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Experience on Nurse-Patient Interaction with Filipino Clients among Non-Tagalog Speaking BSN Students

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ABSTRACT

The Philippines have experienced an increase in international students in various programs especially in the nursing program and medical program. This programs required students to have clinical exposure where the students are expected to have good interaction with the patient. This study aims to explore the experience of non-Tagalog speaking nursing students on nurse-patient interaction with Filipino clients. A qualitative design was used in this study. A Semi-structured interview with three questions was conducted to 13 respondents selected with purposive sampling technique. This study included seven main informants or non-Tagalog speaking nursing students and six general informants or Filipino nursing students' perceptions. The respondents were recruited from one university in the Philippines. Qualitative data analysis was done following Giorgi's phenomenologist method. Several themes were established in this study: (i) translation of words which is a mean for patients and nurses to communicate their thoughts; (ii) the use of nonverbal (gestures, technology) to facilitate nurse-patient interaction; (iii) Importance of trust to confidence in giving care to patients; (iv) preference in giving care to English speaking patient, unsatisfied feeling when communicating with patient; (v) individual initiative in learning Tagalog which is mean to help in communication preparation to Tagalog speaking patient; (vi) support from clinical instructor and Filipino friends are methods being used to help in communication; (vii) institutional support is one way to help the students in the preparation before clinical exposure. This study suggests that the support from several instances such as fellow local nursing students, clinical instructors, staff nurses, and the university are critical in helping the students dealing with communication problem to help their students increase their self-confidence. Furthermore, willingness to learn and practice new language plays an important role in effective communication and interaction with local patients.

Keywords: caring, communication, nurse-patient interaction.

INTRODUCTION

The interaction between patients and nurses is fundamental in their experience of receiving or delivering care (Seiger, Ertyl-Schmuck, & Harking, 2010). Communication skills in interaction are firmly established as requisite to developing the patient-nurse relationship with therapeutic qualities (Nordby, 2007). Therefore, international nursing students need to be linguistically and culturally competent in order to learn more clinical skills. Otherwise, poor communication and

interaction may have a negative impact on student learning in the clinical environment, especially if the trainee is an international student (Komaratat & Oumtanee, 2009).

One foreseeable challenge that international nursing students must face in the Philippines is effective communication with patients during their clinical learning (Wa-imbaleka & Appiah, 2015). From this, we know that communication is one of the biggest factors in any relationship, and this is certainly true for a nurse-patient relationship. How international nursing students communicate and interact with some patients whose medium of communication is Filipino is part of the interest of this study.

There are still few studies related to the experiences of international nursing students in clinical practice, specifically in the Philippines. Learning in clinical practice is still a problem, especially for international students (Croxon & Maginnis, 2008). Therefore, there is still a need for the study to be conducted in order to expand the knowledge in this area of international nursing students.

The main purpose of this study was to know what is the experience of international nursing students in the Philippines when caring for Filipino patients. The researcher intended to understand and answer the following research questions:

1. What is the experience of the international nursing students when communication with Filipino patients?
2. What is the experience of international nursing students during nurse-patient interaction in the clinical practice?
3. What are the preparation made by the international students particularly for nurse-patient interaction during clinical placement?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nurse- Patient Interaction

Nursing is the art of caring, based on caring relationships seeking to preserve humanity and sustain human dignity, unity, and wholeness (Levy-Malmberg et al., 2008; Watson, 2005). The caring relationship between the nurse and the patient is fundamental to nursing theory and practice; it is a special kind of a human care relationship, a union with another person, in high regard for the whole person and his/her being-in-the-world (Watson, 2005).

The nurse-patient relationship is said to be of importance for patient participation in nursing care. In the discourse of nurse-patient relationships. There are frequently encountered concepts like empathy, intimacy, and esthetical distance, concepts relevant to communication and

interaction. This further reflects how strong the concepts of interaction, communication, and relationship are intertwined. (Millard et al. 2006). Peplau also seen the nurse-patient relationship as the essential aspect of nursing; it depends on the skills of the nurse like nonjudgmental listening and the ability to convey warmth and understanding (Castledine, 2004).

