Nursing Students' Perceptions of Trust in the Student–Faculty Relationship

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Background

- Few studies examined trust within nursing student–faculty relationship
- Nursing student–faculty trust is associated with academic success[1]
  - Impacts cognition and critical thinking
  - Positive students' attitudes
  - Students actively engaged

Purpose

To disseminate findings of an exploratory study that identifies:

1. BSN students' experiences of nursing instructors in class or clinical who established trust
2. BSN students' experiences of nursing instructors in class or clinical who did not establish trust

Methodology

- IRB approval
- Purposeful sampling
  - Students enrolled in first semester nursing course. Participant incentive: pizza and drink
- Two focus groups
  - Consent cover letter
  - Conducted after class
  - Guided by pre-set questions
  - Permission to audiotape

Demographics

- 6 Participants
- Gender
  - 6 females
- Age
  - Range 20–43 (mean age 28)
- Ethnicity
  - 5 White and 1 Asian
- Education Level
  - 2 high school graduates
  - 4 college graduates

Thematic Analysis

- Audio recordings transcribed verbatim
- Two researchers:
  - Became familiar with data
  - Generated initial codes
  - Searched for and reviewed themes
  - Defined and named themes

Theoretical Framework: A Convergence of Two Studies

- Data were coded and thematically analyzed without trying to apply a preexisting framework

- In the final step, however, the Elements of Trustworthiness™ model was found to succinctly capture the findings

  - The model is the result of an exploratory factor analysis of 99 items believed to be antecedents of workplace trust

  - Chronbach alphas for the three subscales range from .918 to .943

Thematic Model: Elements of Trustworthiness™

Character

Self-Oriented .... Other-Oriented

Effort

Adequate ....Above-and-Beyond

Interactions

Steadfast.. Open to Influence

Behavioral Polarity—Character

Self-Oriented ....Other-Oriented

Benefits   **Benefits**

Take care of oneself, independence, personal needs met

Loyalty, sense of safety, camaraderie, bonded team, cohesion

Costs   **Costs**

Fractured relationships, discord, less performance in others, attrition

Perceived weakness, loss of respect from some people, fewer personal needs met

Behavioral Polarity—Effort

Adequate ……………………………………………………………………………… Above-and-Beyond

Benefits   **Benefits**

Conserve energy and resources, maintain   Excellence, quality, pride in
margin and flexibility, more rested   accomplishment

Costs   **Costs**

May be outclassed by competition,   Stress, burnout, exhaustion
minimized rewards, loss of momentum

Behavioral Polarity—Interactions

Steadfast ....Open to Influence

Benefits   **Benefits**

Accomplish own goals, get what one wants, achieve individual vision

Obtain collective wisdom, achieve collective competence

Costs   **Costs**

Strife, decreased engagement, shut down others' input

Blurred boundaries, may lose sense of self, risk selling self short

Findings

Sample Focus Group Quotes: Character

Self-Oriented .... Other-Oriented

"It's sort of body language about everything. When I feel like they're stuck on their life or what they need to get done is more important than the success of the students."

"Any time I feel like I'm not supported or I'm interrupting their stuff. That's where I feel like I really don't have the trust."

"If they make eye contact. If they listen to me or they look at me while I'm asking a question. And if they don't understand, they'll restate it to me."

"The teachers help you trust yourself because they understand where you are. They're like: 'We did this. We get it. Let's help you.' So they just understand and they get it and they want you to do well."

Sample Focus Group Quotes: Effort

Adequate ……………………………………………………………… Above-and-Beyond

"One of our classes, I feel like the teacher doesn't do a lot of preparing then blames it on the system or the building faults. She took no accountability."

"One of the best professors I've ever had was one who was willing to go above and beyond and help me with research and help me design my own course to take in another country."

"I feel like I adequately prepare for an exam. To go into an exam and feel that you have no idea what the question is… I mean, literally, like 85% of the test. Trust was gone after that test."

"It's about the effort they put in. To know that the teacher was prepared and wants to get to know you and wants to answer questions."

Sample Focus Group Quotes: Interactions

Steadfast ……………………………………………………………………………… Open to Influence

"I mentioned, can we go slower? And she said, 'just write down the key points.' I feel like she's done it this way for many semesters and it's probably not time to change it."

"She was not listening to what he was really asking. Her face got red and she was like: 'I don't think you understand.' She took it like what you're teaching us is wrong. If I was him, I would shut down."

"If someone makes a mistake and then is willing to say, 'You know what? I messed up.' That builds my trust because it goes back to the person being relatable."

"We've had professors where a certain amount of people missed a question or they realized it was worded wrong, and they threw it out. Every time that happens… it gains trust… because they're real and they're fallable. Just to be able to admit it."

Discussion

▸ Nursing students seem more likely to trust faculty who

  ◦ Exhibit a student-oriented character

  ◦ Go above-and-beyond in their teaching role

  ◦ Are open to influence in their interactions

Conclusion and Recommendations

▸ The Elements of Trustworthiness™ model can teach faculty how to form student–faculty relationships based on trust

▸ Further studies are needed to determine if such training can

- Increase student engagement in learning

- Improve student academic success

References

[1] Applebaum, B. (1995). Creating a trusting atmosphere in the classroom. *Educational Theory*, 45(4), 443–452.

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