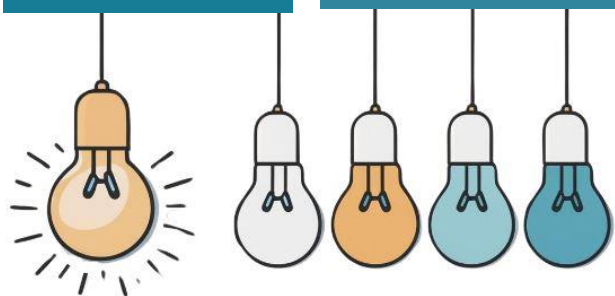


# Influence and innovation

Understanding the impact of social conformity in nursing and midwifery education



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**Social conformity is a critical issue in nursing and midwifery education due to its ability to influence educators' behaviours, decision-making, and the overall quality of the educational landscape.**

**Introduction:** Research for the author's MEd dissertation explored the impact of social conformity in nursing and midwifery education. The study aimed to understand how prevalent conformity behaviours are, how they manifest, and their influence on educational practices and outcomes. This research is particularly relevant in the context of nursing and midwifery, where adherence to professional norms is crucial, whilst excessive conformity may risk innovation, critical thinking, and diversity of thought.

**Method:** A mixed methods approach combined qualitative semi-structured interviews and quantitative structured surveys. Fourteen nursing and midwifery practice educators were convenience sampled for the study. Qualitative data provided in-depth insights into educators' experiences and perceptions, while quantitative data identified measurable patterns of conformity within educational settings.

**Results/Discussion:** Three key themes emerged from the data:

- 1) connecting personal beliefs and identity with conforming behaviours
- 2) social acceptance and selective challenge
- 3) organisational reputation and regulatory influence

**Conclusion:** Education should not only uphold regulatory requirements, but also foster a culture where creativity, individuality, and professional autonomy can thrive. The role of conformity can be addressed within curricula, education practices, and organisational culture. Developing resources and creating learning environments that embed psychological safety and clearly align with professional standards, can prepare practitioners to navigate the complexities of modern healthcare with confidence and autonomy.

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