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## Why do nurses need philosophy?

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### Abstract

The nature of philosophy gives a significant influence on the way nurse examines the phenomena which happen on the field. Together with nursing ethics, it is needed for nursing practice, as the basic elements of rights, giving value and the nature to perform good nursing practice. Philosophy and science can't be separated because they give mutual benefits each other; where science requires philosophy to connect its findings for human knowledge and philosophy can act as a language connecting disciplines. Philosophy will increase nurses' ability to understand the phenomena and this will provide nurses with a way to think about their practice. Caring is expected to be a spirit of nursing, and through caring, nurse can provide a safe and compassionate nursing care. For nurse educator, caring is a soul of nursing that will help the students cope or make adaptation with the stressor, thus will increase their motivation to study nursing.

**Keywords:** Philosophy; nursing practice; science; caring.

### 1. Introduction

Nursing is a discipline embedding science and art. As science, nursing has the body of knowledge that serves as rational for nursing practice; and as an art, nursing embodies effort to express the creativity in providing nursing care. Based on that definition, question that may arise is: why do nurses need philosophy? To answer this question and to know about the relationship, this paper attempts to provide the answers and it is believed that nurses need to understand the nature and the value of philosophy. Philosophy originates from Ancient Greek word of *philosophia* (*philos*-love, *sophia*-wisdom), meaning 'love of wisdom'. Philosophy [1] is a type of inquiry that uses critical analysis to describe, evaluate and understand various phenomena in the universe. From some study literatures, some authors mentioned that there are three fundamental/nature of philosophy, namely ontology, epistemology, and axiology [2,3].

Ontology will seek the answer to the nature of phenomena (i.e. what is this things?). This ontological question about the nature of nursing is important because it will identify the aims of developing nursing knowledge. Epistemology seeks an answer how the phenomena are known (i.e., how do we come to understand this thing?). This nature of philosophy gives a significant influence on the way nurse examines the phenomena which happen on the field. From the history, there is paradigm in nursing which act as a basic for nursing theorist development, called meta-paradigm, consist of person, environment, health and nursing [4]. Axiology plays an important aspect of value and ethic in the scientific process. The questions that arise from axiology involves with relevance, nature and types of theory needed for nursing practice. Nursing ethics [5] refers to moral phenomena that needed for nursing practice, as the basic elements of rights, giving value and the nature to perform good nursing practice.

## **2. Philosophy, nursing science and nursing practice**

Science comes from the Latin word *scientia*, means knowledge. Science itself aims to develop knowledge and seek the truth. Philosophy and science give mutual benefits each other; where science requires philosophy to connect its findings for human knowledge and philosophy can act as a language connecting disciplines. Science and philosophy can't be separated [6], since they have relation to build and examine the framework for developing theories which are good, valid and appropriate for human.

Nursing science [7] refer to the unique body of knowledge embedded in the extant nursing frameworks and theorist that continue to be developed through research and creative conceptualization. Nurse utilizes scientific knowledge to assess health status, recognize nursing problems that complaining by the patient and identify the appropriate nursing treatment to eclipse the problem.

Philosophy will increase nurses' ability to understand the phenomena and this will provide nurses with a way to think about their practice. Some theorist mentioned that philosophy can represent the goal of nursing care in their practice area, where nurses will see a patient as a whole thus support holistic nursing care. Holistic nursing care has a goal to cure the patient with caring, recognize patients differently, spent interacting time with patients and use a therapeutic touch that will promote the psychological and emotional healing of patients thus will lead for improvement satisfactory.

Philosophy in nursing science consider as way of life and practice, where nurses utilize philosophy to answer, analyze, and critique clinical situations that may risk patient safety. Nurses work with human, dealing with many issues that have close connection with life and death, find multiple ethical issues that need a human response. Repeatedly, nurse will involve in making difficult decision, regardless if they work as practitioner, educator, researcher or administrator, thus nurse should notice the value of knowledge that they have and philosophy that the belief to decide the good conclusion.

In addition, Philosophy also can be a method in nursing. Nursing science [8] as the communal knowledge gained by systematic collection, analysis and presentation of empirical data related to human phenomena. Nursing research is the tool used in developing nursing science. For qualitative research, process begins with

philosophical assumptions that will support the paradigm and theoretical framework. Researcher need to find out what is the essence of her/his research based on ontology, epistemology and axiology. Through qualitative research, it is expected that interpretation and better understanding of human phenomena will be developed and nursing theorists will arise to enrich nursing science and give a different personal approach for patients.

### **3. Philosophy and the perspective in nursing science**

Every nurse has responsible for increasing his/her knowledge and education after completion nursing program. By concern at personal growth to increase knowledge and promote an autonomy in her specialty, a nurse can develop critical thinking, self-confidence and enthusiasm as a foundation to build nursing judgment. This judgment may result in critical thinking in choosing best problem-solving for patient, family and her/himself as a nurse.

