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Meanings and Expressions of Caring among Nurses in Clinical Workplace: A Literature Review

Putri Mayasari[1],Urai Hatthakit[2], and Pratyanan Thiangchanya[3]

Background: Research shows that nurse retention is high as a result of a stressful work environment coupled with inadequate support in clinical workplace. Caring among nurses is therefore crucial in enhanced and enriched the working environment that helps increase nurse's satisfaction and retention in the profession.
Purpose: To explore the meanings and expressions of caring among nurses in clinical workplace.
Methods: Literature review of existing articles on electronic databases was conducted. The meanings and expressions of caring among nurses were identified. The year of publication ranged from 2000-2012.
Result: Based on inclusion criteria, 10 articles reviewed were included. There was very limited result describing meanings of caring among nurses. However, caring expressions had been identified and categorized into personal and professional levels. There were some common themes such as caring through helping and support, caring through appreciating, and acknowledging unappreciated caring.
Conclusion: Caring among nurses is very important to keep nurses emerged and able to work more effectively. However, caring varies within cultures and there are still limited studies among nurses in nonwestern society. Therefore, further research is needed to describe meanings and expressions of caring in clinical workplace that is beneficial in enhancing caring environment, increasing nurse's satisfaction and nurse retention.
Keyword: caring among nurses, meaning of caring, caring expressions, clinical work.

[1] Master Student, Faculty of Nursing, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand (pu3_aceh85@ymail.com)
[2] Lecturer of Nursing Administration Department, Faculty of Nursing, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand
[3] Lecturer of Nursing Administration Department, Faculty of Nursing, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

Background

Research shows that nurse retention is not high as a result of a stressful work environment coupled with inadequate support in clinical workplace. Caring among nurses is therefore crucial in enhancing and enriching the working environment that helps increase nurse's satisfaction and retention in the profession.

Selye (as cited in AbuAlrub, 2004) indicated that nursing is one of the most stressful professions. Study from Decola & Riggins (2010) reported that because of work environment issues regarding high workloads nurses are thinking about leaving the profession. The study shows nearly half of all nurses (46%) say their workload is worse today than it was 5 years ago. Nurses saw that as the most unfavorable part of nursing such as; 'heavy workloads' (42%), 'insufficient pay and benefits' (22%), a 'lack of recognition' for their work (15%) and 'too much bureaucracy' (13%). Persky, Nelson, and Bent (2004) reported that nurses feel greatest frustrated related to workload and be the most affected by stress in the relationship with the patients while their work in the unit. Therefore, ensuring colleagues support as recognizing and nurturing positive caring behaviors among nursing colleagues can enrich professional life (Yam & Rossiter, 2000).

Effective strategies are required to maintain nurses in the profession. One of important strategies is to create caring working environment. Few studies have shown social support among nurses is one of variables that might reduce the negative effect of job stress. Providing environments with enhanced level of social support and reduced level of stress might help to retain staff and thus alleviate the nursing shortage (AbuAlrub, 2004).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the meanings and expressions of caring among nurses in clinical workplace. The benefit of the study is to help better understanding how

nurses define caring and express their caring to their colleagues in clinical setting. The knowledge is very important to be local to promote caring atmosphere in their workplace

Methods

To achieve the objectives of this study, literature review of existing articles on electronic databases was conducted. The meanings and expressions of caring among nurses were identified. The year of publication ranged from 2000-2012. The author used CINAHL, PubMed, Proquest, Science Direct to search the existing studies about meaning and expressions of caring among nurses in clinical workplace. Several keywords were used to find those articles are meaning of caring, caring among nurses, support among nurses, caring expressions, and clinical work caring.

The data, information, and documents that matched the keywords were retrieved. The author examined the search 'hits' and made a preliminary evaluation about whether or not the articles were relevant to the study and then downloaded the relevant ones. The inclusion criteria of the retrieved articles focused on perceived by nurses in clinical setting. Finally, the author reads carefully the included articles and extracts the given information

Results

The ten reviewed research articles were included consist of qualitative study and quantitative study (*see table 1).* Most of the study design that include in this review was seven qualitative studies (Blair et. All, 2011, Enn and Gregory, 2007, Longo, 2011, Mebrouk, 2008, Paliadelis, 2007, Sikma, 2006, and Turkel, 2003) with the participants are registered nurses as staff nurses and nurses manager. The three studies are quantitative studies included the two correlational studies (conducted by Burtson and Stichler, 2010 and AbuAlrub, 2004), and one survey study by Huggard (2012). The results of the 10 selected articles discuss the meanings,

the expressions, and caring environment among nurses in their clinical workplace.

