

Public Image of Nursing

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Abstract

This paper addresses some of the major outcomes from the previous seminal discussions about the challenges faced by nurses towards the dispensation of their professional responsibilities. It is widely apparent that nursing environment has changed over time since its institutions by Florence Nightingale in the mid-1840s. However, such changes have tainted the profession with more negative perception thereby exposing more challenges faced by nurses. Therefore, the author sought to address such challenges together with the potential solutions for an improved image and an enhanced healthcare service delivery.

Keywords: Professional; Seminar; Registered nurse; Rationale

Introduction

The profession of nursing has been facing challenges that have, in a way, discouraged the professional efforts and performance of nurses. The World Health Organization (2016) has indicated that such challenges have consequently led to a reduced enrollment to nursing schools in many parts of the globe [1]. In most countries, the public image of nursing has remained poor since nurses are merely viewed as assistants to the doctors with no sufficient judgmental ideas to execute. Such issues promoted the seminar discussions of the contemporary issues affecting the nursing profession.

The contemptuous view on the nursing profession arises from many challenges such as unpleasant work environments; long working hours and low pay [2]. Such challenges have also contributed to the poor reputation of nursing among other external predicaments [1]. Further, Patrick (2010) also indicated that the system of administration in the healthcare institutions also affect the reputation of nurses [3]. Despite the numerous challenges, scholars have expressed that nurses have the capability to establish "...a public and professional identity that recognizes the value of their professional and educational development..." through unity and dedicated efforts and create a strong professional worth [4]. This paper addresses the contemporary issues in nursing based on the seminar discussion and the authors' reflection alongside the proposed solutions.

The Rationale of this Topic

The foundation of this topic is based on the author's experience as a Registered Nurse where there have been an array of discouraging occurrences. Such experiences include the unconditional allocation of duties (by the doctors), regardless of time and interests. Such unconditional allocation of duties can lead one into making errors. Besides, it reduces the morale and excitements in delivering passionate care to the patients. Lartey et al. (2014) further indicate that there is need to develop 'mitigation measures' for retaining the current Registered Nurses [5]. There are high likelihood that the leading reasons for the discouraged enrollments are built upon the poor nursing reputation together with the challenging work environments [6].

Critique of the Literature on the Public Image of Nursing

The topic sources support from the literature and research articles that have reinforced a foundational idea about the current public image of nursing. Maxwell (2015) indicates that the "environment in which nurses do practice has changed" and this foreshadows a continuous

shifts to more deplorable status in the future [7]. Nevertheless, it was also expressed that there are regional differences in terms of reputation of nurses. Some parts of the world like North America (specifically Canada) still holds high value and reputation for the nursing profession.

The discussions addressed three main questions that goes hand in hand with the literature records. It presented the current leading challenges in the profession of nursing that have affected the undergraduate enrollment, causes of poor reputation of nursing and how leadership affect nursing. These three issues are addressed below based on the literature well as the suggestions that were presented during the discussions.

Current Challenges in Nursing Profession

Challenges at work environment

Nurses face diverse complications that range from the simpler social relationships to the more complicated issues like the highly demanding station activities. This idea clearly emerged from the discussion and it was noted that nurses frequently come into contact with the patients' bodily fluids, some of which have the potentiality of transmitting infections. Instead of depreciating, Maxwell (2015) argues that these challenges have high chances of increasing and posing more serious danger to nurses in the future [7].

Long working hours and low pay also do contribute to the challenges that discourage the performance of nurses in most health institutions [2]. The same idea was addressed in the discussions and it became clear that nurses get low pay yet they work for long hours. The nature of the work that they handle is also complicated and pose to them challenges, both mentally and physically. Hoeve et al. (2015) also highlighted the same reasons and adds that lack of autonomy is another issue that affects nurses' performance [4]. Lack of nurses' autonomy in their own working environment was also addressed in the discussions to be affecting their performance as well as patient outcomes.

