

EMPOWERING NURSING STUDENTS: GIVING VOICE TO THE NEXT GENERATION

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CONTEXT

In 2019, the government made a commitment to bring 50,000 new registered nurses to the NHS by 2024 as part of The NHS Long Term Plan (NHS England, 2019). Whilst there has been an increase in applications to nursing courses, according to the Nursing Standard (Collins, 2018), the annual rate of attrition from these courses has typically been around 24% each year. To understand why, it is important to speak to those at the heart of it: **the students**.



Bradbury-Jones et al. (2007) found that student nurses often failed to voice concerns about poor nursing practice even if they believed it to be wrong.



Webb and Shakespeare (2008) recognised that students' worried about the detrimental effect of exercising their voice on their placement experiences.



Levett-Jones and Lathlean (2009) discussed how students conformed to clinical practices that they knew to be incorrect so as not to 'rock the boat'.

AIM

To explore the experiences and perspectives of nursing students in relation to their ability to use their voice and have a say in their education and practice.



Why is it important for nursing students to have a voice?

Do nursing students feel they have a voice?

What are the barriers to nursing students using their voice?

What would help nursing students use their voice?

METHOD



Online questionnaire



122 nursing students



Four key questions



Open and closed questions: quantitative and qualitative data



Thematic analysis to identify the key themes

RESULTS

The importance of nursing students having a voice

Nursing students are the next generation of nurses

Taught the most up to date evidence-based practice

To ensure the best learning opportunities

Everyone in the multidisciplinary team deserves a voice

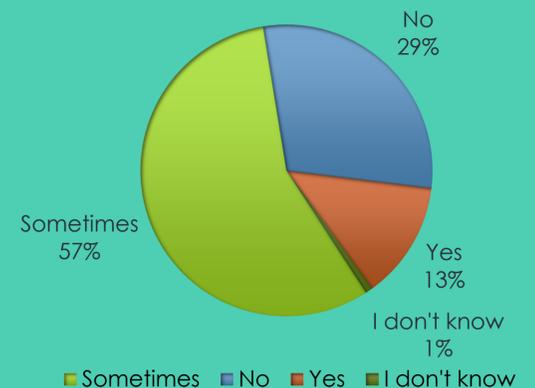
Feeling heard and valued helps with morale

Bring a fresh pair of eyes to a clinical area

Student nurses have a duty of care going into the profession

Support the retention of nursing students

Do nursing students feel they have a voice?



Barriers to nursing students' using their voice

Not taken seriously as 'the student' with staff not using their name

Poor communication with university and placement

Lack of confidence to speak up as a student nurse

Hierarchical structure in clinical practice areas

Unsupportive staff make students feel unwanted and undervalued

Not knowing where to go for help and support

Fear of repercussions when speaking up

Poor staffing threatens students' supernumerary status

FUTURE PRACTICE

Recommendations for future practice



No more 'the student': team should learn their name and recognise the value they bring



Training for students: focus on when and how to speak up in clinical practice



Improved student platform: forums, Q+A with decision makers, student councils



Active listening: ensure student nurses feel their voices are heard



Safety to speak up: create a psychologically safe environment for all



Protected time for regular meetings: to address positive and negative experiences



Education for multidisciplinary team: on the role of nursing students and inclusion training



Passionate mentors: excited about teaching the future nursing workforce



Support and advocacy: better support from the team and management

References

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