

# FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH NURSING STUDENTS' RESILIENCE: COMMUNICATION SKILLS COURSE, USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SATISFACTION WITH CLINICAL PLACEMENT

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The purpose of this study was to explore the (a) associations between students' personal and group resilience to their utilization of social networking platforms and formally taught communication skills, (b) students' personal and clinical characteristics that are related to personal and group resilience and the perceived helpfulness of communication course, and (c) factors that contribute to students' satisfaction with their clinical placement.

Data were collected from 149 second year nursing students learning in a major university in the country of Israel with the use of a self-administered structured questionnaire. Students' satisfaction from their clinical placement was measured using 1 open-ended question, analyzed through qualitative methods.

Results demonstrated positive correlations between students' use of social networking to their personal and group resilience ( $P < .05$ ). Moreover, social media use, religion, and clinical placement characteristics were related to resilience and to the perceived helpfulness of the communication course ( $P < .01$ ). Students' satisfaction with their clinical placement was based primarily on the clinical instructors' personal and professional skills. In conclusion, social networking can and should be used as a learning tool to promote resilience among nursing students. Faculty and nurse managers should be aware of the central role of the clinical instructor and initiate collaborative and supporting initiatives. (Index words: Nursing students; Israel; Personal resilience; Group resilience; Social media use; Communications skills course) J Prof Nurs 0:1–9, 2016. © 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

**I**NTERNATIONALLY, NURSE EDUCATION programs are facing high rates of attrition (Gillen, 2012). Both retention and attrition have been attributed to various

factors such as demographic, academic, financial, cognitive, and behavioral factors (Cameron, Roxburgh, Taylor, & Lauder, 2011; Pitt, Powis, Levett-Jones, & Hunter, 2012). Recently, there are findings that indicate on the contribution of psychosocial factors such as resilience to nursing students' academic success (Beauvais, Stewart, DeNisco, & Beauvais, 2014; Deb & Arora, 2012).

Nursing students usually experience high levels of academic stress because of the intensity of their nursing programs compromised of academic and clinical performance, fear of failure, and time management issues (Wolf, Stidham, & Ross, 2015). In addition, nursing students are exposed to various stressful and adverse situations in their clinical placements that they

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have to cope with and overcome, as they become professionals (Stephens, 2013). Evidence suggests and clearly recommends the inclusion of resilience training into nursing education (Hodges, Keeley, & Troyan, 2008; Jackson, Firtko, & Edenborough, 2007; McDonald, Jackson, Wilkes, & Vickers, 2013). Nonetheless, there has been little research into the development of resilience among nursing students and specifically into the factors contributing to its development and strategies that nurse educators can adopt in order to build students' resilience (Thomas & Revell, 2016).

The current study was conducted in Israel among nursing students attending a 4-year baccalaureate program in a major university in the central of Israel. The aim of this program is to train its graduates for their professional role as academic-registered nurses in various health facilities.

## Background

Definitions of resilience in nursing students across the literature are broad, and most of them involve the ability to "recover" from adversity or stressful situations and to cope and react appropriately (Pines et al., 2014; Stephens, 2013; Taylor & Reyes, 2012).

Nursing is a highly demanding profession with daily occupational, organizational, physical, and psychological demands, making nurses more vulnerable than other professional groups to low resilience (Glass, 2009; Kornhaber & Wilson, 2011).

Gillespie, Chaboyer, Wallis, and Grimbeek (2007) found operating room nurses' sense of hope and optimism, self-efficacy, and coping strategies to be central to maintaining resilience. Higher resilience was also associated with the ability to reflect on a situation and explore one's emotional reactions. Studies conducted recently among nursing students found that social support from family, friends, faculty, and peer within the nursing program was an important factor in the development of resilience (Carroll, 2011; Crombie, Brindley, Harris, Marks-Maran, & Thompson, 2013). Nevertheless, studies that correlate these factors to nursing students' resilience have not been done yet.

Resilience has been linked to individuals' strength of character, but evidences suggest that it is not a permanent feature but rather dynamic and learnable, and it can be developed by appropriate interventions (Beddoe, Davys, & Adamson, 2013; McDonald, Jackson, Wilkes, & Vickers, 2012). Strategies found to be helpful in building nurses' resilience include cognitive reframing and critical reflection (Glass, 2009; Hodges et al., 2008), developing emotional toughness (Kornhaber & Wilson, 2011), and maintaining strong social ties and a good work-life balance (Ablett & Jones, 2007; Glass, 2009). Among nursing students, strategies found to promote resilience include reflection (Hodges, Keeley, & Grier, 2005), simulation and debriefing (Pines et al., 2014), and resilience messages delivered through Twitter (Stephens, 2012).

Resilience has also, if seldom, been described from an environmental perspective. Exposure to stressful or negative events at work can be experienced not only by individuals but by groups too, hence indicating both individual and group resilience. Support from colleagues can build and sustain resilience. Collegial networks among nurses and supportive peer group between nursing students have been identified as contributing in this regard but have not been explored (Breen & Sweeney, 2013; Carroll, 2011; Crombie et al., 2013; McDonald, Jackson, Vickers, & Wilkes, 2016).

The factors found to counter resilience in the workplace are, unsurprisingly, the opposites of the positive factors listed above and include workplace characteristics (a constantly changing workplace, job stress), psychological emptiness (frustration and anxieties), a diminishing inner balance between work and private life, and a sense of dissonance between professional perceptions and organizational goals (Glass, 2009; Kornhaber & Wilson, 2011). None of these factors has been explored yet in nursing students.

Resilience enables nurses to adapt positively to stressful working conditions and the associated emotional distress (McDonald et al., 2012). Hence, nurses' coping with challenges in the workplace is affected by both personal and group resilience. Successful coping builds resilience and vice versa. One needs resilience to cope with stressful events, and resilience develops as a result of effective coping.

## Social Media Use and Resilience

Social media technologies have become a popular means for creating and maintaining social relationships, but although it is assumed that the majority of nursing students frequently use social media, the role of the social media in nursing education has not been fully explored (Usher et al., 2014). Evidence from studies conducted with nursing students in an attempt to develop new learning tools has demonstrated the potential of these platforms to build and enhance self-efficacy. Social networking via Facebook or Twitter creates new peer learning, which promotes students' sense of autonomy, control, and partnership in their learning process, factors that help develop self-efficacy (Bowers-Campbell, 2008; Tower, Latimer, & Hewitt, 2014). Interestingly, social media forums are used by students not only for academic problems but also as a resource for emotional support: students share their experiences and receive feedback on stressful events in clinical practice (Tower, Blacklock, Watson, Heffernan, & Tronoff, 2015). This has the potential to promote students' professional skills in giving and receiving feedback and to lower their stress levels. One may fairly speculate that the social media might be harnessed to the reinforcement of students' personal and group resilience. The literature review reveals to date three studies that approached strategies for promoting resilience in nursing students. Of them, only Stephens' (2012) work has demonstrated an

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