The Effects of an Academic Bullying Culture on Nursing Faculty Self-Esteem & Mental Health:
A Nursing Care Plan Approach Using PMHN Skills to Support New Nurse Educators

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Abstract

- Horizontal violence (or bullying) is well documented in the clinical setting and also in the academic setting. Sadly, the new nurse educator is at risk for experiencing a compounded dose of incivility and bullying which can have a negative impact on self-esteem and mental health.
- Without support, these new nurse educators may leave the field, thus compounding the educator shortage. We in PMHN have a unique understanding and set of skills to assist new nurse educators to succeed. This session will present a Nursing Care Plan using PMHN skills that can be used to support our new nurse educator colleagues.

Need for Nurse Educators

- 169,000 qualified applicants turned away in 2008-2009
  - Shortage of nursing faculty, competition for clinical sites, inadequate classroom space
- Average age of nurse faculty over 50
- Few RNs going into academic careers → Acute drop in nursing faculty over next 10-15 years

Goals for Nursing Education

- Attract nurses to academia
- Support them once they arrive
- Retain them in the position

Goals for Nursing Education

- Develop qualified educators to guide the next generation of nurses (and nursing faculty)
- If the faculty shortage is to be alleviated, there is a dire need for experienced nurse educators to teach and empower a new generation of faculty
- Professional role development and mentoring are needed to help new nurse educators assume the faculty role

Learning Objectives

- Define and describe horizontal violence in nursing, faculty incivility and the academic bullying culture.
- Outline and discuss the negative effects and implications of academic bullying on new nurse educators.
- Integrate PMHN concepts into a plan of care to support new nurse educators.

Jahnke
Factors for Nurse Educators

• Attraction to nursing education
  – Working with students
  – Helping to shape the nursing profession
  – Flexibility to meet other obligations of life

• Effective recruitment strategies
  – Increased faculty salaries
  – Discussions about nursing education careers
  – Grants and scholarships

Factors for Nurse Educators

• Effective retention strategies
  – Positive work environment
  – Work environment that fosters collegial relationships
  – Flexible working hours
  – Support from administration

Role Transition

• From expert clinician to novice academic
  – Leaving security and expertise of clinical position
  – Can cause apprehension, ambivalence, uncertainty regarding career move
  – Disparities between instruction and direction

Factors influencing recruitment and retention of nurse educators
Jane D. Evans, PhD, RN, MHA
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Nursing
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New Nurse Educators

• Enter the field with dreams and hopes
• They come with ideas of changing the world and high ideals

Inexperienced Nurse Educators

• Beginning a teaching position can create high levels of stress
• Transition to educator often hampered by unrealistically high expectations leading to uncertainty and anxiety
• Requires an adjustment in knowledge, skills, behaviors
Learning Curve

• Expectations
  – Teaching, student advisement, committee and curriculum work, service learning
• Challenges
  – Undoing mistakes, finding adequate support and accurate information, discovering intricacies of position
• Learning on-the-job
  – Feeling ill prepared and unsure of self

Horizontal Violence in Nursing

• The venting of the intolerable stress can result in lateral violence
• Regardless of the initiating stress, no one deserves to be abused
• When lateral violence erupts, everyone is affected
  ANA Continuing Education: "Lateral Violence: Nurse Against Nurse" by Patricia A. Rowell, PhD, RN www.nursingworld.org

Horizontal Violence in Nursing

• Violence between and among workers is not unusual today
• In health care, violence is a growing problem among nurses
  – Lateral violence: Nurse against nurse
• The core issue continues to be that violent behavior towards another oftentimes injures the other’s self-esteem

Incivility in the Workplace

• Hostile work environment
  – Power imbalances
  – Silent treatment, micromanaging, demotion, given less responsibility, demoralizing incidents, constant criticism
  – Aggression, incivility, bullying
• Thresholds for incivility differ
  – Who violated whom, when, where, how, how often, why

Horizontal Violence in Nursing

• Such an adversarial dyad serves no one but establishes an atmosphere for increasing anger and possibly violent behavior
• High stress jobs such as nursing tend to generate pressures that are often vented when additional stressors are added

Academic Environment

• Job satisfaction = empowerment
  – Cognitions: meaning in work, competence, self-determination, impact
  – Formal structures: access to resources
  – Informal structures: relationships between co-workers and management
Academic Organization

- Hierarchical business organization vs. academic institution
- Incivility
  - Tenure and promotion process
  - Bureaucracy and isolation
  - Politics and power

Faculty Incivility

- Distributing resources unequally
- Withholding resources and information
- Belittling or dismissing other’s opinions and ideas
- Deceiving, using passive-aggressive behaviors, flaunting power and authority
- Eroding another’s self-confidence and self-esteem

Incivility in Academe

- Classroom
  - Student to faculty
  - Faculty to student
- Department
  - Administration to faculty
  - Faculty to faculty

