Lori I. Kidd, PhD, RN, CNS
Kathleen Tusaie, PhD, PMHCNS/NP-BC

PURPOSE
To analyze influence of a Virtual Community of Practice (VCoP) on resilience and connectedness in graduate psychiatric nursing students

PROBLEM
Approximately 33% of Nurse Practitioners (NPs) change place of employment within the first year after graduation.

Reasons include:
- Role conflict
- Changes and losses in relationships
- Feelings of isolation
- Uncertainty due to lack of knowledge
- Inability to function in a holistic manner

Would structured participation in a VCoP increase sense of connectedness, level of resilience, and retention rates?

METHODS
Mixed methods pilot study
- Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (2003)
- Sense of Community Index II (Shavis, Lee, & Acosta, 2008)
- Focus Groups

Sample
- Convenience sample (n=6)
- Psych NP students in final year

ANALYSIS
- Paired sample t-tests pre-participation in VCoP and post-participation in VCoP (1 year after graduation)
- Thematic analysis: peer debriefing and verification to ensure credibility of findings

FINDINGS
- Total mean scores for resilience post participation trended towards significance
- Sense of community scores post participation demonstrated less variability
- Students demonstrated more frequent use of VCoP after graduation than when assigned in class
- Only 1 graduate changed employment in the first year after graduation (16%)

THEORY OF CONNECTIVISM (Siemens, 2005)

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING
- Use of VCoP may increase workplace resilience
- Use of VCoP may increase retention in initial employment of new graduates
- Use of VCoP helps move education into the digital age
- Recommendations for future research:
  - Larger sample
  - Longer time line
  - More variables

Limitations
- Small sample size
- Convenience sample
- Lacks generalizability
- No control group
- Possible confounding variables

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