Meanings of Caring among Nurses in Clinical Workplace

Most articles did not mention about meaning of caring among nurses. However, in phenomenology study conducted by Turkel (2003) nurse managers as participants described meanings of caring for their staff in many themes consist of growth, listening, support, intuition, receiving gifts, frustration, nurses' way of being, reciprocal caring, and caring moment as transcendence.

Managers described helping staff member to grow in social and professional level, and how nurse' managers meant caring as therapeutic listening, not only listen their voice but their presence and give time when listening. Managers also describe meanings of caring as being supportive and intuition guide their expressions of caring. Receiving gift from their staff meant a lot for the managers, it also meaning of caring they received from their staff. The frustration meant they felt when they do battle in a bureaucracy that values money instead of caring. The other meaning of caring described by manager is nurses' way of being included three attributes; firstly, authentic presence is a sense of going beyond to share feelings and experiences of another during interactions. Participants shared a vision that involves understanding, compassion, and being there for one another. Secondly, instillation of values are includes trust, openness, fairness, respect, and humility. Spirituality is the third of attribute that the nurse' way of being. This involved faith, hope, and religious attitudes as well as openness to alternative methods of healing and confidence in one's own skill. Study from Huggard (2012) also mentioned about spirituality that nurses described many and varied spiritual practices as being supportive and comforting their practice.

Meanings of caring among colleagues meant reciprocal caring that included four attributes of mutuality (having the same feeling during interactions), oneness and

connectedness (in-depth knowing, feelings, and experiences of the "one care caring" between "one cared for"), increased self-worth, and feeling of being care for. Another meaning of caring described by managers is moment as transcendence included change and energy exchange, it described transformation left giving new meaning to the experience between managers and their staff. All of meanings described by managers are caring their felt during interactions between their staff and they value caring among colleagues as part of their practice.

Expressions of Caring among Nurses in Clinical Workplace

Study from Longo (2011) reported that caring expressions between nurses' managers and nurse peers identified in three themes: (1) caring through helping and supporting each other, (2) caring through appreciating, and (3) acknowledging unappreciated caring.

Caring through helping and support each other

Mostly articles described expressions of caring as helping and supporting each other in the clinical workplace (Blair et. All, 2011; Huggard, 2012; Longo, 2012; Parliadelis, Cruickshank, & Sheridan, 2007; Sikma, 2006; and Turkel 2003). Nurses expressed caring through helping and supporting in those studies can describe in emotional support, informational support, giving time, and physical support.

Helping and supporting in emotional support expressed nurses with simple asking "are you okay?. Nurses also helped in demanding situations when at the same time they faced on busy in the unit and would to help their colleagues. Therefore, nurse checked with simply question is so helping and supporting (Longo, 2011). Emotional support was showed by nurses when their prepared and seek certification in-group study to become certified in a nursing specialty. Nurses felt care from their peer during study (Blair et. all, 2011). However,

another expression of emotional support studied by Huggard (2012), mentioned that nurses felt supporting and comforting in their practice.

Another expression of caring was described as informational support. Nurses have opportunity to learn each other in seeking certification (Blair et.all, 2011). Nurses feel comfortable asking help from nurse's coworkers concerning certain unclear nursing tasks, thus decreasing error and enhancing performance. This is expression of informational support nurses gained from their colleagues (AbuAlrub, 2004). During interactions with their staff, nurse manager also expressed limitations related to limited financial support and inform their staff (Turkel, 2003). Promoting quality with maintaining the standards and competency by nurse managers is another way of managers to express their caring (Sikma, 2006)

In expressed caring for their colleagues, nurses have time to care for and give time to listen or counseling. That is part of caring through helping and supporting and can be a role in unburdening the nurses when they faced the stress and problems in their workplace (Longo, 2011 and Turkel, 2003). Giving the time for peers expressed in humor with sharing laughter with their staff (Turkel, 2003). Another helping expression through giving time is being flexible in with the schedule.

Helping and supporting each other also can be physical support with touch. It enables the one being touched to experience caring between nurses and their peers (Turkel, 2003).

Caring through appreciating

Several articles described caring expressions among nurses through appreciating (Longo 2011, Sikma, 2006, and Turkel 2003). Appreciation gave among nurses can be as recognizing a need, moment acknowledging, and appreciate each other.

