

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This descriptive study was designed to explore the ethical dilemmas and resolutions encountered by nursing students in clinical practice in Health Polytechnic Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. Subjects were recruited from Health Polytechnic Semarang including five Nursing Programs in Semarang, Purwokerto, Magelang, Pekalongan, and Bora. The 225 nursing students in this study were recruited by proportionate random sampling. They were asked to fill in the questionnaires including: the Personal Data Questionnaire (PDQ), the Ethics Teaching and Learning Questionnaires (ETLQ), the Ethical Dilemmas Questionnaires (EDQ), and the Resolutions of Ethical Dilemmas Questionnaires (REDQ). The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. In this chapter, conclusions, implications, and recommendations of this study are presented.

1. Conclusions

Most subjects in this study were female with age ranging from 19 to 26 years. The majority of subjects were Muslims, and the ethnicity was Javanese.

Regarding ethics teaching and learning, the curriculum of ethics course in Health Polytechnic Semarang for nursing students in 2001 followed the national curriculum 1999. Four credits of ethics course were divided into two credits of General Ethics in the

first semester of the first year, and two credits of Nursing Ethics in the second semester of the first year. The background education for teachers was mostly bachelor degree, and all teachers enrolled an ethics course in their education. Lecture and discussion were the common methods for ethics teaching.

Subjects encountered ethical dilemmas in clinical practice at a moderate frequency. Among all ethical dilemmas, the ethical dilemma regarding advocating for patients vs. lacking authority had the highest frequency and the highest level of disturbance of ethical dilemmas.

The results of this study revealed the top three frequencies of ethical dilemmas as follows: (1) advocating for patients vs. lacking authority (Mean= 2.66), (2) values conflicts in professional roles (Mean= 2.60), (3) professional obligations vs. protecting self from harm (Mean= 2.23). The lowest mean score of frequency was ethical dilemma regarding prolonging life vs. ending life decisions (Mean= 1.82). Moreover, all ethical dilemmas were at a moderate level of disturbance and the top three levels of disturbance of ethical dilemmas as follows: (1) advocating for patients vs. lacking authority (Mean= 2.47), (2) professional obligations vs. protecting self from harm (Mean= 2.36), and (3) truth telling vs. withholding the truth (Mean= 2.19). The lowest mean score of level of disturbance was ethical dilemma regarding values conflicts in professional roles (Mean= 1.65).

In addition, only one among three resolutions had the highest frequency, which was discussing and consulting with others (Mean= 2.69), and the others were at a

moderate frequency including emotional coping strategy (Mean= 2.53), and taking moral actions (Mean= 2.52).

In conclusion, the need for nursing students to be able to recognize the ethical dilemmas of their clinical practice, and to be active participants in resolutions about ethical dilemmas is addressed in a growing of body of nursing.

2. Implications and recommendations

2.1 Nursing education

One goal of ethics teaching is to produce knowledgeable, sensitive, and aware nursing students when they confront ethical dilemmas in clinical practice. The resolution of ethical dilemmas regarding taking moral actions is the lowest mean score among three resolutions. It is recommended to enhance adequate knowledge, skills and conduct more discussion of various ethical issues to provide exercise regarding resolutions of ethical dilemmas. Therefore, nursing students will be knowledgeable and more confident to resolve ethical dilemmas by taking moral actions.

The results of this study can be used as baseline information in ethics courses for preparing nursing students to resolve ethical dilemmas in clinical practices effectively and ethically.

2.2 Nursing practice

This study found that ethical dilemmas were encountered by nursing students in clinical practice and they were lacking authority to help patients. It is recommended that

nursing educators and senior nurses enhance students' autonomy in clinical practice by providing appropriate opportunity to active participate in making decisions. The results of this study found that discussing and consulting with teachers and senior nurses was the highest mean score. It is recommended for senior nurses, clinical instructors and educators to facilitate and guide nursing students when they confront ethical dilemmas in clinical practice. Therefore, ethics round should be established to enhance their awareness to analyze ethical aspects for resolving ethical dilemmas in clinical practice.

2.3 Nursing administration

The findings of this study found that the number of ethical dilemmas occurred that caused by limited facilities/equipment. Refer to the results, this study suggests that nursing administrators should aware ethical dilemmas surrounding clinical practice. Providing proper facilities/equipment may provide quality of care and minimize the factors that influenced ethical dilemmas. Attention by nursing administrators to ethical dimensions is an important feature to concern that policies and procedures that are in place to sustain ethical care in clinical practice.

2.4 Nursing research

The findings of this study provide data that can be used for further research such as (1) exploring factors associated with ethical dilemmas and resolutions of ethical dilemmas of nursing students, (2) developing an instrument to measure ethical dilemmas

and ethical resolutions in nursing students, (3) exploring moral distress of nursing students when facing ethical dilemmas.

In addition, the present study, which focuses on ethical dilemmas and resolutions of ethical dilemmas by using quantitative method, has certain weaknesses. It would be more advisable to study ethical dilemmas using a qualitative method such as in depth interview that would explore more experienced nursing students regarding ethical dilemmas and resolutions of ethical dilemmas.