

HEAD NURSE SUPERVISION IN NURSING CARE DOCUMENTATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Nursing care documentation is a key indicator of service quality, patient safety, interprofessional communication, and nurses' legal accountability. However, documentation completeness remains suboptimal in both global and Indonesian health-care settings. Head nurse supervision is a managerial factor that may improve nurses' performance through direction, coaching, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous feedback. This literature review aimed to identify the role of head nurse supervision in nurses' performance in nursing care documentation. The article search was conducted using the PICOS framework in Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and PubMed for studies published from 2018 to 2026 and selected according to the PRISMA flow. From 2,210 initially identified records, 15 articles met the eligibility criteria and were appraised critically. The review found that 14 articles (93.3%) reported an association or effect of head nurse supervision on nurses' documentation performance, while one article (6.7%) did not show a direct effect. Mixed supervision, combining direct and indirect approaches, was the most frequently used form. Structured, educational, consistent, and sustainable head nurse supervision is recommended to strengthen nurses' documentation performance and nursing service quality.

Keywords: head nurse supervision; nurse performance; nursing care documentation; nursing management

INTRODUCTION

Hospitals are responsible for delivering effective, efficient, safe, and high-quality health services. Within hospital services, nursing is an integral professional service, and nurses are expected to provide care according to professional standards. Because head nurses are first-line managers, their supervisory role is central to maintaining the quality of nursing practice and documentation in inpatient units. (Talibo & Yahya, 2025; Afifah et al., 2026)

Nursing care documentation is not merely an administrative activity; it is a structured record of assessment, nursing diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Complete documentation supports communication among health professionals, legal accountability, service continuity, quality monitoring, and patient safety. Therefore, the quality of documentation reflects nurses' professional responsibility and the quality of nursing care. (Shafiee et al., 2022; Nursalam, 2020)

Despite its importance, nurses' performance in documentation remains below the expected standard. International studies have reported documentation completeness ranging from 47% to 60%, while the level of good nursing documentation performance in Indonesia has been reported at approximately 53.82%. The Indonesian Ministry of Health has also set 75% as a minimum achievement level for good nursing performance, indicating a persistent gap between the expected standard and actual documentation practice. (Bolado et al., 2023; Cheevakasemsook et al., 2020; Reza & Hanafi, 2025; Talibo & Yahya, 2025)

The human resources context further reinforces the importance of improving nursing

performance. Health-care human resources in hospitals include 817,145 personnel, consisting of 569,714 health workers and 247,431 supporting staff, with nurses representing the largest group at 50.79%. This large nursing workforce requires effective managerial support so that clinical competence, professional behavior, and documentation performance can be maintained consistently. (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020; Asnawati et al., 2021)

Head nurse supervision is one managerial factor associated with nurses' performance in nursing care documentation. Supervision includes planning, organizing, directing, controlling, evaluating, and reporting activities that guide nurses to perform care according to standards. When conducted properly, supervision helps nurses understand documentation standards, correct errors, and maintain accountability in patient care. (Afriyadi & Nasution, 2025; Nursalam, 2020)

Previous studies have shown variations in supervision practice and documentation performance. Talibo and Yahya found that although head nurse supervision was mostly categorized as good, nursing care documentation remained incomplete in many cases, with a significant relationship between supervision and documentation performance. Other Indonesian studies also reported uneven implementation of supervision, indicating the need for more structured and sustainable supervisory systems. (Talibo & Yahya, 2025; Asnawati et al., 2021; Sadahisman et al., 2019; Silalahi & Bunga, 2024)

Poor documentation may disrupt clinical communication, increase the risk of errors, and compromise patient safety. Factors such as insufficient clinical supervision, high workload, inadequate knowledge, weak motivation, and inconsistent documentation habits contribute to low documentation compliance. These issues suggest that supervision should be implemented as an educational and quality-improvement process rather than only as administrative control. (Wang et al., 2021; Gao et al., 2024; Simamora et al., 2020; Sofyan & Rianty, 2023)

Based on these gaps, a literature review is needed to synthesize current evidence on how head nurse supervision contributes to nurses' performance in nursing care documentation. This article aims to identify and analyze the evidence regarding the role of head nurse supervision in improving nurses' documentation performance. (Wang et al., 2021; Talibo & Yahya, 2025)

METHOD

This study used a literature review design to examine scientific articles discussing head nurse supervision and nurses' performance in nursing care documentation. A literature review allows researchers to analyze, classify, and synthesize findings from previous studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of a specific topic. (Nursalam, 2020)

The search strategy used the PICOS framework, consisting of Population/Problem, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome, and Study Design. The population/problem was practicing nurses; the intervention or exposure was head nurse supervision or nursing supervision; the comparison component was not mandatory; the outcome was nurses' performance in nursing care documentation or documentation quality; and the study designs included quantitative observational and intervention studies relevant to the topic.

