

Creating Healthy Work Environments 2019

Analyzing Self-Care Initiative of Nursing Students

Rita W. Ferguson, PhD

Lawren Murray Tachias, BSN

College of Nursing, The University of Alabama in Huntsville, Huntsville, AL, USA

The purpose of this research is to understand how nursing students perform self-care throughout the 5 semesters of a rigorous nursing pre-licensure program. The field of nursing, often emotionally and physically challenging, encompasses a broad spectrum of patient circumstances. Self-care consists of constant, purposeful, voluntary, and learned actions performed in order to maintain one's well being and overall healthy existence (Orem, Taylor, & Renpenning, 2001). Self-care is a life sustaining action, tailored to each individual separately. Nursing students face the clinical world of constantly putting others' needs before their own, along with the stress of academia. Before caring for anyone else, a caretaker needs be mindful of his or her own individual needs, for example: how much water to drink throughout the day, how much sleep to get, how many calories to eat related to energy expenditure, how much time of physical activity needed, etc. A prevalent problem nursing majors face is incorporating self-care maintenance activities into their already demanding daily schedules. Finding a balance is often extremely difficult for these students. In a preliminary review of the literature, studies show that nurses lack self-care practices. Nurses impact patient outcomes and quality of care but there is evidence that the lack of nurses' self-care has a negative impact in the workplace and for patient outcomes.

This research exposes unique evidence through a mixed-methods study of both a survey (n=160) and semi-structured, self-report interviews (n=9). This mixed-methods style of research includes both numerical or quantitative data and the voice of the research participants or qualitative data. Inclusion criteria included participants were age 19 years or older, able to read and understand English, and admitted to The University of Alabama in Huntsville declaring nursing as a major if lower division or accepted in the College of Nursing. This research revealed crucial themes in regards to the lack of self-care that were analyzed to better understand self-care during this rigorous program. Nursing students and healthcare workers need more knowledge and support about self-care to create a balanced work and home environment and to prevent workplace fatigue.

Reference

Orem, D. E., Taylor, S. G., & Renpenning, K. M. (2001). *Nursing concepts of practice* (5th ed.). St. Louis, MO: Mosby.

Title:

Analyzing Self-Care Initiative of Nursing Students

Keywords:

balancing professional and personal life, clinical and academic fatigue and self-care of healthcare workers

References:

Chow, J. and Kalischuk, R.G. (2008). Self-care for caring practice: Student nurses' perspectives. *International Journal for Human Caring*, 12(3), 31-37.

George, J. B. (2014). *Nursing theories: The base for professional nursing practice* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Orem, D. E., Taylor, S. G., & Renpenning, K. M. (2001). *Nursing concepts of practice* (5th ed.). St. Louis, MO: Mosby.

Spadaro, K. C., & Hunker, D. F. (2016). Exploring the effects of an online asynchronous mindfulness meditation intervention with nursing students On Stress, mood, And Cognition: A descriptive study. *Nurse Education Today*, 39, 163-169. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2016.02.006

Stark, M., Manning-Walsh, J., & Vliem, S. (2005). Caring for self while learning to care for others: a challenge for nursing students. *Journal Of Nursing Education*, 44(6), 266-270.

Watson, J. (1998). *Nursing: Human science and human care*. New York: National League for Nursing.

Abstract Summary:

One cannot serve others if they cannot serve themselves first. Academic burnout, secondary trauma, failure, death and dying processes, along with mental, emotional, and physical grief all encompass the many challenges that nursing students overcome. This mixed-methods research reveals the self-care struggles of nursing students.

Content Outline:

I. Introduction

A. Self-care consists of constant, purposeful, voluntary, and learned actions performed in order to maintain one's wellbeing and overall healthy existence (Orem, Taylor, & Renpenning, 2001).

B. In a preliminary review of the literature, studies show that nurses lack self-care practices.

a) Research related to self-care of nursing students is an under researched topic.

b) Interventions related to self-care of nursing students is an under researched topic.

C. The importance of self-care is connected to decreased medical errors and increased patient satisfaction.

a) Without proper self care of healthcare providers, bad patient outcomes could result.

b) The abundance of stress leads to concentration issues, impaired problem solving skills, and mood changes (Spadaro & Hunker, 2016).

II. Body

A. Nurses care for others at the expense of their own emotions, comfort, and welfare (Stark, Manning-Walsh, & Vliem, 2005).

a) Nursing students balance both the clinical/ hospital settings and the world of academia.

b) Students are required to perform at extremely high standards in many different professional settings and in the academic setting.

c) Throughout the rigorous five semester program, we are conditioned and designed to become advocates, therapeutic communicators, and expert caretakers of others.

d) In Dorothea Orem's self-care deficit theory, these patients are deemed incapable of self-care and in need of nursing care (George, 2014).

e) Nurses and student nurses can become numb to their own needs because their daily lives are immersed in others needs.

B. A great need for more knowledge and support in regards to self-care was unveiled through a survey given to nursing students.

a) Students scored high in areas of interpersonal relationships and spiritual growth.

b) This evidence is directly confirmed through the interviews of nursing students.

c) Common themes of friends, family, and communication are valuable to the success of nursing students.

d) The survey revealed that students struggle in areas of stress management, nutrition, physical activity, and health responsibility.

e) Many students said they almost never attend programs on their personal health.

f) This is a shocking realization because nursing students attend lectures every week on a health related topic.

g) This is evidence that there is a lack of education on personal health and self-care within our health care programs.

h) Rarely is there an interest in a self-care of the healthcare promoter (Chow & Kalischunk, 2008).

C. A great need for more knowledge and support in regards to self-care was unveiled through interviews of nursing students.

a) Interview transcriptions revealed critical themes; many of the themes were related to negative terms.

b) Themes uncovered include: fear of failure, family and friends, scheduling and planning, powerlessness, decreased health, power of communication, purpose, fatigue, patient focused care above all else, self-care activities, lost hobbies, and spirituality.

c) Many quotes to support these themes are documented.

d) As health care providers, we must be in tune with our own emotions.

e) These are some of the heavy weighted words mentioned in the interviews: hyper focused, crying, breakdown, balance, perfection, support, mental breakdown, inadequate, anxiety disorder, fail, guilty, camaraderie, confidence, psyched out, reasoning school, torn emotionally, prayer, passion, selfish, afraid, caring, shut down, cry, lose it, avoiding responsibility, and plan.

III. Conclusion

A. How do we help nursing students become more knowledgeable about self-care?

B. The importance of self-care is often overlooked, but in order to properly care for our patients we must focus on the care of ourselves first.

First Secondary Presenting Author

Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author

Rita W. Ferguson, PhD, RN, MSN, CHPN, CNE
The University of Alabama in Huntsville
College of Nursing
Clinical Assistant Professor
Huntsville AL
USA

Professional Experience: 2006-Present Clinical Assistant Professor, The University of Alabama in Huntsville 1999-2005 Director of Nursing, Hospice Limestone County, Athens, AL 1997-1999 Graduate student, The University of Alabama in Huntsville 1977-1997 Army Nurse Corps, U.S. Army 1975-1977 Staff nurse, Western State Hospital, Hopkinsville, KY

Author Summary: Rita Ferguson graduated from Murray State University with her BSN. In 1977, she joined the Army Nurse Corps and retired from active duty in 1997 at the rank of LtCol. She has a Masters in Healthcare Administration and Nursing Administration. She received her PhD in Nursing from Georgia Baptist, Mercer University and is a Certified Nurse Educator, Hospice/Palliative Nurse. Her research interests include palliative care, end-of-life care, and health promotion activities of healthcare professionals.

Second Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author

Lawren Murray Tachias, BSN
The University of Alabama in Huntsville
College of Nursing
Student Researcher
Huntsville AL
USA

Professional Experience: STUDENT RESEARCHER Research and Creative Experience for Undergraduates and Honors Capstone Research Experience November 2016 – present Applied and chosen for both experiences, research approved by a Institutional Review Board, recruitment of participants, data collection through quantitative and qualitative methods, data analysis

Author Summary: Lawren Tachias graduated from The University of Alabama in Huntsville with her BSN. She started her research November 2016 through a program called Research and Creative Experience for Undergraduates at UAH. While working with Dr. Rita Ferguson, Lawren gained a passion for learning about the self-care of nursing students. Lawren is an advocate for self-care and presents this research in hopes that more knowledge and support is given to healthcare workers about their self-care.