The Effect of Low Self-Esteem on Clinical Performance among First Year Nursing Students in a Private College at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

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ABSTRACT

It is important to prepare the nursing students to be confident and able to interact with the patients, colleagues, doctors and other staff because the nature of nursing work included a high degree of personal and group interaction. Continuous communication and interaction in nursing work are some of the important factors for self-esteem among nurses. Self-esteem affects the relationship between job roles and job satisfaction as well as the link between work performance and work roles conflict. The objective of this study is to examine the effects of low self-esteem on clinical performance among first year nursing students at private nursing college in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. A descriptive qualitative study was conducted among 10 first year nursing students in one of the private nursing college. Data was collected through one to one interviews using semi-structured questions. The interview question was structured based on observation and literature review. The design is ideal because it facilitate the collection of data from a small number of participants through personal interview. The collected data was transcribed into verbatim and analysed by identifying the themes via coding and categorization. The results showed there are two main themes emerged from the study: Defensive behavior and poor communication as the effects of low self-esteem on the students' clinical performance. As conclusion from this study, defensive behavior and poor communication and are the obvious effects of low self-esteem among the first year nursing students in a private nursing college. This study revealed the needs to equip the students with more conducive learning environment facilitate suitable motivational and mentoring approaches and practice good communication skills. Future research suggested, extends the study to the public nursing college for outcomes comparison and evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

A number of studies that aimed to describe self-esteem have been done in nursing include the effects of low self-esteem on clinical performance especially for the younger nurses. It has a huge impact on behavior and psychological reactions involving relationship with others, the communication quality, competition or rivalry, compliance or submission and generally in the treatment of self-versus environment. It showed how important is self-esteem in nursing career as nurses have to facing and communicating with people around them to ensure the delivery of care is being proceed as accordingly[1]. Nursing training is a combination of theoretical training and practical training. A large part of nursing education is carried out in clinical environments[2].

As there many issue arose in health care delivery, such as ineffective service and lack of soft skills, this study was conducted to examine especially the effects of low self-esteem on clinical performance among the first year nursing students. Self-esteem is an important element of a person in which people with healthy self-esteem perceive themselves as a worthy person. Nurses with solid theoretical background and ability to apply the skills acquired during their studies, can maintain a healthy social and working life. For younger nurses, there are many factors influenced their self-esteem and based on few studies; background is the main factor molded their level of self-esteem[3]. The development of self-esteem begins with infancy in response to environmental stimuli and is one of the most important evolutionary process[4]. Some of them are confident enough to be a nurse but some are still lacking in portraying their skills either in hands on or communicating with other people especially the patients. For them to ensure the patient will trust and follow their instruction or order, firstly they have to show their confident level. Many studies revealed that the individual's self-esteem might relate to many individual's performance. For instance, positive students' self-esteem influences their professional values, critical thinking and professional behavior[5].

This study was conducted to examine the effects of low self-esteem on clinical performance among the first year nursing students in one of the private college in Kota Kinabalu. Based on the observation and assessment, there a few issues with the nursing students begin with their first year's student. The main issue with the first year nursing students is communicating effectively. It was reported when assessing the students performing procedure or presenting their assignment. Furthermore this particular private nursing college received some bad comments from the clinical posting reports regarding the students' performances. Through the evaluation, a plan of remedial measures can be taken to improve and enhance

the younger nurse's confidence and effectiveness of nursing care and service delivery. Self-esteem represents the extent to which we believe ourselves to be capable, significant, successful and worthy. Hence it has been suggested that nurses' achievements and job satisfaction are closely associated with self-esteem. In every performance, self-esteem is the basic self-motivation which can pursue to the desired aim. Self-esteem found to be very important in nursing profession as the nurses have to initiate they self-esteem in order to fulfill the quality of care. To ensure the nurses are strong internally they must have a positive self-development and one of the important aspects in building up self-development is self-confidence which is strongly based from self-esteem. For this reason, the roles of education in developing the esteem and efficacy of young nurses are very important to ensure the quality in health care delivery[6]. Addressing the concerns of student nurses and exploring how to find the answers to their concerns promote an emotionally positive learning environment[7]. There are few studies done on the effects of low self-esteem with similar observations and findings which can be adapted into this study.

