EXPLORING THE MODEL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF CLINICAL PRECEPTORSHIP IN NURSING: A SCOPING REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Clinical preceptors play a crucial role in nursing education as they help students learn clinical preceptorship and grow into competent professionals. However, theories and models that specifically address preceptorship remain limited, even though such frameworks are essential for developing learning concepts, enhancing the role of preceptors, and supporting the learning process. Despite the existence of various theories and models related to preceptorship, there is no clear consensus on how they should be selected or applied across different clinical settings. **Methods:** This review identified existing theories and models relevant to clinical nursing preceptorship. The databases selected for this study were ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Springer, PubMed, and ProQuest. The keywords used were: "Clinical" AND "Theory" OR "Model" AND "Preceptorship" AND "Nursing. The inclusion criteria encompass nurses involved in preceptorship—both novice and experienced—across various educational settings. The focus lies on theoretical frameworks such as social learning theory, competency theory, and adult learning theory, emphasizing their application in enhancing nursing competence and care quality. The context includes hospital-based, community, and global nursing education systems with varying resource levels." **Results:** Of the 10 eligible articles included in this review, five distinct theories and five models were identified. The theories include Concept Analysis Theory, Social Identity Theory & Reflective Practice, Situated Learning Theory, Transition Theory, and Health System Responsiveness Theory. The models found were the Preceptorship Model for Botswana, the One-Minute Preceptor (OMP) Model, the Reflective Role Model of Preceptorship, the Leadership-Focused Preceptorship Model, and the Social Accountability Model. **Conclusions:** Although several theories and models are utilized to develop learning strategies, enhance clinical skills, and build effective relationships in clinical nursing preceptorship, each carries its strengths and limitations. The application of these frameworks remains relatively limited in both number and contextual relevance within clinical education environments. To generate a comprehensive body of literature, the selection of appropriate theories and models must align with the specific context and needs of clinical education. The findings highlight the need for continued study and application of these frameworks to improve the effectiveness of clinical education and ultimately support successful preceptorship and the quality of nursing education.

Keywords: model, theoretical framework, clinical preceptorship in nursing, scoping review

Introduction

Preceptorship is a learning approach in nursing practice that involves an experienced preceptor or mentor who supervises and guides novice nurses in developing their clinical and professional competencies. It is widely used in nursing education to ensure that beginner nurses acquire the technical, clinical, and interpersonal skills necessary to deliver high-quality nursing care. As nursing education systems continue to evolve, a deeper understanding of the theoretical frameworks underpinning preceptorship is essential to enhance its effectiveness as a field-based learning strategy (Burge, 2022; Jones et al., 2021).

Although preceptorship has gained wide acceptance in nursing education, numerous challenges persist in its effective implementation. One of the primary challenges is the lack of a consistent understanding of the theoretical foundations that support preceptorship practices. These theoretical frameworks are critical for understanding how preceptorship enhances nurse competence and ensures that practical learning aligns with professional standards and patient care needs (Taylor & Molyneux, 2023). Consequently, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive review of the various theoretical frameworks applied in nursing preceptorship to identify patterns and applications across diverse educational settings.

Existing literature indicates that while many studies focus on the outcomes of preceptorship—such as improved nurse competence and patient satisfaction—few have specifically examined the theoretical foundations of this practice. Most research has centered on evaluating its impact, with limited attention given to the comprehensive exploration of the underpinning theories. This lack of integrated theoretical analysis underscores the need for a broader scoping review to explore which theories have been utilized and how relevant they are to the implementation of preceptorship in nursing education (Shaw et al., 2021; Edwards et al., 2022).

In the context of nursing education, preceptorship can be seen as a collaborative approach involving a relationship between the preceptor and the novice nurse, where the preceptor functions not only as a mentor but also as a bridge between theory and practice (Liu et al., 2023). In this regard, theoretical frameworks such as social learning theory, competency-based theory, and adult learning theory play a vital role in shaping how preceptorship operates within broader educational and clinical contexts. Therefore, critically understanding and examining these theoretical perspectives is essential for improving the quality and consistency of future preceptorship practices.

