

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion, limitations and recommendations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study, discusses its limitations and makes recommendations for nursing practice and education, policy-making and further research.

From the findings, negative perceptions about nursing mentally ill people appear to be associated with lack of knowledge and skills on how to handle mentally ill people in the wards. There was a general feeling that mentally ill patients were very unpredictable, and many of the respondents felt insecure, threatened, frustrated and unable to communicate with mentally ill people. This suggests that professional nurses should be equipped with more knowledge and skill on how to manage mentally ill people in a general hospital.

The respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards nursing mentally ill patients differed significantly on the basis of their demographic profile and working experience, therefore the hospital may expect different outcomes and work quality, among other things, when the nursing staff deal with mentally ill people.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

The study was conducted at a single hospital in a single institution, among professional nurses in Gauteng. The researcher therefore chose not to generalise findings because of population or sample especially this was conducted specifically to this single institution. Another limiting fact was the absence of in-depth exploration. The researcher used a self-administered questionnaire and the respondents had no opportunity to explore any questions.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

With regard to the perceptions of professional nurses nursing mentally ill people, the researcher makes the following recommendations for nursing education, nursing practice, policy-making, and further research.

5.3.1 Nursing education

In order to correct the problem of negative self-perception of female and part-time nurses who lack self-confidence to nurse mentally ill people in a general hospital, it is recommended that the training include more knowledge, skills and exposure to psychiatric hospitals. Greater psychiatric experience might provide a protective effect. Ward managers should capitalise on staff with psychiatric experience to facilitate in-service training for the less experienced staff.

Nurse managers should encourage staff to attend seminars, conferences and workshops periodically on psychiatric nursing, in order to equip nurses with knowledge and skill. This will build self-confidence to nurse mentally ill people in a general hospital. These findings concur with Mavundla (2000:1569) who found that professional nurses had negative self-perceptions of nursing mentally ill people in a general hospital. Therefore more knowledge and skill will improve self-confidence.

5.3.2 Nursing practice

Nurse managers should encourage staff rotation to psychiatric wards for nurses to gain more knowledge and skill on how to nurse mentally ill people. To overcome negative perceptions regarding the nursing environment, nurse managers should consider employing more staff, especially more male nurses since they are more confident about nursing mentally ill people than female nurses.

5.3.3 Policy-making

With regard to policy, the researcher recommends the following at hospital, provincial and national level:

◆ **Hospital level**

At hospital level, at least one psychiatrically trained professional nurse should be allocated to both medical and surgical wards, accompanied by male nurse or professional nurse with experience in psychiatric nursing, if possible.

All part-time nurses should have in-service training in psychiatry.

◆ **Provincial and national level**

At provincial and national level, continuous quality improvement should constitute an integral part of the nursing curriculum so that professional nurses become conversant with mentally ill people.

The hospital budget should be improved to overcome the problems of staff shortages and overcrowding.

5.3.4 Further research

Further research should be undertaken on:

- The impact of knowledge and skill as an integral component of comprehensive nursing care on mentally ill people.
- Creating therapeutic nurse-patient relationships with mentally ill patients.
- Improving care for mentally ill patients, particularly those who show no sign of improvement.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The study found a predominantly negative perception of nursing mentally ill people in a general hospital setting among the professional nurses. The sample size was a good representation of the population in this public institution therefore the findings are regarded as generalisable. The researcher is of the opinion that there is a gap in the body of existing knowledge and further research is recommended to scientifically

discover new meaning concerning negative perceptions about nursing mentally ill people.