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Moral Distress and Associated Factors among Baccalaureate Nursing Students: A Multi-Site Descriptive Study

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2 Descriptive Study

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42 Moral Distress and Associated Factors among Baccalaureate Nursing Students: A Multi-Site
43 Descriptive Study

44 Moral distress and its associated negative consequences among post-licensure nurses
45 have been extensively discussed in the literature. Moral distress is defined as knowing the
46 ethically correct action one should take but feeling constrained from acting on one's convictions
47 due to internal and external constraints (Epstein & Delgado, 2010; Hamric, 2014; Jameton, 1984;
48 McCarthy & Gastmans, 2014; Musto, Rodney, & Vanderheide, 2015). The focus in much of the
49 reviewed literature is on measuring and describing moral distress, moral residue (lingering
50 feelings associated with moral distress), and subsequent deleterious consequences (frustration,
51 apathy, compassion fatigue, and turnover) (Grace, Robinson, Jurchak, Zollfrank, & Lee, 2014;
52 Rushton & Kurtz, 2015; Whitehead, Herbertson, Hamric, Epstein, & Fisher, 2015). Less
53 prevalent in the literature is evidence describing moral distress among nursing students who are
54 at risk for developing such distress when they encounter ethical dilemmas during patient care
55 experiences.

56 Nursing students who develop moral distress prior to licensure may enter the workplace
57 already experiencing apathy and compassion fatigue. These and other consequences of moral
58 distress have been associated with eroded quality care and increased turnover. According to an
59 American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) 2008 public policy statement on moral
60 distress, an estimated one of three nurses will consider leaving their current position or the
61 profession because of moral distress symptoms. Uncovering empirical evidence describing moral
62 distress among student nurses and the associated contributing factors will assist nurse educators
63 to prioritize and implement educational strategies that may prevent the accumulation of moral
64 distress while providing support to students already experiencing distress. This multi-site study

65 among three baccalaureate nursing programs located in Midwest and Pacific Northwest regions
66 of the United States of America had three aims: first, to assess moral distress among
67 baccalaureate nursing students (BSN) via the Moral Distress Thermometer (MDT) (Wocial &
68 Weaver, 2012); second, to describe clinical situations contributing to moral distress as
69 experienced by students in clinical practica; and third, to describe predominant reasons why
70 nursing students do not take action during distressing situations experienced during clinical
71 practica.

72 **Literature Review**

73 A comprehensive literature review resulted in locating one empirical study that measured
74 moral distress among BSN students (Range & Rotherham, 2010). This one-site study (n=66) was
75 conducted at a private faith-based institution and used the Moral Distress Scale (Corley, Elswick,
76 Gorman, & Clor, 2001), a 32-item instrument describing common moral problems experienced
77 by post-licensure nurses in hospital settings. Study findings revealed slight to moderate levels of
78 moral distress.

79 The literature provided qualitative descriptions about student nurse exposure to micro-
80 ethical and biomedical dilemmas that could result in moral distress. Micro-ethical dilemmas, as
81 first defined by Worthley (1997), are every-day, routine ethical decisions that are so common
82 that they may go unnoticed. When students encounter micro-ethical dilemmas, the risk for moral
83 distress is present because they are confronted with making a decision between two choices: (a)
84 speak up and advocate for quality patient care or (b) remain quiet and permit the substandard
85 practice to occur. For example, students reported micro-ethical issues that could cause harm to
86 patients; e.g., breaking infection control practices, violating confidentiality, failing to
87 appropriately implement sterile technique, bypassing medication administration safeguards, and

111 content analysis was used to qualitatively describe clinical situations associated with moral
112 distress.

113 **Sample**

114 A purposive, convenience sampling strategy was used to recruit study participants at all
115 three academic institutions. Those who chose to participate received a token appreciation gift
116 card to a local food vendor. All senior-level nursing students who met inclusion criteria (250 or
117 more hours of clinical experience, currently participating in clinical practicum experiences, and
118 at least 18 years of age) were sent an email inviting them to participate. Consent to participate
119 was implied by completing and submitting the anonymous paper survey. The survey contained
120 no identifying information that could connect study participants with findings, thus assuring
121 confidentiality.