Nursing as profession should dealing with rapid changes in knowledge and practice. Nurse need to examine their role and inquiry what is the value and belief which is fundamentally important to maintain their practice in harmony, increase motivation, develop critical/analyze of thinking and provide ethical guide to decide the good decision. Personal value and belief can be influenced by many factors such as life experience, education, environment, culture, belief, etc. All of these factors may contribute the personal growth about who we are, what we belief and more importantly, how we act.

As nurse educator, the personal philosophy of the author is based on the premise that all students deserve to have good quality of education and perform caring as a soul of nursing. The good quality of education is focus on preparing students as active learner by helping them discover their value, weakness, strength and also their full potential. Preparing adult learner students, means that the students must be motivated to be a problem solver and analytical thinker. The students should 'equip' themselves with nursing process, an approach to problem solving that enable a nurse to organize and deliver nursing care. Nursing process is a systematic method which utilizes scientific reasoning, problem solving and critical thinking to direct nurses in caring for patients effectively [9]. Through nursing process, students learn and prepare themselves in dealing and caring the patients, families and community regardless of ethnicity, poverty and gender. The students also need to determine the nursing diagnoses and select desire intervention to achieve the outcomes using critical thinking skills.

The biggest challenge as nurse educator in Indonesia is to increase student's motivation to learn and love nursing as their life. Majority, the motivation of students to enroll in nursing school is not always coming from their decision but from their family or family; however, some of them decide to choose nursing school because their failure to enter medical school. This matter about the motivation to pursue nursing education might be a cause for students 'difficulty in cognitive engagement, such as studying, learning and also will stimulate stress during clinical practice. In this condition, the role of teacher is more focused on motivating, coaching, caring and supporting the students to actively engage with the course content inside and outside the classroom. It is also needed to explore their full potential by providing an environment which is safe, warm and invites a sharing idea, by allowing the students to discover their learning style, promote respect to all things and caring the

people.

For the students of nursing who mostly enroll in nursing as the second choice, they will experience the decrease in the ability to perform during clinical practice. Process of studying nursing in the hospital and other clinical settings will bring another stress if they cannot adapt with it. From the experience as nurse educator, the author found out that some nursing students refused to accept an assignment to provide the care for patient, especially with terminal illness patients such as AIDS, where the students appeared to avoid and accept the assignment willingly. The students mentioned that they believed patients with AIDS deserve the care but they are not willing to help because of fear and close encounters with patients, as well as negative attitude of mode transmission of the HIV/AIDS. The patients and families may be perceived this issue thus could bring negative impact upon the nurse-patient relationship.

Aside from clinical practice area, it is also important for the teacher to know the uniqueness of adult learner in order to teach properly. The students who are entering in the classroom today is called millennial generation, who were born between the year of 1981-2002 [10]. Millennial generation is comfortable with multitasking, multimedia and achievement oriented. The students in this generation need active teaching that involve them directly in the learning and they also need teacher to support them to participate actively in study. Therefore, it is essential for the teacher to modify the method of teacher centered learning into student centered learning as the method of teaching in the classroom and laboratory which may enhance the interest and motivation of students in study nursing.

The nurse educator should inform or expose the students to the information about the profession, the learning and the work that will be faced in the real world of nursing. The students need to be emphasized the attitude to be performed on clinical practice. If a problem on practice of study was found, the nurse educator should motivate and support the student and ask the students to make a reflection paper from the situation and follow up action. This approach is expected to increase the comfort feeling and the readiness, thus will improve the interest to do nursing practice so that the student could cope or make adaptation with the stressor.

Nurse educator need to perform as role model in dealing with patient, especially in performing caring. Caring is the soul of nursing and caring is a value that need to be present in nursing practice. This caring behavior can be performed with simple action by knowing the name of the patient, spent more time with patient, using touch and therapeutic communication [11]. Caring behavior, is expected to be a spirit of nursing and can provide a safe and compassionate nursing care. Furthermore, the action of caring [12] which is shown toward nurses gives a significant role in increasing relationship, thus enhance a quality in work environment.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In nursing, philosophy increase nurses' ability to understand the phenomena and support nurses to think about their practice in the clinical area as well as in the academic. Philosophy and science give mutual benefits each other because it produces framework for developing theories for human being. Moreover, nurses utilize philosophy to answer and analyze clinical situations that arise in their practice, since nurses involve in making

difficult decision, regardless if they work as practitioner, educator, researcher or administrator, thus nurse should notice the value of knowledge that they have and philosophy that they believe to decide the good conclusion. As nurse educator, philosophy become the foundation for developing nursing knowledge, and it is expected that philosophy be able to justify a better understanding of human phenomena for development nursing theorists, thus will enrich nursing science and give a different personal approach for patients and students.

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