Recognizing the need for nurses was important. When nurse had a family health crisis, managers and peers covered a shift themselves, so that nurse can attend to the situation

(Longo, 2011). Another expression identified as caring in recognizing is valuing. It involves three sub-dimensions of respecting, recognizing, and rewarding. Nurses need to respect staff members' value and worth as individuals helps them, thus to demonstrate that humanity to clients. Recognition is very important and means a lot. Rewarding represents the material worth of caring work (Sikma, 2006).

Give giving and moment acknowledging is way that nurses appreciating to their colleagues. Nurses expressed caring with gift giving; small token gift such as candy bars and a crystal animal. Although it is a small gift, it conveys a message to nurses that someone is there for them and it meant a lot (Longo, 2011). Moment acknowledgment is the other way that expressed by nurses through celebrates their birthday or grief moment (Turkel, 2003).

Another expression that involved caring through appreciating is appreciate each other with work consistently with the same people (Longo, 2011), belonging and knowing (Sikma, 2006). Longo (2011) reported that the way of coming to know and to appreciate each other was through the opportunity to work with the same people. This created feeling of family to become appreciated with capabilities and the weaknesses of colleagues. Another expression f rom Sikma (2006) described caring through appreciating is belonging that involves feeling connected to and accepted. Belonging included two dimensions; being there for each other even in difficult situation and have a common set of values and goals that guide actions it called sharing a vision. Knowing is the process that gained understanding, being known inter-individual, inter-group, and the whole persons and situation.

Acknowledging unappreciated caring

The other thing that nurses expressed their caring among coworker with acknowledging unappreciated caring (Longo 2011, and Enn & Gregory 2007). In order to provide caring to their colleagues, nurses often felt it not easy to do. Nurses describe

sometime they have to identify the difference between someone who really needed help and someone who was asking to escape work. When they faced on that situation, sometimes they expressed willingness to establish relationship and try to demonstrate caring to their colleagues. Other situations, nurses as Informants described the lack of support and shared how often they felt alone, frustrated, and exhausted as lamentation and loss of care in contemporary practice.

Study from Sikma (2006) reported that expression of caring among nurses in the workplace as acting together included teamwork and participating. Sikma (2006) mentioned teamwork in the organization involves everyone working together to get work done consist of cooperating, helping out, and backing up each other. Caring among nurses in clinical workplace showed as teamwork (Mebrouk (2008). Teamwork is external factor that influence female nurses to be care for their patients. Teamwork is in this way closely linked to a caring relationship between colleagues. According Enns & Gregory (2007) nursing is a profession that demands teamwork. Participating involves contributing ideas, respond, and working incorporate staff input into the operations (problem – solving, decision-making, program development, implementation, and evaluation) (Sikma, 2006).

Caring Environment

Caring service requires a caring and supportive environment. Conditions in the organizational environment are critical to the staff's capacity to provide care. Sikma (2006) reported that the three themes of caring conditions areas: providing resources to do the work, trusting and safety, and communicating.

Providing resources to do the work includes human and material resources needed to support the work of caring. Adequate staffing in organization is help nurses to provide care. Nurses who felt cared for by peers and supervisors were able to provide quality care for their

patients. It is the responsibility nursing staff to support another (Enn & Gregory, 2007). According to Burtson & Stichler (2010), reported that compassion satisfaction and social interaction opportunities among nurses might improve nursing care. Another condition is having enough material resource such as equipment and supplies: the physical environment, education, expertise, consultation, and reimbursement for Medicare were made nurses feel cared for and supported in their caring work.

Trusting is supports caring in environment because it helps caregivers feel safer in vulnerable situations. Trusting involves confidence by staff to do their job, and handle fairly in an environment free from defensiveness, discrimination, harassment, prejudice, and elitism. Nurses aware of their vulnerability in many situations and expressed a strong desire for an expressed of trust that helps them feel safe (Sikma, 2006).

Another condition reported by Sikma (2006) in caring environments is communicating. It was supportive nurses to have open communication both horizontally and vertically to get information to do their work and understanding what happening in the organization. Communicating involves listening, responding, feedback, and follow-through. Providing dialogue with each other to receive any information was important. Nurses explored that they spoke the same language and had a common goal, that of caring for other (Parleadelis, Cruickshank, & Sheridan, 2007).

