

The Professional Self-Concept of New Graduate Nurses

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The goal of nursing education is to prepare students to provide holistic care, expand their knowledge base, improve clinical skills, and develop professional self-concepts. The gap between the preparation of nurses and the expectations of healthcare organizations can affect retention of new graduates. The purposes of this study were to: (1) describe the level of professional self-concept among new graduate nurses working in critical care and general medical surgical units six months after completing a nursing program, (2) to compare the relationship between professional self-concept and age of the new graduate nurses, (3) to explain the differences between the levels of professional self-concept relative to marital status and educational level of new graduate nurses, and (4) to examine graduate nurses' perceptions of their nursing educational preparation for their clinical area. This was a nonexperimental, survey design. One hundred thirty-two ($n=132$; overall response rate=78%) new graduate nurses who completed their nursing program within the past six months, successfully completed the NCLEX, identified themselves as registered nurses, and were employed at a large medical center (MC) and large community hospital (CH) completed the Professional Self-Concept Nurses Instrument (PSCNI) (Arthur, 1992) and answered two open ended questions focused on their educational preparation. The majority of the new graduate nurses were young and single, most were prepared at the BSN level, worked in critical care, and had at least four months of experience. The scores on the PSCNI ranged from 58-106 with an overall mean of 83. Pearson's r showed a positive correlation between age and level of professional self-concept. Single factor ANOVA showed no statistical differences between levels of professional self-concept, marital status ($p=0.43$) and educational level ($p=0.09$). Subjects identified clinical experiences, capstone course/preceptorship experiences, effective coursework, enhanced skills/critical thinking, and summer internship/externship experiences as enhancing their professional development and professional self-concept as students. They wanted experiences designed to increase their basic skills and enhance their critical thinking skills in the healthcare environment. They also suggested that having smaller clinical groups and instructors who challenge students and enjoy their profession facilitating development of a positive professional self-concept.

Arthur, D. (1992). Measuring the professional self-concept of nurses: A critical review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 17, 712-719.