



## Research article

# The role of awards in promoting educational leadership in nursing: A qualitative descriptive study in gerontological nursing

Kimberly J. Oosterhouse<sup>a,\*</sup>, Lisa Skemp<sup>b</sup>, Lisa Abdallah<sup>c</sup>, Laurie Grealish<sup>d</sup><sup>a</sup> Loyola University Chicago, Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing, 2160 S. 1st Ave. Bldg. 125, Rm. 2522, Maywood, IL 60153, USA<sup>b</sup> Loyola University Chicago, Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing, Chicago, IL 60606, USA<sup>c</sup> University of Massachusetts Lowell, Solomont School of Nursing, Lowell, MA 01854, USA<sup>d</sup> Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus, Southport 4215, Australia

## ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:**Awards  
Education  
Nursing  
Geriatrics  
Qualitative research

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** As the population ages, the need for high quality nursing education in the unique health and illness needs of older people is required at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Gerontological nursing and gerontological nursing education are critically important in this new age of human longevity and chronic disease. To facilitate high quality and engaging educational practices in gerontology, the National Hartford Center for Gerontological Nursing Excellence offered a professional recognition award program, entitled the Distinguished Educator in Gerontological Nursing Award (the Award).

**Objectives:** Describe participants' perceptions of an awards program in gerontological nursing education.

**Design:** Qualitative descriptive research.

**Settings:** National Hartford Center for Gerontological Nursing Excellence, a professional body that aims to enhance and sustain the capacity and competency of nurses to provide quality care to older adults, opened the Award to international applications in 2018.

**Participants:** Nine awardees, residing in North America and Asia.

**Methods:** Semi-structured individual interviews followed by inductive, thematic analysis.

**Results:** The Award was valued for its prestige and recognition; the process of applying was affirming; and achievement of the Award strengthened awardee confidence to lead and advocate for gerontological nursing education. A model for understanding the Award, focused on value, application and confidence is proposed.

**Conclusions:** The use of award programs for gerontological education expertise may improve nurse educators' confidence and performance within educational settings. How the Award impacts student learning remains unknown. Further research into the benefits and limitations of award programs for nurse educators specializing in gerontological nursing and other fields, their managers, and students is required to fully understand the role of educational award programs in nursing.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [koosterhouse2@luc.edu](mailto:koosterhouse2@luc.edu) (K.J. Oosterhouse), [lskemp@luc.edu](mailto:lskemp@luc.edu) (L. Skemp), [Lisa\\_Abdallah@uml.edu](mailto:Lisa_Abdallah@uml.edu) (L. Abdallah), [l.grealish@griffith.edu.au](mailto:l.grealish@griffith.edu.au) (L. Grealish).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e16113>

Received 24 October 2022; Received in revised form 12 April 2023; Accepted 5 May 2023

Available online 12 May 2023

2405-8440/© 2023 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

The world population is ageing. In 2020, the World Health Organization was charged by the United Nations General Assembly to lead the implementation of the 2021–2030 Decade of Healthy Ageing, a movement to “reduce health inequities and improve the lives of older people ....” [1]. As people age, they may experience significant physical, social, and emotional changes associated with ageing such as reduced motor function, loneliness, grief, and loss. Despite chronic health issues, older people may also experience positive life achievements and enjoy this next phase of life. There is a critical need for nurses who understand the unique needs of older people to ensure the delivery of high-quality patient-centered nursing care that enhances well-being [2]. Yet, geriatric nursing and care of the older adult remains a stigmatized area of nursing care [3].

An integrative review into nurses’ attitudes towards older people suggests that education is one factor that may influence attitude [4]. However, the developing attitude may not be positive. For example, in a systematic review of baccalaureate nursing students, researchers found that student preferences for working with older people decrease during training [5]. Researchers in a phenomenographic study of nurse educators in Thailand and Sweden described an ethical responsibility for nurse educators to be credible and a source of inspiration about ageing and aged care nursing in relation to global ageing [6]. Addressing nurse educators and the quality of education required to cultivate student interest in gerontology is recommended [5].

