

and stereotypical views about people diagnosed with mental illness. In a study conducted in Bloemfontein, South Africa, the participants were afraid of over-involvement, which caused them to avoid patient contact, resulting in a boring environment (Jansen & Venter, 2013, p. 143). In this current study, the participants felt that they had to be different people when they were on duty, which was challenging for them. Participant number two (2) described how friendly she was by nature, which had to change, because the patients were inappropriate. Another participant also emphasised the inappropriateness of the patients and described how challenging it was for her to set boundaries with the patients. She further highlighted that certain the patients wanted to have 'relationships' with her and take advantage of her friendliness. Participant number four (4) mentioned the challenge of setting personal space boundaries with the patients, because they did not understand it, which was difficult for her.

5.7.2. Interaction with the patients

In mental health nursing, the main focus is on direct patient contact; however, because of the heavy workloads, mental health nurses reported that it was difficult to find the time to spend with patients in inpatient units (Browne, Cashin, Graham & Shaw, 2013, p. 543). The participants, reportedly, became emotionally drained when they had to interact with the patients, or maybe they avoided these activities, which created the perception that psychiatric nursing was boring and not stimulating (Jansen & Venter, 2013, p. 144). In this current study, participant number five (5) described how she tried to engage with the patients, who were unwilling, preferring to stick to their own routine.

The initial encounter with patients often provokes anxiety and fear in the student a situation that may be exacerbated in the mental health context (Melrose & Shapiro, 1999, cited in Higgins & McCarthy, 2005, p. 220). In this current study, the number of patients in the wards was overwhelming for some of the participants. Participant number nine (9) was of the opinion that her main challenge to interacting with the patients was their number, as she could not even remember most, but had to write reports about them.

In a study conducted in USA, on Nursing students' attitudes about Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing, most students felt uncertain, while interacting with patients with

mental illnesses, although, when asked specifically about anxiety, only 24% reported feeling anxious during interactions with mentally ill patients (Hunter, Weber, Shattell & Harris, 2014, p. 4). One participant of this current study explained how difficult it was to interact with intellectually disabled patients, since they were not interactive, or could only pay attention for a short while.

5.8. Limitations to the study

This current study was limited to the final-year student nurses of one higher education institution in the Western Cape, South Africa, engaged in their psychiatric nursing module, while placed in psychiatric accredited facilities. Final-year student nurses in other institutions were excluded from this study. The findings of this study, therefore, could not be generalized to other contexts, as it was done in the context of one higher education institution in the Western Cape, South Africa.

5.9. Summary

In this current study, the researcher determined that anxiety played a huge role in the unpreparedness of final-year student nurses for psychiatric clinical placement. The findings also suggest that the students were not prepared for psychiatric clinical placement, and, even though they attended a two-week orientation programme to prepare them for psychiatric nursing, they were still anxious about practicing in psychiatric nursing.

Some students acknowledged the effectiveness of the orientation programme, but disclosed that, due to what they had been told about psychiatric nursing, they were anxious. They stated that the aggressiveness of the patients was the main cause for concern. They did not know what to expect, when they entered the clinical placements, as they were scared of the patients, and these anxieties affected their interaction with the patients. They found it difficult to communicate with the patients, especially on their first day, and noted that some of the patients would not engage with them. It was also difficult for them to set boundaries with patients, who attempted to take advantage of them.

The other concern was the duration of orientation. Some participants were of the opinion that it was too short to cover all the theory they needed, before going to their clinical placement. They also highlighted that more theory presentation was required and suggested more theory

presentation on mental disorders, psychotropic medication, writing psychiatric nursing reports and managing mentally ill patients. However, they acknowledged the positive attitude of staff members at the clinical placements, who made them feel comfortable, with an open door policy, for students to approach them for anything that they needed. The clinical staff even helped the participants with achieving their clinical learning outcomes.

5.10. Recommendations

In this study, the experiences of final-year student nurses of a higher education institution have been explored and described. The findings of the study suggest that the objectives of the study have been met. The recommendations for this study are related to the orientation programme and the attitude of staff in the wards.

- **Orientation programme:** It is recommended that the period of orientation programme be extended by the higher education institution, since the information shared during orientation was too much to digest in two weeks. It is also suggested that the orientation programme should cover more of what actually transpires in clinical placements, so that theory can be integrated with practice. Such theory should include medication, mental disorders, writing of psychiatric nursing reports and the management of mentally ill patients. It is also recommended that teaching and learning be improved at the institution, by having students fully prepared for their clinical placement there by increasing their confidence in psychiatric nursing.
- **Attitude of ward staff:** Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the staff members in the wards maintain their positive attitude, since it decreases the student nurses' levels of anxiety. Staff members should also be encouraged to continue being supportive of the student nurses, who are scared of the aggression of mentally ill patients. The findings of this study indicated that it helped the student nurses to settle well into their clinical placements, which, in turn, generated positive actions that enabled the student nurses to interact with patients, without any fear and anxiety.

5.11. Conclusion

In this study, the experiences of final-year student nurses were explored and described. The participants in this study attended the complete two-week orientation programme offered at the higher education institution under study. Eleven participants were purposively selected

for the study. The findings of the study, ultimately, suggested that the participants were not prepared for their psychiatric clinical placement. The limitations and recommendations were discussed, based on the findings of this study.

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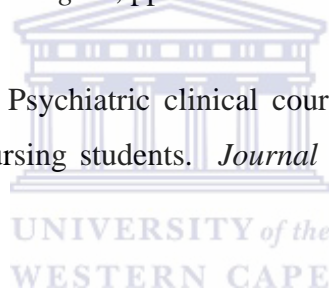
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Appendix: E

06 November 2015

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Editorial Certificate

This letter serves to prove that the thesis listed below was language edited for proper English, grammar, punctuation, spelling as well as overall layout and style by myself, publisher/proprietor of Aquarian Publications, a native English speaking editor.

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EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN THE WESTERN CAPE REGARDING THEIR
PREPAREDNESS FOR PSYCHIATRIC CLINICAL PLACEMENT

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