

Introduction

Empowerment theories would truly benefit nurses interns helping them realize their worth and their potentials. It will help nurses interns gain strength and knowledge to support themselves. Empowerment theory would enhance the well-being of nurse's interns by helping them build self-confidence. However, understanding where the negativity is coming from to better understand the individuals needs to overcome such oppression on themselves that society has placed. On a personal level, helping individuals find where their powerlessness stems from will in turn help the individual to gain positive self-esteem by addressing the problem and then by taking steps to overcome the problem (*Morton and Montgomery, 2011*).

Kanter' theory of structural empowerment is a good framework to explain concepts related to negative workplace behaviors, such as turnover. The structure of the work environment is an important correlate of staff attitudes and behaviors in organizations. The perceived access to power and opportunity structures relate to the behaviors and attitudes of staff in organizations (*Nicole, 2006*).

Kanter' theory of structural empowerment has been widely applied to the nursing field. Structural empowerment includes four components: opportunity for

growth and development, sharing of information, rendering of support, and availability of resources. These components are conceptualized as antecedent conditions of positive outcomes and effective organizational behavior (*Cheng and Boey, 2015*).

Empowering begins with the change in attitudes, beliefs and thoughts. It does mean that, the interns need to believe themselves as capable and deserving enough to do their responsibilities successfully and feel independent and free to do tasks. They have to see themselves effective and able to control occupational duties. They need to feel that they are following valuable and magnificent occupational responsibilities. They need to believe that they are treated honestly and fairly (*Sayadi, Gholami, and Abdali, 2015*).

Empowering interns is the ongoing process of providing the tools, training; resources, encouragement and motivation of interns need to perform at the optimum level. Empowerment provide interns with a sense of autonomy, which will increase job satisfaction. The nurse will be more comfortable at work because she/he develops confidence and a sense of worth (*Anaejionu, 2015*).

Empowerment is the interpersonal process of providing the proper information, support, resources and environment to build, develop and increase the ability and effectiveness of individuals to set and achieve

organizational goals (*Hawks, 2010*). Empowerment means increasing employee involvement in their work through greater participation in decisions that control their work and expanding responsibility for work outcomes (*Robbins and Hunsaker, 2009*).

Empowerment "is a principle component of managerial and organizational effectiveness. Empowerment techniques play a crucial role in a group development and maintenance. With more organizations looking for staff who take the initiative and respond creatively to the challenges of the job, empowerment becomes important at both individual and organizational levels. Unfortunately, empowerment programs have not always been proven effective therefore, a better understanding of which organizational factors positively influence empowerment would be useful (*Ramos and Alés, 2014*).

Empowerment is a management practice of sharing information, rewards and power with staff so that they can take initiative and make decisions to solve problem and improve service and performance. Empowerment is based on the idea that giving staff skills, resources, authority, opportunity, motivation, as well holding them responsible and accountable for outcomes of their actions will contribute to their competence and satisfaction (*Zimmerman, 2015*).

Empowered intern nurses experienced higher levels of job autonomy, increased job satisfaction, higher levels of assertiveness, and greater trust in the organization. When work situations are structured so that intern nurses are empowered, organizations benefit from improved intern nurses attitudes and increased organizational effectiveness (*Patrick and Spence Laschinger, 2006*).

Assertiveness can be defined as an interpersonal behavior that maintains boundaries whilst allowing people in relationship to express their needs clearly and directly. Assertive behavior is seen when an individual gives expression to their rights, thoughts and feelings in a way that does not degrade but recognizes and respects the rights, thoughts and feelings of others (*Warland, McKellar and Diaz, 2014*).

Assertiveness is a substantial communication style that enhances successful relationships with patients, families, and colleagues. Assertiveness is an expression of self. Individuals who have assertive behaviors generally have higher self-worth and are more successful in life. Assertive persons maintain self-respect and respect for others by assertive behavior which directly expresses one's true, basic feelings, needs, desires, opinions and personal rights in a positive, productive way without denying the rights of others. It enables one to act in her or his interests without undue anxiety (*Abed, El-Amrosy and Atia, 2015*).

Assertiveness is thought to be a healthy form of behavior. Becoming more assertive can lead to increased respect and recognition as a person and as a nurse. It can get individual more of what his/her want (*Sudha, 2005*). Assertiveness is considered to be an essential skill for nurses. It is a key attribute for nurses without it true autonomy and personal empowerment cannot be achieved. Assertive behavior demands control over outbursts of anger, crying or other behavior patterns that exhibit lack of professionalism. Assertiveness skills can be seen as "valuable component" for successful professional nursing practice, with which many conflicts in a nursing situation can be successfully ruled out (*Sanders, 2007*).

