Perseverance: The Backbone of Nursing
A Middle-Range Theory

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Introduction

Nursing is a tough job and there is no sugar-coating it. Most would want to romanticize and think that it is about helping people and doing well to the community. There is no argument there but one also has to work doubly hard if one has to help and care for the people. Nurses are meant to be persistent. When they are faced with adversity, they push and continue with determination and tenacity. There is no such thing as giving up and throwing in the towel. That is not an option that is being considered by nurses. Instead, when the going gets tough, nurses will look for and arrive at solutions. They have several game plans so that when one does not work, then there is another strategy that they can use (Millar, 2007).

The persistent person believes in the long term vision, and therefore, is more motivated to continue the climb, even if it’s uphill. It is much easier to be persistent if you believe that the greater good will arise from the situation. The world is full of success stories from people who gave it one more try, who didn’t give up, who looked for one more right answer. The world is also full of stories from people who tried to move a new idea forward, tried to meet someone special or tried to get fit, but never quite got there (Staples, 2013).

According to the study of Markman, Baron and Balkin (2005) entitled “Are perseverance and self-efficacy costless? Assessing entrepreneurs’ regretful thinking”, personal perseverance and self-efficacy are required in new business formation. They added that perseverance and self-efficacy also occurs with regretful thinking. It was revealed in their study that the higher the overall perseverance scores of patent investor, the higher their annual earnings.

Eisenberger, 1992 (as cited by Markman et. al 2005), perseverance is defined as one’s tendency to persist and endure in the face of adversity. Perseverance influences individuals’ courses of action, the length and level of their endurance and their resilience in the face of setbacks and repeated failures (cf. Eisenberger & Leonard, 1980 as cited by Markman et. al, 2005). Similarly, Bandura, 1997 (as cited by Markman et. al 2005) said that perseverance also influences how much stress individuals can endure while they cope with setbacks, and the level of accomplishments they eventually realize.

Shechtman, DeBarger, Dornsife, Rosier and Yarnall (2013) stated in their draft of the study entitled “Promoting Grit, Tenacity and Perseverance: Critical Factors for Success in the 21st Century” that non-cognitive factors such as grit, tenacity and perseverance are essential to individual’s capacity to strive for and succeed at long-term and higher-order goals, and to persist in the face of the array of challenges and obstacles encountered throughout schooling and life. Furthermore, these factors are very important in preparing students to meet 21st-century challenges.

Gingrich (n.d.) said, “Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did.”

Freed (1998) revealed in his study that psych nurses are very much involved in educating their patients wherein three themes where revealed, The Teaching Way, Being In-Between, and Seeing Inside which when taken together formed one constitutive pattern. The researcher highlighted in her study the renewed commitment and very much involvement of psychiatric nurses in educating their patients and that the process differs from the traditional way.
Staples (2013) said that persistence or perseverance in nursing care describes the essence of being a nurse. This commitment to caring is the ultimate driving force why nurses have been persistent in finishing nursing school, passing licensing examinations and overcoming day-to-day challenges in the job. Furthermore, she added that persistence is not an inborn quality of nurses. It is something that we can practice and develop, nurture and cultivate.

As a professional nurse, we are expected to be persevering and persistent. The nursing profession has never been for the weak heart. One has to have an iron will in order to survive and succeed nursing. Perseverance is a trait that most nurses should have. It is like developing a thick skin and not knowing when to give up. Most people trust nurses very much because they see the do-or-die attitude of the nurses (Millar, 2007).

Similarly, Fludd (2012) wrote a story of a nurse who cared for a homeless patient who did not have any insurance. The patient had a large venous stasis ulcer on his left ankle with another smaller ulcer just below it. The attending physician told the nurse that there was not much hope but suggested her to apply Unna boot once a week. The nurse did it for 1 year and the patient did not loss his foot. Her persistence turned into a positive outcome.

Perseverance has the critical attributes of continuing efforts, belief or determination to do or achieve something withstanding discouragement or difficulty without complaint.

**Purpose**

The theory Perseverance: The Backbone of nursing is formulated to illuminate the value of perseverance of nurses in attaining optimum health.