To increase registered nurse preference for working with older people, undergraduate course design must be improved [5]. Specifically, faculty with expertise in gerontology, who hold positive attitudes to ageing and use educational techniques to engage students in the care of older people, are required [7]. In a systematic review of educators’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding older persons care, negative attitudes towards older people and gerontological nursing were found to limit their delivery of education regarding the care of older people [8]. In a focused ethnographic study, researchers concluded that the culture in higher education may be a barrier to educators seeking to build expertise in geriatric care [9]. Recognizing the challenges associated with negative attitudes towards gerontological nursing in higher education, the National Hartford Center for Gerontological Nursing Excellence (NHCGNE) established a program to recognize educator expertise in gerontological nursing. Expertise for the recognition award was established using the core competencies for gerontological nurse educators [7]. Understanding awardee perceptions of the program can increase our understanding of the usefulness of this type of program to enhance gerontological nursing education.

## 2. Background

Award programs recognize professional achievement at a single point in time and are usually granted on the review of a portfolio of work [10]. Awards differ from professional certifications and licenses which indicate a level of skill to do a specific job [11]. Awards are associated with some type of personal benefit, such as an increase in salary [10] or evidence to support promotion [12]. For organizations, awards carry reputational benefit. For example, in a study of awards for health and safety performance, researchers found that managers encouraged team members to obtain awards to recognize employee achievement and thereby support the commercial objectives of the company [13].

Awards in higher education aim to improve the quality of that education [12]. A cross-sectional survey of participants in a

**Table 1**  
Gerontological nurse educator award exemplars grouped by competency domains.

Competency Domain <sup>^</sup>	Gerontological Nurse Award Exemplars	Required
1. Maintains knowledge and skills in the care of older adults	Master or PhD qualification Educational qualification in ageing <sup>a</sup> Gerontological nursing certification	✓ ✓
2. Service as an advocate and positive role model in the care of older adults	Mentorship Ageing related publications, including book chapters or pamphlet Volunteer service in the community related to ageing Examples of community advocacy in ageing	
3. Implements innovative teaching strategies for engaging learners to develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills about healthy ageing and the care of older adults	Extensive teaching experience in ageing (at least three years), considering number and types of courses taught and experience in administration and coordination of courses focused on older person Undertake and evaluate innovative educational programs in ageing	✓
4. Facilitates interprofessional learning opportunities related to healthy ageing and care of older adults	Develop a collaborative practice model in ageing Service on editorial board for one or more publications in ageing	
5. Facilitates the integration of concepts of healthy ageing and care of older adults in academic and/or professional development programs	Service on ageing and/or education committees of recognized professional bodies	
6. Collaborates in the evaluation of learning about healthy ageing and care of older adults in academic and/or professional development programs	Active participation in quality initiatives in ageing Service on university committees	
7. Demonstrates scholarship and leadership that advances gerontological nursing education and practice, and fosters others professional development	Previous teaching awards in ageing Speaker or moderator on ageing Grants related to ageing education, research or practice Author or co-author article published in peer review journal Other authored article published in non-peer reviewed journal	

<sup>^</sup> From Wyman et al., 2019.

<sup>a</sup> Ageing includes gerontology, geriatrics, ageing and older persons.

recognition award program established in higher education found that the program: (1) engendered individual and group confidence and continual practice development; and (2) was valued by stakeholders [12]. Given the success of this generic program, offering a recognition award program in gerontological nursing education may enhance current gerontological nursing education programs.

In 2015, the US-based professional body for gerontological nurse education, the National Hartford Center for Gerontological Nurse Education (NHCGNE), established an international Expert Panel to develop core competencies to promote quality education in the care of older adults to nursing and interprofessional students in academic and professional development programs, provide career guidance for nurse educators specializing in gerontology, and provide guidance for evaluating qualifications of nurse educators teaching or seeking to teach gerontological nursing [7]. These competencies were used to develop criteria to distinguish nurse educators who were leading gerontological nursing education (see Table 1).