Importance of effective communication in nurse-patient interaction

Communication is one of the biggest factors in any relationship, and this is certainly true for a nurse/patient relationship. The patient has a responsibility to do his/her part and inform the nurse of any changes in how he or she is feeling and in asking questions so they can be informed. The nurse has a responsibility to communicate their knowledge about the patient's condition and treatment plan.

A study was done by Pergert et al. (2008) about patients' and relatives' experiences and perspectives of 'good' and 'not so good' quality care. They found out that communication is a significant factor with regard to patient satisfaction and quality nursing care. Patients' emphasize that nurses should take time to communicate since it is through communication that nurses get to know patients, identify their needs, and inform them. When communication is poor patients are dissatisfied with their care.

Problems in nurse-patient interaction and communication

Clinical practice is an essential part of the nursing degree program because it ensures that students become safe practitioners and are socialized into the nursing profession (Miguel & Rogan, 2012). According to Komaratat and Oumtane (2009), when the trainee is an international student, poor communication may have a negative impact on student's learning. They suggested that in order for the students to learn more clinical skills, they need to be linguistically and culturally competent. Bernarz, Schim, and Doorenbos (2010) also stated some of the most frequently cited pitfalls and greatest frustrations for students related to language and communication. A language barrier, which is a communication barrier resulting from the parties concerned speaking different languages, has been shown to be a threat to the quality of hospital care (Karliner et al., 2007).

Synthesis

The nurse-patient interaction is essential in daily activity to render care to the patient. When a nurse has a good interaction with the patient, it can result in a good outcome and can increase

patient satisfaction. Some authors even suggested that a nurse must develop a more personal relationship with the patient as opposed to doctors because nurses spend a lot of time with the patient. It is clear that nurses are required to develop the skill to interact and communicate effectively in cross-cultural care encounters. Nurses should be linguistically and culturally competent, and it has been shown that it can be a factor contributing to the quality of hospital care and patient satisfaction. Nurses who have a language barrier can either use verbal or nonverbal strategies to facilitate communication. However, little is known about the experience of the nursing students during interaction with the patients who speak different language than the students, and also the experiences of the students in the preparation of clinical exposure.

METHODS

The study aims to know the experience on nurse-patient interaction when caring for Filipino patients among non-tagalog speaking BSN student. Hence, phenomenological approach was utilized. Phenomenology is a science whose purpose is to describe particular phenomena, or the appearance of things, as lived experience (Cohen, 1987). Moustakas (1994) also added, that inquirer collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon and develops a description of the essence of the experience for all individuals. The description consists of “what” they experienced and “how they experienced it.

Purposive sampling was used in selecting the informants from a population of international nursing students. According to Houser (2008), the purposive selection of informants is a technique in qualitative research in which the subjects selected possess certain characteristics that enhance the credibility of the study. Furthermore, purposive sampling is a characteristic of qualitative research in which the researcher identifies criteria for the type of informant most likely to provide necessary data that will answer the research questions. Through this sampling technique, the researcher deliberately chose participants who will best contribute to the information needs of the study (Polit & Beck, 2010).

Also, Polit and Beck (2006) stated that informants must be able to describe the situations they are going through, what it is like to live that experience. Thus, this study included seven main informants and six general informants, and the inclusion criteria for both the main and the general informants were set. For the main or key informants, the participants must be non-Tagalog speakers, currently enrolled in Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program, male or female, already have been exposed to the clinical area, and be willing to share information related to their experiences. Meanwhile, the inclusion criteria for general informants are as

follows: Filipino colleagues of the participants enrolled in BSN program, and have been the same block with an international student. The respondents were recruited from one university in the Philippines.