122 **Survey**

123 The researchers developed a survey (Figure 1) that incorporated the previously tested and
124 validated MDT (Wocial & Weaver, 2012) as well as literature-based recommendations about the
125 reasons individuals do not speak up during distressing situations. The survey was reviewed by
126 three PhD-prepared nurse educators with both quantitative and qualitative research experience to
127 assure content validity. Prior to survey administration, institutional review board approval was
128 obtained from all three academic institutions. The four-part survey asked nursing students to
129 provide the following: 1) demographic data, 2) moral distress rating via the MDT, 3) brief
130 written narrative describing clinical situations contributing to moral distress, and 4) their reasons
131 for not taking action during distressing situations (participants were asked to select all that
132 apply).

133 Permission to use the MDT was granted by the author, Lucia Wocial (personal
134 communication, July 7, 2015). Psychometric testing of the MDT has “demonstrated acceptable
135 reliability and support for concurrent validity” (Wocial & Weaver, 2012, p. 171). The MDT is
136 simple to use, asking participants to rate the moral distress they experienced in the past week on
137 a scale of zero to 10 with associated verbal anchors. Zero is associated with no moral distress,
138 five is linked with uncomfortable to moderate amounts of moral distress, and 10 is the worst
139 possible distress experienced. The MDT does not propose examples of potentially distressing
140 practice dilemmas; therefore, the survey in this study included a prompt that asked participants to
141 describe clinical situations contributing to their moral distress rating. The paper-and-pen surveys
142 were administered during fall 2015, outside of scheduled class times. Completed surveys were
143 placed into an unlabeled envelope and collected by the on-site researcher. Surveys were scanned
144 into a PDF document and emailed to the primary researcher via password-protected university
145 email servers. The paper versions of the surveys were shredded. Electronic copies were safely
146 secured on a password-protected computer in the primary researcher’s locked office.

147 **Data Analysis**

148 Surveys were deleted from the study (n=21) if they were incomplete or illegible. Moral
149 distress ratings were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Mean moral distress values
150 were computed for each academic institution and for the aggregate. A between-groups ANOVA
151 of the mean moral distress values was computed using both E-Z Analyze 3.0 and SPSS 22.0.
152 Reasons for not taking action during distressing situations were also entered into an Excel
153 spreadsheet to compute the frequencies of each response.

154 Narrative responses were analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Elo & Kyngas,
155 2007; Lambert & Lambert, 2012; Sandelowski, 2010). Hand-written text data were transcribed

156 verbatim from surveys onto a Microsoft Word document. The researchers read the text data
157 multiple times, seeking commonalities in language and redundancy in thought. Throughout the
158 content analysis process, text segments from the data were classified as belonging to specific
159 codes. A code book (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, & Milstein, 1998) was utilized throughout the
160 iterative content analysis process to enhance reliability among the findings. Researchers
161 collapsed codes into categories that shared general meanings. To enhance the reliability of
162 findings, the researchers frequently returned to the data, checking text segments against category
163 definitions. Researchers at each study site met via conference call to compare codes and
164 categories, discuss variations, and arrive at final agreement.

165 **Findings**

166 Demographics are reported in Table 1. Among the participants (n=267), 233 were female
167 (87%), 31 were male (12%), and three declined to denote a gender association (1%). The average
168 participant age was 22.6 years. Ethnicity demographics revealed 213 Caucasian (80%), 26
169 “other” (10%), 11 Hispanic (4%), six African American (2%), six Pacific Islander (2%), and five
170 selected “decline to reply” (2%).

171 **Survey Findings: Moral Distress Thermometer**

172 The aggregate mean moral distress rating was 3.12, which was associated with verbal
173 anchors of mild to uncomfortable distress (Wocial & Weaver, 2012). Table 2 presents mean
174 moral distress values among the students at each academic institution and ANOVA statistics. A
175 one-way between-subjects ANOVA showed no significant effect of academic institution on
176 moral distress ratings among students at all three sites [$F(2,264) = 0.746, p > .05$]. Forty-four
177 participants (16%) rated their moral distress as “zero.”

178 **Survey Findings: Reasons for Not Taking Action during Distressing Situations**

179 Table 3 presents the four most frequently selected reasons for not taking action during
180 distressing situations. The most common response, “I have a subordinate role in the patient care
181 environment,” was selected 187 times (26.3%). The second most common response, “I want to
182 preserve my relationship with my preceptor and/or clinical faculty,” was selected 126 times
183 (17.7%). The third most common response, “I felt my concerns were due to incomplete
184 knowledge/judgment,” was selected 118 times (16.6%). And finally, “I didn’t know how to
185 respectfully speak up to the person(s) involved” was selected 110 times (15.5%).