The Award program was first conducted in 2018 and has been offered annually since [14]. Applicants complete a comprehensive form outlining how they meet each criterion and provide evidence in the form of their curriculum vitae. A points system was used to record when application material demonstrated the criteria was met. A post-graduate qualification at masters or doctoral level in nursing, post-baccalaureate education in ageing, and formal experience in geriatric education for at least three years were considered essential to achieve the Award. The points cut-off to determine mastery for the Award was determined by an international committee of expert gerontological nurse educators.

The challenge of attracting graduate nurses to gerontological nursing may be addressed through high quality gerontological nursing education. The introduction of a recognition award in gerontological nursing aimed to enhance gerontological nursing education through the recognition of excellence in teaching. Understanding program participants' perceptions of the Award and its impact on their work and career may provide insights into the value of recognition awards more generally. This study aims to describe participants' perceptions of the NHCGNE Distinguished Educator in Gerontological Nursing Award (the Award) program.

### 3. Methods

A qualitative descriptive approach [15] was used to describe participants' perceptions of the Distinguished Educator in Gerontological Nursing (DEGN) Award program. The Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) guidelines for reporting were followed [16].

#### 3.1. Participants and setting

Purposive sampling, the selection of participants who can provide the information required to meet the needs of the study [17, p. 221], was used. The thirty-four recipients of the 2018 Award program were invited to participate. The 2018 Award recipients were employed in nursing education roles in higher education and in health care sectors based in North America, Europe, and Asia.

Recruitment took place over 3 months. The NHCGNE office staff advised recipients about the study via email including the aims of the study and the names, credentials, and affiliations of the researchers. The potential participants and researchers belonged to the same community of interest, specifically nurse educators in gerontological nursing, but did not have any work or personal relationships.

#### 3.2. Data collection

As participants agreed to an interview, they were allocated to a research team member (KO, LS, or LG) to arrange the interview time. The interviews were conducted on a digital meeting platform (Zoom®) and audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher introduced herself, restated the study purpose, and re-affirmed consent for interview and audio-recording. Only the researcher and participant were in their respective rooms for the interview. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. Questions were pilot tested on two people who had recently received the Award (i.e., not in 2018 group) and minor grammatical changes were made. The questions are outlined in Table 2. On average, the interviews were 20 min in length and ranged from 15 to 30 min. The researchers were PhD prepared female academic gerontological nurse educators with

**Table 2**

Semi-structured interview guide.

- 
1. How did you learn about the Distinguished Gerontological Nurse Educator Award?  
Probe: did you receive any advice? from who?
  2. What are the reasons that you applied for the Award?
  3. What is the value for you in receiving this Award?  
Probe: How did you benefit by receiving this award? How did you benefit by participating in the award process?
  4. How was the Award received by your colleagues?  
Probe: did colleagues inquire about the Award? congratulate you? seek you out for advice?
  5. How was the award received by your employer?
  6. How has your practice changed as a result of being an Award recipient?
  7. How have your patients benefitted as a result of you being an Award recipient?
  8. Did you attend the NHCGNE Leadership Conference this year?  
Probe: How did being a Distinguished Gerontological Nurse Educator influence that decision?
  9. Is there anything else you would like to add?
-

experience in qualitative methods. Three researchers (KO, LS, LG) conducted interviews. Recruitment for interviews occurred over 3 months with the goal of data saturation; specifically, once no new information was discussed by participants [18].

The digital recordings of the interview were uploaded to a professional transcription service. A research assistant checked the transcribed interviews against the recording to ensure accuracy. Member checking is one method that is used to enhance credibility of the study [19]. Participants were offered the opportunity to review the transcript prior to analysis to achieve member checking.

