

*Original Article***Iranian nurse students' experiences of relationships with nurses in clinical setting**

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Abstract

Background: Today, the importance of clinical education of nursing students to train them for transition to professional roles has been documented. In this trend, the communication process between students and nursing staff is one of the key variables. So, the present study aimed to describe such relationships based on their real experiences.

Methods: The phenomenological approach was used and all participants were drawn from an affiliated teaching hospital to Medical Sciences University of Isfahan. Purposive samples of 10 nursing students were interviewed in-depth. Colaizzi's analysis method guided the essential activities of the researchers. The reliability and validity of the present study was grounded on the four items: factual value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

Results: Seven major themes and related sub-themes were identified as following; students' perception from staff's behavior, students' socialization, motivation, students' professional attitudes, students' skills and abilities, cultural factors and peer relationships.

Conclusion: Findings of the research showed that nursing students experience the communication with nursing staff as an important issue, through which they can more conveniently enter to their professional role. The students' experiences from the quality of this process shaped their attitude towards profession and working in clinical setting.

Key words: Experiences, relationships, clinical environment, nursing student

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One of the primary intentions of comprehensive nursing education is to train graduate nurses for practice in a variety of health care settings.¹ Benor and Leviof claimed that approximately 50% of the curriculum for the nursing education is devoted to clinical studies.² This is crucial in order to shape the professional identity of nursing students, and is also the primary source of learning professional attitudes, values and norms.³ One of the variables that affect the students' clinical teaching and learning is the communication processes that exist between nursing students and clinical nursing staff.

Hart and Rotem examined the best clinical experience from perspectives of 30 nursing students. Findings showed that students valued

the appropriate relationships with nursing staff. In that study, students' experiences showed that they essentially need to be belonged to clinical setting and accepted by clinical nurses.⁴ Another study by Nolan reported that nursing students experienced relationship with clinical nurses as the most important factor that would affect their clinical learning.⁵ Findings of the Haas et al study supported the positive relationship between amount of time that students shared with nurses and development of their knowledge and abilities.⁶ Although many studies have addressed student nurses' clinical learning and related problems, whole clinical experience of being a student nurse,³ but few have explored the specific processes such as relationships that affect their experiences. So, the

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present study aimed to describe the specific features of such relationships based on their real experiences.

Methods

A qualitative phenomenological approach was chosen because it is based on the premise that individuals are best placed to describe situation and feelings in their own words.

Following the proposal approval from the research center of nursing school, a purposive sampling of 10 nursing students (5 male and 5 female) were carried out in affiliated teaching hospital to Medical Sciences University of Isfahan. They were selected amongst students spending at least one period of clinical practice based on their willing to participate in the study. In order to gathering data, participants were interviewed in-depth. Such interviews conducted in an agreed private place in nursing school or clinical ward by author who is experienced in clinical teaching as well as qualitative research methodology. A general interview guide was used. Patton (1990) stated that the interview guide gives the interviewer the freedom to have a conversation with the interviewee within a special topic, to ask questions extemporarily, but with the focus on the predetermined special topic.⁷ The guiding questions were "what are your experiences of communicating with clinical nurses?" and "how do you describe the nature of your relationships with clinical nurses?" Questions were explained or clarified to be understood by students if it was necessary. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed immediately after the interviews. The researcher also took notes during the interviews. Then the data were transcribed and compared with notes to find differences. At first, the transcribed interviews were read through several times to obtain a sense of the whole. Colaizzi's method was carried out to analysis of the data.⁸ The rigor of the present study was grounded on the four items: factual value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. The study lasted about one year (from September 2005 to September 2006).

Results

Six major themes and related sub-themes were identified as following; the first theme was named as Students' perception from staff's behavior. Based on the students' experiences, they would attract to communicate with nurses and benefit them so long as the experience is gracious and followed by favorite feedback:

"If a nurse shows welcome, we will find that for example he/she wants to communicate, so we will go towards and welcome him/her; but sometimes we ask questions and find that some nurses don't like to communicate; they have vanity, in consequence we leave them ..." (participant number 1)

Students argued that they must have sured that nursing staff just mean to give help from communicating them and in this trend they adopted appropriate position. Participant number 4 said that:

"For example the nurse said that go and bring the patient outside of the bed ... while they don't themselves, just talk about, they can't prospect us that do".

Socialization of the students was the second theme. The nursing students will enter to their professional role and accept it, if they can minimize the gap that exists between them and the members of nursing profession. Experience of this good sense will achieve through making close relationship with the nursing staff as future coworkers. Findings showed that the clinical nursing teachers have crucial role in supporting such relationship and minimizing the gap between nurses and students. One of the participants (number 1) said that their mentors themselves quite know that which of the ward staffs welcome the students ... they (mentors) ordered them to cooperating and sharing with such nursing staffs.

Another theme that was defined was Motivation. Participants believed that certainty about future desirable consequences could motivate doing certain act. They argued that nursing staff could persuade them through giving assurance and so explaining the future good outlook of the nursing profession. They

believed that if they don't stand such persuasion, they will undergo negative experiences. A student (number 4) participated in the study said that:

"Ward nurse said that these (health care system) cause you to behave such as porters; your salary is few, you should leave the nursing and find another job. They never give hope ..."

