

## The Nursing Student: An Agent of Change

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### ABSTRACT

Nursing students, in their training and internships, play a crucial role as an agent of change in the community, since beyond acquiring clinical skills, they are involved in community projects that allow them to have a positive impact on public health, PHC, health education and disease prevention. Therefore, this article examines how nursing students contribute to the well-being of the community, driving significant changes in the quality of life, their role has evolved significantly, highlighting the acquisition of clinical skills, but also as a transformative actor within communities, their training and active participation in community projects, contribute to the well-being of the community, allowing us to analyse their potential to influence social transformation and the creation of healthy environments, demonstrating their ability to lead change initiatives and their impact on improving quality of life.

**Keywords:** community, quality, significantly, skills.

### INTRODUCTION

Nursing students are responsible for transforming their environment into a critical and autonomous context, in order to orient nursing care towards a different professional profile, based on the studies carried out. The methodology focuses on the steps of the processes that make it possible to produce an article. The nursing area determines the essential characteristics of nursing as a science, conferring specific characteristics in its academic habit, an objective that aims to promote these aspects of life called the essence and professionalism of nursing through a single means of communication and dissemination that is a scientific article.

The full text of the scientific article must also be accompanied by some elements: sections, formatting, citations and even margins, such as the first lines of the sections, for which a series of rules must be followed that make it possible to standardize criteria, facilitating their reading and interpretation, having the elements easily located and classified so that the reader can consult them intuitively.

Nursing is a discipline that has expanded its scope beyond hospital care to include health promotion and community intervention. In this context, they emerge as fundamental actors to generate significant changes in the community considering their focus on health promotion and disease prevention, becoming key pieces in this process, since their training prepares them to face the challenges of community health and to act as catalysts for social change.

In the context of health care, nursing has historically been a discipline focused on the direct care of individuals, families, and communities.

### The Role of the Nursing Student in the Community

Nursing students are not only prepared to provide direct care to patients, but they are also trained to understand and address the health needs of communities. Through their training, they are taught to assess the social determinants of health and to develop interventions aimed at improving the health of individuals, individuals, and communities. Nursing education focuses on the acquisition of technical and scientific competencies, on the development of social and communication skills that are fundamental to work in the community, in addition to having the ability to identify the health needs of different populations and thus design and implement interventions according to these needs.

### Leadership and social change

Likewise, the nursing student works closely with other health professionals and community leaders, has the possibility of developing leadership and teamwork skills, essential for the effective implementation of public health initiatives. This collaborative approach allows interventions to be more sustainable and tailored to specific needs.

### **Impact on the Quality of Life of the Community**

The impact of nursing students on the community is significant and multifaceted. Through their participation in community projects, students not only improve access to health services, but also empower communities to take an active role in their own health care. This empowerment is crucial for the creation of resilient communities and for the improvement of people's quality of life.

In this way, they have proven to be effective in reducing rates of preventable diseases, improving vaccination rates, and increasing knowledge about safe health practices. These achievements underscore the importance of their participation in community health and, in this case, in community nursing.

Within the theories there is the key reference to understand the role of the nursing student as an agent of change in Nola Pender's Theory of Health Promotion. This theory holds that health is a positive state that should be promoted through prevention and the adoption of healthy behaviors, rather than simply the absence of disease.

It provides a framework for understanding how to motivate individuals and communities to adopt behaviors that improve their well-being. In community practice, students can apply these principles by designing and implementing programs that promote health through education, awareness-raising, and direct intervention.

The nursing student must become a leader and therefore, transformational leadership is proposed, focusing on the ability of leaders to inspire and motivate others towards positive change, promoting a shared vision of well-being and community development.

In the context of nursing, students who adopt a transformational leadership approach can significantly influence a community's health culture. By leading health initiatives, students can inspire other health professionals and community members to commit to common goals, fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

### **Study Design**

This study follows a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews and focus groups to collect data on nursing students' experiences and perceptions.

### **Participants**

20 nursing students from different educational levels were selected through purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were: being enrolled in the nursing program and having completed at least one clinical experience.

### **Instruments**

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to explore students' perceptions of their role as agents of change. Focus groups were also used to gain a deeper understanding of shared experiences and group dynamics.

### **Procedure**

The interviews were carried out in person and virtually, depending on the availability of the participants. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and was recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

### **Data analysis**

The qualitative data were analyzed using a thematic approach, following the method of Braun and Clarke (2006). The researchers coded the transcripts, identifying recurring themes and subtopics. To ensure validity and reliability, we used data triangulation and solicited participant feedback on the preliminary results.

## **RESULTS**

Four main themes were identified that reflect the perceptions of nursing students as agents of change:

1. Awareness of the transformative role: Students recognize that their training prepares them not only to provide patient care, but also to be leaders in implementing improvements in the health system.
2. Perceived barriers: Participants pointed to lack of trust, institutional hierarchy, and lack of support from more experienced health professionals as key barriers to assuming a leadership role.
3. Institutional support: The presence of mentors and a positive learning environment was perceived as a critical factor for the development of transformative skills.
4. Clinical experiences: Experiences in the clinical setting were seen both as opportunities for hands-on learning and as limitations due to rigid protocols and traditional expectations.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of the study show that nursing students are aware of their potential as agents of change, but face significant challenges that affect their ability to influence the system of care. Lack of confidence in their abilities and the perception of a hierarchical structure in clinical settings represent significant barriers. However, those

who experienced adequate support from their mentors and a collaborative learning environment felt more empowered to take on a transformative role.

This study reinforces the need for nursing education programs to include strategies that foster trust and leadership among students, as well as the development of a more inclusive and collaborative clinical environment.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that nursing students have the potential to act as agents of change in health care, but require ongoing support at both the educational and institutional levels to overcome perceived barriers. It is recommended that nursing education programs include the development of leadership skills and strategies to foster a clinical environment more conducive to change. Their role is fundamental in the community, their training allows them not only to attend to immediate health needs, but also to lead initiatives that promote long-term well-being. Through their work in the community, nursing students demonstrate that they can be a transformative force, contributing to the creation of healthier environments.

It is essential that educational institutions and health systems recognize and support this role, providing nursing students with the necessary tools and opportunities so that they can realize their full potential as leaders in health.

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