



A Scoping Review of Followership in Nursing

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Table 1.

Data extraction

Author(s) and year; country	Purpose	Type of article and nursing context	Main theme(s)
Newton 1951; US	To reflect on and compare viewpoints of Florence Nightingale with current thought	Commentary: Nursing history	Each member of the group is important and must be respected for their contribution as both the followership and leadership roles can be equally satisfying.
Guidera and Gilmore 1988; US	To discuss the importance of effective followership in nursing	Commentary: Management	A follower is a colleague, partner and necessary cohort of the leader. Effective followership is essential to leader survival, and the follower–leader relationship is an alliance.
Brown 1990; US	To examine the roles of followers and leaders and their impact on nursing	Commentary: Management	Followership and leadership are roles that are integral to the group process and share many of the same skills. Followers must understand their limits regarding how far they will follow a leader.
Murphy 1990; US	To provide a description of types of followers and outline the development of effective followers	Commentary: Nursing leadership	Effective followers can survive without a leader, are power influencers and play a critical role in nursing. Followers and leaders are equally important and necessary to accomplish the work of nursing.
DiRienzo 1994; US	To discuss the concept of followership and its separate but equal role and the importance of including followership instruction in baccalaureate education	Discussion paper: Nursing education	Followership and leadership are interdependent concepts of equal value, and teaching everyone in baccalaureate nursing programs to be a leader is unrealistic. Followership takes practice and should be incorporated into education at all levels.
Thomas 1995; US	To discuss the importance and traits of exemplary followers	Commentary: Nursing education	Exemplary followers are not much different from exemplary leaders, and both should be comfortable in either role.
Gunn 1996; US	To discuss a partnership model of relationship between followers and leaders	Letter: Nursing education	Followers and leaders must work in a partnership model that focuses on a common purpose. The concept should be taught in educational institutions and work environments.
Frisina 2005; US	To discuss the importance of effective followers	Commentary: Management	Leaders can only accomplish their goals with supportive followers in a direct, symbiotic relationship.

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Miller 2007; US	To discuss the importance of followers to any situation	Commentary: Management	Effective followers are crucial to the success of any endeavour.
Kean et al. 2011; UK	To identify how leadership is perceived and experienced by community nurses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative study: individual interviews • ($n = 31$); three focus groups ($n = 13$); no particular methodology noted • Multi-site recruitment of registered nurses from three different health boards in Scotland (urban, rural and community nursing settings) • Study aimed to understand how community nurses understand leadership 	Following emerged as a major theme of leadership and engaging with followers is pivotal to leadership. Followership is enacted on all levels of hierarchy, and the actions of followers determine the power of a leader. Following is a complex process that includes how perceptions of the leader affect following behaviours: followers assess their peers and can create change by becoming leaders within the follower group.
Kean and Haycock-Stuart 2011; UK	To point out the peril of ignoring followers' contributions to the organization	Discussion paper: Management	Followership is not the simple act of following but is influenced by many factors, including this: followers and leaders are interdependent and the decision to follow is affected by followers' judgments about prospective leaders.
Whitlock 2013; UK	To discuss the concept of followership and highlight examples of followership and their effect on patient care	Discussion paper: Management and nursing education	Followership is everyone's responsibility, and good or bad following behaviour affects the workplace. Academic and workplace training must include followership skills.
Crawford and Daniels 2014; US	To investigate followership styles and their influence on nursing burnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative, cross-sectional and observational survey study ($n = 114$) • Recruitment of actively practising RNs in southeastern Michigan • Study examined how followership styles influence burnout of nurses in healthcare environments 	Followership styles influence followers' productivity, and effective leader–followership exchanges can strengthen nurse followers. Practising effective followership may decrease nurse burnout.
Coombs 2014; New Zealand	To discuss the role of the follower in achieving the shared goal of patient care	Editorial: Management	Most people in organizations spend their time in a following role, and nurses move between the roles of followers and leaders every day. Followers can contribute to a toxic workplace environment; it is not just the leader who is responsible. Engaging in “power with,” not “power over,” relationships between followers and leaders will help ameliorate workplace culture.
Amundson 2015; US	To discuss the skills of a follower and their worth to the organization.	Commentary: Acute care system	Followers and leaders work together around a purpose in a synergistic relationship.

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Everett 2016; US	To discuss the importance and leadership and followership to academic–practice partnerships	Discussion paper: Academia	Followership is not an individual but a role, and the interdependence of the follower and leader roles is interactive and influential.
Raso 2017; US	To discuss the importance of followers to leaders in nursing	Editorial: Management	Followership is critical to leadership; nothing happens without followers, and weak followership is just as disabling as weak leadership.
Smith-Trudeau 2017; US	To discuss the importance of the relationship between followers and leaders in nursing	Commentary: Management	Followers and leaders work together in a sacred relationship, which is integral to the success of nursing. Followers are an organizational asset, and learning followership skills is important for new nurses.
Lopez and Freeman 2018; Canada	To discuss followership and different types of following, to outline its importance to nursing and to suggest procedures to integrate followership into nursing	Discussion paper: Academia	Effective followership is a prerequisite for successful organizations. In order to support followership, leaders must understand followership and positive following behaviours. Followership is a role and followers have influence. Followership theories are absent from nursing literature, and nursing students should have the opportunity to practise both roles.
Boothe et al. 2019; US	To identify the types of followers in nursing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive questionnaire survey (<i>n</i> = 60) • 20 questions, 7-point Likert-type scale • Registered nurses with four years' or less experience employed at an acute care hospital located in southwestern US • Study conducted to identify followership styles of new nurses with four years' or less experience 	Participants scored higher in independent thinking and lower in active engagement. Followers who are disengaged are more often sick and tend to spread their discontent to other workers. Understanding the role of followership and the importance of new nurses feeling engaged could increase job satisfaction.
Freeman 2020; Canada	To dispel nine myths of followership in nursing	Editorial: Management	Leaders need to understand the role of followership and its integral position in the follower/leader dyad. More research is needed to dispel the myths of followership and support the idea that nurses are followers and leaders.