Professional socialisation, accountability and social media: what’s the relationship and should we care?

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**Professional socialisation, accountability and social media: what’s the relationship and should we care?**

Gemma Sinead Ryan; Senior Lecturer in Health & Social Care (Nursing), University of Derby Online Learning, g.ryan@derby.ac.uk

**AIM**

Critically analyse and explain the relationships between professional accountability and Facebook during the journey of professional socialisation.

**BACKGROUND**

The rapid diffusion of social network sites such as Facebook have presented a wealth of challenge and opportunity for the nursing profession. A large majority of student nurses have adopted Facebook but [as developing professionals] may not understand the implications and unintended consequences of the information shared in a personal or innocent way.

No studies have yet critically analysed [in depth] the underlying factors that influence and determine the relationships between professional accountability and social media or if there is actually a ‘problem’ with social media.

**METHOD**

Critical realist ethnography employing online observation of three cohort groups, 30 public profiles and professional group discussion topics, focus groups (academic and practicing nursing staff n=8) and semi-structured interviews with student nurses over two sites (n=16). Critical realist retroductive analysis (Bhaskar, 1998) was developed as part of this study (figure 1).

**RESULTS**

Three key relationships were identified and six models were generated to explain and test theories about the possible ‘causal’ mechanisms within the data. From this three explanatory frameworks were confirmed,

**I)** SPO (figure 2): This study has indicated a potential ‘tertiary’ or ‘online’ socialisation process and illustrates the factors, context and socialisation informs accountable behaviours; linking the physical and online (personal, public, professional).

**II, III)** UAPU, A2A: The lack of physical context and presence in the online environment causes dissonance between perceived (self-efficacy/awareness) and actual behaviours.

**CONCLUSION**

With further research and validation these three frameworks may be used in education and practice, for personal and group assessment, reflection and/or for raising awareness of personal and professional practices online. They may also be used by organisations and professional bodies to assess the ‘acceptability’ or professionalism of scenarios or incidents.