



Stress Experience and Stress Coping of Nursing Students in The Clinical Learning Labor Room

Patchara Somchoe

Faculty of Nursing, Kasem Bundit University, Bangkok, Thailand

ABSTRACT

This article focused on stress experience and stress coping of nursing students in the clinical learning labor room. The informants were 14 nursing students who experienced the practice in the labor room and 5 nursing preceptors. Data collection was gathered by interviewing nursing students and preceptors. The content analysis was employed to analyze qualitative data. The results indicated that nursing students felt a combination of excitement, anxiety, fear and stress. The stress affected the nursing students in many ways, for example, a lack of confidence, a fear of doing and thinking about what they should do, or even fainting or falling asleep. Some coping strategies included reading more books, searching for information from the library or online media and sharing experiences with friends, talking to their families, or relaxing by walking or swimming and listening to music. It was recommended that nursing students should be prepared by practicing building relationships between nursing preceptors and themselves, receiving and giving advice among themselves, creating new opportunities and love in the profession.

Keywords: Nursing Students, Stress Experiences, Stress Coping

1. Introduction

Nursing students who study in the nursing science curriculum must practice in the clinical learning labor room for nursing care and delivery. They were exposed to uncontrollable environments, unexpected events such as the mother's physical changes. Students have specific fears: fear of failure, fear from the evaluation of nursing preceptors, fear of danger that the mother or baby will experience undue harm, fear of interaction with

the patient and relatives. (Mahat, 1996, pp. 163-169). A normal delivery , it is a skill that requires especially specialized skills. Nursing students evaluate themselves as lacking in knowledge and expertise, lacking of practice with the guidelines and having heavy workloads. If students assess the situations that affect the well-beings, these stress them. Stress negatively impacts students' physical and mental health (Reeve et al., 2013 cited in Turner K., McCarthy VL, 2017, pp. 21) and hinders academic performance and completion rates. (Goff., 2011, Jeffreys, 2007 cited in Turner K., McCarthy VL, 2017, pp. 21) The study "Physiological and emotional responses to stress in nursing students: an integrative review of scientific literature." (Benavente, S. B.T., & Costa, A. L. S., 2011, pp. 571-572) concludes that, in terms of results, it was observed that the theme should be further studied and developed for teaching and learning nursing because verified stress is a frequent occurrence and has major consequences for students. Obviously, it is important to consider the fact that students from different educational institutions experience different levels of stress during the teaching-learning process and depend on the reality they live in which will influence the intensity of stress during different stages of the students' life. The results of a qualitative study from key informants will be valuable data for developing guidelines to help the nursing students.

1.1 Objectives of the study

1) To study stress experiences of nursing students in the clinical learning labor room. 2) To study the stress coping strategies used by nursing students. 3) To create a learning process on stress and coping strategies of nursing students in the clinical learning labor room.

1.2 Scope of Research

Key informants were selected by purposive sampling. There are two groups: nursing students and nursing preceptors. Selected students were the 3rd year nursing students in a private university who had experienced for the first time in the clinical learning labor room and selected nursing preceptors in the clinical learning labor room at a hospital. The study took place during August–November 2017. The researcher, an instructor, listened to and reflected on the problems. The information obtained from interviews nursing students and nursing preceptors was used for this study.

1.3 Definition of vocabulary used in research.

Stress refers to the effect of interactions between nursing students and situations in the clinical learning labor room. Nursing students assess situations that affect their well-being in ways that threaten their feelings and behaviours.

Stress coping refers to the cognitive and behavioural efforts made to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts among nursing students in the clinical learning labor room. Nursing students manage the stress that had occurred and its effect on them by methods of coping include problem-focused coping or emotion-focused coping.

1.4 The benefits of research

1) Instructors, nursing preceptors and related personnel will understand the stress experienced by nursing students in clinical learning labor rooms. 2) Nursing students have coping strategies for practicing in clinical learning labor rooms from senior nursing students with direct experience. 3) Instructors, nursing preceptors and related personnel can be used to create a learning process on stress and coping strategies of nursing students in clinical learning labor rooms.

2. Theoretical Framework

The Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress (TMS) to conceptualize stress is based on the assumption that "psychological stress is a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (pp.19). The primary focus of the TMS is on the transactions that occur between the person and the environment where cognitive appraisal and coping are deemed as two critical processes that mediate this person-environment relationship and affect his social, psychological, and physical well-being. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) Lazarus and Folkman's stress theory focuses on the appraisal, response, and adaptation to stress; thus, it is more applicable to the clinical faculty in understanding the experience of stress by nursing students and on how to help them cope with this stress during their clinical practices.