This review will conduct a scoping review to explore the theoretical frameworks that have been applied in preceptorship research within nursing education. The aim is to map the dominant theories and models used, identify gaps in the existing literature, and offer insights for the effective implementation and further development of preceptorship in nursing education. As such, this review is expected to contribute significantly to the development of more applicable and evidence-based theories and models for preceptorship in clinical education settings (Peters et al., 2020).

Review Question: "What theories and models have been used in clinical nursing preceptorship studies?"

Materials and Methods

The development of this scoping review follows the latest methodological guidelines from the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) (Peters et al., 2020) and the PRISMA-ScR framework (Tricco et al., 2018), which are designed to ensure a systematic and credible research process. First, the

research objectives and questions were defined using the Population, Concept, Context (PCC) framework, which helps to clarify the study's focus and scope. A research protocol was developed that included inclusion and exclusion criteria, literature search strategies, and data extraction methods to ensure transparency throughout the research process. Literature searches were conducted across several academic databases, with the assistance of an expert librarian to refine the search strategy and document each step of the process clearly (Tricco et al., 2018).

The article selection process was conducted in multiple stages, beginning with the screening of titles and abstracts, followed by full-text evaluation using a PRISMA-ScR flow diagram to ensure transparency (Tricco et al., 2018). Relevant data were extracted and analyzed descriptively to map key findings, research trends, and gaps in the existing literature. This process aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the theoretical frameworks used in preceptorship and their contribution to nursing education (Peters et al., 2020).

Inclusion criteria

The article search process was conducted using the Population, Concept, Context (PCC) framework. The following outlines the inclusion criteria applied in this study:

Table 1. *Inclusion Criteria*

Component	Description
Population	Nurses involved in preceptorship, including both novice and experienced nurses, working across various nursing education settings.
Concept	Theoretical frameworks used in preceptorship, including social learning theory, competency theory, and adult learning theory. The focus is on the application of these theories in enhancing nursing competence and the quality of nursing care.
Context	Various nursing education settings, including hospital-based education, community clinic training, and community-based learning. In addition, it encompasses global education systems with varying levels of resources to explore differences in the application of preceptorship theories across diverse contexts.

The inclusion criteria encompass studies that explicitly address the application of theories in nursing preceptorship, as well as research conducted across various nursing education settings, including hospitals, clinics, and community-based environments. Articles that do not provide an in-depth discussion

of the application of preceptorship theories or are not relevant to the topic will be excluded during the selection phase.

Types of sources

This scoping review will include a wide range of sources of evidence to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research question. Various experimental and quasi-experimental study designs will be considered, including randomized controlled trials (RCTs), non-randomized controlled trials, before-and-after studies, and interrupted time-series studies. Analytical observational studies, such as prospective and retrospective cohort studies, case-control studies, and analytical cross-sectional studies, will also be included.

Descriptive observational study designs, including case series, individual case reports, and descriptive cross-sectional studies, will be considered to provide additional context and insight into the research topic. Furthermore, qualitative studies focusing on the collection and analysis of qualitative data including but not limited to phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, qualitative description, action research, and feminist research will also be included to capture a range of perspectives and experiences.

By incorporating a variety of study designs and sources of evidence, this scoping review aims to comprehensively map the available literature, identify existing gaps, and highlight the breadth of knowledge on the implementation and outcomes of preceptorship in diverse nursing education contexts.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria for this scoping review were carefully defined to ensure the relevance and academic rigor of the articles analyzed. The specific inclusion criteria are as follows: 1) Articles must report findings that explicitly discuss, apply, or evaluate theoretical frameworks or conceptual models in the context of nursing preceptorship, including theories related to education, mentoring, or professional

development (Tinsley & Hardicre, 2023; Foley et al., 2021); 2) Eligible studies may employ quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method research designs; 3) Study populations must include registered nurses, newly graduated nurses, or nursing students participating in preceptorship programs; 4) Articles must be available in full-text format to allow comprehensive data analysis; 5) Articles must have been published between 2004 and 2025; and Articles must be written in English.

