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**INVESTIGATING KNOWLEDGE SHARING PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES  
WITHIN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AMONG NURSES IN FEDERAL  
UNIVERSITY CLINICS, KANO STATE, NIGERIA.**

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**Abstract**

*This qualitative study, employing a narrative-based design, explored knowledge sharing practices and challenges within Communities of Practice (CoPs) among nurses in federal university clinics in Kano State, Nigeria. Three research objectives guided the research while eight senior nurses were purposively selected from a population of 54 to participate in the study. Findings revealed that both tacit (implicit) and explicit knowledge are shared within these CoPs. Tacit knowledge, such as personal experiences and intuition, is often conveyed through informal interactions, while explicit knowledge, like technical skills and information from external sources, is shared through formal channels. Strategies employed to support CoPs include team meetings, discussions, training programs, workshops, conferences, brainstorming sessions, peer coaching, focus groups, seminars, video screening sessions, decision-support systems, blogs, wikis, emails, portals, and other online communication channels. However, challenges hindering the effectiveness of CoPs as identified include individual factors such as trust and openness, organizational culture issues like management support, reward systems, and incentives, and technological factors. The study recommended that there is need establish appropriate reward mechanisms to motivate nurses to participate in CoPs and share knowledge as well as to promote a culture of trust and openness, there is need for CoPs to continue sustaining the strategies they used as well as initiating new ones as this collectively contribute towards supportive and collaborative environment that fosters knowledge exchange and professional development among nurses, and there is need for the CoPs have adequate funding and resources to support their activities as this will ensure active participation through targeted outreach and incentives. There is also need to consider the specific needs and preferences of nurses when designing and implementing CoPs.*

**Keywords:** Community of Practice, Knowledge Sharing, Nurses, Federal University Clinics.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Nurses in federal university clinics often form communities of practice to share knowledge and improve patient care from inception of their profession, understanding their knowledge is dynamics and crucial for optimizing healthcare delivery and professional development. Community of practice has an impending importance through knowledge sharing across the world, among individuals and Organization, these quest for knowledge sharing is bringing people closer by belonging to community of practice (CoPs) on the area of professionalism. In business, CoPs are promoted as drivers of knowledge management, as a mechanism for the sharing of tacit knowledge, sparking innovation, reducing the learning curve, and as a means of creating social capital and adding organizational value. (Ahmed cited in Muhammad, 2023). There are barriers that hinder effective community of practice such as, Standard of Nursing Education, Low Interest in Research, hierarchical structures, communication gaps, or technological limitations, lack of resources, leadership and support that may hinder CoPs functionality. This is in line with the findings of Nchekwebedi C. (2020). There is need to develop curriculum to improve the quality of nursing education and also to guide nurse practitioner training program, it is not an uncommon knowledge that the quality of education has deteriorated in the country, and nursing education is not an exception.

The study aims to address the lack of understanding regarding knowledge sharing practices in relations to students' complaints and the issue of not belonging to other affiliated council of practice among nurses as a result of economic instability, negligence and laxity, hierarchical structure, professional isolation, Competing Priorities, leadership support, Resistance to Change to mention a few. Healthcare organizations need well-established mechanisms to manage and safeguard the nursing career in order to achieve positive impact on service delivery. One way to achieve that is through Communities of Practice (CoPs). CoPs are promoted as a means of



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generating, sharing knowledge and improving organizational performance. Organizations leverage their expertise to their fullest potential since it gives them a competitive edge. (Muhammad cited Persson et al., 2023). Since knowledge is the foundation of a health organization's services, increasing organizational knowledge flows is necessary to achieve efficiency benefits. This calls for CoPs as a tool for knowledge generation and sharing among nurses to effectively engage in better service delivery in federal universities clinics in Kano State.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

In today's dynamic world, knowledge management has become a cornerstone of successful organizations. It's not just a process, but a valuable asset, especially for institutions of higher learning, by actively implementing knowledge management practices, institutions can retain their relevance and effectiveness. Knowledge management relies on sharing practices making information more accessible and usable. Thus, effective knowledge sharing among nurses is crucial for delivering high-quality healthcare in federal university clinics.

