

What Attributes Do Nursing Students Perceive as Caring Behaviors Exhibited by Instructors?

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Background: Nursing remains the most trusted profession for eighteen consecutive years with caring being a key attribute. However, caring is not a natural skill but is acquired and practiced throughout nursing education. As patients believe that nurses should care for their overall health and wellbeing, students believe professors should care for them and their learning. To instill caring behaviors in students, UWG Tanner Health System School of Nursing (THSSN) uses a caring science curriculum to emphasize the vital role caring plays in the development of the professional nurse. Nursing faculty know the importance of role modeling caring behaviors but often there is a disjunct between what faculty perceive as caring and what students perceive as caring. To better understand how students identify caring behaviors exhibited by instructors, a research study was conducted. The research question for this study was: What do students perceive as caring behaviors from faculty?

Methods: Q-methodology was used for the design of this study. Q-methodology, developed by William Stephenson, is the science of subjectivity. Q-methodology contains both qualitative and quantitative components of research, making it a mixed-method design. It contains five steps, which include 1) development of the concourse, 2) development of Q-statements, 3) data collection of Q-sorts, 4) factor analysis, and 5) defining the factors into themed model sorts. This method was chosen because it provides more robust results when exploring individual's perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs. The framework used for this study was Duffy's Quality Caring Model used in the UWG THSSON caring science curriculum.

Results: This study consisted of two phases. Phase one was carried out in 2018-2019. Phase two was carried out in 2019-2020. This report will focus on phase two research results. Forty-three q-sorts were collected from junior and senior students on the Carrollton and Newnan campuses. After factor analysis, three factors were identified. Factor one consisted of 46% of participants, and the theme describing this factor is "content-clarity." Factor two, included 16% of participants, was themed "cheerleader." Factor three included 38% of participants and was themed "consumer-focused." Therefore, 90% of the participants' opinions were accounted for in this study. Overall, demographics showed that neither class, campus, age, nor gender impacted loadings.

Conclusion: The data collected from this study successfully identified what UWG THSSON students perceive as caring behaviors exhibited by faculty. The majority of students want faculty to be content-experts who are knowledgeable about content and are willing to explain difficult content in more detail. The second largest group also care about faculty being content-experts, but also believe faculty exhibit caring by helping students reach their goals of becoming a nurse. Lastly, the third-largest portion wants faculty to be vested in their learning through helping, kindness, and pushing them to do their best.