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Decreasing number of preceptors and low enrollments

The low number of preceptors is another significant factor that emerged to pose challenge to nurses. Elisabeth et al. (2009) indicate that nursing education and training is directly influenced by the presence of preceptors, clinical supervisors and mentors [8]. However, Lartey et al. (2014) observed that the number of RNs and experienced clinical supervisors are declining. Consequently, the training of the novice nurses will get impaired [5]. The likelihood of incurring errors increases and thus the lack of self-confidence.

Nevertheless, the discussions present that one of the ways in which nurses can improve their public image is through their own personal initiative of delivering satisfactory services to patients. However, this can be challenging in the environment of low number of preceptors [9].

The historical perception of nursing as a junior profession also creates a negative image as reflected on the low number of undergraduate enrollments [10]. The discussion points also supported the idea of low enrollments. As previously mentioned, the challenges that are experienced at the work environment are the leading reasons for the discouraged enrollments.

Gender, tradition and cultural norms

The idea of traditional beliefs, cultural perceptions and gender directly contribute to the poor reputation of the nursing profession. The traditional beliefs and norms gives a feminine view to the profession of nursing. China, for instance viewed nursing as a duty of the female individuals from home [11]. Besides, they regard nursing as a duty of the inferior subjects based on the belief of their traditional caring system in which the junior had to care for their superior counterparts [4].

The idea that nursing has been based on 'caring' exercise makes it sounds like a feminine duty. The same idea of feminine duty was also presented in the discussions and nursing was termed as duty of 'sisters'. The discussions also indicated that nurses are merely considered as physicians' assistants.

Media and stereotyping

The media promotes the poor reputation of nursing in two different ways. The first approach is the display of programs that often portray nurses as junior staff. Secondly, the media has provided the platform where nurses spoil the image of their own profession. This is stressed by Bickhoff (2014) who indicates that nurses post negatively-portraying images on the social media. [12]. These have given a leakage of their unprofessionalism to the general public who react with the payback of stereotyping. The discussion highlighted an instance where nurses had been rebuked: "Naughty nurses told to behave after posting saucy selfies on social media".

Moreover, nurses have been identified with the low levels of positive representations on the media. The discussion highlighted instances when nurses had failed in communicating their professionalism publicly. Accordingly, Cordoso et al. (2014) who denotes that there are scanty information about nursing professional work and practices on the media [13].

Leadership

The absence of a strong unity of nursing could be due to the incomplete responsibility of the nurses' leaders [5]. Leadership is best built upon a transcendent and continues manner such that the experienced nurses provide mentorship and monitoring to the novice nurses [9]. However, this has not been perfectly achieved as nurses are

quitting the field, taking away their expertise, only to leave behind the new and inexperienced graduate nurses. The pitfalls in leadership were discussed and it became clear that strong nursing leadership have the potential of creating a positive perception of the nursing profession on top of empowering them to value themselves as professionals. On the hand, poor leadership only creates a poor work environment for nurses with the negative outcomes.

Leaders have the role of equipping the students with positive perceptions about nursing (Elisabeth et al. 2009). They have the responsibility to empower the students and make them feel the worth of their profession, thereby killing the effect of stereotyping [6].

Implications Involved

Various research and review articles have given an explorative examination of the current state of nursing as a profession with a poor reputation [4,14]. These criticism have also made attempts in providing realistic solutions but with little impacts so far. Through the discussions boards, nurses have confirmed the continued existence of the poor image of this profession. These issues, as mentioned previously, fall under three categories; the work place challenges, leadership and the media.

Nurses face many challenges, both at the management level as well as at the ground level. The nature of a nurse's activities entail a lot of mental and physical demand that may lead to stress and stress-related disorders. A registered nurse often faces the challenge of long working hours, and this is mainly due to the low staffing. Take an example of a nurse who works throughout the night and also attends to patients on the next day.