This study was conducted particularly to assess the effects of low self-esteem on clinical performance for the first year nursing students as they are never exposed with the challenges to nurse the real patient and collaborate with other health care provider. By evaluating the effects of low self-esteem on clinical performance, it may be able to justify in the student's activity in the program and acknowledge it as remedial measures. There are many factors contributed to the nurses' level of self-esteem such as their background, level of education, environment and peers. For some students, learning new skills is hard work requiring many hours dedicated to the process. Self-confidence perpetuates the drive or motivation needed to invest in the learning process[8]. It is important for the educator to know and understand the factors so they can provide effective learning guidance for the young nurses.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive qualitative method was used in data collection through the transcripts of individual interview with semi structured questions to the respondents. Ethical permission was taken by ethical committee {OUM/5.9/MN/20.10.2013 (003)}. The questions were structured based on collected observation and assessment during the theoretical and clinical training, according to study's objectives and supported with relevant literature reviews. The respondents for this study were comprised of the first year nursing students from one of the private nursing college in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. These purposive samplings are full time nursing students, ages between 18 and 24, able to understand English either in writing or speaking consist

of 9 female and 1 male nursing students. The numbers of participants are limited due to the reduced number of students' population in this private college. This study design was selected because it facilitates the collection of data from small number participants through personal interview. And the interview approaches was suitable because the researcher has greater interest in the interview's point of view. Qualitative research study able to provide the details about human behavior, emotion, and personality characteristics[9]. The interview was conducted in a private and therapeutic atmosphere room, to ensure the aims of this interview achieved. Establishment of rapport between the researcher and the respondent is essential component of the interview as rapport involves trust and a respect for the participant's information he or she shares. The researcher initiated the interview by introducing herself; explain the purpose of the interview and obtained permission to start the interview and in the same time permission to record the conversation.

With approaches that entail detailed attention to language, such as conversation analysis and discourse analysis, the recording of conversations and interviews is to all intents and purposes are a must to ensure that no data or information missed out. The researcher is supposed to be highly alert to what is being said, following up interesting points made, prompting and probing where necessary, drawing attention to any inconsistencies in the interviewee's answer and it is best if he or she is not distracted by having to concentrate on getting own notes on what is said. The interview was conducted in about 30 to 45 minutes for each session depends on the participant's responds. At the time, the ethical clearance was done from the granted permission of the institution's management and informed consent from the respondents.

As the researcher was involving human participants, it was necessary to follow strict ethical principles. Permission obtained from the Acting Academic manager of the private college after informing and explaining the purpose of the study. During the data collection, the researcher had explained the purpose and the study details to the participants. After the participants understand and agreed to participate in the study, an informed consent obtained from the participants prior to the data collection processes. Assurance given to the participants on the confidentiality of the data collected from them. Semi structured questions to examine the effect of low self-esteem on clinical performance among the first year nursing students:

Table 1: Semi structured questions

	Probe	Prompt
General feeling/ opinion	Ask them about their feelings when dealing with people or situation during class or clinical posting.	Can you explain generally, what is your feeling when you are given a task during your class or clinical posting?

Examine problem/ issue	Ask them is they experience any problem with their task during class or clinical posting.	Can you share if there is any problem during your class or clinical posting that make you feel unsatisfied, frustrated or demotivated?
Negative behaviors	Ask them if they had any bad experience related to learning process	During your study, you may come across bad experience related to your learning process. Can you share it?
	If there is any bad experience, ask them why they think it is bad for them and what is their feeling about it.	With your above experience, what is your opinion about it and why do you think like that?
Communication	How they initiates their communication	Normally, how will you start communicating with people, with your friends, lecturers, staff-nurses, doctors and patients?
	Ask if they is any barrier during communication g with them	What is your major concern when communicating with them?

The data was analysed by familiarization the data with consisted listening to the recorded data through the approaches interview, transcribed them into a verbatim script, reading and re-reading the transcripts. Then, identifying the thematic framework by drew up a list of the main recurring coding. The researcher had used the streamlined codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry[10] to analized the data.