Communities of Practice (CoPs) offer a promising approach to facilitate this exchange. However, the specific types of knowledge nurses share within these CoPs, the effectiveness of current strategies used to support them, and the challenges hindering their implementation remain unclear in the context of federal university clinics in Kano State, Nigeria. This lack of understanding poses a significant problem. Nurses may not be sharing the most relevant or up-to-date knowledge, hindering optimal patient care are barriers that hinder effective community of practice such as, Standard of Nursing Education, Low Interest in Research, hierarchical structures and a host of others. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the knowledge sharing practices and challenges within CoPs among nurses in federal university clinics within Kano State, Nigeria. by identifying the types of knowledge shared, evaluating existing support strategies, and explore the factors hindering CoP utilization, this research will contribute valuable insights to enhance knowledge sharing and ultimately improve healthcare service delivery in these clinics.

### **1.2 Research Objectives**

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The main purpose of the study is to examine the manner in which nurses exploit CoPs through knowledge sharing as a mechanism for improve service delivery.

1. To identify the types of knowledge shared by nurses within community of practice in the Federal University clinics Kano State, Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the strategies used to support and promote the effectiveness of the community of practice for knowledge among nurses in the federal universities in Kano State.
3. To identify the factors that hinder the implementation and utilization of community of practice for knowledge sharing among nurses in federal university Kano State, Nigeria.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Communities of Practice (CoPs):**

Community of practices are promoted in healthcare setting as a tool to enhance knowledge and improve practice. Ostensibly, they provide a means for knowledge to cross boundaries, generate and manage a body of knowledge for members to draw on, promote standardization of practice, and “innovate and create breakthrough ideas, knowledge, and practices”. Community of practice is defined by Jane Lave and Etienne Wenger 2015 “as a group of people who share common concern or a set of problem, or an interest in a topic and come together to fulfil both individual and group goal.”

Three dimensions were proposed as defining a CoP: joint enterprise (what it is about); mutual engagement (the interactions that lead to the shared meaning); and a shared repertoire (of resources such as techniques, tools, experiences or process and practice). In 2002, Wenger and colleagues redefined CoPs in terms of a managerial tool which would bring together groups of people working in parallel to share knowledge and to innovate. Characterised by a shared domain of interest, a community that pursues the shared interest, and practice or shared repertoire of resources, CoPs were defined as: “... groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing



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basis... These people don't necessarily work together on a day-to-day basis, but they get together because they find value in their interactions, as they spend time together, they typically share information, insight, and advice. They solve problems. They think about common issues. They explore ideas and act as sounding boards to each other. They may create tools, standards, generic designs, manuals, and other documents; they may just keep what they know as a tacit understanding they share... Over time, they develop a unique perspective on their topic as well as a body of common knowledge, practices and approaches. They also develop personal relationships and established ways of interacting. They may even develop a common sense of identity, they become a community of practice.”

## **2.2 Types of Knowledge:**

Knowledge is the crux of, and a crucial element for organizational survival (Islam et al., 2021; Asrar-Ul-Hag et al., 2016). In the recent past, knowledge in organizations has been considered as a critical organizational resource (Nickerson & Zenger, 2004; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; However, whether formal or informal way of sharing knowledge, knowledge is shared through a process. The knowledge-sharing process is conceptualized as a structured process (Chatterjee et al., 2022), and is aligned with the firm's strategy, available skills and competence, and guidelines to facilitate the process. Some of these strategies, processes, skills, and guidelines are industry, market, and firm specific. (Muhammad, 2023. Cited in Lawday) Knowledge can be seen as information combined with experience, context, interpretation, reflection, intuition and creativity. Knowledge is categorized in to two: Tacit and Explicit knowledge. Knowledge is an important resource for an organization. Knowledge sharing contributes to the development of competitive advantages for organizations, by enhancing knowledge capital, by encouraging knowledge exchange and creation within an organization (Phung, 2019).

