

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN NURSING IN BEGINNING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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1

PURPOSE

- Assess the feasibility and utility of measuring baseline professional identity formation in an introduction to the profession course for beginning nursing students.
- Examine beginning baccalaureate nursing students' general understanding of professional identity and compare the results of thematic analysis with the emerging work in nursing regarding professional identity.
- Inform nursing educators of identified gaps in professional identity formation which will be used to improve professional identity education.

2

PROFESSIONALISM AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Descriptor:

“Formation and cultivation of a sustainable professional identity, including accountability, perspective, collaborative disposition, and comportment, that reflects nursing’s characteristics and values.” (AACN, 2021, p. 55)

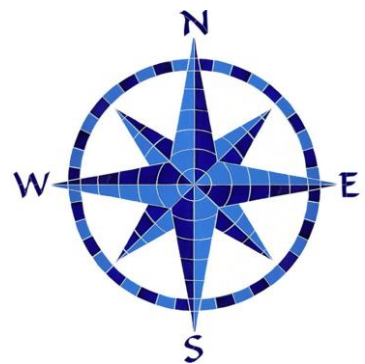
Professional Identity in Nursing:

“A sense of oneself, and in relationship with others, that is influenced by characteristics, norms and values of the nursing discipline, resulting in an individual thinking, acting, and feeling like a nurse” (Godfrey & Young, 2021, p. 363)

3

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN NURSING SIGNPOSTS

Values & Ethics
Knowledge
Leadership
Professional Comportment



4

FOUR SIGNPOSTS

Values and Ethics: A set of core values and principles that guide conduct

Knowledge: Analysis and application of information derived from nursing and other disciplines, experiences, critical reflection and scientific discovery

Leadership: Inspiring self and others to transform a shared vision into reality

Professional Comportment: A nurse's professional behavior demonstrated through words, actions and presence

5

METHODS

First Semester Nursing students (N=127) in an introductory nursing course completed the Professional Identity Essay (PIE)

Two evaluators reviewed seven student narrative responses for each of the nine questions to establish reliability.

Content analysis was completed and common themes and exemplars identified.

Themes were then compared to the four domains/signposts of professional identity in nursing and current gaps noted.

6

PROFESSIONAL
IDENTITY ESSAY
(PIE)

Students completed a total of 9 prompts.

Exemplar Prompts:

1. What does being a member of the nursing profession mean to you? How did you come to this understanding?

4. What conflicts do you experience or expect to experience between your responsibility to yourself and others- patients, family, and the profession? How do you resolve them?

7

QUESTION 1: WHAT
DOES BEING A
MEMBER OF THE
NURSING
PROFESSION MEAN
TO YOU? HOW DID
YOU COME TO THIS
UNDERSTANDING?

Common Theme:	Exemplar Quotes:
Most trusted profession	"Being a nurse means that you are there for others, you are going to be someone that they trust, and they need to be able to trust you"
Committed to others/selfless	"Nurses are brave. They are putting their own lives at risk to care for others." "...dedicating your life to helping others in their most desperate and vulnerable times." "Becoming a nurse to me has such a powerful meaning that I believe that in order to be a nurses it takes a lot of courage, strength and selflessness"
High standards/high importance	"Being a member of the nursing profession means working for something greater than myself and working with others to further the future." "A member of the nursing profession must be able to meet extremely high expectations from their patients, from the profession, from society and from themselves." "It takes perseverance, hard work, and resiliency"
Balance of knowledge and caring	"It means that there are now expectations for me to be a competent, compassionate nurse that provides safe, quality care to all" "It means having the skills to be able to do the tasks needed to ensure a patient is taken care of an also being their support system if needed"
Patient advocate/patient centered	"We can be patient advocates by being professional, compassionate, and openminded" "I believe the nursing profession is a very relational profession because of our patient-centered focus"
More than a job/An honor	"I wanted to make a difference in people's lives in a way that is impactful and can improve their lives as well as their families" "To me, being a member of the nursing profession means being a part of something bigger than myself that strives to do what is best for those in need"

8

QUESTION 4: WHAT CONFLICTS DO YOU EXPERIENCE OR EXPECT TO EXPERIENCE BETWEEN YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS- PATIENTS, FAMILY, AND THE PROFESSION? HOW DO YOU RESOLVE THEM?