In order to being care for in the environment, nurses perceived the outcomes of caring they felt. Study from Sikma (2006), reported the outcomes of caring for clients, staff, and the organization. The nurses perceived positive outcomes including satisfaction, pride, motivation, productivity, retention, and better attendance. The clients are satisfied, improved quality of care, and decreased risk. However, staffs are satisfied motivated, and proud of their work will be the positive to organizational outcomes of productivity, consistent attendance, and staff retention

Discussion

Nursing is a profession related to the stressful environment. Some studies showed a high workload and conflict in the organization causing changes environment. Study of Enn and Gregory (2007) mentioned about that, time pressure, heavier workload, increase responsibility, increase patient annuity, high technology and tasking have changed the nursing environment. It can cause nurses' resignation or even nurses to leave their profession. Therefore, create caring environment through increase social support among nurses is needed.

Caring is central to nursing and beneficial not only for patients but also for nurses (Ousey and Johnson, 2006; & Suliman, Welmann, Omer, & Thomas, 2009). In providing care to the patients, sometimes nurses neglect to care for theme self and their colleagues. However, caring is not limited to interactions between nurses and patients (Turkel, 2003).

Nurses defined meanings of caring in various themes and expressed caring in several ways. It explained by staff nurses during interaction with their managers or their peers and nurses managers experienced between their staffs and colleagues. Not only define the meanings of caring, nurses also expressed how caring they showed to their colleagues, and how their colleagues expressed caring for them. For example is caring among nurses perceived by nurses as “care for” and “support each other”. Nurses felt support from their peer more than formal support from their organizational. Therefore, nurses described support from their friend as informal support. It expressed by nurses with “caring as helping and supporting each other”. Provide helping and supporting caring among nurses in the workplace may help to decrease nurse’ stress with heavier workload. Sometimes with simply asking, “are you okay?” can help nurses to work in heavy situation. Otherwise, nurses faced problem with other profession, their colleagues have willingness to listen their problem and gave time to counseling any problems.

Caring among nurses can described as personal and professional level. Firstly, example for personal level: nurse felt sad, and frustration caused individual or family problem then their colleagues expressed caring through appreciating that nurses recognizing a need in a nurse's personal life. The appreciating in personal level also expressed by appreciate each individual have strengths and limitations. Therefore, nurses can work together "with the same people". Another appreciating gave by nurses is expressed moment acknowledgement. The moment could be happy moment or grief moment. Nurses celebrated friend' birthday and give even the simply gift, it meant a lot. In the grief moment as well, when friend's family passed away, nurses expressed caring through gave small gift. Although a small, it convey message to nurses that they have someone care for them.

In clinical workplace, caring among colleagues meant teamwork (Mebrouk, 2008). It may because they spoke the same language and had a common goal, so that teamwork was closely linked to a caring relationship between colleagues. In order to provide caring to their colleagues, nurses faced on not easy situation such as identifying between someone who really needed help and someone who asking to escape their work. Some nurses try to deal with that situation and demonstrated caring to their colleagues, so that the colleagues can learn meaningful of caring by caring demonstration. It described as acknowledging unappreciated caring (Longo, 2011).

Caring can be professional level. Compassion satisfaction and social interaction opportunities among nurses might improve nursing caring. Hospital nurses with high social support from coworkers have low perceived job stress and enhances nurses' job satisfaction (Burtson and Stichler, 2010 & AbuAlrub, 2004). The results of the most studies reported that caring service requires a caring and supporting caring environment. Achieving professional care in nursing begin when nurse feels that they are supported by others in the work environment. Workforce environment within hospitals has been recognized as an important

factor for nurse retention and satisfaction (Latham, Hogan, and Ringl, 2008).

Study from Sikma (2006), reported the outcomes of caring for clients, staff, and the organization. The nurses perceived positive outcomes including satisfaction, pride, motivation, productivity, retention, and better attendance. The clients are satisfied, improved quality of care, and decreased risk. However, staffs are satisfied motivated, and proud of their work will be the positive to organizational outcomes of productivity, consistent attendance, and staff retention.

Various studies mentioned create caring environment through caring expressions in clinical workplace can create a healthy work environment. Nurses who felt cared for by peers and supervisors were able to provide quality care for their patients. Fostering nurse's internal motivation such as social interaction among nurses may increase the frequency of caring behaviors, consequently patient satisfaction, and finally positively for retaining nurses.

Limitation

This study has the limitations. Firstly, since this study only focusing on the existing study in clinical workplace, there are limited researches that found related to meanings and expressions of caring among nurses. Secondly, the author not focusing on cultures of caring to review those research studies.

Conclusion

Caring among nurses is very important to keep nurses emerged and able to work more effectively. However, caring varies within cultures and there are still limited studies among nurses in nonwestern society. Therefore, further research is needed to describe meanings and expressions of caring in clinical workplace that is beneficial in enhancing caring environment, increasing nurse's satisfaction and nurse retention.

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