In the rapidly evolving landscape of healthcare, the cultivation and sharing of tacit knowledge among medical professionals have emerged as crucial elements in elevating patient care standards. However, transferring tacit knowledge—an inherent expertise ingrained in practitioner behaviors and thoughts—presents a persistent challenge (Huie et al., 2020). Organizations fundamentally

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strive to capture and leverage knowledge (Garcia-Perez et al., 2020), with tacit knowledge serving as the foundation for all forms of knowledge. Consequently, the acquisition, discovery, distribution, and application of tacit knowledge are vital for integrating and utilizing organizational knowledge effectively. This narrative review delves into the realm of tacit knowledge transfer within healthcare, drawing upon contemporary studies to offer a comprehensive perspective.

### **2.3 Knowledge Sharing:**

Knowledge sharing is defined as the exchange of task-related information, advice, and expertise to help others and to collaborate with others to carry out daily tasks. It involves both the willingness to actively communicate with colleagues (knowledge donating) and actively consult with colleagues to learn from them (knowledge collecting).

Knowledge sharing is regarded as a social interaction in which employees exchange their experiences, skills, and knowledge across the firm (Y. Lee et al., 2021). Knowledge sharing is employee-to-employee learning procedure to assist one another to enhance their potential, solve problems and boost work performance (Nguyen et al., 2021). This review adopted the definition provided by (Nguyen et al. Cited in Yeboah, 2023) which states that “knowledge sharing is employee-to-employee learning procedure to assist one another to enhance their potential, solve problems and boost work performance”. Thus, knowledge sharing leads to innovation and sustained performance (Islam et al., 2021)

Knowledge is an important resource for an organization. Knowledge sharing contributes to the development of competitive advantages for organizations, by enhancing knowledge capital, by encouraging knowledge exchange and creation within an organization (Phung, 2019). Individual willingness to share has been equated to attitude and used as the dependent variable. In a study by Abbas et al. (2015), it was noted that even though both extrinsic and intrinsic factors influenced Knowledge Sharing attitude and intentions, intrinsic factors like willingness to help others played a more significant role.

### **2.4 Knowledge Sharing Practices within CoPs**

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A Nursing Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of nurses who come together to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices to improve their professional skills and the quality of patient care, exchange information about the latest research, clinical practices, and innovations in nursing. This can include discussing case studies, sharing resources, and staying updated on evidence-based practices base on their specialty.

The CoP's supports ongoing education and training for its members. This might involve organizing workshops, seminars, or mentoring programs to enhance skills and competencies as well as problem solving by way of collaborating and discussing challenging cases or situations, brainstorming solutions, share strategies that have worked in similar circumstances, and develop best practices. CoPs bring about Interest in Research as the community aimed at improving the quality of nursing care. There is need to promote research utilization through formation of nursing research/committee. Ortiz et al. (2017) state that knowledge sharing occurs when individuals actively share their professional knowledge or experience with others to help them learn new ideas or thoughts. Knowledge sharing is a sustained process of transferring experiences and organisational knowledge to business processes through communication channels among individuals, groups, and organisations (McAdam et al., 2012; O. O. Oyemomi, 2017; Sedighi et al., 2016). Community of practice brings about Support and mentorship in nursing and it served as a way of bridging the gap between the older and younger generation or even between peers and subordinate in any relationship, it has impacted a lot that belong to a community of practice as such you get to be mentored by someone you don't even know online. New or less experienced nurses can receive guidance and support from seasoned professionals, this includes providing advice, emotional support, and career guidance.

The CoP can play a role in advocating for changes in nursing practice or policy, based on collective experiences and expertise. They can also support leadership development among members as well as to do away with Inter/Intra Professional rivalry. Knowledge sharing among community of practice provide networking platform for nurses to connect with peers across different settings,



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which can lead to collaborations and the development of professional relationships that extend beyond their immediate work environment.

