Registered Nurses' Lived Experiences of Peer-to-Peer Incivility in the Workplace

Susan Rux, PhD, RN, PHN, ACNS-BC, CHEP, CNE, CPRW, NEA-BC
North Brunswick Campus, Chamberlain University - College of Nursing, North Brunswick, NJ, USA

Purpose:
The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore registered nurses’ lived experiences of peer to peer incivility in the workplace. An aim of this study was to understand the participants’ experiences of peer-to-peer incivility in the workplace, its effect on patient safety and nursing job satisfaction and retention.

Methods:
Descriptive phenomenology was used for this study on the lived experience of being a registered nurse who has encountered peer to peer incivility in the workplace. Participants were enrolled using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. Semi-structured interviews were audiotaped and conducted with participants who had experience with peer to peer incivility in the workplace. Data were collected until saturation was achieved. The audiotapes were transcribed and analyzed for common themes that represented the participants’ experiences with peer to peer incivility. Through the process of phenomenological reduction, the researcher is challenged to suspend beliefs, biases, and preconceived notions about the investigational phenomenon. In this reductive process, bracketing, sets aside subjective perception in order to gain purity and neutrality of the phenomenon. A reflective diary was used as a method to set aside preconceptions when listening to the participants’ stories related to peer-to-peer incivility. This researcher believes that past experiences influence one’s perceptions which is consistent with a constructivist philosophy.

Results:
Based on the findings of this study, suggestions are offered for further research and required actions to elevate the work atmosphere of the nurse from uncivil to a healthy and professional workplace. There was no hierarchy of themes. All themes and subthemes were equally important. Two themes and five subthemes emerged from the participants' verbal descriptions. The participants revealed how their workplaces were highly competitive and that one had to fend for oneself in order to survive. Many of the participants verbalized that they did not feel supported by their peers. Participants chose words such as war, enemy, brutal and rival to describe their workplace. Experiences of competing and fighting with one another were shared and therefore, being in a war-zone, became apparent. Participants described how incivility in their workplace prevented them from being able to provide adequate care to their patients. Additionally, the participants revealed emotional, physical, and social consequences that directly or indirectly had an impact on them. Feelings of rejection, disrespect, not treated with dignity, and treated unjustly - feeling demoralized and humiliated were common themes shared from the participants’ experiences with peer-to-peer incivility in their workplace.
Conclusion:
The study findings have substantial implications for nursing education, nursing practice, nursing research, and nursing science. This investigation provides novel information about experiences with uncivil peers and relates the experience to being in a war-zone. Some participants shared their perceptions of the impact on safe patient care, retention of nurses, and medical costs. Finally, this study suggests what it is like to be a nurse who has experienced peer to peer incivility and how that experience has affected their decision to remain in their nursing position.

Title:
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Keywords:
Experiences, Incivility and Workplace

Abstract Summary:
This qualitative study explored registered nurses' lived experiences of peer-to-peer incivility in the workplace and to the effect of incivility on patient safety and nursing job satisfaction and retention. Study findings, inform required actions to elevate the work atmosphere from uncivil to a healthy workplace for nurses.

References:
Author Summary: Dr. Susan Rux is an award-winning nurse educator and administrator with greater than 25 years nursing experience. Her work on addressing peer-to-peer incivility in academic and work environments, has gained attention from nurses and nurse leaders. Currently, she serves as the Vice President of Communications for the New Jersey State Nurses Association (NJSNA), Region 4 and has served on the task force for the American Nurses Association Professional Panel for Incivility, Bullying, and Workplace Violence.