

ABSTRACT

The Impact of Decentralization of the Health System in Trinidad and Tobago on the Status of Nursing

Paulina Lauren Cazoe

Social change in the last century has created a growing interest in the study of nursing and its quest for professional status. Yet, much of the theoretical literature on status suggests that factors such as prestige, income and level of education only influence status. Recent trends, however, have emphasized the role that other factors, such as power, can play.

This study adopts a sociological approach to clarify this explanation for, within the hospital setting, the complexities of social relationships manifest a prototype of the role that power plays and the struggle involved in the whole status process. It proposes that power is a significant variable in the explanation of status under a decentralized system of health care.

This is a survey study, the general aim of which is to seek to understand the processes at work, in relation to status, by examining the relationship between decentralization and nurses' status. The fieldwork was done in four Regional Health Authorities in Trinidad and the sample comprised two hundred and fifty-nine nurses.

The analysis indicated that there were significant differences in perceptions across the regions. The most significant relationship existed between decentralization and status (.05 level of significance). The major finding, using one-way analysis of variance, indicated that the responses between groups showed a marked difference or variations in perceptions.

Finally, we examined the interplay of social and cultural forces and how they shaped the organisational outcome of the nursing service of Trinidad and Tobago.

Keywords: Paulina Lauren Cazoe, Decentralization, Nursing, Social Change, Power, Regional Health Authorities, Status, Profession.