Bullying

- Not new
- Recent topic of national conversation
- Issue facing people of all ages
- 27% of workers admit to feeling bullied at work

Faculty Incivility

- Manipulating and intimidating
- Divulging confidential information
- Assigning overloads with unrealistic expectations
- Excluding, alienating, ostracizing, silencing others
- Unfairly treating, hounding, micromanaging, undermining, unfairly criticizing

Bullying

- Challenges the limits of civility
- Bully aligns personal interests to his or her own agenda in the belief that he or she is acting for the greater good of others or the organization
- Prolonged workplace incivility and bullying can sustain a bully culture
Definitions of Workplace Bullying

- Synonyms that reflect the seriousness of bullying: Psychological Violence, Psychological Harassment, Personal Harassment, 'Status-Blind' Harassment, Mobbing, Emotional Abuse at Work
- Euphemisms intended to trivialize bullying and its impact on bullied people: Incivility, Disrespect, Difficult People, Personality Conflict, Negative Conduct, Ill Treatment

Early Signs & Indications

- You feel like throwing up the night before the start of your work week
- Your frustrated family demands that you stop obsessing about work at home
- Your doctor asks what could be causing your skyrocketing blood pressure and recent health problems, and tells you to change jobs
- Your favorite activities and fun with family are no longer appealing or enjoyable

Experiences at Work

- You attempt the obviously impossible task of doing a new job without training or time to learn new skills, but that work is never good enough for the boss
- Everything your tormenter does to you is arbitrary and capricious, working a personal agenda that undermines the employer's legitimate business interests

Early Signs & Indications

- You feel too ashamed of being controlled by another person at work to tell your spouse or partner
- All your paid time off is used for "mental health breaks" from the misery
- Days off are spent exhausted and lifeless, your desire to do anything is gone
- You begin to believe that you provoked the workplace cruelty

Experiences at Work

- People feel justified screaming or yelling at you in front of others, but you are punished if you scream back
- You finally, firmly confront your tormentor to stop the abusive conduct and you are accused of harassment
- Surprise meetings are called by your boss with no results other than further humiliation
Experiences at Work

• You are shocked when accused of incompetence, despite a history of objective excellence, typically by someone who cannot do your job

• HR tells you that your harassment isn't illegal, that you have to "work it out between yourselves"

• Everyone (co-workers, senior bosses, HR) agrees (in person and orally) that your tormentor is a jerk, but there is nothing they will do about it (and later, when you ask for their support, they deny having agreed with you)

• Your request to transfer to an open position under another boss is mysteriously denied

Workplace Bullying

• Undermines legitimate business interests when bullies' personal agendas take precedence over work itself

• Is akin to domestic violence at work, where the abuser is on the payroll

Who Gets Targeted

• Most likely, you were targeted (for reasons the instigator may or may not have known) because you posed a "threat" to him or her

• The perception of threat is entirely in his/her mind, but it is what he/she feels and believes

Targets

• Targets are independent

• They refuse to be subservient

• Bullies seek to enslave targets

Workplace Bullying

• Is driven by perpetrators' need to control the targeted individual(s)

• Is initiated by bullies who choose their targets, timing, location, and methods

• Escalates to involve others who side with the bully, either voluntarily through coercion
Targets

• When targets take steps to preserve their dignity, their right to be treated with respect, bullies escalate their campaigns of hatred and intimidation to wrest control of the target's work from the target

• Are better liked, they have more social skills, and quite likely possess greater emotional intelligence

Targets

• Are non-confrontive

• They do not respond to aggression with aggression

• But the price paid for apparent submissiveness is that the bully can act with impunity (as long as the employer also does nothing)

Targets

• They have empathy (even for their bullies)

• Colleagues, customers, and management (with exception to the bullies and their sponsors) appreciate the warmth that the targets bring to the workplace

• Are ethical and honest

Targets

• Some targets are whistleblowers who expose fraudulent practices
  – Every whistleblower is bullied

• Are not schemers or slimy con artists
  – They tend to be guileless

• They have empathy (even for their bullies)

Bullying

• “Bullying is not about what the perpetrator meant; it is about what the recipient felt.”

• Suppression of emotions
  – Embarrassment and fearfulness

• Negative effects on empowerment, competency, motivation
  – Disempowering

Bullying

• Often result in psychological or physiological distress for the people involved

• If left unaddressed, may progress to threatening situations
Bullying

• Is a systematic campaign of interpersonal destruction that jeopardizes your health, your career, the job you once loved

• Is a non-physical, non-homicidal form of violence and, because it is violence and abusive, emotional harm frequently results

Esteem Needs

• People need to have high self-regard and have it reflected to them from others

• If self-esteem needs are met, we feel confident, valued and valuable

• When self-esteem is compromised, we feel inferior, worthless and helpless

Maslow’s Hierarchy

• Self-transcendence
• Self-actualization
  – Becoming everything one is capable of
• Esteem
  – Self-esteem related to competency, achievement, and esteem from others
• Love and belonging
  – Affiliation, affectionate relationships, love
• Safety
  – Security, protection, stability, structure, order, limits
• Physiologic