**Assumptions**

1. A perseverant nurse has the ability to deliver care despite of job stresses.
2. Perseverance refuels a nurse who suffers from discomforts when success is not easy to achieve.
3. A perseverant nurse still endures even the rest of the medical team members gave up.
4. Perseverance makes the nurse sturdy to carry her responsibilities.
5. A perseverant nurse is not violent.
6. Optimum health is always possible with a perseverant nurse.

**Nursing’s Meta-paradigms**

1. **Person** refers to a being composed of physical, intellectual, biochemical, and psychosocial needs; a human energy field; a holistic being in the world; an open system; an integrated whole; an adaptive system; and a being who is greater than the sum of his parts (Wagner cited in McEwen and Wills, 2002). A human being is a unique individual who is in the continuous process of becoming, evolving and changing (Travelbee, 1971). Most nursing models organized data about the individual person as a focus of the nurse’s attention (Thorne et al. cited in McEwen and Wills). The person in this theory would be any individual, sick or healthy who is indeed of the help of the nurse.

2. **Health** is the ability to function independently; successful adaptation to life’s stressors; achievement of one’s full potential; and unity of mind, body, and soul. (Wagner cited in McEwen and Wills). Health would also encompass increase personhood, achievement of optimum level of functioning and wellbeing. DeKeyser and Medoff-Cooper (as cited in Reed and Shearer, 2009) said that health is considered within nursing to be the intended outcome of nursing actions, such as quality of life.
3. Environment typically refers to the external elements that affect the person; including internal and external conditions that influence the organism; an open system with boundaries that permit the exchange of matter, energy, and information with human beings (Wagner cited in McEwen and Wills). Reed and Shearer (2009) stated that the environment is the surroundings or circumstances of the individual to which the person must adapt. This is also the setting where nursing will occur. In this theory, the setting will be the hospital and the community.

4. Nursing is a science and art, and a practice discipline and involves caring. Goals of nursing include care of the well, care of the sick, assisting with self-care activities, helping individuals attain their human potential, and discovering and using the nature’s law of health. Furthermore, nursing practice facilitates, supports, and assists individuals, families, communities, and societies to enhance, maintain, and recover health and to reduce and ameliorate the effects of illness (Thorne et al. cited in McEwen and Wills). Nursing in this theory will occur when the nurse is able to continue her efforts in caring patients and able to withstand difficulties without complaint.

Philosophical Perspectives
Human Science

Paradigm of Nursing
Interactive-Integrative

Explanation of the Theory
Perseverance: The Backbone of Nursing is a middle range theory. Theories of this level contain limited numbers of variables and are limited in scope as well. Because of these characteristics, middle range theories are testable, yet sufficiently general to still be scientifically interesting (Walker and Avant, 2011). In addition middle range theories are relatively simple, straightforward, and general (McEwen and Wills, 2007). The focuses of middle range theories are client problems and likely outcomes, as well as the effects of nursing interventions on client’s outcome (Blegen and Tripp-Reimer cited in McEwen and Wills). Fawcett (1993) also states that a middle-range theory maybe (1) a description of particular phenomenon, (2) an explanation of the relationship between phenomena, or (3) a prediction of the effects of one phenomenon or another.

Middle range theories for nursing combine postulated relationships between specific, well defined concepts with the ability to measure or objectively code concepts (Good and Moore, cited in McEwen and Wills).

![Figure 1. Perseverance: The Backbone of Nursing](image-url)
The conceptual model formulated explains that factors which affect the ability of the nurse to carry out nursing care includes situations wherein success is not easy to achieve and discomfort related to effort to achieve success. I used an arrow pointing down to symbolize that these factors cause decreased ability of the nurse to do her responsibilities. The horizontal line explains that because of perseverance, the nurse is able to rise again. She will continue her efforts in caring for her patients withstanding difficulty without complaint. The arrow going up signifies that through perseverance, optimum health will be attained. This would mean having a renewed commitment in giving care to patients.

**Limitations of the Theory**

There are no grand theories to derive the concept of perseverance. There are limited literatures of perseverance in nursing found in databases. However, there are useful literatures in some websites that can be of great help in expounding the concept of perseverance and its relation to nursing but it cannot be accessed for free.

**References**

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Reed, P. & Shearer N. (2009). “Perspectives in nursing theory. Fifth ed. USA. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins