

Caring Competency for Undergraduate Nursing Students: A Systematic Review with Implication for Nurse Educators in Teaching Caring

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Keywords: Caring Competency, Undergraduate Nursing Student.

Abstract: *Caring* is essential in nursing. It has been considered as primary component and a foundation for quality nursing education. Caring competency is requirement needed by professional nurses, which is expected by patients and families when seeking nursing service. The purpose of this systematic review was to evaluate existing evidence with aim of identifying caring competency for undergraduate nursing students. **Methods:** Literature review was conducted by selecting appropriate articles which were published between year 2012 to 2017. Various database used were CINAHL, Proquest, Pubmed, MEDLINE, Science Direct, and Gale. **Keywords** used were caring competency, undergraduate nursing student, and nursing education. This search found 31 related articles. Of 31 articles, there were only 16 articles which focus on caring competency. Nine of 16 focused articles provide full texts of important information on caring competency and caring experiences in undergraduate nursing students. **Results:** From a total of 31 articles related to caring competency for undergraduate nursing students, nine were retrieve as the final step. The articles consisted quantitative and qualitative research which revealed important caring competency for undergraduate nursing student which named as fundamental caring competency of the student: provision of appropriate care, personal quality/character, helping attitude, communication skills, and relationship building ability. Besides the competency, this systematic review also found factors influencing students in study caring: learning milieu, motivation, personality, and cultural competence. **Conclusion:** Caring competency is very important for undergraduate nursing students to apply into practice since it is the essence or foundation for nursing intervention. Caring competency can be studied and measured through nursing education system. Nursing education institutions and nurse educators have obligation to ensure that their students equipped with caring competency for their professional practice.

1 BACKGROUND

Caring is related to values, attitude, and behaviors considered as primary component of professional nursing education (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 1998). It is the essence of nursing and foundation for quality nursing education (Watson, 2002). It is also expected by patients and their families and primary word used by nurses and student nurses to describe identity of nursing practice (Duffy, 2003). Daggett, Butts, and Smith (2002) revealed that evidence-based clinical practice and values of education are related. Value of education can be measured and used as basis for improving nurse competencies. As the results, improved nurse

competencies would contribute to quality nursing care.

Caring in nursing practice implied in day by day nurses' job and its purposes are of well-being and healing (Duffy, 2002). Nurse's caring competency as known as clinical caring process represents value, attitude, and behavior which create "being cared of" by recipients of care (Watson, 2002). Clinical caring process is centred on relationship and combine physical actions with interaction, connected, and knowing others (Duffy, 2003). Furthermore, caring is considered to have benefit for patients in term of well-being, dignity, healing process, knowing the patient, and also benefits for nurses (Watson, 1985).

Little is known regarding caring competency for undergraduate nursing students. Most of studies focus on caring of students or competency of professional nurses. Therefore, by identifying caring competency of undergraduate nursing students, the faculty can develop strategies in teaching learning process which will facilitate their students in embracing caring behaviours.

Nursing education has important roles in teaching nursing students with proper caring abilities. Woodward (2003) stated that caring could be learned, practised, and measured through nursing education system. Woodward believes that modelling and role play approach can be used to train nursing students in order to improve their caring competency. Meanwhile, Carlson, Kotze, and Rooyen (2003) stated that clinical learning environment creates a lot of opportunities for students to learn and develop caring competencies. The purpose of this systematic review was to evaluate existing evidence with the aim of identifying caring competency for undergraduate nursing students.

2 METHODS

Literature review was conducted by selecting appropriate articles which were published between year 2012 to 2017. Searching strategy included using of electronic databases such as CINAHL, Proquest, Pubmed, MEDLINE, Science Direct, and Gale. The keywords used were caring competency, undergraduate nursing student, and nursing education. Inclusive criteria was of articles which published original data. Unpublished articles, abstracts, dissertation, thesis, and book were excluded from this review.

3 RESULTS

From a total of 31 articles related to caring competency for undergraduate nursing students, 9 were retrieved as the final step. The articles consisted quantitative and qualitative research which revealed important caring competency for undergraduate nursing student which named as fundamental caring competency of the student. Besides the competency, this systematic review also found factors influencing students in study caring.

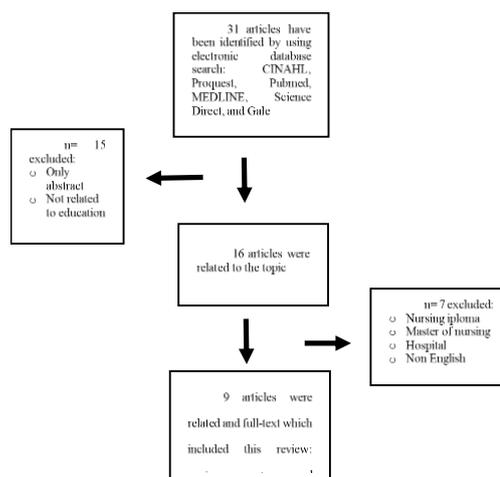


Figure 1: Flow of articles selection process

3.1 Fundamental Caring Competency of The Student

Nurses have to show their caring behaviours to patients and their families. Therefore, caring competency needs to be taught for nursing students during their study period. Research studies found that caring competency for undergraduate nursing students includes (1) provision of appropriate care, (2) personal quality/character, (3) helping attitude, (4) communication skills, and (5) relationship building ability.

Provision of appropriate care means that students should have abilities to carry out appropriate clinical procedures, doing tasks, and provide basic needs of a patient (Phillips, et al., 2015); and know how to give shots, IVs, give treatments and medications on time (Labrague, 2012). This caring competency is essential for nurses in providing nursing care to their patients.

