

Critique of a Study on Student Nurse Experiences Caring for Cancer Patients

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Abstract

Each section is clearly written and the purpose and findings are easily identifiable. The consistent shortcoming of the article is an absence of concise clear explanations on the findings related to student experiences and excessive material that appears to be opinions superimposed on the data. The study findings, conclusions, and dependability are evaluated as low to medium.

Sanford et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative research study on student nurse experiences caring for cancer patients. This article is a critique and evaluation of all aspects of the above study.

Critique of the Introduction

The introduction of the article is logically written and the content efficiently builds on each preceding idea. A thorough description of the magnitude of increasing incidences of cancer patients and severity of outcomes is excessive and off of the focus of the study. Good analysis is given of prior researches concerning nursing students' care of both cancer and end-of-life patients, and documented suggestions for improvement of nursing student cancer education. However, irrelevant discussion on pain management of cancer patients distracts away from the main purpose of the study. However, clear and substantial evidence

supporting the necessity of the study is lacking. Insufficient evaluation is provided on prior research focused on the broader view of nursing student's experiences when caring for cancer patients.

The literature review concludes with an statement about the shortage of practicing cancer nurses, which is off topic and does not connect clearly to the information on the purpose of the study nor previously described research. A clear purpose statement is provided outlining the goals of the research. Overall, the introduction provided moderately meaningful analysis and a clear purpose statement, the quality of the literature review is medium due to incomplete literature review, lack of information to support the study, and insufficient information about timeliness of the study.

Critique of the Methodology

Sampling

A purposive sample comprised predominantly of female junior students was utilized. Due to small

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biased sample size it is improbable that an adequate representation or description of the student population and setting was achieved to permit and transferability to other settings. For example, more could have been provided on participating universities, student's age, quantity of cancer patient experiences per participant, and the characteristics of the hospitals where the students were learning. Saturation was stated to have been reached, but this is still a concern because only three interview groups were used. Saturation appears to have been decided in the analysis phase rather than during the interview phase.

Procedures

Auditability was well documented and bracketing was noted, adding strength to the methods. Yet, no information was provided on the results of the member check and percentage of participants involved in the member check. Analysis corroboration and interviewer corroboration were not used because there was no explanation on whether the separate, independent interviews and analyses were conducted. Adequate time was allowed for interviews, but lack of multiple interviews on separate occasions with the same subjects does not meet the qualitative criterion of prolonged, persistent observation. The use of group interviews increases the risk of biases due to the possibility of social conforming pressures among the participants. Negative case analysis is non-existent but confirmability of analysis by outside researchers was used, albeit without adequate evaluation of differences or similarities. The methods section is written with clarity and logical flow. However, due to insufficient information and inadequate integration of appropriate qualitative criteria the methods section is of low quality.

Critique of the Results and Discussion

The results section is written clearly and neatly organizes the four established themes. Excellent incorporation of direct student quotes provides detailed descriptions that validate the experiences documented. Similarities were notably mentioned on the difficulties and stresses of caring for dying patients. The study lacked information provided on the number and type of experiences that each student received. Student's were stated to have had a variety of patient experiences. However, only the similarities in experiences are mentioned in detail.

Notable differences were recognized in perceptions in quality of care provided by nursing staff and physicians, and whether prior cancer experiences in life proved to be beneficial or detrimental to the student in caring for cancer patients in the clinical setting. It is unclear how many students experienced these differences. More analysis could have been provided on the differences in experiences and perceptions found within the study. Further, failure to provide descriptions of student's suggestions for improving the nursing curriculum in the results undermined the purpose and conclusion of the study. Thus, the results section is of medium quality due to inadequate information on discrepancies of experiences and suggestions for curriculum improvements, and poor generalizability of results.

The discussion section is written clearly. A greater analysis of the findings would have been of value. A very brief summary of the results is provided without adequate evaluation of discrepancies in students' experiences found both in the current study and upon comparison to previous studies. The majority of the discussion section focuses on improving nursing curriculum despite the fact that no recommendations by students were mentioned in the results section and only minimal information is provided in the discussion section without adequate quotations of direct student statements. Extensive focus is placed on previous research's suggestions without direct relation to the current study, and with much apparent inundating of the findings with the interviewer's own opinions, not just what was communicated by the students. This was not entirely consistent with the statement that the truth value was maintained. Minimal limitations of the study are mentioned, namely human fallibility and the subjective nature of qualitative research. The study could have also provided limitations of using only three groups, insufficient data on quantity of experiences per participant, and the excluded criteria for qualitative methods mentioned previously. Insignificant information is provided on future research studies needed to more accurately evaluate students' experiences in caring for cancer patients and subsequent curriculum changes necessary to more adequately prepare student nurses in the future. Thus, the discussion section is somewhat superficial and disconnected from the findings.

Critique of the Conclusion

The conclusion is concisely written but adds little

new understanding to the complexity of emotions, reflective thoughts, and concerns experienced by student nurses in caring for cancer patients. The conclusion restates findings from prior studies already mentioned in the introduction section. Therefore, the conclusion section somewhat weak due to limited explanations of any beneficial insight into nursing student experiences in caring for cancer patients derived from the findings.

Summary

Throughout the study report, each section is clearly written and the purpose and findings are easily identifiable. Despite some meaningful analysis on a few prior research and a clear purpose statement, the the literature review appears incomplete due to lack of information to support the study, and unexplained timeliness. The methods section provides insufficient information to fully evaluate rigor and would be strengthened by integration of appropriate qualitative criteria, notably negative case analysis, interviewer and analysis corroboration, and transferability. The results section needs to add information on discrepancies of experiences and suggestions for curriculum improvements. The discussion section needs more analysis of the current study's findings and comparison to previous studies, a fuller

disclosure of the study limitations, and needs to add clearer direction for future research. Lastly, the conclusion section confirms the insignificance of the study does not add beneficial insight into nursing students' experiences in caring for cancer patients and useful recommendations for nursing curriculum improvement in cancer education and clinical preparation, which is the core purpose stated for the study.

Overall, for the reasons explained above, the study findings, conclusions, and dependability are evaluated as low to medium. The importance of this topic argues for further studies that address the above points.

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REFERENCES

Sanford, J., et al. (2010). "I See My Mother's Face": Student nurse experiences caring for cancer patients. *European Journal of Oncology Nursing*, doi:10.1016/j.ejon.2010.05.010, 1-7.