Streamlined codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry[10]

code → categories → Theme/concept → theory
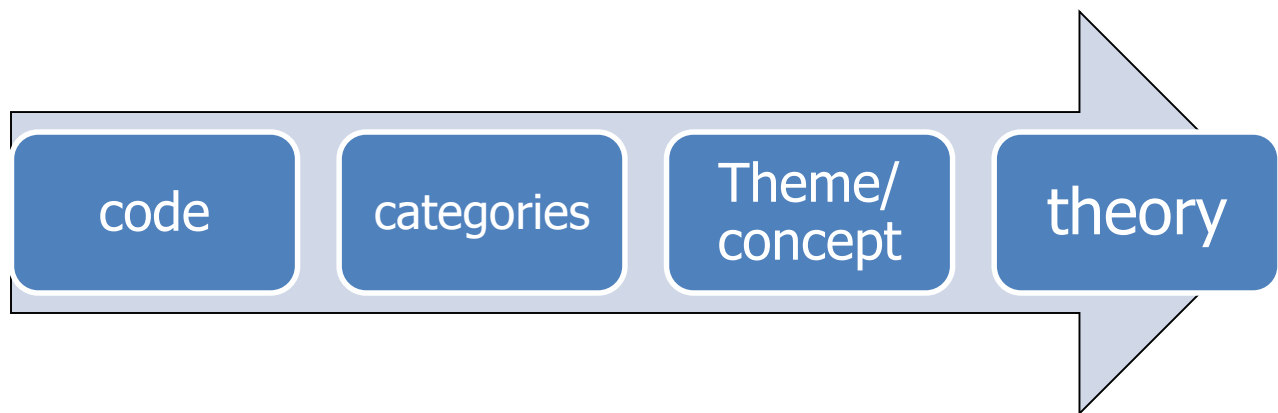
RESULTS

From the data collected, the findings on the effects of low self-esteem on clinical performance for the first year nursing students in the particular private college revealed two major effects, which is defensive behavioral and poor communication. The summary of the effects is described in Table 2.

Table 2: Effects of low self-esteem on clinical performance

CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES
1. Defensive behavioral	- Felt uncomfortable with the staff who took over her procedure. - Ask other person to perform procedure even though she has to do (example, administering medication) - Defense herself if she think that she is right. - Ignored about other's opinion/ advice. - Disagree when the peers correct them
2. Poor communication	- Scared and shy to communicate with the staff in the clinical area and to the lecturers in the college. - Take time to build a rapport and communicate with the new patient. - Not confident to respond with the patient or patient's family. - Avoiding the ward's round because scared if the physician or doctor and they doesn't know how to answer.

Category 1: Defensive behavior

Basically, the students were supervised by the clinical instructor or the ward staffs during their clinical posting, but sometimes the clinical instructor may not around and the ward staff will take over to supervise the students. Based on the data collected from the interview, the following is the reports on lack of self-confidence due to low self-esteem by the students. Student number 4 mentioned that, during my clinical posting, when I tried to perform some procedure, such as simple dressing. Suddenly, in the middle of the procedure, the ward staff took over my job because according to her, I did not perform the procedure correctly. From that moment, I felt uncomfortable with this particular staff. By right, the staff should wait until the student finish their procedure[11], qualified staff should provide a conducive environment for clinical learning by teaching and acting as mentors, supervisors, preceptors and assessors for nursing students. But the student also needs to take it as constructive comment for her to improve. Student number 3 reported; when the staff nurse or my clinical instructor instruct me to administer injection to the patient, I requested to ask someone else to give because I am not confident enough. [7]'Learning new information and skills and dealing with challenging situations can all be negatively impacted by lack of confidence, and students with low confidence often visualize defeat before it occurs.' The above situation, informed us that the students is demonstrate of low self-confidence. Once the student learned regarding the theory of the specific procedure, the student supposed to be more confidence to perform the procedure unless the students are not well equip with the knowledge.