The literature search was conducted through Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and PubMed. The publication period was limited to 2016-2026 to ensure the relevance of the evidence to recent developments in nursing management and documentation practice. The keywords used included 'head nurse supervision,' 'nursing supervision,' 'nurse performance,' 'nursing care documentation,' and their Indonesian equivalents. Boolean operators such as AND and OR were used to refine the search.

The inclusion criteria were articles discussing nurses, head nurse or nursing supervision, nursing performance or documentation quality, and studies available in full text in Indonesian or English within the 2018-2026 publication range. The exclusion criteria were articles that did not focus on nurses, did not examine supervision, did not assess documentation or performance

outcomes, were not available in full text, or were published outside the specified period.

The article selection process followed a PRISMA-based flow. The initial search identified 2,210 articles, consisting of 167 records from PubMed, 103 from ScienceDirect, and 1,940 from Google Scholar. After duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, full-text eligibility assessment, and application of inclusion and exclusion criteria, 15 articles were included for further analysis.

The quality of the selected articles was assessed using critical appraisal. The data were synthesized descriptively and narratively by examining publication year, study design, data analysis method, type of supervision, and the reported effect or association between head nurse supervision and nurses' performance in nursing care documentation.

Table 1
PICOS Framework Used in the Literature Review

Component	Description
Population/Problem	Practicing nurses and nursing care documentation performance
Intervention/Exposure	Head nurse supervision or nursing supervision
Comparison	No mandatory comparison; control or alternative managerial factors when available
Outcome	Nurses' performance in documentation and quality of nursing care documentation
Study Design	Relevant quantitative observational and intervention studies published from 2018 to 2026

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The final review included 15 articles published between 2018 and 2026. The publication-year distribution indicates that this topic has continued to develop over the last several years, with the highest number of studies appearing in 2021 and additional studies continuing through 2026. This pattern suggests that supervision and documentation remain relevant issues in nursing management research.

Table 2
Distribution of Articles by Publication Year

No.	Year	Frequency	Percentage
1	2018	1	6.7%
2	2019	2	13.3%
3	2020	2	13.3%
4	2021	3	20.0%
5	2022	1	6.7%
6	2023	2	13.3%
7	2024	1	6.7%
8	2025	2	13.3%
9	2026	1	6.7%
	Total	15	100%

Most studies used a cross-sectional design, accounting for 13 articles (86.7%), while two articles (13.3%) used quasi-experimental or pre-experimental approaches. This finding

indicates that most available evidence remains observational, and intervention-based studies evaluating the direct effectiveness of supervision are still limited. (Marwanah & Marianna, 2021; Talibo & Yahya, 2025)

Table 3
Characteristics of Study Design

No.	Study Design	Frequency	Percentage
1	Cross-sectional	13	86.7%
2	Quasi/Pre-experimental	2	13.3%
Total		15	100%

Regarding data analysis, 13 articles (86.7%) used statistical tests, while two articles (13.3%) used experimental tests. This pattern shows that most studies examined associations between supervision and documentation performance, while fewer studies measured changes before and after supervisory interventions. (Hastoro et al., 2019; Marwanah & Marianna, 2021; Talibo & Yahya, 2025)

Table 4
Characteristics of Data Analysis

No.	Data Analysis	Frequency	Percentage
1	Statistical tests	13	86.7%
2	Experimental tests	2	13.3%
Total		15	100%

The distribution of supervision types showed that mixed supervision was the most common approach, reported in eight articles (53.3%). Indirect supervision was found in four articles (26.7%), while direct supervision was found in three articles (20%). This result suggests that nursing management practice often combines direct observation with indirect methods such as documentation audits, feedback, training, and organizational support. (Nursalam, 2020; Ginting & Harahap, 2019; Suryati et al., 2025)

Table 5
Characteristics of Supervision Types

No.	Type of Supervision	Frequency	Percentage
1	Direct supervision	3	20.0%
2	Indirect supervision	4	26.7%
3	Mixed direct and indirect supervision	8	53.3%
Total		15	100%

The main synthesis showed that 14 articles (93.3%) reported an association or effect of head nurse supervision on nurses' performance in nursing care documentation, either directly or indirectly. Only one article (6.7%) reported no significant direct effect of supervision, emphasizing that organizational commitment may be more dominant in documentation compliance.

