



Short Communication

# “Linking Lyrics to Leadership”: An Innovative Approach to Teaching Caring Behaviours in Nurse Leaders

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## Abstract

Caring behaviors are generally considered to be at the heart of the nursing profession. These behaviors can be expressed through grand gestures or subtle acts of kindness. Nurses demonstrate care not only through clinical expertise but also through soft skills such as empathy, communication, and adaptability. Demonstration of caring behaviors and effective use of soft skills can contribute to a positive organizational culture where patient outcomes are improved. In the learning environment nurse educators can play a vital role in nurturing the development of caring behaviors and soft skills. Integration of music into nursing curriculum can increase students' emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and leadership potential. Music can be a powerful pedagogical tool. “Linking Lyrics to Leadership”, as an innovative teaching strategy, can transform the future of nursing leadership. The learner can embrace the concepts of empathy, resiliency, and authenticity. In a graduate nursing leadership course, learners are asked to use deep reflection as the focus on song lyrics and then engage in meaningful dialogue focused on caring behaviors identified in the lyrics. The goal is that the learners can connect caring behaviors with authentic leadership.

**Keywords:** Caring behaviours; Soft skills; Nurse leaders; Leadership; Authentic leadership; Lyrics; Music; Musical lyrics; and Teaching strategy

## Introduction

Nurse scholars have developed a multitude of theories related to the profession of nursing. Many of these theories have focused on the concept of caring, which is often considered the cornerstone of the nursing profession. Caring actions and behaviours are demonstrated in diverse ways as nurses focus on the well-being of others [1]. The development of soft skills, particularly those focused on caring behaviours, complement technical skills which nurses already possess. Using musical lyrics as a teaching strategy may promote development of caring behaviours and facilitation of soft skills in nursing students [2]. Indira and colleagues (2018)

indicate music can be used by nurse educators to improve a student's academic performance, enhance perceived self-efficacy, and promote positive relationship building.

## Caring Behaviours

Zhang and colleagues (2023) postulated that caring behaviours are expressed by kindness shown to others and acts of kindness may produce a sense of confidence in the nurse and create a sense of loyalty. Caring behaviours by authentic nurses/nurse leaders have been identified as an indicator of quality care and a catalyst for positive patient and organizational outcomes. Authentic leadership reflects transparency, honesty, self-awareness, and ethics promoting a healthy work climate with greater organizational commitment [1]. There is a correlation between caring behaviours demonstrated by leaders and increased organizational commitment,

job satisfaction, and employee engagement as well as decreased burnout, compassion fatigue and intent to leave the organization.

### Development of Soft Skills

Diz-Otero, et al. [2] indicated the development of soft skills can assist individuals in adapting to the demands of life. Soft skills are a set of skills that can assist a person in adapting to challenges that may exist in their daily lives and in the work setting. In addition, a person's perceived self-efficacy can be promoted by the development and use of effective soft skills. The integration of music in the educational arena can positively impact the growth of soft skills. Music, as a teaching strategy, can be vital in fostering effective authentic leadership skills and the development of positive teams. “Music improves soft skills by providing tools that allow for better life development and a greater possibility of adaptation to the labor market” [2,3].

### Using Musical Lyrics as a Teaching Strategy

Musical lyrics allow for the development of communication skills, which are imperative to conveying caring behaviours in leadership. Integration of music in the academic setting is essential to the achievement of soft skills which can be used to promote a culture of caring within organizations. Diz-Otero and colleagues (2023) conveyed that music serves as an effective strategy to foster socialization and facilitate expressive communication in childhood. In the educational setting, music can promote artistic expression of emotions and the development of intellectual understanding of concepts. Soft skills, social adaptation, self-confidence, and leadership skills are improved by the integration of music. Additionally, perceived self-efficacy, empathy, and accountability are fostered using music [2]. In addition, Drumm [4] supports that music can alter a student's temperament and culminate in a change in one's perception of events. Authentic leadership skills can be cultivated as lyrics and music evoke a deep reflection on one's current behaviours and actions.

According to Stanley [5] nurse educators may find it difficult to teach critical content such as imparting caring values. In a graduate nursing leadership course, an assignment was created to assist students in the development of vital soft skills, specifically those related to teamwork, communication, and authentic leadership. In the learning experience entitled, *Linking Lyrics to Leadership*, students are asked to listen to a song, engage in deep reflection of the lyrics, and then to answer self-reflective questions in a discussion forum.

The “*Linking Lyrics to Leadership*” assignment was placed at the beginning of a leadership course to convey the importance of the topic of caring, which is integrated throughout the semester. Students are asked to engage in mindful practices while listening to a song, which includes being present in the moment rather

than being preoccupied with outside thoughts or influences. Students are prompted to consider the current circumstances of both the male and female artist in the song. Discussion prompts are designed to illicit deep meditation and self-reflection on the lyrics of the song and the roles of both the male and female artist. Students are given a week to listen to the song and explore how the lyrics conveyed caring behaviours by the male artist. Key elements are outlined on a grading rubric which include peer engagement in the discussion forum and application of the concept of caring behaviours. Moreover, key components of the rubric prompt self-reflective practices and require a deep dive on the concepts of self-worth, caring behaviours and positive regard for others. Points are allocated, using a Likert scale, on the key elements outlined within the grading rubric.

### Implications for Nursing Education

Indira and colleagues [6] emphasized that music has been recognized for its positive influence on the human body. Musical lyrics enhance learning experiences by evoking strong emotions which, in turn, promote memorization, comprehension, and recollection of the content. Educational success can be achieved using musical lyrics to promote healthy relationships, self-awareness, and self-confidence; thus, achieving the attainment of soft skills necessary for developing effective nurse leaders. Intellect, behaviour and emotions can be influenced by the integration of music in curricula. Nurse educators can use music to positively impact the teaching and learning environment. The future landscape of nursing education can be altered by assisting students in connecting caring behaviours with authentic leadership, by developing effective soft skills, and by encouraging the concept of caring in authentic leadership [6].

### References

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