3. Methodology

The key informants comprising 14 students were the 3rd year nursing students from the Faculty of Nursing at a private university and 5 related nursing preceptors, practicing in the clinical learning labor room at a hospital in the academic year 2017.

The instruments used in this study were in-depth interview outlines. There were issues in the interview.

1. In the clinical learning labor room, we asked nursing students the following. What stressors do they have? What is the stress? How does stress affect them?

2. Next, we asked them on how the nursing students manage the stress that had occurred and its effect on them.

3. In the case of students experiencing stress in the clinical learning labor room, we asked nursing preceptors on ways to help students learn about stress and solve it.

Data collection: The researcher asked for an appointment to interview nursing students and nursing preceptors by appointing a date, time and place to interview each of them within 1 week after completion of the labor room practice.

The interview process is as follows: 1) Before the interview: Prepare interview forms and materials for recording. 2) During the interview: The interviewee was informed about the purpose of the interview; the interviewer started the in-depth interviews based on a topic guideline to enable a detailed exploration of the nursing students' and nursing preceptors' views and experiences, requested for permission to record information during the interviews with notes and audio- recorder; lastly, the interviewer thanked the interviewees at the close of the interviews.

Data analysis: 1) Content Analysis 2) Describe the information by depiction on the overall analysis of nursing students' and nursing preceptors' responses.

4. Results

The findings were presented according to the analytical typologies.

Part 1: Experiences of stress in nursing practice of nursing students.

- 1) Stress experiences of nursing students in the clinical learning labor room.

The key informants were 14 female nursing students. They felt a combination of excitement, anxiety, fear and stress:

- **Excitement.** Students felt excited on the first day when they saw the delivery and more excited when practicing their first case of delivery:

"When I saw the first delivery in my life, I was so excited that I almost fainted..."
(9th student)

"For the first time in life, I was very excited. From the beginning of the walk into the first ward ... that day, I had the opportunity to see a delivery in the first time, and I was afraid and excited." (12th student)

- **Anxiety.** Students felt anxious every time they practiced in the clinical learning labor room. Anxiety was caused by fear of nursing preceptors, fear when they could not answer or do what was expected to :

"... two days later, a friend in the group was the first to come in contact with the nursing preceptors ... she was fearful and anxious. I wasn't happy with that.... I did not dare to approach her." (6th student)

"Very concerned about the anxiety , I didn't know what to do. At that time, I was very worried. My personality, I'm more of a reflective person." (13th student)

- **Fear.** Students felt scared when they could not meet nursing preceptors' expectations and could not answer the questions. Fear of doing what was expected and fear when seeing the first delivery:

"... I can't guess what events are going to happen each day. I feel scared."
(2nd student)

".. I feared to make mistakes . I feared I couldn't answer the questions and I was scared when the instructor or nursing preceptors scolded me." (7th student)

"That day was my first chance to see a delivery, I had both fear and excitement..."
(12th student)

- **Stress.** Students felt stressed from the first week of practice. They experienced stress every day of practice. When a nurse preceptor came to coach and asked many questions that they could not answer, they had these to share:

"We experienced the stress every day." (3rd student)

"Stress worked fast and the job was so multifaceted..." (8th student)

"The first week was very stressful. I did not prepare anything. I did not know much about it ... I was screaming at the nurse preceptor." (11th student)

"... What I had to deal with in the group was very stressful. We were asked everything. Everyone was so stressed that we almost cried." (12th student)

2) The effects of stress experiences on nursing students in the clinical learning labor room.

The stress affected the nursing students in many ways: for example, a lack of confidence, a fear of doing and thinking, or even fainting or sleeping problem:

- **Lack of confidence.** Students lacked confidence. Sometimes they did not dare to do anything with the nursing preceptors and did not dare to decide on anything:

"... The nursing preceptor scolded me. That day, I lacked confidence." (1st student)

"... Sometimes I didn't dare to do anything with the nurse preceptor." (3rd student)

"When I had to take care of the mother during delivery, I wondered why I was so excited about it?" (12th student)

- **Momentarily forgetting.** When the nursing preceptors asked questions during nursing care for delivery and childbirth, the nursing students could not remember for a moment what to respond and received a scolding:

"I read it (a book) but I could not remember it. The nurse preceptor scolded me because I remembered nothing." (11th student)

- **Crying, falling asleep, having headaches and trembling hands, even fainting.** Students were so stressed that they almost cried, even almost felt asleep, had some headaches:

"From my friend's experience, I was afraid, worried that I would be beaten and could not sleep." (8th student)

"Providing care in the first delivery, I was very excited, even fainting..." (9th student)

"I was stressed and had a headache..." (10th student)

"Until that day everyone was very stressed and were almost crying." (12th student)

Part 2: Coping strategies used of nursing students in the clinical learning labor room.

