

The impact of leadership development on nurses and midwives underpinned by transformational learning theory [abstract only]

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Background: Given current global healthcare challenges, such as staffing shortages and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need for effective leadership across all tiers of the health and social care sector (Joseph-Richard & McCray, 2022; Abbas, 2021; Messenger, 2021; Richard *et al.*, 2021). However, it is argued (Miles & Scott, 2019) there is limited scholarship in relation to how leadership capability within nursing and midwifery might be achieved across wide-ranging and diverse contexts. In relation to nursing leadership, Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978) has held prominence across the healthcare leadership literature (Paton *et al.*, 2021; Wong *et al.*, 2013).

The Florence Nightingale Foundation (FNF) is a UK charity that provides leadership development, underpinned by Transformational 'Learning' Theory (Mezirow, 2000). Throughout the programme, scholars are encouraged to challenge existing and habitual psychological, sociocultural, and epistemic meaning perspectives about 'the self'. We evaluated the experiences and perspectives of individuals who have undertaken these programmes in the last two years. The purpose of this was to provide insight into the usefulness of employing this approach to developing future healthcare leaders.

Methodology: Data were collected from 690 participants' responses to the question '*please tell us about the impact of your overall experience*' and a corpus analysis was performed. A combined corpus of 75,053-words was analysed using AntConc 3.5.9 (Anthony, 2023) a freely accessible online corpus analysis toolkit for processing language.

Findings: The following word types were noted to be frequently located across the corpus: Confidence; Influence; Self-awareness; Insight; and Impact. Participants expressed a high level of reflection, which a transformation of the self in terms of considering critically their own worldview and how this might impact leadership. Patterns of language were evident, which reflected of an increasing understanding of the of self as efficacious, in relation to changing perceptions of 'the self' as a leader,

e.g. confident, influential, self-aware, insightful, and consideration of being able to have impact on others, the practice environment, and ultimately patient care.

Relevance: Nurses and midwives must gain insight into their existing values and personal qualities, regarding how the 'self' might be experienced by other individuals with whom they work, if they are to become effective leaders. This has the potential to create socially and strategically confident 'self-efficacious' leaders who are influential in creating positive changes across a variety of clinical environments.

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