative care, and evidence-based nursing competencies are beneficial for nurses to improve their identification with their profession, maintain a positive mindset, and help them to adjust to stress, so that they can appreciate the benefits and rewards of their profession and help them to adjust to stress (Liu & Jiang, 2018). This study suggests that nursing leaders should organize more lectures or trainings on literature and information retrieval, encourage nurses to learn knowledge related to evidence-based nursing competence, and improve their ability to retrieve and integrate evidence.

The results of this study showed that the chain mediation of narrative care skill and evidence-based nursing competence in the relationship between nurses' core competence and sense of career benefit questionnaire was 0.015, which accounted for 2.66% of the total effect, which shows that narrative care skill and evidence-based nursing competence can promote nurses' core competence, thus enabling nursing staff to improve their sense of career benefit. Analyzing the reasons, it may be that nurses with high narrative care skill actively and proactively pay attention to the humanistic care needs of patients and their families, and empathize with the physical and mental suffering of patients, thus cherishing the present life more and being contented with all that they have. In addition, nurses with high narrative care ability can better perceive the inner world and behavioral motives of others, share the emotions of others, so that it is easy to experience the "happy moments" in the work, and form a positive cognitive evaluation of the nurse's career (Dong, Lu, & Cao, 2022). Moreover, it is easier to establish a harmonious therapeutic relationship with patients, patients recognize the quality of their nursing services, and the nursing staff's sense of accomplishment and self-efficacy are significantly increased; it is conducive to the smooth development of their interpersonal relationships, so that they can be recognized by their colleagues and leaders. Nursing staff's sense of job accomplishment, job recognition and job satisfaction can make nursing staff's professional thinking relatively stable, corresponding to a relatively high level of professional competence, while obtaining more rewards, self-efficacy, and a higher sense of career benefit. Nursing staff with high evidence-based nursing competence have higher critical thinking ability in clinical work, and are able to apply the best evidence to guide clinical nursing decision-making and improve nursing workflow, thus promoting the improvement of nursing quality (Chen, Zhou, Wu, & Zhao, 2020). Nursing staff with high evidence-based nursing competence give full play to their subjective initiative to retrieve, evaluate, integrate and utilize resources in clinical work problems, thus solving problems, which is conducive to the enhancement of their sense of self-efficacy and professional identity (Zhu, Liu, Zhuang, Xia, Cao, Li, Bao, & Yan, 2023). Narrative care and evidence-based nursing competence can effectively enhance nursing staff's self-efficacy and improve their sense of professional identity and career benefits. It is suggested that nursing leaders can carry out lectures, training courses and other forms to improve nurses' narrative care skills and evidence-based nursing competencies, promote nurses' perception of professional identity, career value, and career achievement, create a good nurse-patient relationship, humanistic environment of the department, and enhance the nurses' sense of belonging to the team, so that the nurses can positively perceive that their career brings them great gains, which is conducive to the positive development of nursing care teams under the modern healthcare environment. This will be conducive to the positive development of the nursing team in the modern medical environment.

5. Conclusion

By investigating 716 clinical nurses, the results of this study showed that nurses' core competencies and nurses' sense of career benefits were positively correlated, and narrative care skills and evidence-based

nursing competencies had separate mediating effects and chain mediating effects between nurses' core competencies and sense of career benefits, which could promote the development of nurses' core competencies, facilitate nurses' positive perception of career benefits, and have a reference significance. As this study is a cross-sectional study, there may be the role of other influencing factors, and its mechanism of action and the existence of other mediating effects need to be further investigated. The scope of the investigation in this study is relatively small, and in the future, longitudinal studies can be carried out to validate the dynamic relationship between the variables and to verify the generalizability of the conclusion through a large-scale, multi-center investigation.

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