Conversely, the exclusion criteria are as follows: 1) Articles that do not present or discuss theoretical frameworks or conceptual models related to preceptorship were excluded, as the primary aim of this review is to map and synthesize theory-based perspectives; 2) Articles classified as literature reviews, systematic reviews, scoping reviews, editorials, commentaries, or opinion pieces were excluded to maintain a focus on original empirical evidence; and 3) Duplicate publications appearing in two or more journals were also excluded to preserve the integrity and uniqueness of the findings (Morris & Turnbull, 2022).

These criteria were applied to ensure that only high-quality, relevant studies with a strong theoretical foundation were included in this scoping review.

Databases

In this study, the literature search was conducted systematically through several relevant academic databases to ensure broad coverage of the topic of preceptorship in nursing, particularly those incorporating theoretical frameworks. The databases used included ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Springer, PubMed, and ProQuest, each widely recognized as credible and representative sources in the fields of nursing, health education, and social sciences. The selection of these databases was based on their capacity to provide access to up-to-date scientific articles, peer-reviewed studies, and publications that support an integrated exploration of nursing theory and practice (Fischer et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2020).

The comprehensive search was carried out on April 29, 2025. The database links used in the search were as follows: ScienceDirect (https://www.sciencedirect.com), Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.com), Springer (https://www.springer.com), PubMed (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov), and ProQuest (https://www.proquest.com). These five databases enabled the identification of relevant, current, and high-quality articles, thereby strengthening the validity and depth of analysis in this review (Tricco et al., 2023).

Search Strategy

In the literature search process, a combination of keywords was used with the assistance of Boolean operators to generate more specific results and to facilitate the selection of relevant articles. The primary keywords employed in this search included: "Clinical" AND "Theory" OR "Model" AND "Preceptorship" AND "Nursing." This combination was designed to capture literature that explicitly discusses preceptorship practices in nursing and their application within theoretical or conceptual frameworks (Tinsley & Hardicre, 2023; Peters et al., 2020). The selection of these terms also considers variations in terminology commonly used in academic publications to avoid excluding thematically or terminologically relevant articles.

Using this keyword combination across five major databases ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Springer, PubMed, and ProQuest the researchers identified a total of 258 articles that met the initial search criteria. This included 34 articles from ScienceDirect, 48 from Google Scholar, 7 from Springer, 31 from PubMed, and 138 from ProQuest. All search results were then further screened based on the pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria. This search strategy was designed to align with the PRISMA-ScR guidelines to ensure a transparent and replicable scoping review process (Tricco et al., 2023).

Article Screening

The article screening process in this study followed the workflow recommended by PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), presented in a flow diagram consisting of four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. The first stage involved identifying all articles retrieved from the five selected databases, followed by the removal of duplicate records based on similarities in title, author(s), or source of publication whether within the same database or across multiple databases. This step was conducted to ensure the uniqueness and originality of the data analyzed (Tricco et al., 2023).

After duplicate removal, the screening phase was conducted by reviewing article titles and abstracts, with a focus on their relevance to the topic of preceptorship in nursing and the integration of theoretical frameworks or conceptual models. Articles that explicitly used study designs such as literature reviews, scoping reviews, or systematic reviews were excluded from this study to maintain a focus on original empirical research. The final stage involved full-text screening to confirm that each article met the inclusion criteria, including the explicit use of theory, relevance of the study population, and methodological alignment. This multi-step procedure was implemented to ensure the validity, transparency, and accountability of the article selection process (Peters et al., 2020; Fischer et al., 2021).

Data Extraction

Data extraction in this study was carried out using a standardized template that included key elements such as study design, population, concept (theoretical framework), context, and findings. This process was conducted independently by two reviewers to ensure objectivity and minimize bias, with discrepancies resolved through discussion or the involvement of a third reviewer when necessary (Peters et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2023). This approach ensured that the data collected were relevant, systematic, and aligned to explore theoretical applications in nursing preceptorship practice.