186 **Content Analysis: Clinical Situation Contributing to Moral Distress**

187 Participants provided hand-written narratives describing clinical situations that
188 contributed to their moral distress. Content analysis resulted in the construction of four
189 categories with related subcategories (Figure 2). Categories, subcategories, and exemplar text
190 statements are provided here.

191 **Compromised best practices.** Moral distress occurred when participants witnessed
192 healthcare providers demonstrating substandard patient care practices. Sixty-five participants
193 (24%) described clinical scenarios where they observed healthcare workers engaged in actions
194 that contradicted evidence-based practice or endangered quality patient care. Three dominant
195 narratives within this category included *infection control breaches*, *substandard medication*
196 *administration practices*, and *unsafe work-arounds*.

197 ***Infection control breaches.*** Twenty-seven participants associated moral distress with
198 witnessing inadequately implemented infection control procedures. Substandard hand hygiene
199 practices were frequently described: (1) “The nurse I was following this week was not 100%
200 compliant with the foam in/out policy”; (2) “at my clinical site, I have witnessed multiple nurses
201 not washing their hands every time they enter/exit patient rooms. This happened almost

202 constantly in clinical this week and is a major patient safety and infection risk breach.” A second
203 dominant narrative described inappropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE): (3)
204 “Often nurses on my floor do not follow important protocol in regards to PPE. I often had nurses
205 walk into my patients’ rooms who were on contact isolation precautions with no PPE” and (4)
206 “the nurse cut off the top of her glove so that her finger was exposed. She was in the process of
207 starting an IV [*sic*].” A final prevalent narrative described sterile technique breaches: (5) “During
208 a bedside sterile procedure – residents/doctors/RN are not keeping a sterile field” and (6) “a
209 nurse was inserting a catheter into a patient and was getting tired of it not getting into the right
210 place. Instead of getting a new kit, she kept inserting the same one.”

211 ***Substandard medication administration practices.*** Eighteen participants wrote about
212 witnessing medication administration practices that increased the risk of compromised patient
213 outcomes: (1) “When drawing up insulin my RN would leave frequently and not want to verify
214 the dosage. I had to ask her twice to stay with me when drawing it up”; (2) “medications were
215 taken out of the Pyxis and left in the patient room”; (3) “the nurse was to administer pain
216 medicine IV push. Typically done over 2 to 5 minutes. She pushed the whole amount in at once,
217 which was unsafe for this pt.”

218 ***Unsafe work-arounds.*** Twenty participants described clinical situations involving work-
219 arounds that compromised patient safety: (1) “I felt moral distress when my nurse preceptor was
220 charting on my assigned patient & got to the GI [gastro-intestinal] section and said ‘Oh, I didn’t
221 listen to his bowel tones’ and then charted WDL [within defined limits], which was the
222 previously charted response”; (2) “I felt kind of weird after taking HR ad RR [heart rate and
223 respiratory rate] on infants and I did the most accurate way I was taught, which is listen to each
224 for 1 full minute. My nurse said she only listens for 15 sec. and multiplies by 4 for her vitals so it

225 doesn't take as long"; and (3) "Even though we are told auscultation is not correct for checking
226 feeding tube placement, I see it all the time, including on a pt who had pulled her tube partially
227 out."

228 **Disrespect for inherent human dignity.** Fifty-one participants (19%) described
229 experiencing moral distress when they were treated with disrespect or when they saw clients
230 (individuals, families, and populations) treated disrespectfully. Two dominant narratives
231 emerged from the text data: *incivility toward clients* and *incivility toward nursing students*.

232 ***Incivility toward clients.*** Thirty-four participants wrote about clinical situations where
233 compassion and respect for the inherent dignity of each person (American Nurses Association,
234 2015) was not demonstrated. (1) "In several clinical situations I have seen nurses make fun or
235 criticize people for the state they are in"; (2) "there was an incident early in the week in which a
236 nurse, actually a few nurses, poked fun at a patient, which made me pretty uncomfortable"; (3)
237 "the nurse was treating the client as a number, not a person, and I did not like that"; and (4) "an
238 interpreter was not provided to a patient and family whose primary language was Vietnamese. It
239 was clear they were confused and scared."

