

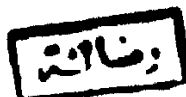
**ASSERTIVENESS AMONG NURSING PERSONNEL  
WORKING AT AIN SHAMS UNIVERSITY  
HOSPITALS**

**THESIS**

*Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Master Degree In Nursing Service Administration*

By

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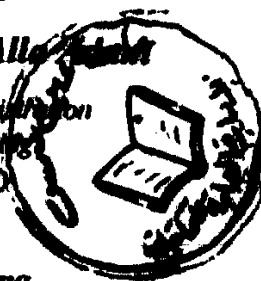
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وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ وَكَانَ  
فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا

صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ  
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***To my parents who  
helped me to grow  
sensitive to the needs of  
the people around ...***

***To my Dear Husband  
for his cooperation and  
support***

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the first half of this century, nurses had limited control over their own work and work environment. Nurses were seldom able to carryout fully what they were capable of doing to improve the health care system. They had little control over the operation of the employing institution, and even had no opportunity to talk about it. This dependent status of the nurse was deeply rooted in the profession; nurses were taught to be obedient and not free to inquire anything about their job. (*Kilkus, 1990*).

However, the dependent status of the nurse of a century ago is incongruous today. Nurses need to be decisive and assertive to handle responsibilities independently, and to be active participants in the organization's decision making system. (*El-Molla, 1991*)

Assertiveness, as defined by *Douglass (1992)*, is setting goals and taking actions depending on these goals in a clear and consistent manner, and taking responsibility for the consequences of one's actions. The same author also pointed out that, assertiveness included aspects of freedom, control, rights, obligations, responsibility, respect and communication.

Assertiveness offers a greater chance to get ones' rights acknowledged and needs met, which leads to a more satisfying life (*Zerwekh and Claborn, 1994*). Assertiveness makes the nurse more confident, less punishing to others, less frustrated

and less anxious (*Burnard, 1990*). Some nurses may have learned to express their needs honestly, to use anger constructively to improve personal and work relationships, and to build self-confidence through assertive behavior. Others still struggle with being assertive because they may not believe that they have the right to be assertive. These nurses are anxious about asserting themselves, but they don't know how to be assertive. (*Chouvardas, 1991*)

Assertive communication is the most effective way to let other people know what a person feels, needs and thinks. It helps him to feel good about himself, and allows him to treat others with respect. Being assertive helps to avoid feeling guilty, angry, confused or lonely (*Marquis and Huston, 1996*). Assertive communication is not an optional extra in nursing profession, but a central feature of the role of the nurse. Nowadays there is a growing interest in nurses developing assertive interpersonal communication skills. (*Burnard and Morrison, 1991*) Assertive communication is a proactive problem-solving and coping behavior which prevents interpersonal misunderstanding that would affect job satisfaction (*Lindberg et al., 1994*).

Job satisfaction is a multifaceted construct with a variety of definitions and related concepts (*Misener et al., 1996*). Job satisfaction is an employee's attitude toward his or her job. It is a feeling experienced by workers in response to the total work situation (*Longest, 1996*). It stems from a variety of aspects of the job as pay, promotion opportunities, supervisors and

coworkers which all affect employees' perceptions about their jobs (*Jennings, 1993*). Virtually in all nursing organizations, the issue of maintaining employee's job satisfaction is a major concern to managers because of its potential impact on morals, quality of patient care, productivity and cost (*Lehmann, 1994*).

Assertiveness can be taught through staff development programs. In these programs, nurses learn to accept responsibility rather than blame others. They learn when to say no, even to their boss. They learn to hold people to a standard. When they are dissatisfied, they improve and use what they have learned to increase their job satisfaction. (*Swansburg, 1996*).

Assertiveness should continue to be recognized as important to nursing education, research and leadership styles. Assertive training promotes wellness and positive individual behavior, which are linked to effective management and communication and would increase staff job satisfaction. (*Swansburg, 1996*).

**AIM OF THE STUDY**

1. To assess levels of assertiveness among nurses working at Ain Shams University Hospitals.
2. To determine the effect of selected characteristics on levels of assertiveness.
3. To study the relationship between assertiveness and job satisfaction among the study nurses.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Assertiveness**

Assertiveness is a healthy behavior required for all people to decrease personal powerlessness and provide personal empowerment (*Kilks, 1993*). Assertiveness, according to Webster's dictionary, is characterized by taking a positive stand, being confident in your statement, or being positive in a persistent way. It is a current name for honesty; that is to live the truth from your inner most being and to express this truth in thought, word and deed (*Hill and Howlett, 1993*).

Assertiveness is an open, honest and direct communication that puts into consideration the individuals' rights as well as the rights of others (*Sullivan and Decker, 1992*). In other words, assertive behavior is maintaining a balance between passive and aggressive behavior (*Lindberg et al., 1994*). It helps making own decisions and giving or accepting praise and criticism (*Barnett, 1983*).

Assertiveness, as stated by *Mc Cartan and Hargie (1990)*, is simply the most direct way of saying "this is who I am". They listed four areas of self expression that are vital to this disclosure: Expressing positive feelings - Expressing negative feelings - Limiting setting (saying No) - Self initiation (speaking up or making requests). Assertiveness is the ability to express one's positive and negative feelings in a socially acceptable and respectful manner, without becoming angry or

guilty, recognizing other's rights and feelings (**Kilkus, 1993**). It entails to ask for things to have needs met, to say no to unrealistic demands as well as to initiate and terminate conversation (**Mac Donaied, 1986 and Kron, 1981**).

Assertiveness is characterized by appropriate expressive self enhancing action; choosing for yourself, feeling good about yourself, and usually achieving your determined goals (**Douglass, 1992**). It is an interpersonal behavior which promotes equality in human relationships (**Mahat and Phiri, 1991**). It enables an individual to act in his/her own best interest, to stand up for him/herself without anxiety, to express honest feelings comfortably, and to exercise own rights without denying the rights of others (**Alberti and Emmons, 1986; Bauer and Hill, 1986**).

Assertive behavior among nursing personnel is an invaluable component for their successful professional practice (**Kilkus, 1990 and Bergman, 1985**). It helps in being proactive which is most correlated with high self-esteem and consequently mental health (**Lindberg et al., 1994**). Also, it pertains a proactive problem-solving and coping behavior which prevents interpersonal misunderstanding and would solve the inevitable conflicts that might arise (**Burnard, 1990**).