

CONCEPT ANALYSIS

Friendship in the Nursing Workplace: A Concept Analysis

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Abstract

Friendships are essential to human function and survival and are one of the many influences affecting health, well-being, and happiness in both personal and professional life. This concept analysis aims to clarify the meaning of friendship among professional nurses by presenting the attributes, antecedents, and consequences of friendship and discussing surrogate terms and model cases.

Keywords: *Concept Analysis, Friendship, Nursing Workplace*

Introduction

Friendship is one of the personal values important to human function and survival, one of the many factors influencing our health, well-being, and happiness (Dunbar, 2018). However, there needs to be more clarity regarding the meaning and attributes associated with this construct within the Nursing profession (Schmidt & McArthur, 2018). Numerous studies, research, and nursing organizations present concepts of Friendship, however vaguely identified as “social networks.” Shaykhislamov (2020) stated that friendship has a diverse function for research and is a very complex spiritual and ethical phenomenon expressed in different ways and languages.

Therefore, the purpose of this concept analysis is to clarify the meaning of friendship among professional Nurses through presenting the attributes, antecedents, and consequences of friendship in the nursing profession as well as surrogate terms and a model case to inform nursing students and nurses both in the academe and the clinical area about the development of friendships.

Friendship and Kinship

Kinship is seen as a person who depends without limit. Friendship has limits, although the limits vary. The exchange between friends is mostly emotional and abstract, though material objects can sometimes be exchanged as well. This event is also called caring, where friends help each other through listening, understanding, and protecting each other. The most important feature of

friendship is that it is voluntary. Persons involved in friendship share mutual trust and emotional closeness, enabling them to express their hidden thoughts and feelings openly.

Friendship in the Workplace:

In the workplace, friendship is usually connected with mentoring. Mentoring is a mutual career enhancement achieved by an alliance between a mentor and a mentee to enhance knowledge and skill. It may be experienced at all stages of a nursing career. A mentor is expected to have advanced professional knowledge or skill, such as a clinically experienced nurse, advanced nurse practitioner, or a “doctorally” prepared nursing professor guiding a mentee to enhance knowledge, skill, and attitude. Mentorship may bloom into the bond of friendship depending on the willingness of both parties to invest time, emotion, and trust. Creating and maintaining friendships is extremely costly in terms of both the time that has to be invested and the cognitive mechanisms that underpin them.

Another feature of friendship is that people involved make a mutual series of decisions about developing or deepening the relationship where both must earn the same rights and privileges, equal to, or more than, a family member. This means that both parties set boundaries and expectations for treating each other; this vital element fosters and sustains the relationship. One must gauge how people open up their personal

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lives or modify their plans to accommodate the other to measure the level or intensity of friendship.

The Ending of Friendships

Like all other relationships, some friendships may come with expiration dates. This happens as people mature and evolve, where change is inevitable. As nurses move through their professional lives, they interact with various people. These people may stay lifelong friends, while others may stay only for an identified season. Though friendships may end, the relationship's learning and benefits have a lifetime impact on the nurse's life.

Antecedents

Pairing of like-minded individuals

Pairing people with like minds builds the foundation for developing professional connections amongst colleagues in future practice.

Pairing people with the same goals and objectives at work leads to professional collaboration, teamwork in clinical practice, and a shared sense of belonging and acceptance while building the potential for friendship outside the workplace (Cleary et al., 2018; Lafrance, 2018).

Constructive Conflict

In its beauty, the nursing profession is built up of unique personalities and value foundations; conflicts may arise from different personalities, values, backgrounds, and upbringing. Constructive arguments allow both parties to express thoughts, likes and dislikes, and negative emotions. Coming out positively on the other side of an argument from stormy waves into the calmer waters builds trust in the relationship. Resolving conflicts in a healthy, professional manner creates an understanding of self and others, facilitating friendship and thus accomplishing goals and strengthening healthy relationships.

Help-Seeking

Making an effort to learn something and develop ways to solve a problem or cope with an existing threat. Help-seeking moves a person to select a confidant that will help an individual cope and further resolve the existing problem. There are three Stages of Help Seeking:

(1) recognition of the present threat; (2) making the decision, willingness and open to accepting help from others and acting on the decision and seeking help (3) selection of a help source (Tagoonaden et al., 2018; Potgieter, 2021)

Caring

One of the fundamental values of the nursing profession is caring. This refers to having an altruistic concern for each other's welfare within and among the profession (Tagoonaden et al., 2018). Caring involves empathy, the ability to unite with another in a given

situation. This concern for others moves one to act for the benefit of others, building confidence and trust and strengthening good relationships. Individuals who experience high-quality team-member exchange relationships are more likely to contribute by assisting one another and sharing information, ideas, and feedback within work teams.

Consequences

Workload Satisfaction

An effective, high-performance team needs interaction with team members to facilitate the usage of individual potential to work within roles and responsibilities. Nurses' friendship networks are a potential key factor in achieving professional goals that lead to job satisfaction (Yang et al., 2012). Friendship in professional nursing can help facilitate coordination, cooperation, and interdependencies and promote job satisfaction. They can also meet others and make cross-ward friendships. Cross-ward friendships can provide extensive contact in multiple departments with access to information, resources, and opportunities. The higher-efficiency nurse demonstrates that her friendship network is rich in structural ties and may take advantage of the opportunities to obtain support to get her job done. Moreover, her job satisfaction will be improved.