Results

In this study, the literature search was conducted through five major platforms: ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Springer, PubMed, and ProQuest. During the identification stage, a total of 258 articles were retrieved from all databases. After an initial screening based on predetermined criteria namely, publications from 2015 to 2025, full-text availability, and English language this number was reduced to 248 articles. Further screening was conducted by reviewing the titles and abstracts to ensure relevance to the research topic. Articles with designs such as literature reviews, scoping reviews, and systematic reviews were excluded, and duplicate articles were removed at this stage. This additional filtering process resulted in 22 articles, which were then reviewed in full to ensure alignment with the inclusion criteria. Twelve full-text articles were excluded because they did not meet one or more inclusion criteria. Specifically, studies were removed for reasons such as the absence of a clear focus on preceptorship, irrelevant populations (e.g., non-nursing participants), lack of application or discussion of theoretical frameworks, and contexts unrelated to nursing education. These exclusions were necessary to ensure that only studies directly addressing the theoretical application within preceptorship programs in nursing education were included. Ultimately, 10 articles were selected to be included in this review. The full PRISMA procedure is presented in the following flow diagram.
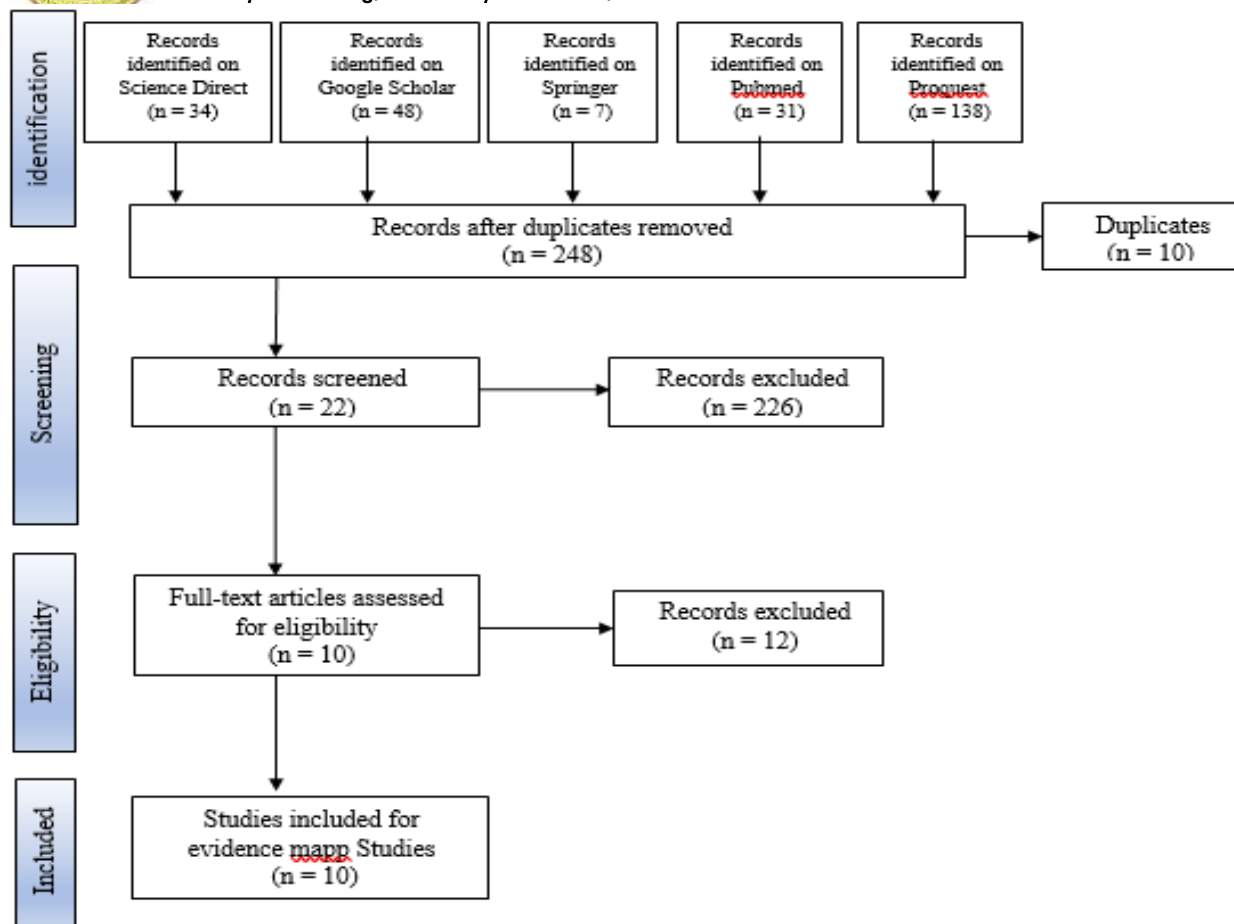
Figure 1. *PRISMA Flowchart*