Students' professional attitude was another theme in our study. According to findings, students' presumptions about the outlook and values of nursing profession would shape their attitudes towards their profession. They experienced that communicating with nursing staffs and sharing in their experiences considerably affect on shaping such attitude. One of the participants (number 1) said that: "Sometimes, nursing staff said that why you had gone to this discipline? You should outright leave it ... she said that I myself am working in my profession for many years; I don't have satisfaction ... of course some nurses are satisfied from their job and persuade us to stand and follow the nursing profession; through clinical teaching, we like and need to listen the experiences of such nurses therewith we will better make decisions ..."

The fifth theme was Students' skills and abilities. Findings showed that the students that had more skill could communicate more confidently and therefore are better accepted in behalf of nursing staffs and also experience lower complications in their relationships with nurses. One participant (number 7) said that: "Sometimes that we want to offer drugs, they say that your knowledge is too little to prescribe any drug, you may make mistakes ... for example we wanted to inject ampoule, they did not let us to do ... they frequently had objected our works"

Participants argued that they will be more effective in the ward when they experience less conflict in relationships with nursing staffs. One of the participants (number 8) said that: "When our velocity is vain, working with us may become hard for nurses, and may affect on our relationships with them. If we can do what that they want, they will be satisfied with us and so

they can more simply and courteously communicate with us".

The last theme was Cultural factor. Findings showed that cultural variables are too important and crucial in making optimal relationships. Students reported that they could considerably better communicate with similar gender and cultural background. One of the participants (number 1) supported this view and said that: "In most hospital wards, the nurses are female, so they can not make close relationships with us (male students); the male nurses communicate more comfortably ..."

Other participants emphasized on the importance of attending on cultural conditions and its crucial role in making optimal relationships. For example one of the female students (number 2) participated in study argued that: "we look at female nurses more comfortable than males; verbal communication of the male nurses is better, they explain the procedures for us, but for example we ask questions from female nurses more simply than males ...".

You did not mention any thing about the time of study and also the gender of participants.

Discussion

The concept of "student - nurse relationship" imply to interactions between nursing staffs and students in which, students are helped in transition to their professional role; so they will be able to cope with professional conditions and work in clinical setting more simply. Findings showed that one of the most important qualities of making relationships in clinical setting is "students' socialization". In fact it means that the students adapted and integrated in their own profession. Spouse assessed the nursing students' beliefs about "how they will practice as clinical nurses in future?" and found that through appropriate supervision and close ties with peer professionals, students acquire positive experiences from clinical practice.⁹ Also we found that through making closed relationships with nursing staffs, students accept themselves as a component of caring team, so they can

share in and benefit from group synergies. Other studies showed the importance of "successful socialization" in clinical setting, and the researchers challenged with finding ways to accelerate and facilitate this process. Clinical teaching managers can take into account in this experienced phenomenon. In supporting from this concept, Lee in his study emphasized to achieve communication skills and new relationship experience with other members of the nursing profession. He examined the effectiveness of international education through which students spent part of their educational period in clinical settings of foreign countries, so they have opportunity to be familiar with various cultures and relationship patterns that can be applied to developing personal and professional skills.¹⁰

One of the main concepts of the study was "student' perception from staff's behavior". This concept implied that the students affect from nursing staffs behavioral patterns. Findings of Gray and Smith study supported this view and mentioned that the students find out the importance of an optimal role model, and admire their supervisors that mostly are their preceptors or nursing staff as role models.¹¹ This finding emphasizes the essence of educating communication skills to the clinical nurses. Also, we found that students' motivation is affected by their professional attitudes, and it determines the quality of their relationships in clinical setting. Persons that have picturesque outlook from nursing profession, give more attention and value to their professional relationships. Participants argued that the nursing staffs helped them to shape their professional attitudes and motivation through communicating their experiences that mostly is negative. In fact, these findings imply that some of students' negative attitudes rooted in nurses' negative attitudes. This finding emphasizes to introduce

and elaborate positive aspects of the nursing profession to whole community members specifically to the nursing students. Findings of an Iranian study conducted by Peyrovi et al supported this view. They talked about poor attitudes toward the nursing profession and emphasized that although the Iranians value the nursing profession, but many Iranian nurses experience discomfort from some negative feelings about their social position and poor attitudes of others towards them.³

Another concept that emerged from the present study was "cultural factors". Findings showed that such factors determine the amount and quality of relationships in clinical setting. Peyrovi et al in their study emphasized the importance of considering cultural variables and paying attention to cultural differences.³

The theme of "student's skills and abilities" implies that nursing students through equipping to necessary skills and abilities can approximate more simply to the nursing staffs and share in their positive and satisfactory experiences. So we can expect that weaker and Jackleg students experienced more complications in this regard. Collins and Zournazis¹² supported this view and reported that the nursing students experience various complications through early stages of transition to their new roles as clinical nurses.

Study limitations

Conducting interviews aided by an interpreter may influence on interpretation of the study findings. Errors may occur in conjunction with translation from the different languages.

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