From the observation and evaluations of the clinical instructors, Some of the student may think they had performed good enough and deserve to get good comment even though there still have some matter that need to be improve. There were few feedbacks from the individual interview conducted and the student was named by digit number for confidentiality purpose. The negative effect of this type of student's behavior is they will tend to be defensive rather than take the advice positively, as mentioned by student number 6, If I felt I am right, I will defense myself. For example, when I performed a procedure and my clinical instructor told me that I did wrong, I will explain to her, that what I had learned during the theory class. Studies revealed that , individual with positive self-esteem is individual who has an ability to assess themselves accurately and to accept themselves regarding who are they. But some people's attitudes are influenced by the social world and the social world is influenced by the people's attitudes.

These interactions, however, may cause a conflict between a person's attitude and behavior. As mentioned by student number 5, 'I disagree when my peers try to correct me. Then, after a few moments, I try to accept but in the same keep reminding my-self to just leave it'. Evidence showed that, it is good for the students to have defensive behavior to avoid bullying syndrome. It is different when come to teach and mold the younger nurses where they supposed to learn to be more open minded and become realistic in every aspect for learning purpose. In the same time, the clinical instructor, supervising the student has to provide them with adequate and accurate information and justification to ensure the students able to follow their guidance.

Category 2: Poor communication with people around

Communication is the most important skill; the nurse has to practice appropriately. To teach the skill only to the nursing student is not enough, as they have to apply it effectively when they placed in clinical posting. To ensure the nurses deliver a quality care, they must use a good communication skill to build up rapport and gain the cooperation especially with the patient. Communication is also important for the nurses to communicate with the doctor and other health care provider. [12]In modern days, communication is one of the most dominant and important activities in organization. Communication in nursing profession can be a complicated process, and the possibility of sending or receiving incorrect messages frequently exists. It is essential for the nurses to know and understand the key components of the communication process, how to improve skills, and the potential problems that exist with error in communication. If the student is conquered with communication's problem, it may lead them for a poor quality of nursing service, as describes by the student number 2, I felt scared and anxious when in a new situation. I scared and shy to communicate with the staff in the clinical area and to the lecturers in the college. When I met with a new patient, I will take time to build a rapport and communicate with them. This situation was very common among the younger nurses, especially with the quiet and shy type of person. Normally, they will choose to keep silent and only speak whenever necessary with limited words. For example, they will only ask when they need to find equipment.

In environment factor, communication barrier also influenced low self-esteem. Such as, if the student did not understand with the language used, they may felt down when communicating with the other person. The following are the information obtained from the student number 3, regarding the environment factor involved communication, "I am not so good in English speaking. This problem make me felt down. When the patient asked me using English language, usually my responds will be a bit late because it will take time

for me to understand and translate the words into English and pronounce it. Sometimes I could not respond because I did not understand the question. I felt very down with this problem".

Generally, the public expected all nurses have the same knowledge as long as they are in uniform. In some situation, the public may ask about health condition to the nursing student in English. Lack of confidence in communicating English may result in different perception on the matter discussed. As mentioned by student number 7, 'when someone asks me about their family health condition in English, I was not confident to respond as I am scared I will give a wrong answer'. Having an opportunity to follow the specialist round in ward is a great thing to do as the students will understand more on handling and manage the patient. But sometimes it will be a difficult situation for the students especially in their earlier year due to insufficient knowledge. Student number 10 reported that, during the ward's round by the specialist and doctors I tried to hide because I am scared they will ask me in English. I understand that it is good for my experience in clinical and to know more about the disease management.

These are the compilation of scripts taken from the students and how the categories on effects of low self-esteem were identified. Further elaboration will be discussed in next topic.

DISCUSSION

Educators and clinical instructors should guide and counsel students constantly to avoid state of despair. Combination of clinical expertise and a passion for teaching are two core skills that strengthen the nurse work force. By re- enforcing and re-emphasizing, it should be rendered to students when performing any procedure. There are significant positive correlation between self-esteem and motivation for learning[13].

In clinical placement, the nursing student's supervisor encouraged to view the clinical teaching and supervision as part of their teaching function and quality improvement strategy in wards. The Nurse Managers should ensure that there is sufficient equipment and personnel within the clinical facilities to enable clinical teaching and learning to take place. This conducive environment not only assists in nursing student's development but also for the service improvement and indirectly contributes to the positive achievement of the nursing profession. As reported in the result, defensive behaviour is one of the effects of low self-esteem among the first year nursing student. [14]'struggling with self-esteem usually creates adverse effects on all areas of student's life'. A person with low self-esteem probably says a lot of negative things about themselves. They may critics themselves, their action and their abilities about themselves in very negative way. The person may also put themselves down, doubt themselves, or blame themselves

when things go wrong. Often, they may not recognize their positive qualities as they always think they are not good in every aspect.