A semi-structured interview method was used. An interview was conducted with one international nursing student and served as a pilot study. The findings served as a basis for the refinement of the questionnaire. Open-ended questions were asked in order to elicit in-depth information. Moreover, open-ended questions give an opportunity to the phenomenologists to get a wide range of responses (Houser, 2008).

Data were collected for a period of one month or less. Prior to that, the researcher had approval for data gathering from the adviser. After the researcher was granted an approval, the researcher first identified the informants who likely possess the same characteristics in relation to the study. The researcher explained to the participants the purpose of the study, and they were allowed to ask questions to understand the research and its outcome better. When the participants agreed, the researcher secured a consent and then set a schedule for an interview. During the interview, a recorder was used with the informant's consent to record the interview. The questions were asked one at a time, and the researcher made a summary of the participant's answer before proceeding to the next question. The interview was conducted first to the main informant, which are the international nursing students, and continued with the general informants who are the Filipino nursing students.

Qualitative data analysis was done following Giorgi's phenomenologist method. Giorgi (1985) described the procedural steps in analyzing the data. The first step is to read the entire description of the experience to get a sense of the whole. Second, is to reread the description. Third, identify the transition units of the experience. Fourth, clarify and elaborate the meaning by relating constituents to each other and to the whole. Fifth, reflect on the constituents in the concrete language of the participant. Sixth, transform concrete language into the language or concepts of science. And the last step, is to integrate and synthesize the insight into a descriptive structure of the meaning of the experience.

RESULTS

This study was intended to identify how the selected international nursing students in the Philippines communicate with patients. Student nurses faced many challenges when communicating in cross-cultural care encounters, especially when they do not share the same language with the patient. Although they used a range of strategies to facilitate communication,

they found themselves in situations where they were unable to communicate effectively, which led to their dissatisfaction with the caring experience. They also lacked skills and confidence in communicating with their patients.

Based on the results of the study, it was noted that most of the time, the students would either have their clinical instructor or Filipino classmates as their translator. Some of them would learn common Tagalog words. Also, when it was hard to express their ideas in words, they would have to act it out or use gestures until the patient understands what they were trying to say. During health teaching, it is easier for them to use audiovisual materials, such as videos or pictures, to help the patient understand more about their diseases and how to prevent it.

Concerning the international nursing students' experience when interacting with patients, they found that it was really hard to gain their patients' trust, especially those who do not speak a common language, which, in this case, is English. This situation makes the international nursing students shy, decreasing their confidence to interact with the patient and making them withdraw from the patient. Another theme also drawn out from the interview was the feeling of dissatisfaction when the international nursing students were unable to communicate well with the patients.

Knowing that there are a lot of things to adjust as a student, they had prepared themselves through independent study, peer support during clinical practice, and also institutional support by including Tagalog class in the curriculum.

Translation of words as a means for patients and nurses to communicate their thoughts

When the international nursing students who took part in this study were faced with patients who could not understand English very well, most of the time they would have the conversation interpreted by their Filipino classmate or by their clinical instructor. A student said, *"My clinical instructor is ready whenever we need help especially when it comes to being a translator. They are very kind and ready to help."* Another student also stated that *"most of the time, the watcher or the relatives understand English, but when they don't, I would ask by blockmates to translate it for me."* Reis (2008) also argues that using an interpreter helps physicians and staff more effectively in assessing patients because with an interpreter, patients are enabled to communicate to medical providers their health-related questions and needs.

The use of non-verbal techniques to facilitate nurse-patient interaction

Students are somehow creative in dealing with language barrier. Using gestures or non-verbal communication techniques enables them to communicate with the patients. A participant

voiced that, *“I’m really good in making gesture and I think my patient understand (sic) it.”* A Filipino student also agreed and said that *“they would use gestures and actions but sometimes the patients still don’t get it. But that is good at least they’ve tried their best.”*

Teaching is one of the requirements during clinical area. It is when the nursing students would be asked to teach the patient about the diseases and the preventive measures to be done. International nursing student who do not speak Tagalog are allowed to have audio-visual tools to help them in delivering their health teaching. A student stated, *“During health teaching I will use videos and pictures to best describe what I really want to say.* Another student also voiced that, *“I’m allowed to bring my cellphone with me because I have a medical application that helps me during health teaching.”*

Visual aids, like pictures, models, charts, maps, videos, slides, real objects, among others, are tools that help make an issue or a lesson clearer or easier to know and understand (Shabiralyani, Hasan, Hamad, & Iqbal, 2015).

