The Nature and Meaning of Nursing Competency as Experienced by Hospital Nurses

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Abstract. The present study used Colaizzi’s descriptive method to understand the nature and meaning of nursing competency in a clinical nursing unit. As a result, the meanings of nursing competency as experienced by hospital nurses were found to be as follows: "nursing qualifications developed through nursing tasks," "time invested to become a true nurse," "work performance fulfilled by a satisfactory desire," "positive results yielded by an effortful process of providing outstanding nursing care," "qualifications as a nurse realized by educational efforts," "realizations of positive interactions through learning and process," "qualifications as a nurse realized by accumulating nursing work experience," "colleagues that understand each other and provide strength," and "experience of oneness with the patient during the caring process." Consequently, it is necessary for nursing managers and hospital organizations to precisely understand the meaning and level of nursing competency for nurses and to provide program support to enhance nurses’ performance.

Keywords: Nurses, Hospitals, Nursing competency

1 Introduction

Nursing competency is basic nursing performance requirement [1] in a clinical setting and describes the capacity to integrate and apply skill, knowledge, and decision for a particular nursing task [2]. Furthermore, it is possible to make actual observations of nursing competency, as it is a behavior that exhibits high performance results.

The improvement of nursing competency has an influence on the job satisfaction of nurses as well as qualitative patient care. Furthermore, nursing competency has been identified as an important precedent factor that positively influences [3] the productivity of nurses by facilitating the formation of harmonious relationships with other departments and managing the transfer rate of the nursing work force.

Consequently, it is necessary to precisely confirm the nature of nursing competency to elicit successful nursing results and raise the nursing performance expectations of the organization. Base on the above confirmation process, nursing capacity should be properly defined and its result computed.

Furthermore, the selection, education, guidance, and evaluation of the nursing workforce should lead to the systematic improvement of nursing competency exhibited within the hospital.
To date, precedent studies have only advocated for the necessity of nursing competency measurement tools, measurement results, and development; in-depth studies that investigate the experience and nature of nursing competency as a unique subjective phenomenon occurring in the nursing field are insufficient [4].

As such, the present study investigated the nature and meaning of nursing competency as experienced by a hospital nurse at a clinical nursing unit to precisely grasp the substantive reality of the terminology. The present study is believed to provide basic data to create a nursing work environment wherein individual nurses can fully exercise the nursing competency expected from their respective clinical units and acquire professionalism to effectively perform nursing tasks.

2 Method

2.1 Study Design

The study used Colaizzi’s descriptive method [5] in order to understand the nature and meaning of nursing competency in a clinical unit.

2.2 Sampling and Data Collection

The study participants were six veteran nurses from six different locations, including Seoul, Gyeonggi-do, and Daejeon, who understood and experienced the meaning of clinical nursing competency. All of the participants were female with an average age of 32.6 and average work experience of 7.3 years. Data were collected between March 1st 2011 and August 30th 2011 through semi-structured individual in-depth interviews. The primary question posed in the in-depth interview was, “What is the nature and meaning of nursing competency as experienced by a hospital nurse in a clinical unit?” All of the interviews were conducted in the participants’ workplace or neighborhood. The duration of the interviews was between a minimum of 60 minutes and a maximum of 2.5 hours.

2.3 Ethical Consideration

The study purpose and reporting as well as the recording of the interview contents were explained in detail. The participants were promised the protection of their rights and personal information.

2.4 Data Analysis

The present study used the data analysis method presented by Colaizzi (1978). After conducting the in-depth interviews, the transcribed interviews were read repeatedly, and any statements that were directly relevant to the phenomenon were extracted.
3 Results

The nature and meaning of nursing competency as experienced by hospital nurses were found to make up a total of nine factors: “nursing qualifications developed through nursing work,” “time invested to become a true nurse,” “work performance fulfilled by satisfactory desires,” “positive results yielded by an effortful process of providing outstanding care,” “qualifications as a nurse realized through educational efforts,” “positive interactions realized through learning and process,” “qualifications as a nurse realized through the accumulation of work experience,” “colleagues that understand and give strength to one another,” and “experiencing oneness with the patient during the caring process.”

4 Discussion and Conclusion

In nursing, nursing competency is defined as the capacity to perform tasks and roles required to meet a standard of expectations [6]. In other words, nursing competency is the capacity to perform work to achieve expected results in various work environments. In order to develop the capacity to deeply understand a patient’s disease and nurses’ independent decision-making, nursing managers and hospital organizations should understand and test the nursing competency level of nurses by providing and supporting programs that improve the nurses’ performance levels.

Fig. 1. Nursing competency as experienced by hospital nurses: topic collection.

References