### **2.5 Strategies for Supporting CoPs:**

In the current context, methods of improving knowledge management systems, and creating shared and integrated systems help improve the performance of organizations (Abubakar *et al.*, 2019; Del. and Della, 2016). Digital innovation in knowledge management systems helps drive business models through the optimization of new knowledge (Di *et al.*, 2021). Generally, “codification strategy” and “personalization strategy” are major ways in which information sharing can occur among employees (Johansson *et al.*, 2012). While codification has to do with explicit knowledge, the personification is interactive and tacit in nature (Hanisch *et al.*, Muhammad, 2023). Sharing knowledge effectively in a Nursing Community of Practice (CoP) involves using various strategies to ensure that information is disseminated and utilized effectively among members

Knowledge Sharing Tools like Google Drive or Dropbox where members can share and collaborate on documents, presentations, and other resources as well as highlighting achievements, shared projects, feedback mechanisms, focused events such as symposiums or panel discussions on specific topics of interest, Collaborative Software such as Microsoft Teams or Slack that facilitate real-time communication and document sharing among members. Abbas, (2015) opined that strategies encourage and facilitates knowledge sharing among professionals and equip them with the knowledge to do their jobs. Strategies like educational workshops and webinars, conferences, seminar are regular training sessions within healthcare organizations where members learn about new procedures, technologies, or best practices and opportunities for professional development through courses, certifications, and other educational programs. Nursing Communities of Practice can effectively share knowledge, foster collaboration, and enhance the professional development of their members, ultimately leading to improved patient care and nursing practice. CoPs is an example of personalization strategy while the codification strategy entails: Virtual Meetings,





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Online meetings or video conferences, Online Platforms that allow members to participate from different locations, making knowledge sharing more accessible as well as social media groups.

## **2.6 Challenges Associated with Knowledge Sharing within CoPs:**

Nursing Communities of Practice (CoPs) can provide significant benefits, but they also face several challenges that can impact their effectiveness. According to Nursing practice council of Nigeria, there is needs to come up to standards obtainable in the developed countries and for these to be achieved, challenges facing nursing practice in Nigeria needs to be identified and eliminated to promote the advancement of the nursing profession Nchekwubedi (2020). Nursing profession in Nigeria is still facing a lot of challenges both in education and practice, the challenges include; Insufficient nursing Education, Dominance of the medical profession, Issues related to credentialing, standardized educational requirements, Supervision requirements, Role recognition, Independent practice authority, Certification requirements, Policy making on health issues.

According to (Tran, 2020). Factors that influence knowledge sharing within an organization include trust, reward systems, teamwork, communication with colleagues, size of senior management support, information technology, engagement and participation in knowledgesharing activities. Another barrier to the nursing profession towards active community of practice is Time Constraints, Lack of Motivation and Leadership and Coordination, Conflicts or disagreements among members regarding practices, opinions, or leadership can arise and need to be managed constructively. Knowledge Management and Information Overload, Confidentiality and Privacy, Cultural and Organizational Differences. However, Brcic and Mihelic (2015) argue that organizations can benefit from knowledge sharing only when workers establish a deep connection to better understand the knowledge provider's thoughts. Moreover, there is a social bond between the knowledge seeker and the provider (Anand et al., 2019).



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### 3.0 Methodology:

Qualitative research methodology was employed using case study design that allows the researcher to explore the experiences and perspectives of each respondent in detail, gathering rich qualitative data. Non-probability sampling was applied using the purposive sampling techniques in selecting the participants and sites in order to understand the central phenomenon through the use of face to face interview. This method allows the candidate meets with the interviewer in person, typically in an office or other designated location (Ratislavová & Ratislav, 2014). Note taking and phone recording was used as a means of data collection. Thus, the participants comprised of 54 nurses working in the federal university clinics in Kano State where 8-senior nurses out of the 54 were judgmentally selected from Nigerian Police Academy clinic Wudil and Bayero University clinics Kano. Interview protocol was developed and sent to the targeted participants seeking their consent for participation as well as assuring the participants confidentiality and anonymity. Content analysis was adopted using thematic analysis technique that identify recurring themes and patterns across the interview data by coding different parts of the text for meaning and grouping them into relevant categories. This helps understand the overall attitudes, experiences, and opinions expressed by the participants.

