

Desirable Needs of a Nurse

A Survey

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to assess the desirable needs of nurses as perceived by a group of nurses. A group of 100 nurses of Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (P.G.I.), Chandigarh acted as respondents. The desirable needs were studied through a need-scale constructed by Mohan and Khanna (1977) and modified for nurses by Mohan and Sujata (1984) based on Edwards' (1954) 15 needs. The results showed that needs which are regarded to be most desirable for the Nursing profession are Achievement, Order Nurture, Affiliation and Endurance in the order of preference. The needs which were perceived as undesirable are Heterosexuality, Aggression, Autonomy and Exhibition. These needs were compared to the needs perceived as desirable for teachers and it was found that by and large they were the same. However, teachers rated Endurance and Dominance significantly higher than nurses and Abasement lower than Nurses.

FLORENCE Nightingale is given the credit for guiding Nursing from an ill defined craft of social disrepute and disrespect to the status of a noble, socially oriented profession. In today's medical work, Nursing staff is indispensable in any hospital worth the name. The nurses' work begins and extends to a long period of time, beyond the doctors' prescriptions or surgery. She has to motivate the patient towards the journey of cure and health not only in the physics but also in mind. Her responsibility is three-fold: to conserve life, to alleviate suffering and to promote health (International Council of Nurses, 1950, revised in 1933, 1960, 1965). She is supposed to have the highest code of ethics, excellence in her work, and a personality which can act as a shock absorber to those who are in the downmost blues.

The National League of Nursing education (1963) attempted to prescribe an ideal personality of a nurse. It was generally agreed that personality cannot be reduced to a formula or a straightjacket in which all nurses could fit in. Nevertheless, there can be a broad consensus on some of the personality characteristics which would be essential to be a good nurse and which could be cultivated through proper training.

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Some Basic Traits

A study, reported briefly by the National League of Nursing Education in a curriculum guide for Schools of Nursing (1937), shows that a nurse who is able to adjust well to Nursing situations is said to be resourceful, considerate to others, able to cooperate, cultivated and possessed of a sense of social and professional responsibility. Some of these characteristics have their origin in good feelings, in kind and generous impulses that the novice in Nursing may possess to as great a degree as the veteran, but this is not enough. Misguided kindness may in some cases do as much harm as a malicious act. If the nurse hopes to be resourceful and to show intelligent consideration for all sorts of people, regardless of their race, religion, or nationality, she must have some knowledge of personality development and of the beliefs and customs of different groups.

One of the main deeds of the nurse is the exercise of the wholesome mental hygiene, which includes a good outlook on life, a plan of life, and enjoyment of life, and work. It should include a recognition of what good Nursing entails and a willingness and ability to accomplish the work well.

The first step towards any behaviour change is to create awareness in oneself as to what the ideal goal is that one wishes to achieve. Knowledge of what the ideal personality traits are helps us to devise strategies to accomplish these.

The Core of Personality

The concept of needs as a relatively enduring disposition of personality was developed by Murray (1938). He maintains that the core of personality is a configuration or hierarchy of basic needs in 1951 McClelland elaborated this into a theoretical model that a need or motive is a disposition to strive for a particular kind of goal, state or aim, such as achievement, power and affiliation. He explains personality in terms of motive, schemes and traits. Motives are drive states which impel the individual to act, schemes are individual's value systems—his philosophy of life, and traits reveal this surface behaviour.

Edwards (1954) derived his concept of 15 needs from Murray's and McClelland's theoretical models of basic needs. (Edwards 1954) is of the view that the 15 needs elaborated by him are manifest needs which help in the measurement of consistency and stability in individual's personality. These needs are named as:

(i) Achievement (ii) Deference (iii) Order (iv) Exhibition (v) Autonomy (vi) Affiliation (vii) Interacep-

tion (viii) Succourance (to seek help from others) (ix) Dominance (x) Abasement (xi) Nurturance (xii) Change (xiii) Endurance (xiv) Hetero-sexuality (xv) Aggression.

Mohan and Khanna (1977a, 1977b) had earlier made an attempt to gauge the ideal needs of a teacher as perceived by the students and the teachers. The Edwards personal preference schedule (EPPS) was used as a model to construct the ideal need scale. It was found that the needs for order, achievement, endurance and nurturance ranked highest. The undesirable needs were aggression, abasement, autonomy, exhibition, and deference.

The present study is a similar attempt using a different target group, i.e., nurses, instead of teachers. The two professions have some parity as far as both have an element of social service in their base. It was, therefore, planned to conduct a survey in which nurses themselves opined what the ideal or desirable needs should be present or cultivated for effectiveness.

The Method

The present work was done on the population of nurses. A sample of 100 female nurses was randomly selected from College of Nursing, PGI, Chandigarh. They were administered the need scale constructed by Mohan and Khanna (1977) for teachers and modified presently for usage on nurses. It measures 15 needs based on Edwards (1954) scale of EPPS.

The nurses were asked to rate these needs, on a 6-point scale according to what they felt was ideal for their profession. Each need was represented by four situations. The minimum and maximum score ranged from 4 to 24 for each need.

