

# OPEN AND DISTANCE EARNING (ODEL) AS A PATHWAY TO GLOBAL HEALTH EQUITY: A NARRATIVE REVIEW ON GRADUATE NURSING EDUCATION IN LOW-RESOURCE SETTINGS

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## INTRODUCTION

The ongoing global nursing shortage as intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, has highlighted structural weaknesses in healthcare systems worldwide (Filip et al., 2022; Endalamaw et al., 2024). A major concern is the declining number of professionals pursuing graduate education, which reduces the pool of experts in academia, research, and leadership (Tencic & Roche, 2023; Kattan & Al-Hanawi, 2025). This shortage is further compounded by challenges such as financial constraints, time pressures, and geographical barriers that hinder access to advanced education, particularly in low-resource settings. Thus, this study investigates ODeL's potential to address systemic educational barriers and strengthen the nursing workforce, thereby contributing to global health equity in low-resource settings.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Guided by the PICO framework, this systematic review of 30 studies (2010–2025) explored the impact of Open and Distance eLearning (ODEL) on graduate nursing education and global health equity. Thematic analysis revealed seven key areas, demonstrating ODeL's capacity to expand access, promote inclusion, enhance educational quality and innovation, and support workforce development through flexible, technology-enabled learning. The seven key areas are:

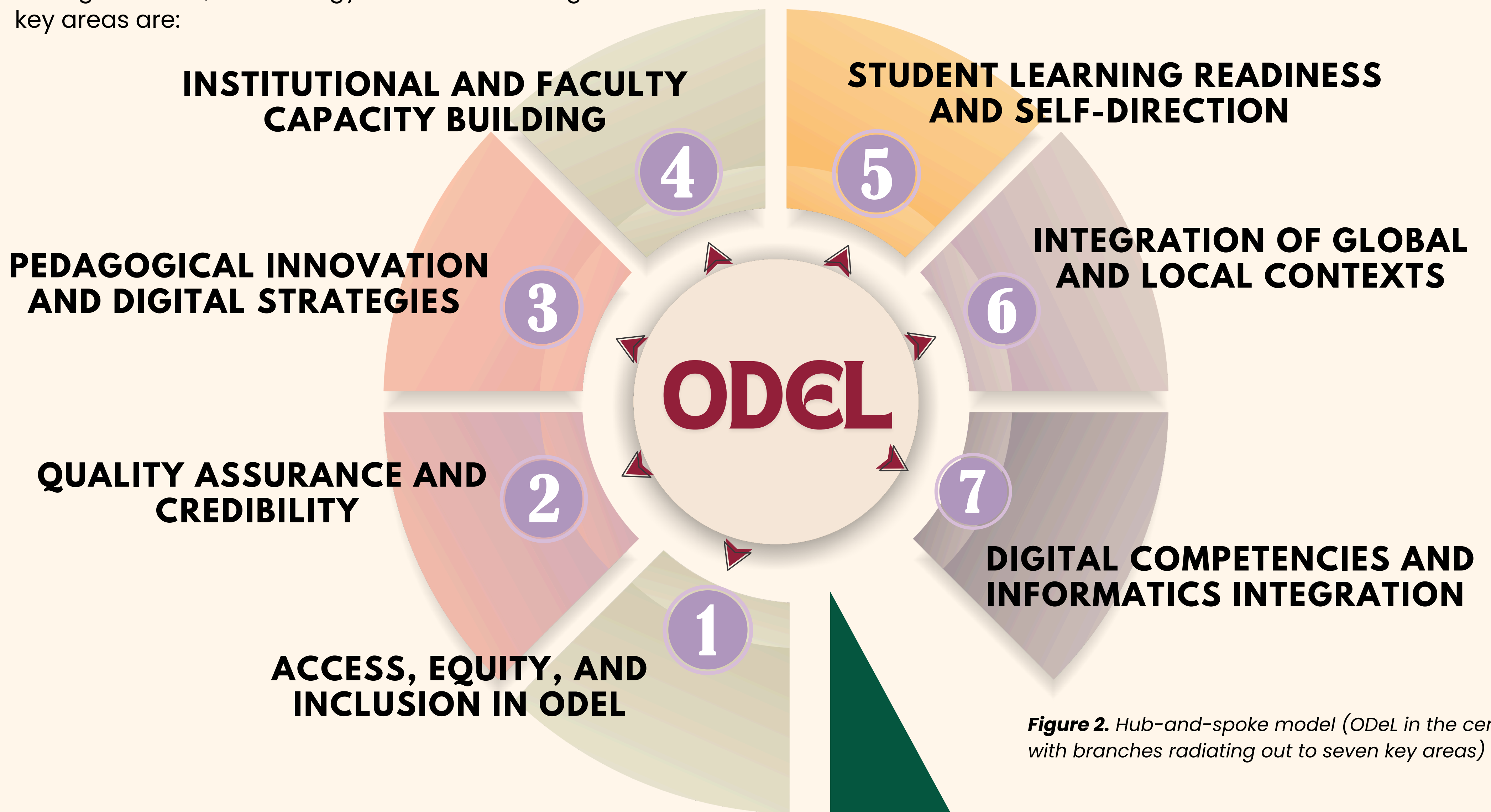


Figure 2. Hub-and-spoke model (ODEL in the center, with branches radiating out to seven key areas)



