Typologies of Professional Identity among Graduating BSN Students

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to identify patterns of professional identity arising from the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) attitudes among students completing their prelicensure education.

Design: This mixed-method study used a modified Q-methodology design with a purposeful sample of 36 baccalaureate students graduating from three campuses of a large Midwestern university. Data were collected near the end of the spring semester of 2013.

Methods: Participants rank-ordered their agreement or disagreement with a set of subjective statements reflecting the 46 QSEN attitudes. Data were analyzed using a standard three-step approach that included generating a correlation matrix, completing factor analysis followed by varimax rotation, and calculating the factor scores.

Findings: Twenty statements represented consensus among the participants, and there was strong agreement that patient safety was both an individual and a team effort. Three professional identity typologies emerged: champions, collaborators, and individualists.

Conclusions: Evidence was found that these students internalized the QSEN attitudes to varying degrees, but more work may be needed to internalize all attitudes, especially those related to patient-centered care. Future research is needed to evaluate how students with different perspectives transition to practice and to explore other factors that comprise professional identity.

Clinical Relevance: This study expands on what is known about patterns of professional identity among nurses and helps provide a beginning framework for understanding the values new graduates bring to practice.