### 3.3. Ethical considerations

Approval from Griffith University Research Ethics Committee (2019/580) and Loyola University Chicago Institutional Review Board (LU#212712) was secured. Participants were provided with an electronic Participant Information Sheet, containing information about the study at the time of booking the interview. The researchers obtained verbal consent at the beginning of the scheduled audio-recorded interview. Each interview recording received a deidentified code and was sent by encrypted file to the transcription service. Given the small sample from an easily identifiable population, detailed demographics on the sample were not reported to protect participant anonymity. All data were stored through a firewall protected, secure database at Griffith University.

### 3.4. Data analysis

Inductive, thematic analysis [20] was used. Two researchers (KO & LG) independently read and reread the transcribed interview making notes in the margins. After review and familiarization with each transcript, any text appearing to describe perceptions of the Award were highlighted. The highlighted text sections were paraphrased and coded, manually charted, and initially grouped. The codes were then reviewed to derive categories (constructs) and were analyzed for themes and manually charted. The two researchers (KO & LG) then met to discuss and arrived at consensus on the independently developed inductive themes. Each researcher maintained a reflexive journal and audit trail, consistent with good practice [19].

A review of two earlier transcripts were reassessed for coding (LS) to confirm reliability over time [17]. Once authors (LG, KO, and LS) derived the final themes from the data, the fourth author (LA), who was a first cohort Award recipient, but not a study participant, reviewed the themes for face validity and the team met again for clarification and discussion of areas of ambiguity. Through this iterative process, the team arrived at consensus on the analysis of the content, increasing the dependability (interrater reliability) of the analysis [17].

## 4. Results

Nine of the thirty-four 2018 Award recipients responded to the invitation and subsequently participated in the study. Award recipients had a master or doctoral degree in nursing, a post-baccalaureate education in ageing, a minimum of three years of experience in gerontological nursing education, consistent with the essential Award criteria and were actively engaged in ageing education.

Participants came from North America and Asia regions. Data saturation was achieved after seven interviews and was confirmed in two additional interviews. Three of the participants reviewed their transcripts; no changes were required. The three themes concluded from the inductive analysis of the data are outlined below:

1. The Award was valued for its' prestige and recognition;
2. The process of applying for the Award was affirming; and
3. Achieving the Award strengthens confidence to lead and advocate for gerontological nursing education.

### **Theme 1.** The Award was valued for its' prestige and recognition

Participants learned of the Award through their gerontological nursing associations or their gerontological nursing education mentors and colleagues. Although the reasons for applying for the Award varied, there was homogeneity related to prestige and recognition of the Award. Participants described the prestige associated with the Award and how the prestige was valued. For example:

Well, I think it's really to identify myself nationally- I guess internationally- with others who I feel are also ... distinguished ... I think to me, especially being involved in the beginning, that word distinguished is there for a reason (DE2).

You're acknowledged by your profession and by an entity [NHCGNE] who is well known, that you are a distinguished educator (DE7).

The participants noted that the Award would be advantageous to their personal work profile, indicating that recognition of their gerontological nurse educator expertise would be valued by their current or future employers:

[I applied because] I felt like I met the criteria and thought it would increase visibility of gerontological nursing and also help with my academic portfolio (DE6).

Participants discussed the prestige of the Award in validating the significance of gerontological nursing education. They perceived that the Award advanced and increased awareness of gerontological nursing education in multiple social circles. Statements by the participants indicating this included:

... I just think that those that work in gerontology don't always get acknowledged. I thought this was a wonderful venue for letting other people know what we're doing and I think most people know, if you've worked pretty hard in a field and if there's an award available it would be wonderful to get that acknowledgement (DE4).

The main reason why I wanted to get the award was to align our university with [international universities] offering gerontology nursing programs. We had just launched [an aging and health initiative], so the best way for us to be known [internationally] was through this award (DE5).

For the participants, the Award represented a unique opportunity to establish expertise, provide an objective measure of credibility, and validate the specialty of gerontological nursing education. Examples included:

... there isn't a whole lot available to nurses who have specialized in gerontology ... I really was very happy to have some sort of distinction that recognizes my expertise and love of older adults (DE1).

I really wanted something on paper to show that I did have the required competency to teach gerontological nursing .... I've been teaching [gerontological nursing] a long time but this was really to solidify and really an objective way to show that I really am [an expert] (DE8).