## METHODOLOGY

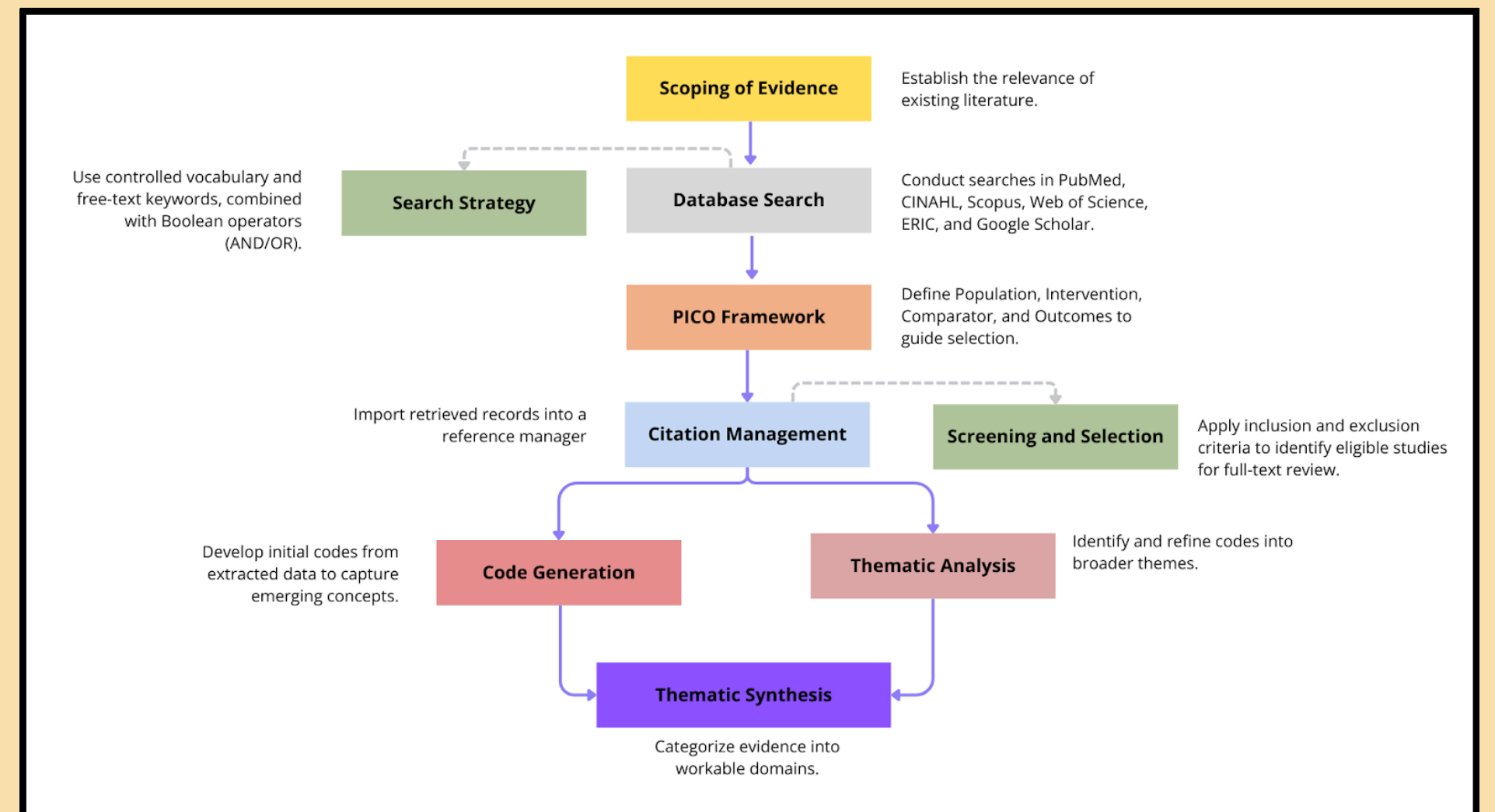


Figure 1. Methodological flow of the review process

A scoping review was conducted to examine the role of ODeL in graduate nursing education and its impact on global health equity. Comprehensive searches of PubMed, CINAHL, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar (2010–Aug 2025, English) used controlled vocabulary and keywords on ODeL, nursing education, and health equity.

Studies were screened with the PICO framework, including qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, case studies, and systematic reviews; non-empirical papers were excluded. Thematic analysis produced four domains, access, equity, outcomes, and challenges as the framework for synthesis.



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The review concludes that ODeL is not merely an alternative mode of education but a transformative strategy to strengthen the global nursing workforce. Sustained investment in infrastructure, faculty development, and inclusive policies is essential for maximizing its impact and ensuring equitable access to graduate nursing education worldwide.

## REFERENCES

Please refer to the QR code to access the Research manuscript with the complete reference list.

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