Significance of the study

Nurse interns are the nucleus of professional nurses of tomorrow. When communication is an integral part of the nurses' role, it is crucial to highlight the importance of assertiveness and empowerment among Nurse interns(*Walczak and Absolon, 2001*). The student of the first year is highly assertive than the student of internship year. This study show that there is an inverse relationship between scholarly level and level of assertiveness as the assertiveness decrease with as the scholarly level of student increase and this is considered a major problem as the nursing profession needs highly assertive graduate to be able to deal with the work environment(*El Shimmy and Ouda, 1995*).

Empowerment of nurses has been shown to improve perceptions of nurse satisfaction. Increased levels of empowerment and level of assertiveness may in turn cause an increase in nurse retention and improved patient care quality (*Laschinger et al., 2001*). So, the present study will be conducted in an attempts to improve nurse interns' level of empowerment and level of assertiveness after applying empowerment theory.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to apply empowerment theory on nurse intern's and measure its effect on their assertiveness through:

- 1- Assessing level of empowerment among nurse interns.
- 2- Assessing level of assertiveness among nurse interns.
- 3- Designing strategy for applying Kantar's empowerment theory based on assessment of empowerment and assertiveness levels.
- 4- Measuring the effect of applying Kantar empowerment theory on the nurse interns' assertiveness.

Research hypothesis:

Application of Kantar's empowerment theory on the nurse interns will affect on their assertiveness.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Internship Program

Developing competent and confident new graduate nurses who remain with their hospitals is a major challenge. Nurse shortage is a worldwide problem while high stress from new environment and low competence may be contributors for high turnover of new graduates (*Beecroft et al., 2004; Ulric et al., 2010*). Although the enrollment in baccalaureate programs in nursing continues to increase, the increase is not enough to solve the nursing shortage. Unless there is significant progress in expanding the size of the future nursing workforce, realizing the goals of healthcare reform will be difficult. The decreased supply of and increased demand for nurses is a recipe for another even more intense nursing shortage in the coming years (*Altier and Kresk, 2006; Park and Jones, 2010*).

New graduate turnover during the first year is estimated at between 35 and 60%, with 40% of new graduates perceiving a lack of opportunities for future career development within the organization (*Casey et al., 2004*). New graduates want reassurance, specific and precise guidelines and daily feedback on their clinical skill development (*Guhde, 2003*). New graduates need to feel connected to people in the organization or they may not

stay long enough to fit in. Novice nurses today still feel the most frustrated by the lack of care and concern they are shown by staff (*Smith, 2008*).

The preparation of nursing students is an important component in the clinical experience. It includes orientation to the clinical setting including patients and environment, using communication skills, patient education, nursing management and leadership; specifically, the educational preparation of nurses must provide the necessary skills and foundation for graduates to practice at a basic level of competency and safety (*Mohamed and Abood, 2012*).

Nurse interns are baccalaureate nursing graduates enrolled in the undergraduate clinical internship year. An internship year is an opportunity for graduate nurse; it is a clinical training year for baccalaureate nursing graduates to gain practice in a real world setting under the guidance of knowledgeable, experienced, and successful supervisor. The internship year helps the nurse interns to develop her management competencies and skills like clinical decision making, collaboration, teaching, planning, communication, critical thinking, and caring (*Bakr et al., 2013*).

The goals of internship programs are to promote strategies for nurse interns recruitment and retention, to provide an opportunity to consolidate clinical nursing

knowledge in new areas of practice and to provide an opportunity to demonstrate understanding and competence in technical skills and procedures related to the specialty in which they are practicing. The program also allows for the application of sound clinical judgment and critical thinking throughout the nursing process in the management of patient skills. The development of time-management and delegation skills is another important goal. The interns and the preceptors are supported by a nursing enhancement coordinator, whose job is to coordinate, implement, evaluate and report on the program(*Smith, 2008*).

An internship program is the bridge between the undergraduate study years and the practice life after graduation. This facilitates transition and adjustment to staff nurse position (*Duncan et al., 2017*). The transition from the role of student to the role of practitioner is highly crucial. Therefore, socialization as a strategy of adaption to changing role is critical and important for the novice professionals. However, professional socialization develops personality, professionally acceptable, and reduces role conflict and turnover (*Marquis and Huston, 2000*).

Program Development and Rationale

A literature review was undertaken to identify the challenges that nurse interns face and to guide the development of program goals. The transition from student to new graduate is a "reality shock." The transition process is a rite of passage with three phases: separation, transition and integration (*Deasy, Doody and Tuohy, 2011*). It is also identified that nurse interns' sense of belonging is linked to their successful transition into their professional role. Nurse interns were found to demonstrate stress regarding competence, confidence, making errors and adjusting to new workplace environments and to complain of lack of support and problems with organization, completion of tasks and quality of work (*Oremann and Garvin, 2002; Guhde, 2005*).