The nurse educator should encourage the nursing students to involve with the activity that may improve their positive attitudes such as team building, motivational talk and religious activity. The essence of nursing is known as an art and science. Self-awareness regarding the job's responsibility for the nursing students is important as their must understand what are they doing and what is the reason for them to perform the procedure. 'Self-esteem focused on feelings of personal worth and level of satisfaction regarding one's self, suggesting that self-esteem is shaped by self-concept'[15]. In defensive behavior, peers influenced noted to be highly encouraging the student self-esteem in correlation with their performance. In contrast study done by some researchers[16]. They found that, low peer acceptance can have a negative effect on adolescent's self-esteem. [17]Maria R.T. (2007) suggested that, peer friendships are dynamic. Its means that peer friendships may change.

The second effect of low self-esteem among the first year nursing student in this study, reported as poor communication. Communication is the most important skill the nurses should have as they are the front-liners and dealing with human being and unlike a machine. As stated by other researchers[18], communication is central to human interaction. Without is, people cannot relate to those around them, make their needs and concerns known or make sense of what is happening to them. In nursing practice, there are frequently great deals of information to be sending to others in a short period of time. To ensure the communication is effectively carried out, the nurse must know recognize the factors that could influence how the message is interpreted.

As supported by [12]Rajhans K. (2012), in modern days, communication is one of the most dominant and important activities in organization. Communication barrier is a major factor for students who are not well-versed in English language. To enhance English communication among the students, the college should conduct an English educational competition such as debates, public speaking and quizzes. Challenges, in this regard, may be due to language or cultural barriers among the nursing students and the staffs, differences in value, or attitudes towards each other's. It is important to examine the message, the way it is delivered and how it may be perceived. Other than that, it should also give students opportunities to do community services such as involved as a volunteer for charity activities so they may expand their communication among the society in effective communication way.

The implication for this research is to enhance the nursing students' self-esteem by understanding their needs and set the remedial measures for any problem identified. This can be initiated at the college level during their first semester theory class and by evaluating the nursing student self-esteem. In addition, the students indicated to have clear linkage between family and institution in helping students build self-esteem. Provide information to parents about ways to foster the development of good self-esteem, such as setting challenges that the students can handle, praising good results but honestly telling them that they have not done well, and helping them not to generalize from temporary failures.

There were few limitations during conducting this study. Firstly, the researcher had limitation in the number of participants based on the research title. Currently there are 10 active first year nursing students in this private college and able to collect and analyze the data from 10 students only. The opportunity of having more respondents would be able to provide a more reliable and representative findings. Secondly, during the data collection, there was a possibility that some students were dishonest in giving the due to felt uncomfortable to reveal the truth about their private life or they may have personal issues with their peers resulting in their reluctances to be truthful. Furthermore the researcher touched on with some factors that had already taken place, for example parenting styles, and therefore, could not be easily obtained by the researcher.

CONCLUSION

Nursing profession is moving forwards and there is a high expectation on its quality of service delivery. To ensure the younger nurses can perform well, it is a responsibility for the nurse educator to prepare them into a real world of nursing. As they are still in the process of career development, younger nurses may have they level of self-esteem and the most concern matter is when they have it at the lower level. Understanding the effect of low self-esteem on their clinical performance, the educators may plan for the appropriate action. In this study, defensive behaviors and poor communication identified as the biggest effects of low self-esteem among the first year nursing students in one of the private college in Kota Kinabalu. This is the challenge for the younger nurses in their life transition for their future career, and with the relevant practice and based on evidence based from the previous study it may help the educator, clinical instructor and supervisor to apply the strategies to occupied the younger nurses with knowledge and experience and enhancing their clinical performance. Finally, future research should continue to examine

the effects of low self-esteem related to the nurses' performance as a basic root in maintaining and enhancing the quality of nursing service.

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