

The contributions of undergraduate nursing education in developing assertive communication behaviours among Saudi newly-graduated nurses: Qualitative findings

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Abstract

Aim of the study: This study aims to explore the views of newly graduated British and Saudi nurses on the contributions of undergraduate nursing education to developing and putting into practice their assertive communication skills. Both UK and Saudi Arabia have distinctly different cultural contexts, including the role of religion in shaping cultural norms and how assertive communication in each culture is perceived and practiced. Examining the views of newly graduated nurses in both settings will explore the similarities and differences between how assertive communication is taught during undergraduate nursing education and how newly graduated nurses in both countries learn and practice it.

Methods: Between 2015 and 2017 a total of 96 newly-graduated British and Saudi nurses completed a qualitative, open-ended question study. In their undergraduate nursing education and in their current clinical position, the nurses focused on acquiring and practising assertive communication skills. Using thematic research, the qualitative responses of the nurses were analysed.

Results: Data analysis established three main themes: "Drivers to Speak Up," "The Pedagogical Meaning of Speaking Up" and "Ways to Create Self-Confidence"

Conclusion: Across the UK and Saudi Arabia, undergraduate nursing education tends to express the need to learn assertive communication skills. However, this seems to be hampered by the lack of effective assertiveness teaching, as well as the lack of operational skills that would help nurses translate this theoretical teaching into tangible work-setting assertiveness strategies. The perceived sense of uncertainty over how to voice concerns seems to have made many participants more sceptical as to whether assertiveness as a concept can ever materialize in real ward settings. While removing any barriers that prevent speaking at work must be crucial, nursing education must also express both the importance of speaking, but also the best way to do so. Future research needs to examine the tactical skills (both verbal and non-verbal) that accommodate both cultural norms, but also the need to challenge poor practice, as well as the best teaching strategies to be used in pursuit of this objective. In future research, experimental methodologies may also be used to examine personality trait contributions to faster acquisition of assertive communication skills.

