

## **Professional Identity in Nursing**

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Registered nurses are the largest group of health professionals globally, playing an essential role in the delivery of quality healthcare. Nursing has evolved over time, with the responsibilities of nurses increasing in response to the changing healthcare landscape. Nurses possess a unique professional identity that is shaped by their educational preparation, their experiences, and their relationship with the wider multidisciplinary team and patients.

Professional identity is a crucial aspect of nursing practice that refers to an individual's self-concept as a professional nurse, including their beliefs, values and behaviours (Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), 2018a). A strong professional identity is vital for nurses to provide high-quality care and support to patients, as it shapes their approach to patient care and interactions with colleagues. Moreover, a positive professional identity is also significant for the retention and recruitment of nurses (Lindahl Norberg and Strand, 2022).

Educational preparation plays a fundamental role in shaping a nurse's professional identity. According to the NMC's Standards for Competence for Registered Nurses, nurses must complete an approved degree-level programme that provides theoretical and practical training and supervised clinical practice (NMC, 2018b). This education provides nurses with the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies to deliver safe and effective care, which is integral to the development of a strong professional identity.

Registered nurses must continually update their knowledge and skills through continuing professional development to ensure that they are providing the best possible care (NMC, 2018b).

The experiences gained during clinical placements and interactions with patients and their families can profoundly affect a nurse's professional identity. Positive clinical experiences and meaningful interactions with patients and their families can help nurses develop a sense of purpose and meaning in their work, reinforcing their professional identity (Vabo et al, 2022). On the other hand, negative experiences can lead to disillusionment, cynicism, and a weakened professional identity.

A strong professional identity is crucial if nurses are to provide safe, effective, and compassionate care to their patients. Nurses who have a strong professional identity are more likely to provide patient-centred care, prioritising patient needs, preferences, and values (Kristoffersen, 2021). A positive professional identity can also help nurses cope with the emotional demands of the job, reduce stress

and burnout, and increase job satisfaction (Hanum et al, 2023). Job satisfaction, in turn, is linked to higher retention rates, which are crucial for addressing the ongoing nursing shortage.

A positive professional identity can attract new nurses to the profession and encourage them to stay in the field long-term. In contrast, a weak professional identity and negative experiences can lead to high turnover rates, further exacerbating the nursing shortage (Kristoffersen, 2021).

Nurses who have a strong professional identity are more likely to act as role models for new nurses, helping to shape the professional identity of future generations of nurses (Koh et al, 2023).

Thus, registered nurses in the UK play a critical role in the delivery of high-quality healthcare services. Their professional identity is shaped by their educational preparation, clinical experiences, and interactions with patients and their families. A strong professional identity is essential for nurses to provide safe, effective, and compassionate care to their patients, as well as cope with the emotional demands of the job. Excellent educational preparation is also essential to nurses' professional identity, as it provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver high-quality patient care.

## References

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