

Resilience: A Necessary Protective Factor for Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

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Mini Review

Research has identified resilience as important for nurses because of the demanding role they have, and the chaotic environments in which they work [1]. The high stress profession of nursing raises the question: Does teaching resilience to nursing students improve their preparation for nursing practice? The purpose of Quinn's descriptive correlational research was to examine the retention and stress levels of nursing students who used resilience activities during nursing school. Nursing students (N=103) of a Generic Baccalaureate Nursing Program in the Midwest between the years of 2015-2018 were surveyed for self-reported stress and resilience activities, as well as monitored for retention. The students who used resilience activities also reported decreased stress and had increased retention. Nursing students of a four-year nursing program in their first term of nursing school were surveyed. The first survey consisted of the Perceived Stress Scale, a 10-item survey that gauged an individual's stress in a Likert Scale format. The students also took a second survey, Resilience Techniques, which was developed and tested to quantify the number of resilience techniques used in stressful situations.

The Resilience Techniques Survey included deep breathing, positive self-talk, guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, and gratitude journaling. The same students in their fourth and final term of nursing repeated the Perceived Stress Scale survey and the Resilience Technique survey. The results revealed a positive correlation between the number of resilience techniques used, levels of stress, and program retention. The students who used an increased number of resilience techniques also had decreased stress levels and increase program completion. The concept of resilience has evolved over time and is gaining traction

among healthcare workers, specifically nurses [2]. The American Psychological Association (2017) defines resilience as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity or significant sources of stress. Resilience has increased recognition in nursing education as faculty are challenged to prepare students to the complex environment of practice. Nurses are exposed to significant amounts of adversity and stress daily [3]. Nurses are challenged with higher patient acuity, nursing shortage, advanced technologies, physical and psychological stress demands [4]. Nurses tend to experience higher levels of stress-related burnout compared to other healthcare professionals [5].

Similarly, it is believed that nursing students also experience high levels of stress. When compared to other healthcare majors, nursing students reveal higher levels of stress [2]. The stress experienced among nursing students can negatively affect retention, the health of the student, patient safety, and quality of care. Protective factors related to resilience include optimism, sense of humor, flexibility and self-efficacy [2]. Resilience has been described as the capacity to 'bounce back' from difficult situations and persist in the face of adversity [6]. Developing resilience in young people is considered by many as the antidote to the epidemic of mental ill-health across our society today. The rate of nursing students with anxiety and depression is of growing concern [7]. Schools are uniquely placed to contribute to a student's healthy attitude and self-awareness through resilience training. If resilience training begins as the student enters nursing school, then the future nurse may see resilience as a natural skill [5]. Competence in skill of resilience may be taught as another important skill that is needed to be successful as a nurse in the profession.

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