Feelings

• Few people go through life without encountering stress, loss or disappointment

• Any persistent life problem or recurring adversity may eventually lead to feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, guilt, apathy, depression

Self-Actualization

• We are preset to strive to be everything we are capable of becoming
• The drive to satisfy this need is felt as a sort of restlessness, a sense that something is missing
• It is up to each person to choose a path that will bring about inner peace and fulfillment

Feelings

• Negative feelings about one’s self and the world arise when life events threaten one’s self-esteem
• If self-esteem is linked to achievement and recognition, status and prestige are very important
• People suffer a loss of confidence and self-assurance when their feelings of competence are threatened
Emotions Experienced

- By the bullied faculty colleague:
  - Anxiety
  - Fear
  - Stress
  - Anger
  - Helplessness
  - Hopelessness
  - Powerlessness
  - Low self-esteem

Mental Health Issues

- Stress
- Crisis
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anger/ aggression/ violence
- Sleep disorders
- Somatoform disorders
- Substance abuse

Effects on New Nurse Educators

- Faculty have become afraid of one another
- There is a silence that pervades the staff rooms like never before
- They are exhausted, hurt, angry, sad, over-whelmed, hopeless, silent, purposeless and lost

Nursing Process

- Application of PMHN concepts to
  - Assessment
    - Physical and psychosocial
  - Diagnoses
    - Psychosocial nursing diagnoses
  - Planning/ outcomes
  - Implementation/ interventions
    - Relationships, communication, qualities, behaviors, understanding responses
  - Evaluation

Low-Self Esteem

- A fundamental problem in dysfunctional relationships
- When self-esteem is threatened, risking levels of anxiety and aggressiveness appear

Assessments

- Understanding of problem
- Risk factors for safety
- Psychosocial status
- Mutual goals
- Formulating plan of care
- Educational and occupational background
- Social patterns
- Interests and abilities
- Coping abilities
- Spiritual assessment
- Mood, affect, feelings
- Thought processes
- Communication
- Physical behaviors
  - Eating, sleeping
Nursing Diagnoses

- Anxiety
- Fear
- Ineffective coping
- Impaired social interaction
- Social isolation
- Ineffective role performance
- Decisional conflict
- Insomnia/sleep deprivation/disturbed sleep pattern
- Fatigue

- Hopelessness
- Powerlessness
- Situational low self-esteem
- Spiritual distress
- Ineffective denial
- Imbalanced nutrition
- Interrupted family process
- Ineffective role performance
- Disturbed personal identity
- Risk for self-directed/other-directed violence

Planning and Outcomes

- Goals of PMHN
  - To empower others by helping them restore their sense of value, strength and the ability to cope with life
  - Empowerment means that people have both the authority and the confidence to choose and act on options
  - The goal of empowerment is that others regain or attain meaningful roles, relationships and activities

Therapeutic Techniques

- Relationships
  - Goals and functions
  - Social, therapeutic
  - Boundaries and roles
  - Values and beliefs
  - Establishing rapport
  - Confidentiality

Strategies for the “Victims”

- Be assertive
- Seek information and resources
- Garner power
- Reframe experience to that of “survivor”
Qualities and Behaviors

• Qualities
  – Genuineness
  – Empathy
  – Positive regard
    • Attitudes
    • Actions

• Attending behaviors
  – Eye contact
  – Body language
  – Vocal quality

Understanding Responses

• Crisis
  – Maturational, situational
  – Phases
  – Perception of precipitating event
  – Situational supports
  – Coping skills
  – Counseling and crisis intervention

Understanding Responses

• Stress
  – Stressors
  – Perception
  – Personality
  – Social support
  – Measuring stress
  – Assessing coping skills
  – Managing stress through relaxation techniques

Understanding Responses

• Anger/aggression/violence
  – Psychological factors
  – Predictors of violence
  – Anger-control assistance
  – Feelings that may precipitate anger
  – Marginal coping skills

Understanding Responses

• Anxiety
  – Levels
  – Defense mechanisms
  – GAD, Acute stress Disorder, PTSD
  – Promotion of self-care activities

Skills Training

• Assertiveness
• Communication
• Conflict management
Nursing Process: Evaluation

• Reflective of goals

• Empowerment and job satisfaction

• Retention of qualified, caring faculty who have much to offer to nursing students and the profession

Challenging the Mindset

• Incivility in nursing education can take a tremendous toll on us, our colleagues, students, and ultimately the people entrusted to our care

• Fostering civility takes courage and a commitment to change

Challenge to PMH Nurses

• Our PMHN skills can be a valuable asset to supporting our colleagues

• Use your PMHN skills to be the change

• Help our new colleagues to be “survivors” of academic bullying

Resources


• www.workplacebullying.org