

Bullying in nursing: Is it in the eye of the beholder?

Bullying in nursing is often dismissed as a rite of passage though perpetuating this misconception may grossly underestimate the pervasive harm this may cause.

Bullying has been described as one of the most serious threats to the nursing profession yet it remains a poorly defined concept in the literature. The lack of a clear definition impedes the ability to conceptualise the phenomenon of bullying in nursing in clear and consistent terms, complicating potential collaboration among researchers and practitioners, and contributing to an inconsistency in findings across studies. Definitions that do exist can be vague, inconsistent and contradictory, reflecting the complexity of bullying in the workplace and the consequent diverse perceptions of bullying to those who witness or experience it.

This presentation will describe preliminary work regarding the phenomenon of bullying within the nursing profession in Australia, focusing in particular on how the definition of bullying in nursing has been conceptualised over time. An understanding of how bullying behaviours are conceptualised and become enculturated within the workforce will inform the development of strategies for the prevention and effective management of the problem when it occurs.