



Nursing, Course of Vocational Principles and First Clinical Practice from the Students' Viewpoint

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study was conducted to determine the opinions of the first year nursing students on nursing, vocational principles course and clinical practice, before they begin their first clinical practice.

Method: Throughout the study an administrator had oriented the group study, and a study assistant had made observations and recordings. Besides, the whole of the group interview had been recorded by a voice recorder.

Results: There were 7 students who feel theoretically equipped for clinical practice, whereas there were 4 students who did not feel ready. From practical point of view however, 3 student felt ready while 8 did not. Besides, all the students indicated that procedure of orientation was not implemented prior to clinical practice and this situation had created high level of stress on them.

KEYWORDS : Nursing students, clinical practice, course of vocational principles

INTRODUCTION

Clinical practice has an important place in the theoretical and practical nursing education and in fact it is right at the center of nursing education.^{1,2} By the laboratory practices that are given within the scope of vocational practices, the students put their theoretical knowledge into practice and later on these acquired skills are expected to be improved by clinical practice. Nonetheless the students who come across with the patients and the hospital environment for the first time experience stress due to various reasons, and this stress have a decreasing effect on the efficiency of the students and hinders an effective educational environment.

Kocaman et. al. (1986) have reported in their study that first day of clinical practice was one of the incidents causing stress on 60.29% of the students.³ Furthermore, Şirin et. al. (2003) have reported in their study that, the rate of the students who declared to have stress at the beginning of the clinical practice was (75.0%),⁴ and it was reported in another study that the students experienced medium level of stress due to first clinical practice.⁵

The studies report that the students have stress because of hospital adaptation difficulty, clinical practice insufficiency, unclear expectations of the trainers, unfamiliar and unknown fields, clinic nurses and academic staff,^{6,7,8} and this clinic-related stress of the students increased even more due to reasons such as lack of sense of belonging to the profession of nursing, acquiring insufficient level of professional knowledge and skills.⁹

METHOD

Focus group interview, which is one of the qualitative research methods was used in the study. Focus group discussion can be defined as a series of discussions on a predetermined topic, planned in order to learn the opinions of a group of predetermined participants.^{10,11} In the study, 11 first year students were included who have not yet begun clinical practice in 2011-2012 academic year. Throughout the study an administrator had oriented group study, and a study assistant had made observations and recordings. Furthermore, the whole of the group interview was recorded by voice recorder and later on combined with the notes of the study assistant.

RESULTS

Student statements and observation notes of the study assistant were collated under various themes and given below.

Table 1: The opinion of the group about nursing before they were nursing students

| Topic | Sub topic | n |
|---------------------------|-----------|---|
| Viewpoint towards nursing | Positive | 2 |
| | Negative | 9 |

It is seen that 9 of the students had a positive opinion while 2 had negative. Some student statements were as follows:

"Before coming to this school I thought a nurse would give injection or infusion. What I learnt and heard around was like that however what is taught in the courses are so different. For example we were taught how to make bed, and I told that to mum when I was back home in the vacation and she was very astonished."

"A nurse is someone who provides care to people both spiritually and physically. That's how I was thinking before coming to the school. Because there were three nurses within our close relatives. They would always succour the people in need for help and that's the reason why we loved them so much."

"So far I have always seen nurses as having a long face. They only had certain borderlines, and once they fulfill their duties and never get engaged in other things, that's how they have appeared so far. They had certain standards; they were always such kind of people who think, let's get the job done and go home"

"I also have met some negative experiences, related to my mum. For example, mum had a problem with her feet: The nurse was supposed to give serum and she treated her really badly."

"I've also seen many good-humoured nurses, even nurses treating the patient nicely although the patient was angry. I had an operation in the hospital, when I was young. The nurse then taking care of me very much changed my opinion about nursing. I mean I became more positive and I still am."

Table 2: The State of Feeling Ready for Clinical Practice

| Topic | Sub Topic | Theoretical | Practical |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Feeling Ready for Clinical Practice | I feel ready | 7 | 3 |
| | I don't feel ready | 4 | 8 |

Out of the group, 7 of the students were theoretically and 3 were practically feeling ready for clinical practice while 4 of them were theoretically and 3 were practically not feeling ready for that. Some student statements were as follows:

"I am afraid that I will hurt the patient. I have a feeling of fear inside. I am unexperienced."