### 4.0 Presentation and Analysis of Data:

Presentation and Analysis of Data: This section deals with presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the participants. Thematic analysis technique was used to analyze the interview text of the participants. Themes that emerged from the data were used to report the findings of the study. The themes that emerged were: - **Theme 1:** Types of Knowledge Shared in CoPs.

**Theme 2:** Strategies used to support CoPs.

**Theme 3:** Factors affecting the implementation and utilization.

### Table 1.0: Codes Ascribed to the Participants of Each Institution



S/N	Institution	Code	Senior Nurses
1	Bayero University New Side Clinic	P1	
2	Bayero University Old Side Clinic	P2	
3	Nigeria Policy Academy Wudil Clinic	P3	

Table 1.0 shows the codes assigned to the participants of each institution. The codes conformed to the use of thematic method of analysis when qualitative method is adopted in research. Code P1 was assigned to Bayero University New Side Clinic, Code P2 to Bayero University Old Side Clinic and code P3 to Nigeria Police Academy Wudil Clinic.

#### 4.1 Types of Knowledge Shared

**Research Objective 1.** To identify the types of knowledge shared by nurses within Communities of Practice in federal university clinics, Kano State, Nigeria. The response was as follows: -

**P1:-** *“The interviewee highlights some types of knowledge they shared within the CoPs as inherent knowledge before knowledge learned from the class room in many instances, as it has become a habit for many midwives, experience gained from practice itself and their own personal learning. The senior nurses believe that technical know-how on how to do things is shared by learning together and also knowledge of work experience is shared as well as through books, journals, workshops and conferences etc.”*

**P2:-** *“This interviewee stresses that nurses within the CoPs shared knowledge and believes knowledge can be in all form so far as you are working in a busy and functional hospital you must be abreast of the happenings around you and also have the idea of engaging on all means of knowledge generation as well as giving their best to explicit knowledge to be precise”.*

**P3:-** *“The interviewee identified clinical knowledge, procedural knowledge, patient care experiences, and experience from knowledge learned is the common knowledge engage in their working place and that knowledge is basically what keep our profession striving as it gives us benefit to work and relate well by sharpening our horizon as a health professional when dealing with patient and in any interactive session”.*



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This shows that based on the above analysis, the types of knowledge shared through community of practice are: (tacit and explicit) through interaction and other forms of get together i.e. through seminars, workshop, presentations and also (tacit) through personal experience, expertise, wisdom etc., and (tacit and explicit) through chatting, observation, discussion and practicing. Explicit knowledge is usually exchanged among colleagues through various means like, newspapers, journal articles, conference papers, discussion etc. In fact, explicit knowledge is the most known type of knowledge identified among nurses. Unlike tacit knowledge which is hard to be identified and transferred. This is in line with Sandhu, Jain and Ahamed, as opined in Muhammad 2023, whom noted that knowledge sharing among employee in a public sector is work related.

#### **4.2 Strategies used by Communities of Practice**

**Research Objective 2.** To ascertain the strategies used to support and promote the effectiveness of Communities of Practice for knowledge sharing among nurses in the federal University clinics Kano.

**P1:** - *“Mentorship programs and online knowledge-sharing platforms through collaboration as the type of knowledge they shared within CoPs as personalization strategy brings better interaction at the workplace and attend conferences, training sessions from time to time”.*

**P2:** - *“Platforms are the major places now to address a situation such as what’s app chat, wiki, blogs, conferences, seminars, and video conferences, and that she belongs to a group of midwives”.*

**P3:** - *“The experience is highly of face-to-face interaction, as much of the training, they attain is from the parent organization with constant interaction sessions to discuss and also training sessions, meetings, conferences organized by NGOs are the major place were knowledge is shared as it gives them room to explore and also relate more via telegram platform created by her colleagues in the area of specialty”.*

Basically, the role of community of practice is for the group to share knowledge regularly amongst members with the aim of learning from each other in order to create valuable solutions and make



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am pull use of multifaceted strategy. The discussion shows that, personalization strategy (face to face interaction) and the codification strategy are both highly in use in the nursing profession. This corroborates with the findings of Abbas (2017) who delved into KS strategies and reported that conferences, workshops, and seminars were common strategies or fora among faculty members. Abbas recommends the adoption of new technologies as a potential tool to enrich KS through teaching and research.