Critical Appraisal Results

The ten studies included in this review were appraised using the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklists, based on study design. Five qualitative studies and five quasi-experimental studies showed moderate to high methodological quality. Most qualitative studies scored between 80–100%, reflecting consistency in methodology and interpretation, while quasi-experimental studies similarly scored above 80%, with minor limitations in blinding and intervention clarity. These results confirm that the selected literature is methodologically sound and provides a strong foundation for the synthesis of preceptorship themes in nursing.

Articles Included in the Literature Review

The results of the initial analysis, further review, and identification ultimately included 10 articles. The following table provides detailed information about each article :

Table 2. *Accumulated Critical Assessment of the Article*

ID	Title	Criteria												Mark
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
JBI Qualitative Studi														
PIN1	Preceptorship: Bridging the Theory Practice Gap	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓			80%
PIN2	Contributing to the Theory Development of Preceptorship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			100%
PIN3	Theoretical foundations and mechanisms of health systems responsiveness	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓			90%
PIN4	Patient handover education programme based on situated learning theory	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓			90%
PIN5	Theory and practice in the construction of professional identity	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓			90%
Quasi-Experimental Studies														
PIN6	Towards a conceptual framework for preceptorship	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓			90%
PIN7	A preceptorship model in Botswana	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			100%
PIN8	The one-minute preceptor model	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			80%
PIN9	A Model of PRECEPTORSHIP in Nursing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓			90%
PIN10	Health provider responsiveness to social accountability	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓			90%