Table 6
Effect of Head Nurse Supervision on Nurses Documentation Performance

No.	Result Category	Number of Articles	Percentage
1	Association/effect reported	14	93.3%
2	No direct significant effect	1	6.7%
Total		15	100%

The findings support the view that head nurse supervision is an important managerial component in improving documentation performance. Marwanah and Marianna reported improved nurses' performance after supervision, while Talibo and Yahya found a significant relationship between head nurse supervision and documentation performance. Hastoro et al. also identified a significant relationship between supervision patterns and documentation completeness, and Gde et al. found that nursing supervision was associated with electronic medical record documentation quality.

(Marwanah & Marianna, 2021; Talibo & Yahya, 2025; Hastoro et al., 2019; Gde et al., 2026) Substantively, supervision may improve documentation performance through clarification of standards, direction, correction, and feedback. In nursing care documentation, nurses must record assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation accurately and systematically; supervision helps ensure that these stages are completed according to standards. (Nursalam, 2020; Shafiee et al., 2022)

Supervision also functions as professional coaching. Through documentation audits and constructive feedback, head nurses can identify incomplete records, guide nurses to correct errors, and promote reflective learning. This educational function is important because documentation quality is influenced by knowledge, attitude, and documentation habits. (Anduaem & Asmamaw, 2019; Desalegn et al., 2022; Tamir, 2021)

The review also indicates that supervision should not be separated from organizational context. Documentation performance may be influenced by workload, availability of guidelines, leadership, psychological empowerment, communication, and perceived support from supervisors and organizations. Thus, head nurse supervision should be integrated with broader quality-improvement systems in nursing management. (Bolado et al., 2023; Molla & Temesgen, 2024; Sen & Yildirim, 2023; Gong et al., 2025)

The presence of one article showing no direct effect of supervision does not negate the value of supervision; rather, it indicates that supervision may work through mediating or contextual factors. Organizational commitment, critical thinking, motivation, and professional accountability may strengthen or weaken the effect of supervision on documentation compliance. (Jus, 2020; Nopriyanto et al., 2020; Dewi Nur Puspita Sari et al., 2024)

From a practical perspective, mixed supervision appears to be the most relevant approach because it combines direct observation of nursing practice with indirect evaluation through documentation review. Direct supervision allows immediate feedback, while indirect supervision supports systematic audit, monitoring, and follow-up. (Nursalam, 2020; Ginting & Harahap, 2019)

Therefore, hospitals should develop structured supervision systems that include clear schedules, standardized audit instruments, documentation indicators, feedback mechanisms, and follow-up plans. Head nurses also need training in communication, coaching, clinical leadership, and documentation standards so that supervision becomes supportive and developmental rather than punitive. (Silalahi & Bunga, 2024; Suryati et al., 2025; Shahzeydi et al., 2024)

Overall, the reviewed evidence suggests that head nurse supervision is a strategic

intervention for improving nursing care documentation. However, its effectiveness depends on consistency, managerial competence, staff engagement, and organizational support. Strengthening supervision may contribute not only to documentation completeness but also to continuity of care, patient safety, and nursing service quality. (Nursalam, 2020; Wang et al., 2021; Talibo & Yahya, 2025)

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This review has several limitations. Most of the included studies used cross-sectional designs, so causal conclusions regarding the effect of head nurse supervision on documentation performance remain limited. In addition, the reviewed studies varied in instruments, supervision definitions, service settings, and documentation indicators, making narrative synthesis more appropriate than meta-analysis. (Talibo & Yahya, 2025)

Another limitation is that only a small number of intervention studies were available. Future studies should use stronger designs, such as quasi-experimental or randomized approaches, with pre-test and post-test measures to evaluate the direct effectiveness of structured supervision programs on documentation quality. (Marwanah & Marianna, 2021; Moldskred et al., 2021)

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Head nurse supervision plays an important role in improving nurses' performance in nursing care documentation. The review of 15 articles showed that 14 articles (93.3%) reported an association or effect of supervision on documentation performance, while one article (6.7%) did not show a direct effect. Mixed supervision, combining direct and indirect approaches, was the most frequently reported form and appears relevant for strengthening documentation quality. (Talibo & Yahya, 2025)

Hospitals are advised to strengthen nursing supervision through structured schedules, standardized documentation audit tools, regular feedback, continuous monitoring, and follow-up improvement plans. Head nurses should be supported through training in clinical supervision, communication, coaching, and documentation standards. Future research should test structured supervision models using intervention designs to provide stronger evidence for improving nursing documentation performance. (Nursalam, 2020; Silalahi & Bunga, 2024; Shahzeydi et al., 2024)

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest related to this manuscript.

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