Common Theme:	Exemplar Quotes:
Work-life balance	"The balance between work and self-care is very important but can be a blurry line at times" "My profession will require much of my time, which will minimize the amount of time I am able to spend with family and friends."
Disagreeing with patient wishes	"A patient disagreeing with my moral values could conflict with the responsibility I have to care for them." "(I would experience) an internal conflict if I do not agree with a treatment choice for a patient."
The emotional toll and stress of being a nurse	"I expect to feel overwhelmed at times in the nursing profession." "I expect to experience an immense amount of stress and sadness from the nursing profession... if something intense and saddening occurs at work, such as a death, it may cause my mental health and my nursing ability to diminish."
Misbehavior and treatment towards the nurse	"Nurses are often the ones that get yelled at by a patient or family member." "(treated like) a verbal punching bag" "...family members getting irritable with the care that their loved one is receiving, causing them to become upset with the nurse."

9

Signpost/Domain	Exemplar
Values & Ethics A set of core values and principles that guide conduct	"Make sure no mistakes are made," "Being a member of the nursing profession also means using clinical judgment and having ethical awareness to know how to respond to different situations that may arise." "...that I will provide the same level of care to patients who are complete strangers in the same way I would provide care to family members."
Knowledge- Analysis and application of information derived from nursing and other disciplines, experiences, critical reflection and scientific discovery	"Utilizing knowledge and skills to care for the patient" "For years now I have dreamt of the day when I can walk into a patient's room and identify what is wrong and how to fix it."
Leadership- Inspiring self and others to transform a shared vision into reality	"Nurses are true role models especially in the healthcare industry"
Professional Compartment- A nurse's professional behavior demonstrated through words, actions, and presence	"Working for what is best for others" "...to conduct themselves in such a way that they can be trusted at every level." "Being a nurse means that you are there for others" "It takes perseverance, hard work, and resiliency"

(Question 1)

10

Signpost/Domain	Exemplar
<p>Values & Ethics a set of core values and principles that guide conduct</p>	<p>"values & ethics" in response to moral conflicts- "providing myself as a readily available and non-judgmental source for information...respect my patient's decisions" "I will have to understand their choice and push my own feelings aside...advocating for the patient, I also must support them in the decision they make."</p>
<p>Knowledge Analysis and application of information derived from nursing and other disciplines, experiences, critical reflection and scientific discovery</p>	<p>none</p>
<p>Leadership Inspiring self and others to transform a shared vision into reality</p>	<p>none</p>
<p>Professional Comportment A nurse's professional behavior demonstrated through words, actions, and presence</p> <p>(Question 4)</p>	<p>Some students gave examples of how they would deal with conflict that reflected professional comportment. "Always remain calm and steady and not let my own emotions get the best of me in the moment" <u>Regarding team member conflicts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "understand that you are both apart of the same team and only want the best for the patient." "consider all views and be willing to learn in every situation as well as advocating for the patient if you believe your thoughts to be in the best interest of the patient." <p><u>Regarding nurse disagreement with patients' care decisions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I have to be open and receptive to their desires and boundaries and discern how we can come to a compromise." "listen and communicate with one another to find a solution together, one in which you both agree on." "value every person I encounter and treat others with bountiful dignity."

11

RESULTS

Student responses indicated early professional identify formation, with some students in earlier stages of development than others.

Common themes applicable to the four domains/signposts of professional identity were identified with the largest gap in professional identity formation being in leadership.

12

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of student responses is an important first step in understanding how nursing students perceive professional identity in nursing.

Utilization of the results can be used to monitor a student's individual development as they move throughout the curriculum/program.

Results can inform how we teach professional identity in nursing to students

13

REFERENCES

American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2021). *The essentials of baccalaureate education for professional nursing practice*. Retrieved from <https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/AcademicNursing/pdf/Essentials-2021.pdf>

Godfrey, N. & Young, E (2021). Professional identity. In J.F. Giddens (Ed.), *Concepts for nursing practice* (3rd ed.) (363-379). St. Louis, MO: Mosby Elsevier.

14