Table 3. *Analysis of Literature Results*

ID	Author and Journal Identity	Journal Title	Objective	Population and Sample	Method	Kategori	Summary of Results
PIN1	Girija Kalayil et al., International Journal of Nursing Care, Vol.1(1), 2013 (Kalayil, 2013)	Preceptorship: Bridging the Theory Practice Gap	To analyze how preceptorship bridges the gap between theory and practice and supports the transition of new graduates.	Senior undergraduate nursing students, preceptors, and faculty members in a triadic relationship.	Qualitative descriptive design using literature analysis and experiential data.	Theory	Preceptorship enhances clinical competence, professional socialization, and confidence. Learning was supported through interactive experiences; no numerical validity reported.
PIN2	Diane B. Billay & Olive Yonge, Nursing Education Perspectives, 2004 (Billay & Yonge, 2004)	Contributing to the Theory Development of Preceptorship	To develop a theoretical understanding of preceptorship in nursing education.	No specific sample; theoretical exploration based on academic experience.	Conceptual and theoretical development paper.	Theory	Proposes a developmental framework showing preceptorship stages; emphasizes educational and mentorship roles in professional development.
PIN3	Tolib Mirzoev et al., Social Science & Medicine, 2013 (Mirzoev et al., 2013)	Theoretical Foundations and Mechanisms of Health Systems Responsiveness	To synthesize theoretical constructs of health system responsiveness using realist synthesis.	Multiple studies synthesized (not primary data).	Realist synthesis and theoretical review.	Theory	Identifies mechanisms like accountability and user experience as key dimensions; strengthens theoretical basis of responsiveness models.
PIN4	Jung Hee Kim et al., Nurse Education Today, 2014 (Kim et al., 2014)	Patient Handover Education Programme based on Situated Learning Theory	To implement and evaluate an education program for nursing students using situated learning theory.	Final-year nursing students in clinical placements (sample size not specified).	Quasi-experimental, program implementation using situated learning theory.	Theory	Improved communication and handover skills post-intervention; effective use of theoretical model in training; statistical significance not detailed.
PIN5	Antonia Arreciado Marañón & Ma. Pilar Isla Pera, Nurse Education Today, 2015 (Marañón & Pera, 2015)	Theory and Practice in the Construction of Professional Identity	To understand how students form professional identity through the intersection of theory and clinical practice.	24 final-year nursing students in Spanish universities	Qualitative study using thematic content analysis of semi-structured interviews.	Theory	Students highlighted a gap between theory and clinical culture; formation of identity linked to mentorship and reflective experience.
PIN6	Melanie Zilembo & Leanne Monterosso, Nurse Education in Practice, 2008 (Zilembo & Monterosso, 2008)	Towards a Conceptual Framework for Preceptorship	To propose a framework for preceptorship in clinical nursing education.	Not applicable (conceptual paper).	Literature review and theoretical modeling.	Model	Framework includes leadership, clinical support, and learner development; builds on existing models.
PIN7	Antonia Dube & Mahlasela A. Rakhudu, Curationis, 2019 (Dube & Rakhudu, 2019)	A Preceptorship Model in Botswana	To develop and validate a preceptorship model for Botswana's nursing education.	Nurse educators and clinical staff in Botswana.	Mixed-methods; model development and Delphi validation.	Model	Model validated with expert consensus; includes dimensions such as role clarity, collaboration, and support; no numeric validation value stated.
PIN8	Miki Miura et al., Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, 2019 (Miura et al., 2019)	The One-Minute Preceptor Model for Nurse Practitioners	To evaluate the effectiveness of the one-minute preceptor model in NP education.	Sample of nurse practitioner preceptors and students (not specified).	Pilot study; preceptor training and evaluation.	Model	Reported increased preceptor satisfaction and teaching effectiveness. No statistical validation results provided.
PIN9	Brenda Happel, Nursing Education Perspectives, 2009 (Happel, 2009)	A Model of Preceptorship in Nursing	To reflect on the complex functions of the preceptorship role in nursing education.	N/A – model reflection based on literature.	Narrative and reflective model development.	Model	Highlights multiple roles: educator, socializer, protector, and evaluator; model clarity enhanced through role mapping.
PIN10	Elsbet Lodenstein et al., Health Policy and Planning, 2017 (Lodenstein et al., 2017)	Health Provider Responsiveness to Social Accountability	To review how social accountability interventions affect health provider responsiveness.	Multiple case studies from low- and middle-income countries.	Realist review of empirical interventions	Model	Found responsiveness influenced by context, leadership, and engagement mechanisms; dimensions include communication, trust, feedback loops.

The results of the literature analysis are as follows:

This scoping review analyzed a series of studies focusing on the application of preceptorship theory and model in

nursing education and clinical practice. A total of 10 journal articles were included, selected based on inclusion criteria emphasizing full-text availability, relevance to nursing preceptorship, and publication years ranging from 2004 to 2025. The analysis captured various aspects including objectives, research methods, population and sample characteristics, categorization as theory or model, and key findings. The literature was synthesized thematically into the following sections.

Characteristics of Included Studies

The selected studies were predominantly conducted in academic and clinical settings across various countries, including Spain, Botswana, Canada, and several low- and middle-income countries. The populations consisted mainly of nursing students, nurse educators, and preceptors. Sample sizes ranged from theoretical conceptualizations with no participant data to qualitative interviews involving up to 30 individuals (Maranon & Pera, 2015), and pilot trials with broader clinical application (Miura et al., 2019). Study designs included qualitative interviews, narrative reviews, theoretical analyses, and model development approaches.