... I teach gerontology in our traditional nursing program and so it was- it just seemed to me to be really fitting, particularly if students see that and know that you're an expert in that area (DE9).

Further, the perception that the Award was prestigious and widely recognized in multiple social circles motivated participants to apply.

### **Theme 2.** The process of applying for the Award was affirming

Participants discussed the Award application process, indicating that applying for the Award was affirming. The application process provided an opportunity for reflection on their accomplishments and their impact as a gerontological nurse educator.

I think the best part was when we had to fill in the criteria and I saw everything I had done (DE3).

I think it helped me recognize the things that I truly have done in geriatrics. I think sometimes we're so busy in nursing doing so many things that sometimes you forget the impact that you have ... (DE8).

Participants noted that their self-reflection highlighted areas for further professional growth. In addition, the process of applying brought to the forefront goals they wanted to accomplish in future work.

That was an interesting process and I had to dig back and think, okay, what is everything I've done related to older adults. So, I guess my benefit other than what I already mentioned ... is I got to really see that I do have expertise and my voice does need to be heard (DE1).

But I think that whenever we apply for any type of award or distinction, it helps us with our own self-reflection. I think it helped me identify areas of strengths, as well as weaknesses for my own learning needs (DE6).

Another affirmation related to the application process was the support and encouragement to apply from mentors and peers. This included those in the gerontological nurse educators' social circle, who had confidence that the individual would fulfill the stringent Award criteria.

... a friend had connected with me because I hadn't seen the information that had been posted initially .... she thought that I would be a good candidate for the Award (DE4).

[A mentor] encouraged us and other members of the faculty here in my university to [apply] (DE5).

The affirmation experienced during the application process was achieved through reflection and appreciation of their personal impact in gerontological nursing education, identification of areas for further growth and development, and the support of colleagues and mentors.

### **Theme 3.** Achieving the Award strengthens confidence to lead and advocate for gerontological nursing education

In this theme, confidence was strengthened through employer recognition, motivation to mentor others, and newly created opportunities for professional development. Participants noted that the Award was recognized and valued by their employer. This included recognition for professional advancement (promotion and tenure), requests or appointments to new initiatives, and inclusion in institutional marketing for student recruitment. The Award was clearly valued by universities looking to promote leadership in gerontological nursing education as indicated in the following excerpts.

I think it plays somewhat of a role in me being promoted and tenured (DE1).

Then once the award was bestowed upon me, then it ... helped heighten the awareness of gerontological nursing within my own institution. I think that it probably contributed to my next raise that I received [and] during the annual review (DE6).

I believe it [the Award] actually helped me to be awarded the gerontology professorship that I hold now, that it's a stipend award, an honor. (DE7).

Many of the participants described how achieving the Award went beyond recognition and prestige. Strengthened by the Award designation, participants indicated a feeling of enhanced confidence to take on new leadership opportunities and initiatives in gerontological nursing education within their institution:

Probably the thing I could say is maybe the confidence. Being confident that - I go back to a lot of nurses, we have imposter syndrome but when you start to build up your career ... it gives me confidence so I can be a more competent provider (DE8).

[Since the Award], I am the founder and director of what we call [the special initiative]. It is university wide and so we're interprofessional, which is super exciting. My institution has never had anything like this related to aging or older adults at all. This is also one of the first initiatives that nursing is leading across the university (DE1).

Attracting students enhanced the participants' perceived credibility and therefore contributed to their personal confidence:

For my employer, of course it's nice when you are talking with potential students. Also, when you are filling out all that information for the US News and World Report about the best schools, they really like all of those recognitions [sic] so that they can put it into their applications. So, for them, they really enjoyed it (DE8).

As noted in the first theme, participants were recognized by their colleagues, peers, and mentors in nursing and gerontological nursing education. Becoming an Award recipient motivated participants to mentor and encourage other gerontological nurse educators to apply, furthering awareness of the specialty.