The Results

The means and standard deviations for the rating on each of the 15 needs alongwith their respective ranks are presented in Table I. Alongwith this, the means and SDs obtained by Mohan and Khanna (1977) on ideal needs of a teacher are also presented and significance of difference between the two is also given in the t-ratios. A sign test was also used to see the difference between the 15 ranks. It was found to be 4.07, significant at .01 level.

Discussion

The present work was an endeavour to set up an hierarchy of ideal needs for nurses with a view that when nurses are given training these needs may be cultivated in them. The assumption here is that behaviour is modifiable and through adequate group counselling techniques these needs can be inculcated to some extent. In order to achieve this goal of training the nurses, one must have an adequate list of ideal needs. In the present work the trained nurses themselves were used as subjects to rate the needs which are appropriate for their profession.

The results revealed that the most desirable needs for a nurse were: (1) Achievement (2) Order (3) Nurturance (4) Affiliation and (5) Endurance. The needs which needed to be curbed were: (1) Hetero-

sexuality (2) Autonomy and (3) Aggression. The International Council of nurses (1950, revised in 1965) included in the *Job Code of Ethics*, traits like 'excellence in her work', 'Care', 'maintain harmonious relationship'.

The National League of Nursing Education (1937) maintained that a nurse should be resourceful, 'considerate', 'cooperative', have a sense of 'social and professional' responsibility.

In the present study, one of the cluster of desirable needs is achievement and order, both are indicative of professional 'excellence' which would include 'resourcefulness'. A nurse, hence, should have the desire to excel in her work, be systematic, plan, and be fully involved in her job. The second cluster of needs has emerged on the human qualities, wherein consideration and thoughtfulness for others would be at the highest. The needs for nurturance, affiliation and endurance would be included in such a group. The word 'care' as used by the International Council of Nurses (1965) cannot achieve its full connotation without inclusion of nurturance and affection. In order to achieve these goals one needs a great deal of endurance.

On the negative side, autonomy and aggression would defeat the very purpose of establishing 'harmonious relationship', showing 'care' and concern. As such a nurse should try to modify these as far as possible. In the training programme for nurses, sessions for sensitivity training and role play could be included through which desirable needs could be enhanced and the undesirable ones could be subdued. The need for hetero-sexuality which has been rated as lowest, is not because it is detrimental to the role of Nursing but because of the Indian cultural set up. Earlier, Mohan (1973), Mohan and Khanna (1977a, 1977b) had eliminated this need from the scale because the subjects felt hesitant to answer these questions honestly. The cultural norms are such where talking of sex is forbidden. As such, one cannot get correct responses on such a scale. In the present case this need was included hoping that with passage of more than a decade, the attitudes have become more liberalized. Some change is perceptible because unlike Mohan's study (1973) where the scores on hetero-sexuality were as low as 5.3 + 6.6 out of 15 (on EPPS) in the present case they have gone up to 12-17.

A comparison was also made between the ideal needs of a teacher and that of a nurse. The teachers shared with nurses in rating Order, Achievement, Endurance and Nurturance as preferred needs, though the ranking was slightly different. The teachers however rated Dominance as desirable need whereas nurses rated it fairly low. According to Edwards (1954), Dominance is 'the need to be a leader, persuasive and influence others, supervise and direct others'. In order to direct one's own cognitive accomplishments towards the learning of others, need for Dominance rightly forms a combination with need for Achievement and Order, as is found in the group of teachers. Nurses, on the other hand, have to be more affectionate-affiliative.

Comparative Means and SDs of Teachers' and Nurses' Ratings on Ideal Needs

TABLE 1

	Teachers: 60			Nurses=100				t-ratio
	Means	Ranks	SD	Means	Ranks	SD		
Ach.	21.48	2	2.10	20.91	1	1.91	+	1.87
Def.	15.63	10	3.44	15.74	10	3.30	0	0.20
Ord.	22.13	1	2.04	20.72	2	1.87	—	4.07 **
Exh.	14.88	12	2.82	15.71	11	3.25	+	2.0
Aut.	15.30	10	2.61	13.09	14	3.56	—	0.20
Aff.	18.67	7	2.72	19.84	4	1.67	+	3.16 **
Ind.	18.90	6	2.83	18.57	6	3.03	0	0.73
Suc.	18.15	9	2.99	18.08	8	2.58	+	0.15
Dom.	19.10	5	2.38	16.35	9	3.46	—	6.25 **
Abas.	13.83	14	3.05	15.30	12	3.14	+	3.06 **
Nur.	20.48	4	2.46	20.22	3	2.40	+	0.70
Chg.	18.37	8	3.44	18.09	7	3.06	+	0.53
End.	21.00	3	2.48	19.68	5	2.60	—	3.03 **
Agg.	14.30	13	3.15	13.12	13	2.53	0	2.60 *
het.	—			12.17	15	2.50		

*Significant at .01 level

**Significant at .05 level

Both these differences have emerged significant both in t-ratios and through sign-test for the ranks of needs (see Table I). Though need for Endurance is rated high by both the groups, yet in the teachers' group, it is significantly higher. Teachers perhaps have to be more patient and tolerant of the faults and ignorance of their wards. Teachers have also rated higher on order in comparison to nurses. Cleanliness, systematic approach are more relevant to the class room situation.

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