The clinical performance of intern nurse includes accurate assessment and treatment of patients and use of appropriate nursing process and communication tools to be an effective caregiver. The nurse interns is able to practice and improve her/his skills and competencies such as clinical decision-making and prioritization which improve her/his clinical performance and increase potential benefit for the patient outcome (*Adah, 2008*).

The period of transition from student to newly qualified nurse can be stressful. Nearly 40 years ago, the response of those in this situation was described as a “Reality Shock” and appears to be an enduring experience for many newly qualified nurses who feel inadequately prepared (*Goh and Watt, 2003; King and Singh, 2009*). This transition period is a time when nurses need to consolidate their developing knowledge and skills, and adjust to their new role. In the absence of adequate support, nurses have been found to change clinical area or leave the profession altogether (*Cowin et al., 2006; Park and Jones, 2010*).

Meanwhile, up to 50% of nurse interns may leave their first position within the year. This results in lost investments in new appointees, and additional recruitment costs for employing bodies. It can also lead to challenges to the safety of staff and to the quality of patient care provided by inexperienced and stressed staff. Therefore, the potential benefits of easing this transition could be a reduction in stress and anxiety, enhanced empowerment and assertiveness for the newly appointed nurse, and improved retention rates and reduced costs for hospital organizations (*Winfield et al., 2009*).

According to nursing literature, poor training, a lack of support systems, and the stress-related to the intense

working situation and high patient acuity are the main reasons nurses are leaving during their first year after graduation (*Al-mahmoud, Dorgham, and Abd El-Megeed, 2013*). Furthermore, a high turnover and an influx of new graduates have led to a higher proportion of inexperienced nurses in direct patient care, which may not only be traumatic for the new professional nurse but may also threaten patient safety (*Brat& Felzer, 2012*).

At Ain-Shams University, Faculty of Nursing, the internship year is a year-long professional development and leadership program designed to increase the nurse interns confidence, autonomy, and satisfaction that has proven to result in increased quality of patient care and increased patient safety. The Nurse Internship year has grown to the following specialty tracks: Critical Care, Emergency Department, Medical-Surgical Specialties, Cardiothoracic, and Women & Infants. Moreover, nurse interns are mentored throughout the program to increase both personal and professional growth and development through a variety clinical unit rotations and experiences designed to meet individual nurse needs (*Cheraghi et al., 2008*).

Skillful and efficient nurses are the most important capital in all health organizations. Nurses are considered as the most valuable factors of production, the most important capitals and the main resource of competitive advantage and producers of basic abilities and real wealth of every organization. So, it is necessary to invest in order to

recognizing talents, choosing and using deserved human forces in several levels of organizational jobs, function reliability, increasing skill, using effective policies and correct guidance of human force (*West et al., 2016*).

Types of Internship Programs

Internships are commonly used term in experiential education. Internships takes place during different times of the year: summer, winter or spring. These may be part-time or full time internships over different durations. Typical internships are entry-level, educational jobs that can be paid or unpaid and usually give college credit for work (but not always). Usually, these internships last for one semester, although sometimes internships can be found that last for two semesters (*Employers' Internship Toolkit, 2005*).

Cooperative Internships

Some colleges and universities use the term cooperative education for a certain type of workplace position that is experiential, that is, experience-based education. In this way co-ops are fundamentally similar to internships; students learn while applying knowledge and skills from the academic setting to a work setting. Connotations of these two terms (internships and co-ops) are often unique to the persons or organizations using them. What an organization may call 'internship' may be referred

to by a college or university as a 'co-op'. The different uses of these terms sometimes cause confusion between the university, the employer and the student. Generally speaking, co-ops or cooperative education program involve paid positions (*Co-operative Education and Career Success, 2015*).

These cooperative education experiences are internship program that are usually required and are available only to students in certain majors. Usually, they are full-time. If colleges require internships, they usually have a cooperative education programs. These positions are easier to get than typical internships and externships. They sometimes entail two six-month assignments, with an academic semester or year in between rotations, but they are not always structured on this timetable. Co-op programs are often, though not always, run at engineering schools (*Krishnan, 2014*).

International cooperative experiences support learning about culture and contribute to personal and professional development. Outcomes include increased maturation, confidence, and flexibility; elevated political and global awareness; and ability to create effective relationships with culturally diverse patients and coworkers (*Hoffart et al., 2015*).