

Nurse Educators' Understanding and Perceptions of Critical Thinking in Low- and Middle-Income Countries in the Middle East

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Purpose & Background: Critical thinking (CT) and clinical judgement are essential elements of RN practice, yet current literature lacks data specific to how nurse educators define, understand, teach and apply these crucial elements within nursing education in the Middle East. The study examined nurse faculty perceptions related to CT. The research questions sought to determine: 1) educator definitions of CT and 2) perceptions related to CT concepts and instruction as applied in specific middle eastern countries. Accurate assessment of nurse educators' understanding and perceptions of CT provides decision-makers with information that supports curricula and strategies that facilitate CT learning in students. Each country participating in this study offers unique experiences and backgrounds related to nursing education and fostering CT development.

Methods: A quantitative research approach was used with a random, convenience sample recruited via cyber-communications (n=544). Nurse educator experts from each participating country (Iran, Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey) were co-investigators and enabled effective bi-lingual communications. Data collection was conducted from December 2021 to March 2022 using a questionnaire that was converted to a Google form and distributed via web services by researchers from each participating country. The final sample gained data from 544 participants with the majority of respondents from Turkey.

Results: The study revealed that Nurse educators hold a widely varied understanding of 1) CT concepts, 2) how to define the term, and 3) how to foster CT development and clinical judgment skills. Nearly all participants indicated a desire for further education related to teaching CT and fostering its integration into student nurse practice.

Discussion/Conclusions: Eight out of the twenty survey statements gained greater than 90% of respondent agreement. These statements pertain to the need for CT to improve clinical competence, daily problem solving, support content learning, evidence-based practice, help with transfer of knowledge between courses, as a component of professional practice, and that CT should be taught as a course within nursing curriculum with educators sharing teaching philosophies with students. Study limitations included issues with English as a second language, technology requirements for both instruction and survey responses, and conflicting priorities brought about by global challenges such as pandemics, regional healthcare policies, and varied cultural patterns.

Next Steps: Immediate next steps involve using study data to determine topics and a schedule for Nurse Professional Development courses for nurse faculty. Once instruction has been implemented, a follow up study might solicit data related to efficacy and/or impact of professional development interventions.