Importance of trust and confidence in giving care to patients

To have a relationship, the nurse must first gain trust from the patient. It is the first and most important foundation in making relationship with people. However, some international nursing students may find it difficult to gain their patients’ trust. An interviewed student said, *“During the interview, it seems like they don’t want to talk to me. I need to ask my Filipino friend to ask it again.”* Another student also expressed that, *“Whenever I get the vital signs, 5 minutes later, the patient will ask a staff nurse to get it again. They think I don’t know how to get vital signs.”* The establishment of trust, being the foundation of all interpersonal relationships, is significantly important in developing therapeutic relationship. In order to gain trust, patients need to believe that nurses are honest, knowledgeable, dependable, and accepting of who they are as people (Sheldon, 2005).

Preference in giving care to English-speaking patients

One of the impacts of language barrier is not only affecting the care of patients but of international nursing students as well. The interviewed nursing students said that they would prefer to take care of English-speaking patients; thus, when they would be assigned to a non-English speaking patient, their tendency was to withdraw from any interaction with the patient due to lack of confidence. A participant said that, *“Most of the time I’m the last one to go to*

the patient's room because I have to wait for my Filipino friend (sic) finish with her patient. I don't want to go by myself."

Mattila et al. (2010) had a similar result in their study, noting that lack of confidence was experienced by international students. Inadequate communication could lead to social barrier and isolation. When international nursing students know how to communicate with the patient, they will be able to demonstrate competency, thereby facilitating learning and enhancing their academic performance.

Unsatisfied feeling in communicating with patient

It is common in the clinical area to meet a group of patients with different needs, cultures, values, and background. However, this set-up will not be very easy to nursing students who will be taking care of the patient for the first time, especially to those who does not share common language with the patient. Creating expectation can give an unsatisfied feeling when the expectation is not met. A student said that, *"I really thought that it will be as easy as saying "hi" to the stranger. I really thought I was ready for this."* Another student also mentioned, *"I learn (sic) about therapeutic communication technique before (sic) had a clinical practice. But applying this to a patient who have (sic) different language than yours is really (sic) different approach"*.

Individual initiative in learning Tagalog is means to help in communication preparation to Tagalog-speaking patients

Besides having a translator with them, the international nursing students are also trying their best to learn at least some of the common or basic Tagalog words. A student said, *"I had to be very adaptive in learning key words and phrases in Tagalog before entering the patient's room."* Some student make an extra effort to learn Tagalog by having some private Tagalog lesson. Another informant mentioned, *"I had private Tagalog lesson for 3 months. But still sometimes I had no idea what they are talking about."*

Support from Clinical instructor and Filipino friends are means to help in communicating with the patient

The theme translator emerged first as a coping strategy by the international nursing student in dealing with communication problem. Their Filipino classmates are willing to help them when they struggle talking with the patients. The following statement confirm the theme: A student said that, *"I asked my Filipino friend to accompany me to the patients' room and ask everything I need to know."* Another student also agreed that, *"My fellow Filipino students will always*

help me in translating something that I don't understand." These students not only get help from their Filipino friends but also from their clinical instructor. A student said, "*Sometimes I will have my clinical instructor to translate for me. They are willing to help me and even teach me how to communicate with them*". According to the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (2008) to promote safe and high quality care to patients, it is suggested that language barriers be reduced by promoting and recommending to the health care provider the use interpreters, written materials or communication boards, or using sign language in the most frequently-encountered languages.

