

Nursing from Conflict Perspective

Introduction

It is important to start by giving a rather simplistic definition of conflict which goes straight to the point. The Tear Fund (2003:1) writes that, conflict happens when two or more people or groups have, or think they have, incompatible goals.

Conflict among nurses can be approached from various perspectives. In other words, conflict is a multi-dimensional subject. From a naive point of view, it can be seen as the vital role which nurses play during armed conflict, for example, wars and so on. However, looking inwardly, there is another side of the coin- managing conflict between nurses and their colleagues, with patients and with superiors, etc. Ignoring conflict in the workplace can be destructive. This paper focuses on selected ways by which conflict manifests in nursing.

Theoretical Perspective

Many conflict theorists agree that conflict recurring reality in social organizations. Nursing is not an exception. Parker (2008:1) supports this notion when she writes that, any work setting certainly has the potential for conflicts, and an acute hospital setting is no different. The issues that occur between staff, and during attempts to initiate new procedures are not unique to the medical profession, and do not, in fact, represent the hospital situations portrayed in television soap operas.

Furthermore, leading theorists Marx and Engels (1965:26) state that conflict is bound occur in society because various groups have diverse interests which clash with one another. The clash between one group and another often results in a social problem when that conflict is not quickly resolved. Nurses work in an environment that is prone to conflict in various ways. Nurses have to deal with patients, doctors, colleagues, etc. Each of these relationships and communication channels can result in conflict if not handled appropriately.

Varying shades of conflict in nursing: related studies

Conflict is a manifest in many ways as nurses carry out their duty. Selected types of conflict in nursing are discussed in this section.

Time as a source of conflict

In the study “Time as a source of conflict: Student nurse experiences of clinical practice in a rural setting” Dalton (2004:1) analyzed the experiences of undergraduate student nurses who were on their first engagements in rural clinical practice. The study sought to find out the meaning which these nursing students attached to time in a rural setting as their previous conception of time was dislodged. It sought to find out what meaning these students attached to time in a rural setting considering that they were city bred. The study used ethnographic research method drawn up by Geertz and the hermeneutic philosophy by Gadamer. Dalton (2004: 3) found that, the students needed to learn about the rural setting before they could get down to the job of caring for patients.

Conflict in the workplace

People are bound to disagree in the work place. While subordinates are expected to listen to superiors, they may disagree among peers. Payami Bousari et al (2009:1) explore the experiences of Iranian nurses in conflicts which occur in the workplace in the study, “The process of nurse’s interpersonal conflict: qualitative study.” This study which undertook a qualitative approach used unstructured serial interviews administered on sixteen nurses working in teaching hospitals in different cities in Iran. The data that was collected was analyzed using a comparative approach. Payami Bousari et al (2009:1) found that the interpersonal conflicts among these nurses were based on trivial issues instead of professional duties- i.e. tasks which the nurses were assigned.

Conflict and new administrative procedure

Conflict does not occur in a vacuum. There is often a condition that sparks it off. One study notes that although conflict is a frequently occurring phenomenon, it may be sparked of among nurses

due to an introduction of new administrative procedure. According to the College of Nurses of Ontario (2009: 1),

Recently, conflict arose among nurses when the unit moved to a total patient care delivery model from a team nursing model. Some nurses are struggling with this adjustment, particularly around individual workload management. Lately, arguments and refusal to help each other have become issues on the unit. There is a feeling of sink-or-swim during peak times as nurses work more and more in isolation...

...References

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