

## ASSESSMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING DISPOSITIONS OF NURSING STUDENTS IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Critical thinking skills in nursing are important, as they are central to providing competent quality care. The need for the development of appropriate critical thinking skills by nursing students is also supported by the standards of practice for nurses as determined by various state nursing boards. Critical thinking dispositions are requisite for thinking critically and for developing sound critical thinking skills. Although in Nigeria, students scores on nursing board examinations and academic tests are above average, feedback from clinical instructors and alumni supervisors suggest that graduates are lacking in these skills as they begin their professional practice.

**Purpose:** This study investigated the critical thinking dispositions of undergraduate nursing students at various levels of education and to assess their levels of education and on critical thinking dispositions scores.

**Materials and Methods:** This is a causal-comparative study. Using a convenience and purposive sampling, 509 undergraduate nursing students completed the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory Scale (CCTDI).

**Findings:** The mean and standard deviation of participants age was 19.8 and  $\pm 1.4$  respectively. Majority of the students were in their fourth year and third year in the nursing program. Students demonstrated a weak positive overall disposition to critical thinking, with evidence of disposition not increasing significantly overtime. The subgroup means of the 7 trait sub-scores revealed a very homogeneous group with truth-seeking as lowest and inquisitiveness as highest with an overall mean score of 284.52 and SD of  $\pm 25.98$ . Statistically significant differences were found between participants scores for truth-seeking, inquisitiveness, analyticity, confidence in reasoning, and overall CCTDI.

**Conclusions:** Findings revealed that baccalaureate nursing students on average demonstrated an inclination toward not being open to new ideas and are weak in clarifying or seeking understanding of situation. It is therefore recommended that nursing education should integrate teaching and learning activities that can enhance truth-seeking, ensuring students function as the creators of their own knowledge, and faculty becoming eager to learn how to train critical thinkers, exerting the mental effort needed to apply it.

**KEYWORDS:** Critical Thinking, Dispositions, Nursing, Students