Categorization: Preceptorship as Theory and Model

Five studies were categorized under 'Theory', focusing on the conceptual and reflective dimensions of preceptorship (Billay & Yonge, 2004; Kim et al., 2021; Maranon & Pera, 2015). These studies explored frameworks such as Situated Learning Theory, Reflective Practice, and Social Identity Theory. The remaining five studies applied 'Model-based approaches, demonstrating structured tools for teaching and role development, such as the Preceptorship Model for Botswana (Dube & Rakhudu, 2019) and the One-Minute Preceptor (OMP) Model (Miura et al., 2019).

Objectives, Methods, and Key Findings

Most studies aimed to either propose a conceptual framework, evaluate an educational intervention, or assess the implementation of preceptorship models. The methods varied, from thematic content analysis (Maranon & Pera, 2015) to Delphi validation and realist synthesis (Lodenstein et al., 2017). Across all articles, preceptorship was found to significantly enhance clinical learning, foster communication skills, support professional identity formation, and improve educational quality. Model-based studies provided practical insights into how structured mentorship influences nursing outcomes and staff satisfaction (Miura et al., 2019; Happel, 2009).

Thematic Functions of Preceptorship

Thematically, the literature demonstrates that preceptorship theory serves to explain cognitive, emotional, and identity-forming aspects of learning, with an emphasis on reflection and social learning (Maranon & Pera, 2015; Kim et al., 2021). In contrast, models translate these abstract elements into actionable systems for practice. Dube & Rakhudu's (2019) model delineates core structural components to guide mentorship, while Miura et al. (2019) highlight the benefit of micro-feedback sessions via the OMP model to strengthen clinical reasoning. These complementary roles indicate the necessity of integrating both dimensions to support student transition and professional development.

Research Gaps and Recommendations

Although the reviewed literature affirms the positive influence of preceptorship in nursing, it also reveals gaps in longitudinal evidence and application within vulnerable populations. Only a few studies systematically measured long-term outcomes or implementation barriers in resource-limited settings. Future research is recommended to expand validation of preceptorship models in diverse contexts, evaluate their impact on nurse retention, and explore interprofessional applications in collaborative environments (Ventura-Silva et al., 2024).

Table 4. *Key Issues Emerging*

Key Issues	Specific Aspects	Sources	Quotations
Bridging Theory-Practice Gap	Preceptorship as a structured transition mechanism	Kalayil et al. (2013); Billay & Yonge (2004)	"Preceptorship enhances clinical competence, professional socialization, and confidence." (Kalayil et al., 2013). "Preceptorship stages illustrate how students grow from novices to professionals." (Billay & Yonge, 2004).
Professional Identity	Formed through reflective and social interactions in clinical settings	Maranon & Pera (2015); Kim et al. (2014)	"Students linked identity formation to mentorship and reflective practice." (Maranon & Pera, 2015). "Situated learning theory enabled contextual learning and skill development." (Kim et al., 2014).
System Responsiveness	Integration of preceptorship into patient-centered and accountable systems	Mirzoev et al. (2013); Lodenstein et al. (2017)	"Preceptorship must align with health system responsiveness dimensions like accountability and user experience." (Mirzoev et al., 2013). "Social accountability improved communication and trust within clinical mentorship." (Lodenstein et al., 2017).
Role Complexity	Preceptors as multifaceted professionals: educators, protectors, evaluators	Happel (2009); Zilembo & Monterosso (2008)	"Preceptors assume complex roles that require leadership, empathy, and support." (Zilembo & Monterosso, 2008). "Mapped roles include educator, socializer, and evaluator." (Happel, 2009).
Model Implementation	Validation of structured models for preceptorship delivery	Dube & Rakhudu (2019); Miura et al. (2019)	"Validated six-element model supports preceptor role clarity and collaboration." (Dube & Rakhudu, 2019). "One-minute preceptor model showed effectiveness in fast-paced training contexts." (Miura et al., 2019).