... there is one junior faculty in particular that I think was ready for it, so I was encouraging her to apply and she was making inquiries of me to talk about the process and talk about what it can do for her and how it is a recognition of accomplishments (DE1).

I have been able to encourage other people to apply for this and ... letting them know that it's not an intimidating process and you've already done the work (DE8).

Achieving the Award provided new opportunities for leadership through networking and through membership in the NHCNE DEGN special interest group. Participants discussed the value of the DEGN special interest group and committee membership for access and networking opportunities with other professionals, individual growth and mentorship, and the learning and sharing of opportunities for institutional program development both nationally and internationally. Examples include:

I think that it gives me opportunities to talk with other professors and other universities ... it really has given me an experience to be able to identify with other nurse educators because we have that commonality (DE8).

... I became a member of [an NHCNE] committee ... it has enriched my teaching by being a part and more connected to the National Hartford Center (DE4).

Achieving the Award strengthened participant confidence to lead and advocate through expanded influence within their university, motivation to mentor others, and continue to personally develop educational knowledge through networking with others.

The three themes can be conceptualized into a working model for awards more generally, consisting of a foundation of perceived value, which motivates application, and affirmation subsequently supports confidence for leadership and advocacy (refer to Fig. 1). This social process operates in the context of supportive colleagues and supportive employers.

### 5. Discussion

In this study, we described participants' perceptions of the NHCNE Distinguished Educator in Gerontological Nursing Award program. Participants valued the Award for its perceived prestige and associated recognition; experienced the process of applying as affirming; and achievement of the Award strengthened their confidence to lead and advocate for gerontological nursing education. This process of valuing, affirming, and leading reflected a dialectic between the values of awardees and their employers and provides a

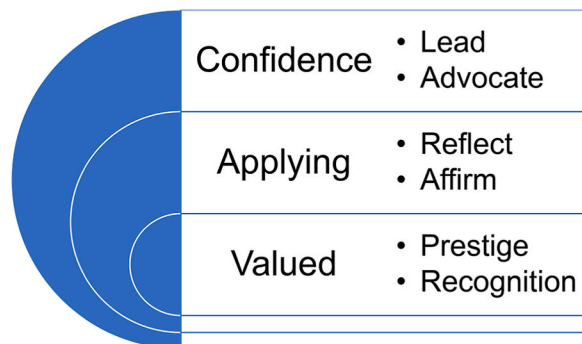


Fig. 1. Thematic process model for the education award.

conceptual model of recognition awards for further evaluation.

Participants perceived that the Award had value. Opportunities for tenure and promotion as well as for achieving increased wages were identified as motivation to apply. Several studies suggest that employers do value awards and certificates, and reward successful staff with professional advancement and increased salary [10,21–23]. Perceived personal opportunities appear to be dependent upon employers who are supportive of the Award, and what it means to the organization.

In addition to perceived rewards, the support of mentors and peers was identified as an element of the application process. Listening to others' views on their abilities provided an additional motivation to apply. Once they began the process of application, participants experienced further affirmation through self-reflection on their impact as a gerontological nurse educator in areas such as educational innovation, interprofessional learning, and scholarship [7]. Formal application provided the opportunity to identify areas for further professional development. This personal experience of affirmation as part of the application process is not reported in the literature on awards programs and may be unique to nurses and or nurses working in the field of gerontology. For these nurses, affirmation by colleagues may partly address the stigmatization experienced by nurse educators working in gerontology [9]. The cost of applying for the Award, in time and money, was not identified as an issue as has been reported for nurse certification [22]. Further research is recommended to investigate the meaning of affirmation in the application process.

Participants perceived that subsequent achievement of the Award strengthened their confidence to lead and advocate for gerontological nursing. This confidence may inspire the next generation of nurses to consider working with older people, which may support them to fulfil their responsibilities to direct more graduates to work in this growing field [6]. More specifically, they perceived that receiving the Award increased awareness of the importance of older adult care and education in their personal communities of practice.