240 ***Incivility toward nursing students.*** Seventeen participants wrote about experiences
241 where they attempted to speak up and advocate for quality patient care. The narratives reveal
242 how the students were ignored or belittled. (1) "Once I told my preceptor an IV [intravenous]
243 was infiltrated and I was not comfortable administering vancomycin as I know it's a powerful
244 vesicant. She told me it was fine and to hang it. I ran saline to prove it was infiltrated and she
245 still refused to evaluate it. I ended up finding a different nurse who confirmed that the IV was
246 indeed infiltrated and commended me on holding the vanc [*sic*]. My preceptor was rude to me
247 the rest of the shift." (2) "My patient's labs came back and there was a clear indication she had

248 bacteria in her urine. I brought this up with my nurse, but she kept putting me off and the patient
249 was discharged before the possible infection was treated.” (3) “I have called a doctor to discuss
250 my concerns about a patient’s pain control and the doctor was short with me, and condescending
251 and instructed me to do nothing further regarding the pt’s pain and hung up on me.” (4) “I
252 attempted to tell a nurse about a set of declining vital signs on a patient and she blew me off. It
253 took the family member to speak up and say something to intervene. I don’t know what
254 would’ve happened if no family was present.”

255 **Perceived constraints.** Thirty-nine participants (14%) reported they experienced moral
256 distress when they knew the ethically correct action to take but felt constrained from taking
257 action due to limited external resources or personal feelings of powerlessness. Subcategories
258 within this category included *external constraints* and *personal internal constraints*.

259 **External constraints.** Twenty-three participants reported experiencing moral distress due
260 to external resource constraints. Examples of these constraints included lack of human resources,
261 financial resource limitations, systems issues, and time limitations. (1) “Currently in my
262 community health rotation that serves LSE [low socioeconomic] status refugees, there have been
263 many situations in which I wish I could do more for these individuals who do not have equal
264 healthcare.” (2) “Many morally distressing things occur here due to lack of resources. People
265 unable to get mental health counseling when needed leading to suicide is a main problem.” (3)
266 “Nurse delayed addressing a complication with a patient based on time constraints and her task
267 list.” (4) “Nurses have so much to do that they can’t spend a lot of time with kids who need to
268 have time spent with them.” (5) “Unfortunately, due to funds and potentially burnout, I don’t
269 believe the highest quality of care can be given.”

270 **Personal internal constraints.** Sixteen participants described a sense of powerlessness
271 that constrained ethical action. Powerlessness was noted in the narratives when students reported
272 feeling ill-prepared to effectively speak up in an environment where they were also feeling
273 subordinate. (1) “RNs were not washing hands after patient rooms. I felt uncomfortable to speak
274 with them about this since they are superiors.” (2) “I have had experiences that cause discomfort
275 based on nurse behavior and not knowing how to speak up.” (3) “I had 2 different nurses in my 2
276 different shifts last week. They both told me very different and sometimes conflicting things
277 about certain ways of doing things. I knew best practice, but I was nervous about standing up for
278 myself.” (4) “There was a situation where gossip/bullying was going on and I should have said
279 something but I didn’t because I did not feel comfortable speaking up to someone four times my
280 age.”

281 **Navigating personal values and patient-centered care.** Eighteen participants (6%)
282 reported experiencing moral distress as they struggled to navigate between personal values and
283 professional expectations of patient-centered care. Students reported experiencing turmoil during
284 clinical when their personal values conflicted with the patient’s values. (1) “During my clinical I
285 had to take care of a drunk driver who hit a family head on. He also has Hep C [*sic*] and is not
286 protected during sexual encounters, putting the partners at risk. I wanted to talk with him about
287 how his sexual activity is extremely risky and about drunk driving.” (2) “A patient in hospice
288 wanted to take life-ending medications. It was difficult to determine the level of intervention that
289 should have been required but also struggling with allowing autonomy of care despite personal
290 opinion.” (3) “I was uncomfortable when talking to clients diagnosed with STDs who had sex
291 with so many partners it is hard to count. Also it was against my morals when talking to a gay
292 sex addict who was advocating for gay rights.”

