COMPASSION FATIGUE IN NURSING EDUCATION

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BACKGROUND

Compassion fatigue is a phenomenon that is experienced by a vast number of health care workers and those whose work is to help others. Also known as secondary traumatic stress syndrome, compassion fatigue results from caregivers handling the stress of an encumbered healthcare system, along with the emotions and trauma affecting their patients. Although experienced daily, a significant number of caregivers do not take the time they should to practice self-care and self-compassion, leading to inevitable lack of empathy and compassion for others.

Caregivers who are affected psychologically, physically, spiritually, and socially with no recovery are then unable to care for patients holistically.

Much of the current literature using surrounding compassion fatigue involves the analysis of self-reported survey data. Such studies assess the signs and symptoms associated with compassion fatigue, but not what leads to the symptoms and/or when those symptoms begin.

STUDY PURPOSE

To explore how nursing students experience compassion and compassion fatigue during their pre-licensure nursing education.

METHODS

Q-Methodology

Purposive sample:
30 participant nursing students
10 entry-level | 10 mid-level | 10 end-level

The Q Sample:
40 opinion statements about perceived compassion behaviors of faculty, students, and self

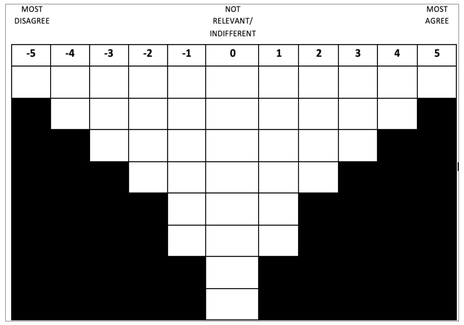
Process:

- Participants ranked their level of agreement and disagreement with each statement on a -5 to +5 sorting sheet.
- Using Ken Q analysis software, the Q sorts underwent by-person centroid factor analysis with varimax rotation to find groups with shared viewpoints.
- Normalized Z scores were calculated to show how much the participants loading on a factor agreed or disagreed with each of the 40 statements.

RESULTS

A three-factor final solution explained 59% of the variance. Five loads were confounded, two did not load, and 23 of the participants loaded on one of the 3 factors.

Q-Methodology is a theory and person-centered research method created to study subjectivity, allowing the researcher to quantify viewpoints regarding the subject.



Pictured above is the sorting sheet utilized in the Q sort. The 40 opinion statements were ranked and recorded by the participants on this sheet.

FACTORS

VIEWPOINT SUMMARIES

MOST AGREE

- Factor 1: "I would not change my field of work if I had the opportunity to."
- Factor 2: "I feel worn out because of my work within nursing."
- Factor 3: "I believe that I make a positive impact on those that I take care of."

MOST DISAGREE

- Factor 1: "Students in the nursing program take the time to practice self care."
- Factor 2: "Students in the nursing program take time to practice self care."
- Factor 3: "Members of my faculty prioritize research/outside work over the classes that they teach."

CONCLUSION

Understanding nursing student perceptions of the subject may help increase our understanding if the dawn of compassion fatigue lies within nursing education.

Nursing students seem to be satisfied in their field of work, feel as though they make positive impact within their scope of care, and are satisfied with the work of their nursing faculty. However, nursing students also seem to feel worn out, and that they lack sufficient self-care.

Obtaining a view on how traditional undergraduate nursing students feel regarding compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction within their programs may lead to the implementation of targeted intervention strategies to prevent compassion fatigue and its onset within nursing education.

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