Another caring competency that students should have is personal quality or character. Nursing students have to possess attributes such as kind and considerate (Labrague, 2012). It also covers compassion and empathy (Phillips, et al., 2015).

Helping attitude is another important caring competency for nursing students. It becomes one of competency that expected by the patients when receiving nursing care. This helping attitude may include guiding, advising, appreciating, giving moral support (Begum & Slavin, 2012) and helping a patient feels good about his/herself (Labrague, 2012).

Several study found that communication skills were one of caring competency that expected from

the students (Begum & Slavin, 2012; Grobbel & Rowe, 2014; Phillips, et al., 2015). This communication skills include how to communicate an understanding of a person's needs (Phillips, et al., 2015) and how to share information, to keep patient informed, educated, or coordinated care (Grobbel & Rowe, 2014).

Relationship building ability is also one of caring competency needed by undergraduate nursing students. It is a compulsory because of the nature of nursing work both in hospital and another setting which need collaboration with another health discipline. Relationship building ability competency for nursing may comprise of treat a patient with respect and dignity, provide hope, and treat a patient as individual (Grobbel & Rowe, 2014).

3.2 Factors Influencing Students in Study Caring

The purpose of undergraduate nursing students in study caring is to be a caring nurse who possesses caring behaviours which they need when they become a real nurse. In the process of having caring behaviours, undergraduate nursing students is definitely influenced by many factors. Factors that can influence their caring behavior are learning milieu, motivation, personality, and cultural competence.

Learning milieu or environment is important factor for undergraduate nursing students in study caring. In term of how students learning caring, Ma, et al. (2014) found that nursing students need to learning caring by role model and conducive learning environment to facilitate students to learning caring. They also found factors for student in study caring that are directive substantive way of learning.

Motivation is another pivotal factor for undergraduate nursing students in learning caring and mastering caring behaviours. This factor may include need for affiliation, need for power, and need for achievement (Nursalam et al., 2015).

Personality can be considered as strong factor for undergraduate nursing students in study caring. A student with good personality may have prominent caring behaviors. Cuadra and Famadico (2013) found that emotional intelligence will have influence on caring behaviours. Akta and Karabulut (2017) also found that professional values of nursing students also would affect their caring behaviors. Finally, Nursalam et al. (2015) revealed that extraversion and conscientiousness would have influence caring behaviours of undergraduate nursing students.

Finally, factor influencing students in study caring is cultural competence. Ma et al. (2014) in study of learning about caring in China found that their participant had cultural issues during the practice and learning process of caring. Students need to have adequate knowledge on cultural diversity so that they could behave appropriately to patients whom they served. When they lack of knowledge on cultural diversity they will experience more complicated in the learning about caring.

4 DISCUSSION

The results show that fundamental caring competence is more clearly on act of caring in providing appropriate care which means that students should have abilities to carry out appropriate clinical procedures or demonstrating skills with patients, and so on. This is because the student have taught that as nursing students they should have the necessary professional nursing skills to provide safe nursing procedures (Labrague, 2012). They need to be equipped with nursing intervention procedures which is included in quality nursing care in best interest for their patients.

Besides seen as act of caring, caring competency for undergraduate nursing students involve personal quality/character, a helping attitude, communication skills, and relationship building ability. These mean that nursing students also need other type of caring expression in giving nursing care to their clients. With this expression, relationship with their client will be established and trust will be gained.

There were several factors which influence undergraduate nursing students in study caring. They were learning milieu, motivation, personality, and cultural competence. Conducive learning environment becomes incentive for students in learning about caring (Ma, et al., 2014). Nursing program and faculties could support this conducive learning environment by creating caring environment. Caring environment can be used as a means to facilitate students in learning about caring. Caring environment combined with caring lecturers and caring clinical instructors as role models both in class and clinical settings will have great impact for student in fostering caring behaviors.

Motivation and personality are internal factors for students which drive their effort to master caring behaviors during their study period. Strong motivation would have significant effect on the way the student embrace the caring behaviours. Good personality combining with strong motivation for

sure will improve students' ability in learning and implement caring behaviours. They would gradually learn how to enhance their basic caring skills into the professional caring behaviour. In addition, with use of their values and experience, the students also will experience transition into professional roles. They would gradually feel more caring, gain self-confident, intuitive knowing, and professionalism (Allgood, 2010). The findings support Watson's (2008) belief that through self-awareness the innate values and technical skills combine to create authenticity within the transpersonal relationship.

One important factor that influences students in study caring is cultural competence. Nursing students who equipped with cultural competence will be sensitive with patient's health beliefs and they will more adaptive to care of patients related to his/her culture and religion. By doing so, the students could provide appropriate care to patients and would have impact on quality nursing care.

This study findings of fundamental caring competency and factors influencing students in study caring have implication for nurse educators. Nurse educators should emphasize at least five caring competency for their students to be embraced in order to be a caring student and further to be professional caring nurse. They also should be aware of factors influencing students in study caring and try to handle these since the early stage of study period.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Caring competency is very important for undergraduate nursing students to apply into practice since it is the essence or foundation for nursing intervention. There are five fundamental caring competency for undergraduate nursing students: provision of appropriate care, personal quality/character, helping attitude, communication skills, and relationship building ability. In addition, there are four important factors which influence undergraduate nursing students in study caring: learning milieu, motivation, personality, and cultural competence.

Caring competency can be studied and measured through nursing education system. Nursing education institutions have obligation to ensure that their students equipped with caring competency for their professional practice. It is recommended that faculties of undergraduate nursing program identify caring competency of their students and put it in curriculum content so that their students will embrace caring behaviours.

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