Discussion, Limitations and Recommendations

293 Findings from this study expose the extent of acute moral distress among BSN students.
294 The ANOVA findings indicate that individual academic institution affiliation did not
295 significantly impact the level of moral distress experienced by students. These findings suggest
296 that BSN students, regardless of geographic location or institutional affiliation, are likely to incur
297 moral distress during clinical experiences. Students who acquire such distress during school may
298 experience a heightened susceptibility to crescendo effects (Hamric, 2014), such as burnout and
299 turnover, during the first year of novice, post-licensure practice.
300

301 This study also quantified the most frequently selected reasons students do not take
302 action when confronted with distressing situations. Two of the top four aligned with content
303 analysis narratives; e.g., *feeling subordinate* and *not knowing how to respectfully speak up* were
304 illuminated in the subcategory identified as *personal internal constraints*. Feelings of
305 powerlessness due to subordinate roles and inadequate conflict communication skills are likely to
306 persist within hierarchical post-licensure practice environments, further accelerating the risk for
307 moral distress and moral residue.

308 Finally, while the content analysis findings were disheartening, they brought out of
309 concealment specific clinical situations contributing to moral distress among students. The
310 preponderance of narratives revealed clinical situations that were routine, every-day, and micro-
311 ethical: i.e. compromised patient care, substandard practice, and disrespect for human dignity.
312 One has to wonder if similar narratives could be identified in interviews with post-licensure
313 nurses and physicians. It is conceivable that work-arounds, substandard practice, and negative
314 vocalizations about clients and students are symptoms of existing moral residue, apathy, and
315 powerlessness among nurses supervising students during clinical practica. Nurses and others may

316 exhibit these behaviors as a coping mechanism to survive within clinical practice environments
317 that are plagued with the presence of compassion fatigue. As reported in the classic work of
318 Chambliss (1996), routinization of healthcare activities “inhibits rules of decorum resulting in
319 flattening of emotion and egregious violation of commonsense morality” (p. 21). The research
320 findings from this study, although conducted 20 years after Chambliss’s statement, highlight the
321 widespread and embedded nature of ethical problems within healthcare systems. Despite 20
322 years of literature on this topic, little has been accomplished to proactively prevent and address
323 moral distress. Findings from this study identify a critical aspect contributing to the preservation
324 of moral distress. Nursing students are exposed to clinical learning environments in which
325 advocacy is dismissed, belittled, and unrewarded; thus, they begin to embrace practices that are
326 role-modeled and the status quo culture is preserved.

327 According to Deshpande, Joseph, and Prasad (2006), peer behavior has a strong influence
328 on ethical decision making. They observed that “ethical behavior of coworkers was more
329 important than other determinants of ethical behavior” (p. 212). Students who are repeatedly
330 exposed to role models who demonstrate substandard practice and disrespect for human dignity
331 are primed to succumb to external and internal constraints, deterring moral agency. If this
332 supposition is true, then students could enter the workplace already believing that both academia
333 and the ANA Code of Ethics are theoretical and incongruent with the professional practice
334 mental models shared among practicing nurses.

335 Finally, content analysis revealed the students’ moral distress associated with learning to
336 navigate between personal values and providing patient-centered care. While only eighteen text
337 statements were related to this category, the narratives highlight the importance of providing
338 educational support that assists students to reflect upon personal values, challenge hidden

339 assumptions, and work toward person-centered care within the context of the nurse-patient
340 relationship.

341 A limitation of this study is that student nurses were asked to report acute moral distress;
342 i.e. distress experienced in the past seven to 10 days. A small percentage of participants
343 commented that they had previously experienced moral distress but did not experience such
344 distress in the last 10 days. Additionally, hand-written qualitative text data were brief, providing
345 one or two sentences, which limited the ability to fully capture the context of each clinical
346 situation. Despite these limitations, the findings support recommendations for nursing education
347 and additional nursing research.

348 Findings from this study validate that nursing students feel vulnerable and require
349 additional educational support to develop requisite knowledge, skills, and affective freedom to
350 thrive as effective moral agents. According to the classical work of Gula (1997), the ability to act
351 on one's convictions requires knowledge and freedom. Gula explained that "it is unreasonable to
352 demand that someone do what is beyond his or her capacity of knowledge, freedom, and
353 emotional moral strength" (p. 30). This is not to say that nursing students and novice post-
354 licensure nurses are victims of hierarchies and are therefore absolved of ethical responsibilities.
355 Instead, nurse educators should use this research in combination with literature-based
356 recommendations to develop, implement, and evaluate educational strategies aimed at addressing
357 moral distress among student nurses. For example, a variety of sources indicate that nurses may
358 reduce moral distress by first identifying the ethical issue and then by speaking up and
359 advocating for the patient (American Association of Critical Care Nurses, 2010; Lachman, 2010;
360 Rushton & Kurtz, 2015). Missing from these resources, however, is a curricular approach for
361 teaching nurses *how* to effectively communicate. Ethical action and effective advocacy require

362 knowledge of best practices, ethical frameworks, conflict communication strategies, and personal
363 formation of both empowerment and resiliency.