Discussion

This scoping review synthesized ten scholarly articles exploring the application of preceptorship theory and model in nursing education. The findings revealed five overarching themes: bridging the theory-practice gap, professional identity formation, system responsiveness, role complexity, and model implementation. Each theme reflects the strategic importance of preceptorship in preparing competent and confident nursing professionals.

Bridging the Theory-Practice Gap

Preceptorship functions as a critical bridge connecting academic learning with clinical realities. Kalayil et al. (2013) emphasized that structured preceptorship facilitates a smoother transition for new graduates, enhancing their clinical competence and confidence. Similarly, Billay & Yonge (2004) proposed a developmental theory in which learners progress through defined stages under the guidance of experienced preceptors. These findings validate earlier assertions that preceptorship supports early professional socialization and contextual integration of nursing theory.

Professional Identity Formation

The development of a strong professional identity is a fundamental goal of nursing education. Maranon & Pera (2015) demonstrated how reflective practice and mentorship experiences in clinical settings play a pivotal role in helping students internalize professional norms and values. Likewise, Kim et al. (2014) reported that implementing Situated Learning Theory in handover education fostered deeper contextual understanding and identity formation. These studies affirm that preceptorship not only imparts technical knowledge but also nurtures self-concept and commitment to the nursing role.

System Responsiveness

Preceptorship must be situated within responsive and patient-centered healthcare systems. Mirzoev et al. (2013) highlighted accountability and user experience as core components of health system responsiveness that align well with the goals of preceptorship. Lodenstein et al. (2017) further supported this by illustrating how social accountability frameworks promote trust and communication within mentorship environments. These findings underscore that institutional structures should be supportive, collaborative, and adaptive to enhance the effectiveness of preceptorship programs.

Role Complexity of Preceptors

Preceptors serve as more than clinical instructors they are educators, protectors, evaluators, and role models. Happel (2009) and Zilembo & Monterosso (2008) both emphasized the multifaceted nature of the preceptorship role. Effective preceptorship requires emotional intelligence, clinical expertise, leadership, and the ability to build trust. Recognizing this complexity is essential for developing training and support systems that prepare preceptors to fulfill these roles effectively.

Model Implementation in Clinical Practice

Validated models provide structure, clarity, and replicability to preceptorship practice. Dube & Rakhudu (2019) proposed a six-component model that has been validated through expert consensus, enabling consistent preceptorship delivery across clinical settings. Miura et al. (2019) examined the One-Minute Preceptor Model, demonstrating its utility in fast-paced environments and its positive effect on teaching efficiency and preceptor satisfaction. These findings reinforce the need for institutionally endorsed models that can be adapted to diverse clinical and educational contexts.

Implications and Future Directions

While the current body of literature affirms the multifaceted benefits of preceptorship, several research gaps remain. Most studies lack longitudinal evaluation to measure long-term impacts on nurse retention, patient outcomes, and professional development. In addition, limited research has focused on vulnerable populations or on adapting preceptorship to low-resource environments. Future research should explore how theory-based and model-driven preceptorship can be scaled and sustained in varying global contexts, and how digital technologies might enhance mentorship effectiveness.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This scoping review affirms that preceptorship both as a theory and model is essential in bridging the gap between academic learning and clinical practice in nursing. Theoretical frameworks like Situated Learning and Social Identity Theory explain how professional growth and identity are formed, while structured models such as the One-Minute Preceptor and the Botswana Preceptorship Model offer practical guidance for clinical implementation. Key issues identified include the importance of structured transitions, preceptor role complexity, and system-level integration. However, gaps remain in long-term outcome research and adaptation for vulnerable or low-resource contexts. Therefore, institutions should align theory with model-based practice, invest in preceptor training, embed preceptorship within accountable health systems, and pursue research that supports culturally adaptable and sustainable mentorship frameworks.

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