1) Nursing Students' coping strategies.

Nursing Students' coping strategies included reading more books, searching for information from the library or online media, sharing experiences with friends, talking to their families, or relaxing by walking or swimming and listening to music:

- **Reading more books.** Most nursing students used the methods of reading more learning materials such as searching for information from the library or online media:

"... It made me think that I'll have to try to read more books from the library and the internet ... Let's learn more." (8th student)

"That day, we spent the whole night reading a book for the next day. Review knowledge very well to avoid any mistakes that might occur." (12th student)

- **Memorize the summary.** Nursing students used the method of memorization, summarizing their understanding of nursing theory and practice in a small notebook to read:

"Memorized and wrote down a note..."(7th student)

"... I tried to read and summarize my understanding, such as nursing intervention during labour..."(13th student)

- **Sharing experiences.** Nursing students shared experiences with friends.

" We shared what we knew ... Everybody tried to help and support one another that made us happy and felt warm among ourselves." (8th student)

- **Mind control.** Nursing students used the method of mindfulness to solve problems, calm down themselves and smile:

"When I started to be confused I thought slowly and tried to answer." (12th student)

"Sometimes when I was scolded, I tried not to think about it. Instead, I thought about something else."(14th student)

- **Talking to their families.** Nursing students talked to their family members and peers to relieve stress:

"... I had a talk to relieve stress with friends in the group." (8th student)

" I told my mother something and she listened to me." (11th student)

- **Relaxing.** Nursing students relaxed by listening to music, singing, walking, swimming, or did other forms of exercising:

"My stress management was exercising, singing to relieve stress, and swimming. These were very good ways to relax..." (13th student)

- **Gratitude for the chance.** Nursing students were given the opportunity, so they felt they should develop themselves:

"We tried to do what our superior wanted... she gave us the opportunity to find the answers." (7th student)

- **More enthusiastic.** Nursing students were enthusiastic about their assignments:

"... We tried to answer the questions in order to show that we were eager to learn. ... We didn't want the nursing preceptors to have a bad attitude about us." (13th student)

"I didn't have enough knowledge so I tried to be enthusiastic." (14th student)

2) The effects of coping and stress management.

- **More confidence and self-improvement:**

"I was encouraged by the trainers and the nursing preceptors. I tried to read more books to practice my skills in the case." (8th student)

"That day, we spent the rest of the night on reading ... After that day, we were more confident and less excited. That day I was very happy.... and the practice went well." (12th student)

- **More knowledge.** Nursing students have more knowledge to answer the questions correctly:

"... I just went back to read the books for the next day to have more knowledge." (1st student)

"... I walked around 3 times and then went back to read the books, remembered and made enough notes..." (10th student)

- **Happiness.** Nursing students' happiness was when they received encouragement from nursing preceptors and instructor, and nursing preceptors didn't blame them for anything:

"That day, I was very happy not to be scolded...and the practice went well."
(12th student)

"I was encouraged by my instructor and nursing preceptors. I would try my best."
(8th student)

"I would like to say thank you to my dear instructor, who have given me knowledge and experience. I have to remember this knowledge in order to use it in the real life."
(10th student)

Part 3: Create a learning process on stress and coping strategies of nursing students in the clinical learning labor room.

The informants , 5 female nursing preceptors, recommended learning process about stress and coping below of nursing students during the period of practice in the labor room:

1) Understanding the nature of the group. Understanding the characteristics and the basic knowledge of the group was important. A joint plan was prepared by instructors and nursing preceptors:

"Nursing preceptors have to understand the nature of the group and the knowledge base of the group. The expectation will be different, for example, for the group experiencing the first day of labour and again on the final day." (3rd nursing preceptor)

"Inquiry into requirements. Expectations from practice at the labor room and students have to do as expected." (4th nursing preceptor)

2) Preparation before the practice. The students should be prepared for the necessary knowledge and the relevant videos should be watched before practice. The orientation on the place and rules should be prepared prior to the practice in labor rooms:

" We should concern about how much training is needed. The students should watch videos to prepare for a newborn delivery." (1st nursing preceptor)

3) Building relationships and love in the profession. It's necessary to build relationships between nursing preceptors and nursing students before practice. Nursing preceptors should be friendly and inspire students to love the profession:

"The nursing preceptors must be friendly and make themselves approachable to nursing students." (3rd nursing preceptor)

"Building relationships between the nursing preceptors and the nursing students before practice. The activities may be organized together to build love for the practice and the organization. If you love your superior, your superior will love you. The practice will be less stressful." (5th nursing preceptor)

4) Giving advice. Nursing preceptors give **the students some** advice on principles and rationally for nursing caring, encourage analytical thinking and link the actual situation with the theory. The first day may focus on knowledge. During the day, the questions will be used to revise the learned content:

"In practice, childbirth labor is a stressful job. So, to make the students feel that it is easy, we must make sure that they have a knowledge base that is focused on what content they need to know. On the first day of training, you may need to focus on the knowledge; do more activities in the latter days of coaching, so, the students will be asked the questions. They need to review, understand and remember the contents." (3rd nursing preceptor)

"If a plan is prepared jointly with the instructor, it can reduce stress for the nursing students on their first day to learn the case together. The instructor demonstrates on the first case." (1st nursing preceptor)

"Nursing preceptors closely supervises the students, teaches techniques that are not in the textbook, and explain the reasons why the nursing activity is being done." (4th nursing preceptor)

5) Creating new opportunities. Nursing students should be encouraged to express their opinions to do things themselves as there is no limit on learning and they should have a relaxing time:

"If nursing students have any questions, please let them find answers from the books and from the Internet." (2nd nursing preceptor)

"... Give opportunity for them to comment or do it themselves in a way that is flexible enough." (3rd nursing preceptor)

6) The senior help the junior. Use a senior to help a junior, and friends help friends:

"... Help one another." (2nd nursing preceptor)

"... For more complicated matters, we help one another to find a source, refer to the books, or the internet." (3rd nursing preceptor)

5. Discussion

The results indicated that nursing students felt a combination of excitement, anxiety, fear and stress. The stress affected the nursing students in many ways: a lack of confidence, a fear of doing and thinking about what they should do, or even fainting or falling asleep. The study on the source of stress in nursing students, Quantitative Review of Quantitative Studies. Pulido-Martos, M., Augusto-Landa, J.M. and Lopez-Zafra, E., (2012, pp. 15-25) found that most sources of stress relate to academic personnel. Other stress sources involve fear in unknown situations, possible errors with patients, or technical equipment. Stress is a feeling that has negative effects, resulting in loss of confidence, inability to think momentarily, headaches, trembling hands resembling insomnia, as well as renal incontinence (Reeve et al., 2013 cited in Turner K., McCarthy VL, 2017, pp. 21-29). Stress affects the physical and psychological health of students contributing to performance barriers and success rates (Goff, 2011, Jeffreys, 2007 cited in Turner K., McCarthy V.L., 2017, pp. 21-29).

Coping strategies included reading more books, searching for information from the library or on online media, and sharing experiences with friends, talking to their families, or relaxing by walking or swimming and listening to music, and get support. Of course in the delivery room, it was found that the coping strategies of the informants were to relieve their feelings with their friends, consult with their instructors and nursing preceptors, practise on the training models and read more on the subject matter in order to prepare before the practice. Nursing students also reported that they received social support from friends, nurse practitioners and families, especially emotional support. In addition, students are encouraged to continue their practice (Jumthong, S., et al., 2009, pp. 39-56).

It is recommended that the nursing students should be prepared before practice by building relationships between nursing preceptors and nursing students, receiving and giving advice, creating new opportunities during the process of learning and love in the profession. These are reported from the study, Analysis of Research on Physiological and Emotional Responses to Stress in Nursing Students: a case study of the review of the scientific. (Benavente, SBT, & Costa, ALS, 2011, pp. 571-576.) The results was shown that emotional expression stimulate perceptions of the brain and physiological responses vary with the perception of students having differentiated attitudes; in this study it is possible to conclude that the expression of emotions, feelings and perceptions of empathy reduce stress. They are used as the main sources to reduce stress. The studies have shown that stress and coping strategies are correlated with psychological symptoms. Positive coping strategies and having social support are associated with reduced mental symptoms. Other studies report that social support and self-esteem have a negative correlation with depression. This is consistent with the major findings of Abbasi's study (Abasimi, E., Atindanbila, S., Mahamah, MM, Gai, X., 2015, pp. 89-97) which found that stress was severe among nursing students due to the negative effects of stress. Therefore stress management is important and steps need to be taken. The orientation to university life and stress coping is needed. This will help to prepare the mind of the students to fight stress in the future. Moreover, the university psychologist should be consulted for some adjustments and tips of stress management.

Suggestion

Prior to the clinical practice in the labor rooms , the meeting between Instructors, nursing preceptors, and related nursing students should be conducted to inform the details of the clinical practice requirement and establish a rapport. In addition, the students' stress should be assessed periodically to monitor the stress level and it should be started before the clinical practice in the labor rooms. To prevent the negative impact of stress that will affect students' physical and mental health, Instructors, nursing preceptors, related nursing students and a university psychologist should discuss how to decrease students' stress in order to improve students' learning process during the period of practice in the clinical learning labor rooms.

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