364 Recommendations for nursing education include critical curriculum evaluation and
365 revision, ensuring a comprehensive, sustainable approach for teaching the future nursing
366 workforce how to prevent and manage moral distress. According to Benner, Sutphen, Leonard,
367 and Day (2010), students emerging from nursing programs are undereducated for the demands
368 they will face in practice. Benner et al. identified that both educators and students described
369 learning “ethics” in terms of biomedical ethical issues, yet findings from this study revealed that
370 the primary causes of moral distress derived from encountering everyday micro-ethical issues.
371 Thus, a pre-licensure nursing program should emphasize micro-ethical clinical examples, such as
372 those identified in the content analysis of the study. We recommend infusing didactic learning
373 experiences with constructivist learning activities such as unfolding case studies, problem-based
374 learning, cognitive rehearsal, and role play scenarios, using both constructivist and behavioral
375 pedagogies.

376 Ethical dilemmas, both bioethical and micro-ethical, should also be embedded within
377 simulation scenarios in the academic laboratory. The integration of ethical dilemmas within
378 simulation provides explicit, low-risk opportunities to experience and debrief ethical practice,
379 conflict communication strategies, and advocacy. Such experiences will help students develop
380 congruent mental models of professional ethical practice while also enhancing self-efficacy. In
381 addition to simulation, periodic administration of the MDT at pre-determined intervals is
382 recommended for early detection and debriefing of morally distressing situations.

383 We also propose developing transdisciplinary co-taught ethics, communication, and
384 leadership courses that would explicitly integrate and capitalize upon expertise from non-nursing

385 disciplines; e.g., communication, philosophy, and business. Such an approach has the potential to
386 empower the future nursing workforce to enact moral agency and ethical decision-making and to
387 promote collaborative work environments, an ethical healthcare milieu, and optimal patient care
388 outcomes.

389 In addition, the envisioned curriculum should extend beyond the students, providing
390 education for clinical faculty and agency nurses who teach and role model professional nursing
391 practice at the point of care. For example, nurse educators are encouraged to partner with clinical
392 practice agencies, providing either in-person or online education and consultation services that
393 narrow the academic-practice gap. Finally, clinical practicum sites in which students witness
394 pervasive distressing patient care situations should not be used for clinical education until such
395 issues are addressed and resolved.

396 Recommendations for research include implementing the aforementioned curricular
397 revisions and teaching strategies and then re-evaluating moral distress levels and associated
398 factors. In addition to these recommendations, conducting research that correlates levels of moral
399 distress with clinical specialties could provide data to guide prioritization of educational efforts.
400 A final research recommendation is to conduct a phenomenological study, exploring the meaning
401 of *compromised best practices* from the emic viewpoint of students.

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Table 1.

Aggregate Participant Demographic Data (n=267)

Demographic	Findings
Age	$x=22.6$
Gender	Female: 233 (87%) Male: 31 (12%) Declined to reply: 3 (1%)
Ethnicity	Caucasian: 213 (80%) Pacific Islander: 6 (2%) Hispanic: 11 (4%) African American: 6 (2%) Other: 26 (10%) Declined to reply: 5 (2%)

Table 2.

Mean Moral Distress Rating among Baccalaureate Nursing Students

Survey item	Mean (\bar{x})
Moral distress rating combined	3.12
Academic agency 1	3.31
Academic agency 2	3.00
Academic agency 3	2.98

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.970	2	3.985	.746	.475
Within Groups	1410.880	264	5.344		
Total	1418.850	266			

Table 3.

Reasons for not taking action during distressing situations – top four responses

Survey item	N (%)
I have a subordinate role in the patient care environment.	187 (26.3%)
I wanted to preserve my relationship with my preceptor and/or clinical faculty.	126 (17.7%)
I felt my concerns or questions were due to incomplete knowledge and judgment.	118 (16.6%)
I didn't know how to respectfully speak up to the person(s) involved.	110 (15.5%)