#### **4.3 Factors Affecting the Implementation and Utilization**

**Research Objective 3.** To ascertain the factors affecting the implementation and utilization of Communities of Practice for knowledge sharing among nurses in the federal University clinics Kano.

**P1:-** *“This interviewee stresses that the major factor affecting the nurses within the CoPs are Lack of management support, Reward mechanism, trust, openness and technological factors hinder CoPs as most of the motivation they need is not really there and that they need more working tools as well as trust among colleagues and government support will go a long way to see that nurses flourish in the profession as well a management and some time you fine people keeping information to themselves and partially engaging in discussions in the office.”*

**P2:-** *“Nurses are sometimes reluctant to respond on time, openness and insufficient skills to utilize the use of ICT gadgets that brings about less referrals, financial constrain and standard education is another factor that cripple the CoPs and to maintain online interaction within the community and consultation”.*

**P3: -** *“The interviewee identified organizational and individual factors as the most hindering factors to CoPs as openness to work as a team and trust is an issue to relate with and also ICT tools need to be in place to enhance nursing operations and other clinical matters”.*

Therefore, openness or open people display intellectual curiosity, creativity, flexible thinking and culture, thus tend to have more positive attitude towards learning new things and share them with others (Matzler, et al. 2008). As well as radical innovations. As a result of this, improvement in quality excellence can be achieved and can contribute to competitive advantage as confirmed by several authors in their research findings also this corroborate with the findings of (Lin et al., 2012



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and Muhammad 2023). Whom stated that “A factor which is identified as a favourable condition in one context may not be as direct replica to another.

#### **4.4 Summary of Findings:**

1. The interviewee identified two primary types of knowledge shared within Communities of Practice (CoPs) in federal university clinics in Kano State, Nigeria: tacit knowledge (based on personal experiences and intuition) and explicit knowledge (codified in books, journals, workshops, and conferences). This suggests that CoPs play a crucial role in facilitating the exchange of both types of knowledge among nurses, contributing to their professional development and improved patient care.
2. The interviewees identified several strategies used to support and promote knowledge sharing within Communities of Practice (CoPs) in federal university clinics in Kano such as mentorship programs, online platforms, conferences, training sessions, and face-to-face interaction. These strategies collectively contribute to a supportive and collaborative environment that fosters knowledge exchange and professional development among nurses.
3. The interviewees identified several factors that can hinder the implementation and utilization of Communities of Practice (CoPs) for knowledge sharing among nurses in federal university clinics in Kano such lack of management support, reward mechanisms, trust, openness, technological factors, financial constraints, reluctance to respond, and individual differences. Addressing these challenges is essential for ensuring the success and effectiveness of CoPs in promoting professional development and improving patient care.

#### **4.5 Conclusion:**

The research investigated knowledge sharing practices and challenges within Communities of Practice (CoPs) among nurses in federal university clinics in Kano State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that CoPs play a vital role in facilitating the exchange of both tacit and explicit knowledge among nurses, contributing to their professional development and improved patient care. The study concludes that Bayero University Kano and Police Academy Wudil nurses adapted the principle of CoPs in discharging their medical responsibility. It is also essential to develop a curriculum that will improve the quality of nursing education as well as guide nurse practitioner training program as this will no doubt increase job performance in federal university clinics.



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#### 4.6 Recommendation:

Base on the findings of the study, the following recommendation were made:

1. There is need establish appropriate reward mechanisms to motivate nurses to participate in CoPs and share knowledge as well as to promote a culture of trust and openness.
2. There is need for CoPs to continue sustaining the strategies they used as well as initiating new ones as this collectively contribute towards supportive and collaborative environment that fosters knowledge exchange and professional development among nurses.
3. There is need for the CoPs have adequate funding and resources to support their activities as this will ensure active participation through targeted outreach and incentives. There is also need to consider the specific needs and preferences of nurses when designing and implementing CoPs.

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