Institutional support is one way to help the students in the preparation before clinical exposure. Aside from having private learning and a friend to translate, the academic institution also helps these international nursing students in their skill to learn Tagalog. A student said, "*The school have (sic) Tagalog lesson for foreigners included in the curriculum. And I think this year they made special Tagalog class for nursing.*" Another student also voiced, "*It would be better if the Clinical instructor would give us patient that can speak Tagalog.*"

Based on the result of the interview, in dealing with the communication challenges, most of the general informants suggested that the international nursing students should learn how to speak Tagalog. An informant stated, "*Teach them basic some basic Tagalog words commonly used in communicating with patients or be with them to help in translations.*" Another informant also suggested that, "*I would suggest to have private lesson for them aside from the Tagalog class given at school.*" Another informant also added that it might be helpful for international nursing students to have "*Maybe a book with Tagalog phrases or common daily conversation with the patient.*"

DISCUSSION

In this study, international nursing students use translators and non-verbal communication techniques to communicate their thoughts with their patients. It is true that communication plays a significant role in nurse-patient interaction. Most international nursing students experienced having difficulty interacting with their patients due to their limited knowledge and skills in Tagalog, which is different from their mother tongue. Grant and McKenna (2003) stated that even in contexts where the language of teaching in the clinical area or in the school is the same as the students' mother tongue, they still experience difficulties interacting with the patients. Thus, the need to improve on the language is seen as vital. The international nursing

students found that it was easier for them to use translators and non-verbal communication techniques than for them to learn Tagalog.

The data also revealed that the students found the interaction with the patients to be limited since they would feel that their patients did not trust them, thus making them withdraw from any interpersonal interaction. Although international nursing students had been taught about therapeutic communication and building rapport with patients, they found the actual hospital experience different from their expectations, making them prefer to take care of patients who can understand English. They felt unsatisfied communicating with the patients. A study was done by Pitkajarvi et al. (2012) also confirmed that some students noted a feeling of alienation. They do not get sufficient knowledge, and they feel either ignored or left alone as a result of their language barrier.

Hence, getting ample support from Filipino students, clinical instructors, and the institution where they belong are the ways to preparing the international nursing students for the clinical area. Also, another way of coping with the communication barrier is to encourage international nursing students to study the local language, which is Tagalog. As found in this study, some of the interviewed students have their private Tagalog lessons aside from Tagalog class at school, which helps improve their knowledge of the language used in the community.

There is also a positive experience that was noted by the interviewed students, which is the feeling of support and sufficient guidance from the clinical instructor. Momeni, Jirwe and Emami (2008) once said that for student nurses to deliver safe, culturally competent care, a mutual understanding of the patient's cultural needs must be achieved through communication. Lack of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, accounts for a large portion of the cultural disconnect between student-nurses and their patients. When communication barriers are present, patients often expressed concerns and fears of being misunderstood, as well as a strong sense of insecurity during interactions with nursing staff (Cioffi, 2003).

Conclusion

The international students in this study experienced challenges, as learning became difficult and adjustments with the culture and practices of the local people have to be made. Ways of communication were also limited to the use of translators and non-verbal communication techniques, like gestures and videos. However, while the international nursing students found the ways of communication challenging, they consider them as methods that help them to cope with the situation. Also, social support from teachers and Filipino friends are a big help for the international students. The assistance they get from their instructors and peers allows them to

communicate with their patients much easier. Similarly, the institution plays an important part in helping the students learn the local language by incorporating Tagalog classes in the curriculum and providing Tagalog lessons for foreigners.

Having patients who are unable to speak English made the international nursing students hesitant to communicate, making them withdraw from any patient interaction, and leaving an unsatisfied feeling in communication and care for their patients. Most of the international students who took part in the study preferred to take care of a patient who could understand English. However, despite the communication struggles and challenges that the international nursing students face every day, students got support from their peers and their institution. Many of them had a private lesson to improve their Tagalog proficiency.

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