

Good Character in Nursing: Concept Analysis

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Abstract. Good character in nursing is a key issue lately in Korea and is emphasized as a condition for entry to hospital and continuation on caring. However, the definition of good character in nursing is insufficiently developed and it has not been made an attempt to clarify its meaning and attributes. The purpose of this study is to analyze the good character concept in nursing aimed at clarifying its meaning in order to enable comprehension and use in clinical setting, education and research in Korea. The concept analysis was performed according to hybrid model which consists of the theoretical, fieldwork and analytical phase. In conclusion, good character for caring in nursing is defined as performing nurse's behavior norm to deliver sensitive and effective care. Although the concept of good character is in itself somewhat subjective judgment, registered nurses as well as students must keep developing good character for themselves.

Keywords: good character, concept analysis

1 Introduction

Character is the aggregate features and traits that form the individual nature of some person [1]. Education has for its object the formation of character [2]. The idea of good character in nursing is rooted in St. Thomas' Hospital training program. In the early days of nursing education, Florence Nightingale believed that new graduated nurses should have the highest class of character and expected that nursing students possess the characteristics of sobriety, honesty, punctuality, truthfulness and patience [3]. In the United Kingdom, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) today provides guidance on good character based on a person's conduct, behavior and attitude. In Canada the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association (SRNA) has defined good character as the demonstrated behavior norm which show an appreciation of the difference between right and wrong and which do not threaten client safety and/or the ability of a nurse to practice safely [4].

In Korea, a concern about good character has been increased departments of nursing and students have increased exponentially from 2006 and emphasized as a condition for entry to hospital and continuation on caring. The concept of a good character in nursing has mostly been used in clinical setting. However, the definition of good character in nursing is insufficiently developed and it has not been made an attempt to clarify its meaning and attributes. And the culture and nursing context in Korea are different from the UK, Canada and so on.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the good character concept for caring in nursing aimed at clarifying its meaning in order to enable comprehension and use in clinical setting, education and research in Korea.

2 Methods

The concept analysis was performed according to hybrid model [5] which consists of three phases: an initial theoretical phase, a fieldwork phase and a final analytic phase. The hybrid model is suitable when the purpose is to find new attributes for concept, the concept is studied in a new context, or the concept of interest is derived from nursing practice. Although the concept of a good character in nursing has been used in clinical setting, it has not been systemically analyzed and clearly defined previously. Compared to other models, a unique feature of the hybrid model is the fieldwork phase. Fieldwork makes it possible to get knowledge of the concept from clinical nursing setting [5].

In theoretical phase, a computer based literature search was performed during June-August 2013. The data were collected systemically by using Korean and English databases: KERIS, MEDLINE and CINAHL. The search terms were used the following key words and their different combinations: “inseong” and “ganho” for Korean database, “character”, “personality” and “nurs*” for English database. In additional, manual data searches were conducted (for example by utilizing reference lists).

In fieldwork phase, eight nurses with extensive experience and a variety of clinical settings like medical wards, recovery room, psychiatric wards, and cardiac wards, and five patients with hospitalized experience and acute, chronic or cancer diseases were invited to participate in this study. Interviews were continued until no new data was generated and each participant was interviewed two to four times. The interviews took approximately 60 minutes. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the National Evidence-based Healthcare Collaborating Agency (approval no. PIRB12-047-02). The data analysis from the tape-recorded and transcribed interviews with participants underwent qualitative concept analysis [6].

In final analytic phase, the researchers stepped back from the intensity and the detail of fieldwork and re-tested the findings in the light of the initial focus of interest. The findings from the theoretical phase should be compared and contrasted with those found in the fieldwork phase. Criteria and attributes were determined based on the literature review, empirical findings and theoretical analysis. The concept of good character in nursing was redefined in Korea.

3 Results

Good character for caring in nursing is defined as performing behavior norm which is recognized professional appearance, attitude, demeanor and conduct of nurse to deliver sensitive and effective care.

The definition, following criteria and attributes related to the concept of good character for caring in nursing emerged from the empirical findings, supported by the literature review.

Trustworthiness

- Presenting the facts although one's self-esteem or profession get hurt (truthfulness)
- To just refrain from deception is not enough, do what has been learned from childhood
- Act consistently according to one's belief whether at work or home (Integrity)
- Keep certainly one's promises made
- Seek out the truth and use that truth to make important judgments or decisions

Respect

- Have professional appearance as a professional and caring image
- Be very particular about punctuality
- Accept generously what others beg for pardon
- Act with common courtesy and protect a client's privacy
- provide high quality care regardless of social and economic state, the nature of disease and client's negative behavior
- Make self-control when necessary, avoid threatening words and aggressive behavior
- Don't blame others

Responsibility

- Finish what you starts
- Be always looking for ways to care patients better, take responsibility for my own learning
- Care my own health, have a regular check-up
- Keep clear and accurate clinical assessment, record or examination, prohibit cheating in those
- Prohibit passing off other people's work as my own
- Keep the time to attendance the department, prohibit alcohol consumption, internet use and so on that affects work
- Keep confidentiality of other people

Caring

- Feel an emotional response to the pain and pleasure of others, be aware of someone's humanity and try to improve practice insightfully
- Love humanity, not individuals
- Be in close contact with patients
- Encourage them to speak about patients' concerns by maintain an open demeanor
- Be always cheerful on duty, may be inappropriate to smile all the time
- Start conversations after considering concerns of other people
- Foster companionship, encourage and help unskillful or new staffs gladly
- Show eye contact, considered reciprocation and active listening when dealing with patients and staffs

Patience

- Wait for patients until therapeutic rapport establish
- Try to overcome gaps between my knowledge and skill and expectation of those in clinical setting as an enthusiastic learner
- Cope with stress

4 Discussion

The aim of the concept analysis was to describe the definition and attributes of the concept of good character of nurse for caring in nursing. In this concept analysis, the concreteness of the data was maintained by classifying the attributes of good character. Good character in nursing is prerequisite for human side as professional nurse and performance of behavior norm so that nurses offer sensitive and effective care to patients and work with staffs.

The identified attributes of the concept of good character showed that honest is the most fundamental values nurse should possess and that action with common courtesy reflects on respect with other people. For example, nurses say hello, goodbye, sorry and thank you in appropriate situation, do not call patient client grandpa, father, grandma or mother, knock on doors before entering and practice good phone etiquette.

The concept of good character in nursing in Korea was emphasized behavior norm such as etiquette.

5 Conclusion

Good character for caring in nursing is defined as performing nurse's behavior norm to deliver sensitive and effective care. Although the concept of good character is in itself somewhat subjective judgment, registered nurses should keep developing good character for themselves, and student nurses should be trained systemically and concretely during undergraduate nursing program.

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