Self-appraisal

Mutual learning and self-development are being highlighted as one personally reflects. As an individual nurse interacts with others, friendship fosters self-appraisal through the need to understand the method of one's current practice and ensure the transfer of current safe practices through the free exchange of information.

Sense of Belonging

Enabling groups allows nurses to share ideas and interests without judgment and gain personal recognition from peers, all of which contribute to increased self-esteem and a strong sense of belonging. Friendships serve as a haven that helps professional nurses cope with the demands of the profession that can be overwhelming.

Fosters Learning

Open workplace communication in professional nursing friendships facilitates access and exchange of information, resources, and opportunities to learn and develop themselves. Friendships that are critically constructive provide different viewpoints, reframing, and reflection. This will elicit positive change, focusing on improving self and practice (Joseph et al., 2021; Gregory & Burbage, 2017; O'Dwyer, 2019).

Surrogate Terms

Rapport

A close and harmonious relationship where people mutually

understand and accept feelings and ideas. People who have established rapport communicate well in a two-way communication.

Closeness

The quality of having an affection for someone.

Camaraderie

A feeling of bond between people is established through sharing an experience.

Proposed Definition

Friendship is a dynamic and complex interpersonal relationship where people are open to sharing their lives, such as past or present painful or joyful life experiences, personal plans, dreams, and aspirations. Friendship is more than a casual acquaintance or the informal meeting of strangers. Friends are persons to whom effort is made to maintain communication and contact to whom feelings of emotional bond are present. The bond of friendship may include members of extended family, spouses, or people who are not related by blood. It is primarily heard from people who call their spouse/mother/sister/brother their "best friend." Significant differences exist between kinship (family) and friendship (friends). Friendship usually stands behind love and family. Friendship has limits, although these limits may vary and may end at any point of a season in the nurses' career progression.

Model Case and Analysis

Cristopher is a dialysis nurse and feels that often, the families are more demanding than the patients. Moreover, when he became a nurse, he spent so much time at work—sometimes even more time than at home with his loved ones. In caring for his patients, not only is he coping with the system he works in, with a supervisor, a boss, or a manager he may or may not like, and office politics, but he also knows that he has specialized knowledge that not everyone has. In a system where not everyone he works with is in the same role, he might feel a little more alone in his job. Non-nurses who do not have the same or similar training may not understand his jokes or fully wrap their heads around their stressors.

Like Cristopher, many nurses have a different sense of humor, which not everyone appreciates. Cristopher found appreciation of this dark sense of humor with Hector. Not only does the friendship with Hector provide him stress relief, but being able to make dark, weird, and gross jokes to someone who will understand and also think it is funny reduces stress in a big way. Cris feels that sharing a laugh amid a stressful day lowers his blood pressure and helps put everything in perspective. Having Hector, who understands what makes nurses tick and what makes the profession unlike any other, is the backbone of these types of relationships. Getting perspective from a work friend who understands how to handle on-the-job situations builds resilience and normalizes stressful

situations. It makes Cristopher feel understood and not alone in challenging tasks. Cristopher thinks that having someone who "gets" you and "gets" you can reduce stress and make you feel better in various workplace situations.

Both male nurses have developed a core group of nursing friends. They collectively pitched in to ensure that if someone needed a day off or a last-minute shift coverage, they helped one another. It was an unspoken understanding that they took care of one another. Cristopher thoroughly enjoyed his shifts when he had coworkers that he could call his friends, and he also was able to sleep better at night and looked forward to going to work.

Related Case: Mentorship

Career changes can be particularly challenging to navigate. Shena was nervous and hesitant when she transitioned to a new service line a few years later. However, Nori, her director of nursing, championed the mentorship program and supported her through the process.

Importantly, Nori gave Shena a safe space to talk through her feelings. Shena always felt supported because Nori prioritized her best interests and well-being. Honest conversations where Shena could freely share her concerns and turn any perceived problems into growth opportunities. Trying something new was challenging, but Nori never made Shena feel like a burden for needing support while adjusting.

Borderline Case

Ruby's mentors have helped her through some tough times but have not always been affirmative persons. Her mentors gave Ruby honest and direct feedback on more than one occasion. Ruby felt that the truth could sting a little, especially early on in her career, but her mentors' honesty allowed her to accept that she is not perfect and no one is.

Not everything always works out the way they plan, which is okay. Nurse Ruby learned to be open to advice even when it was hard for her to hear. It has helped her have a clearer outlook and navigate difficult situations more easily. Ruby learned that it is just as crucial to question our own approach and response to challenges as it is to offer constructive criticism to others.

Conclusion

Nurses cannot underestimate the power of the bond of friendship in the workplace. Building healthy workplace friendships is an ingredient of a healthy work environment; although costly with the time and emotional investments, it has the potential to influence nurses' well-being, job satisfaction, health, overall wellness, and happiness despite the daily challenges they face, thus contributing to the quality of care given to patients and improves healthcare delivery.

Recommendation

The investigation of the concept revealed that bonds of friendship within the Nursing field are essential to develop and nurture. Safe workspace has the potential to provide a positive environment where friendships flourish and grow. On this basis, future research should examine the impact of friendships in nursing on the quality, safety, and improvement of healthcare delivered to the patients.

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