Participants identified new opportunities available in the workplace post-Award. These experiences may develop in a dialectical relationship with employers. Employer recognition and social visibility have been found to improve individual performance [21] and increase employee willingness to contribute to the public good [24]. The dialectic between the three processes of the Award, from application to achievement, and the organizational goals of academic providers bears further investigation to create more ways to promote gerontological nursing education specifically, and ageing education more generally, as important to our societal, and global future.

While our interviews with Awardees suggest that the award process is a positive one, with good outcomes for the individual and their employers, there are some studies that suggest that social comparisons associated with awards may further reduce the performance of already low ability trainees [21] and that receiving an award may not enhance individual autonomy [22]. Receiving the Award appeared to strengthen individual resolve to advocate for excellence in gerontological nursing education. However, it was beyond the scope of this study to investigate social comparisons between Awardees and other gerontological nurse educators. As such, further research into awards generally, and the Award specifically, is required.

It is important to undertake further research into the quality of learning and teaching for gerontological educational programs led by educators with a gerontological award and those without to determine the impact of awards on the quality of education.

### 5.1. Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, general characteristics of the participants described though specific demographics were not provided due to the risks to anonymity associated with a small sample from an easily identifiable population, which may limit reproducibility. Secondly, when we set out on this research, we expected to learn more about how the Award improved teaching and learning in the field of gerontological nursing. However, participants did not perceive any changes in their practices with students or patient care due receipt of the Award. This may be attributed to the nature of the Award as an affirmation of good practice, with the quality of their work validated and therefore not raised in the interviews.

Thirdly, the study provides insights into the experiences of a limited number of Award recipients from one cohort, which may constitute nonresponse bias [18]. Given the findings of a recent integrative review, which indicate widespread negative attitudes to gerontology by educational administrators and educators [8], the findings of this study should be applied with caution. Inclusion of those who were awarded the designation in subsequent years may yield additional perceptions and themes.

Strengths of this study include its rigor, inclusion of an author for face validity, and inductive analysis. This work is the first to provide insights into the value of awards in the field of gerontological nursing education but how it can be sustained over time requires further investigation.

## 6. Conclusion

The process of applying for the NHCGNE Distinguished Educator in Gerontological Nursing Award relied on applicant perceptions of value, both personally and for the organization. This research provides a preliminary model to better understand the use of awards in nursing education. The use of awards is not widely practiced in specialist nursing, and its application to those areas where encouragement is required to ensure high quality educational practices, such as in gerontological nursing, requires further investigation. Further research into the benefits and limitations of award programs for individuals, employers, and the clients affected, such as baccalaureate nursing students, is required.

## Author contribution statement

Kimberly Oosterhouse, Lisa Skemp, Laurie Grealish: Conceived and designed the experiments; Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Wrote the paper.

Lisa Abdallah: Conceived and designed the experiments; Wrote the paper.

## Funding statement

This work was supported by funding from the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service Aged Care Research Development Fund.

## Data availability statement

The data that has been used is confidential.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the operational support provided by Annette McLaren-Kennedy to undertake the study.