Moreover, nurses undergo a lot of sacrifice to satisfy the patients' needs. This means that a nurse has to take much concentration and effort in ensuring that his/her patient gets satisfactory care. From the discussions, it became evident that a nurse, like any other professional, has the entitlement of seeing a success in his/her duty. When a patient fails to recover well, as expected, it often presents the psychological problem to the nurse.

Secondly, the discussions regarded leadership as a significant element that can either make or break the passion of a nurse. This observation has been substantiated by Patrick (2010) where he argues that leaders have the responsibility of mentoring and encouraging the nurses [3]. Yet, such encouragement have been missing. Leadership has played a critical role in modeling the current image of nursing because they have the responsibility of leading, monitoring and representing nurses in major decision making events. Based on the discussions and the current state of nursing, a nurse can denote that leaders have not made a good success in creating a united nurses hub that that can boldly create a positive impact on the media. The leaders have not succeeded in creating a proper environment for nurses probably due to the influence and oppressive control from the senior members of the health facilities.

Significance of the Contemporary Issue in Nursing Today

The contemporary issues that are currently viewed to impede the successful performance of nurses can be traced back to the mid nineteenth century in Europe. Karimi & Alavi (2015) denote that, "In England, in the middle of the nineteen century, nursing was not a decent job" [15]. However, the indecency has gradually intensified and nurses' working environments have increasingly become unsatisfying.

The changes in the environment of nursing has spread to all sectors. Technology has improved, nature of diseases have changed and so, the expectations from the nurses must also change. Besides, the political systems have also undergone modifications and so the influence on nursing leaderships.

Nursing education and training have been modified in order to cope with the changing environment around the profession of nursing [16]. However, this has not been sufficient on its own and the challenges still exist within the nursing workforce. It is speculated that education could have failed in the aspect of empowering and equipping the newly enrolled students with proper skills of handling the challenges. A gap has widen between the changing environment (with challenges) and academic knowledge. Critical decisions are made on behalf of the nurses and this has discouraged the empowerment of their leadership due to the restricted freedom. Nurses cannot show their competencies over the media and so, the public has ended up looking at them negatively. Once all these challenges get to the would-be-eager fresh recruits, the vicious circle of discouragement continues and this is how the current contemporary issues arose in the profession of nursing.

Conclusion

The reputation of nursing as has not been adorable over a long period of time. Nursing has been considered as a junior duty, an occupation of the less learned female individuals who are directed to care for others. The traditional norms and believes that depict nursing as a feminine role have also enormously contributed to the poor reputation. However, this should not be the case because nurses, like other students, are well learned and equipped with proper knowledge of health services. Nurses are also faced with other discomfoting issues like putting on of the uniforms like the schooling students, exposed to hazardous work environments, awarded little pay, and work for so long at the critical stages of human life. Such challenges have scared away the passionate individual who would wish to join the field and the undergraduate enrolments have thus reduced. Besides, some of the older and experienced registered nurses are leaving the field and this will have a detrimental effects on the future of nursing as career if not considered.

Recommendations

The presented discussions actualized that nurses operate under restricted environments that discourage full demonstration of their professional responsibilities. Nevertheless, they have the chance of rectify their torn image by first, improving their public involvements and communicating their professionalism over the media such as YouTube and other internet channels. Besides, nurses need to engage on major public events and discussions that pertain to health matters. Such involvement would convince the public of their professional capabilities and knowledge.

Modification of the education and training systems for the learners is another means of empowering the upcoming nurses. It is important to let the learners have the confidence and esteem in their course

and professional line. This will make them realize that they are not mere assistants to the doctors, but professionals with strong medical knowledge and capabilities. Leaders have the critical role of doing this and this also asserts the enormous significance leaders in boosting the reputation of nursing.

The media is an open avenue that nurses can use in changing their image. Instead of posting images and literature that would otherwise affect their professionalism, they should use the media in reveling their skills and competencies to the public. This will have a positive effect on the young individuals who are aspiring to become nurses and the enrollments will also increase.

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