The Practical Experience of Male Nursing Students in Obstetrics

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Abstract. This study explored male nursing students' practical experiences in obstetrics. The study used qualitative descriptive research methods. Participants were twelve male students with practical experiences in obstetrics. Four themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews: Barrier by gender framework, Understanding of the female psychology during childbirth, New perspective on women, Opportunity to gain insight into the role of nurse. This research enhanced understanding and promoted nursing knowledge of the unique needs of men in nursing practicum.

Keywords: Students, Males, Maternal-child nursing, Clinical practice

1 Introduction

Clinical practice education helps nursing students take appropriate actions in playing a role of nurse in clinical care after graduation, but due to the female students-oriented education, male nursing students still encounter practical difficulties in the course of practice. By the Korean Nurses Association stating that in 1996, there were 87 male nursing students, and in 2010, this has increased to 6,684 [1].

Men have three major gender barriers in the nursing education process. These barriers include social isolation, refusal of the program to address individual leaning needs and the lack of acknowledgement of men as a vital part of the nursing profession [2]. In a phenomenological study, Patterson and Morin interviewed 8 male student nurses about their experiences in the maternal-child setting [3]. From the analysis of data, three theme clusters emerged: preconceptions about the maternal-child rotation, enduring the clinical experience, and surviving the clinical rotation. A
study was conducted to examine the prevalence and perceived importance of gender-based barriers during the nursing education programs of men. The participants in the study were posted in an obstetric ward. They reported that midwifery staffs were cold and hostile during the placement. Many male students were not allowed to participate in the full range of caring interventions during the obstetric placement [4]. A study on adaptation to nursing science by male students based on grounded theory identified a central phenomenon of ‘feeling isolated’ expressed by a minority of male students in a group whose majority is represented by females [5]. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the significance and essentiality of the experiences of male nursing students during delivery room practice, which in the past, has mainly focused on female students in the sociocultural context.

Qualitative research is a means of further discovering meaning so as to better understand phenomena and to obtain truth through collecting specific life experiences [6]. The aim of this study was to explore male nursing students’ practical experiences in obstetrics.

2 Methods

2.1 Design and Participants

In this study, we used qualitative descriptive research methods. The sample consisted of 12 male students who had completed their maternal nursing practice. Participants were recruited from three universities in B city. Their age ranged from 23 to 27. All of them were single. Ten students had more than one sister and two students had no sister.

2.2 Ethical Consideration

Prior to initiating the study, Institutional Review Committee approval (E-2011052) for the protection of human subjects was obtained. Written consent was also obtained from the students who wanted to participate in the study after they were informed about the nature and objectives of the study and assured that the data were to be confidential. It was clearly explained that the process would include a recorded face-to-face interview and that a transcript would be made from the tape, but that anonymity would be preserved in all published results.

2.3 Data Collection

Data collection was undertaken in in-depth and individual interviews. Each interview lasted from approximately 40 minutes to 110 minutes. The specific research question for this study was, “What is the experience of male nursing students during the maternal nursing clinical practice?” Unstructured interviews focused on the students’
experiences during maternal nursing clinical practice in labor and delivery rooms. Participants were encouraged to describe their experiences as fully as possible. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the participants’ identities were concealed using code numbers.

2.4 Data analysis

Data analysis methods included tape-recorded interviews that were transcribed verbatim and reviewed multiple times to identify redundant ideas and achieve saturation.

3 Results

Findings of this study are reported within four main themes; that is, barrier by gender framework, understanding of the female psychology during childbirth, new perspective on women, opportunity to gain insight into the role of nurse.

3.1 Barrier by gender

Pregnant women were anxious about nursing care by male students, and the husbands of women in labor refused the male nursing students’ care. Participants found the mother subjects more difficult to approach compared to other adult subjects in general wards and they could not easily sympathize with the women subjects in labor due to different gender roles, as a result, causing difficulties in building a relationship.

3.2 Understanding of the female psychology during childbirth

During the delivery process, the participants was impressed by the greatness of women after seeing a mother undergo the birth pains, make a final effort to give birth to a baby, shed tears of joy and place her baby above herself. For them, the delivery process itself was marvelous and devotional and they shared the joy of having a baby with mothers.

3.3 New perspective on women

After seeing women putting up with the pains of birth, the participants began to feel sorry for their future spouse who will undergo the same hard delivery process. Also, when they run into pregnant women in their daily lives, not in a delivery room, they were able to guess the week of pregnancy and took the women seriously as knowing that those pregnant women are willing to accept the painful delivery process.
3.4 Opportunity to gain insight into the role of nurse

During the practice, the participants observed that nurses working in the delivery room accurately understood the state of the subjects and timely provided treatment and care, and accordingly, were aware of the nurses’ professionalism and specialized work in the room. In addition, after observing nurses in the delivery room build a closer relationship with the subjects than the ones in general ward rooms, and solve the nursing problems immediately after the subjects requested, the participating students felt that they are genuine nurses.

4 Conclusions

According to this study, it was found that during the delivery room practice, the male nursing students went through positive experiences, such as understanding of female psychology during the childbirth, new perspective on women, and comprehensive insight into the role of nurse, in addition to negative ones, such as barrier by gender framework. The findings from this study should sensitize faculty members to the needs of the male nursing students in the maternal nursing clinical practice. Nurse educators and clinical instructors should be aware of their discomfort and encourage professionalism in male nursing students.

References