## References

- [1] World Health Organization, Ageing and Health, 2021. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health#:~:text=Between%202015%20and%202050%2C%20the,%2D%20and%20middle%2Dincome%20countries>. (Accessed 6 June 2022), 2021.
- [2] Institute of Medicine (US), *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, National Academies Press: Washington D.C., USA, 2010.
- [3] T. Fulmer, A retrospective/prospective on the future of geriatric nursing, *Geriatr. Nurs.* 41 (1) (2020) 29–31, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gerinurse.2020.01.012>.
- [4] K.L. Rush, S. Hickey, S. Epp, R. Janke, Nurses' attitudes towards older people care: an integrative review, *J. Clin. Nurs.* 26 (23–24) (2017) 4106–4116, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.13939>.
- [5] M. Hebditch, S. Daley, J. Wright, G. Sherlock, J. Scott, S. Banerjee, Preferences of nursing and medical students for working with older adults and people with dementia: a systematic review, *BMC Med. Educ.* 20 (1) (2020) 92, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-020-02000-z>.
- [6] K. Mattsson, S. Rosendahl, Teaching gerontology in transcultural academics: a phenomenographic study of Tai and Swedish nurse educators' conceptions of gerontological nursing, *J. Transcult. Nurs.* 33 (3) (2022) 446–455, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10436596211068432>.
- [7] J.F. Wyman, L. Abdallah, N. Baker, C. Bell, National Hartford Centre of Gerontological Nursing Excellence., Development of core competencies and a recognition program for gerontological nursing educators, *J. Prof. Nurs.* 35 (6) (2019) 452–460, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2019.04.003>.
- [8] K.A. Negrin, S.E. Slaughter, S. Dahlke, J. Olson, Factors affecting undergraduate nurse educators' knowledge, skills or attitudes about older persons and their care: an integrative review, *Int. J. Older People Nurs.* 15 (1) (2020), 212293, <https://doi.org/10.1111/opn.12293>.
- [9] K.A. Negrin, S.E. Slaughter, S. Dahle, J. Olson, The experiences of nurse educators in establishing a teaching practice in the care of older persons: a focused ethnographic study, *J. Prof. Nurs.* 40 (2022) 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2022.02.005>.
- [10] S. Berlinksi, A. Ramos, Peer effects in the decision to apply for a professional excellence award, *Lab. Econ.* 67 (2020), 101934, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2020.101934>.
- [11] E. Cunningham, Professional certifications and occupational licenses, *Mon. Labor Rev.* (2019) 1–38.
- [12] T. Thornton, Professional recognition: promoting recognition through the Higher Education Academy in a UK higher education institution, *Tert. Educ. Manag.* 20 (3) (2014) 225–238.
- [13] R. Tait, D. Walker, Motivating the workforce: the value of external health and safety awards, *J. Saf. Res.* 31 (4) (2000) 243–251.
- [14] M.J. Gilmartin, J.L. Pettis, Take the next step in your leadership journey: a guide to geriatric nursing career awards and professional development opportunities, *Geriatr. Nurs.* 43 (2022) 314–317, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gerinurse.2021.11.024>.
- [15] M. Sandelowski, Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Res. Nurs. Health* 23 (4) (2000) 334–340.
- [16] A. Tong, P. Sainsbury, J. Craig, Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): a 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups, *Int. J. Qual. Health Care* 19 (6) (2007 Dec) 349–357, <https://doi.org/10.1093/intqhc/mzm042>.
- [17] J.E. Hupcey, Measurement issues in qualitative research, in: C.F. Waltz, O.L. Strickland, E.R. Lenz (Eds.), *Measurement in Nursing and Health Research*, Springer, New York, 2005, pp. 215–228.
- [18] D.F. Polit, C. Tatano Beck, *Nursing Research: Generating and Assessing Evidence for Nursing Practice*, tenth ed., Wolters Kluwer, China, 2017.
- [19] Y.S. Lincoln, E.G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, SAGE Publications, Inc., Beverly Hills, California, 1985.
- [20] V. Braun, V. Clarke, Using thematic analysis in psychology, *Qual. Res. Psychol.* 3 (2) (2006) 77–101.
- [21] N. Ashraf, O. Bandiera, S.S. Lee, Awards unbundled: evidence from a natural experiment, *J. Econ. Behav. Organ.* 100 (2014) 44–63.
- [22] B. Niebuhr, M. Biel, The value of specialty nursing certification, *Nurs. Outlook* 55 (4) (2007) 176–181.
- [23] L. Whitehead, M. Ghosh, D.K. Walker, D. Bloxsome, C. Vafeas, A. Wilkinsons, The relationship between specialty nurse certification and patient, nurse and organizational outcomes: a systematic review, *Int. J. Nurs. Stud.* 93 (2019) 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2019.02.001>, 2019.
- [24] S. Neckermann, B.S. Frey, And the winner is...? The motivating power of employee awards, *J. Soc. Econ.* 46 (2013) 66–77.