"I do not feel ready for clinical practice. We haven't had any practice yet. We will not also have any practice when we go to clinics, even if we have we'll have it under supervision. That's why I am scared. There are so many applications and we'll see a lot of them when we go there."

"To be straight, I do not feel technically ready for practice. Let me explain that. Our practical applications are not sufficient. As for the fear, there is the fear of giving harm to someone. After all it is a human being in front of us and we cannot make a trial."

"I feel myself as sufficient. I want to get in practice as soon as possible. My only fear is that (we are still extremely novice and unexperienced) if our teachers do not have an understanding approach on the slightest mistake. There are sometimes instructors who behave intolerant...."

Table 3: Clinical Orientation before the first Clinical Application

| Topic | Sub Topic | n |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------|----|
| Clinical Orientation Before Application | Done | 0 |
| | Not done | 11 |

All the students (11 students) have stated that orientation was not implemented before the first clinical application and this has caused stress on themselves to a great extent. Some student statements are as follows:

"We are going to the hospital but who is going where is not certain."

"We don't even know where the dressing rooms are."

"We are distressed because we don't know what we are supposed to do."

Observer's note: The fact that the students were not given clinical orientation prior to their first practice experiences is observed to cause considerable level of anxiety on the students.

Table 4: Students' suggestions for the Course of Vocational Principles

| Topic | Sub Topic | n |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---|
| Suggestions for the Course of Vocational Principles | Implementation of different teaching methods | 3 |
| | Bringing live samples to the classrooms | 3 |
| | Reducing the workload of the instructor | 4 |
| | Abandon the course as a threshold course | 1 |

There was 1 student proposing that the course should no longer be a threshold course, while 3 students each have suggested different educational methods and live samples in the classrooms, respectively.

Moreover, 4 students have recommended to reduce the workload of the instructor. Some student statements were as follows:

"Instead of giving an ordinary lecture, after all we're talking about the things occupying our lives. We are short of time, we know that but it can be in an enjoyable way. Things that attract students attention can be done. The instructor need to draw the attention of the whole class. There should be activities that are a little amusing and drawing the student to the lesson. Instructor must apply different teaching methods and be careful about the voice and mimics. "For example a case of cancer is taught. Why not bring a patient with cancer and allow him tell us his experience?"

"Workload of the instructor is too much, gets out of our class and goes to another class. Inevitably becomes unenthusiastic in teaching. Nonetheless this is a fact that vocational principles course is something that cannot be executed by only one instructor."

"We want the course to be abandoned as a threshold course. Because it is a threshold course, having the fear of failing, we have to focus on vocational principles course too much."

DISCUSSION

The fact that the students have negative opinions regarding nursing (Table 1) is thought to be due to inadequate presentation of nursing as well as witnessing some unfavourable examples. Similarly, in the study of Şirin et. al. (2008) it is seen that a part of the students have negative opinions regarding nursing.¹²

While a considerable part of the students were feeling themselves theoretically ready for clinical practice, a considerable part of the students again were not feeling themselves ready practically (Table 2). It is observed that this situation was originating from being unexperienced, acquiring inadequate experience, fear for harming the patient, by the own statements of the students (Table 2, students' statements). In addition to these, absence of clinical orientation before the practice (Table 3), and insufficient time spent for applications due to excessive workload for the instructor (Table 4) are among the factors causing the students feel not ready for clinical practice. Erbil et. al. (2006), in their study have determined that the students had experienced high level of stress before their first clinical experience.¹³

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It has been determined that

- The students had unfavorable opinions regarding nursing before they were nursing students
- The students do not feel ready for application from practical side
- Clinical orientation was not implemented before the first clinical application and for this reason the students had a substantial level of anxiety
- The students were expecting different educational approaches in vocational principles course
- In accordance with these conclusions, it is suggested;
- to allocate more time for applications in the vocational principles course,
- to reduce students' anxiety by implementing clinical orientation,
- to adhere new educational methods in the vocational principles course.

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