THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NURSES' CHARACTERISTICS, AGEISM, PERCEPTION OF OLDER PEOPLE'S CARE AND NURSING PRACTICE IN HOSPITALIZED OLDER PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT:

Background: The increasing number of hospitalized older people with complex health needs requires specific nursing practice. However, study of nursing practice which focused on older people is often overlooked. This study attempts to explore the relationships between nurses' characteristics (age, gender, education, and experience), ageism, perception of older people's care and nursing practice for hospitalized older people. Benner's theory From Novice to Expert and extensive literature review were used in study planning and implementation.

Methods: This correlational study involved 120 nurses using simple random sampling from two hospitals in Bandung, West Java. All participants completed four questionnaires: 1) the Demographic questionnaire, 2) the Professional Development of Registered Nurse (PDRS), an instrument to measure nursing practice, 3) the Fraboni Scale of Ageism (FSA), and 4) Nurses' Perception of Care questionnaire. The acquired data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Spearman correlation, and Pearson correlation.

Results: The study showed that nursing practice for hospitalized older people has a high performance in the clinical setting ($\bar{x}$ = 4.07, SD = 0.49). Nurses showed moderate level of ageism ($\bar{x}$ = 66.61, SD = 6.0), and high perception of older people care ($\bar{x}$ = 3.61, SD = 0.42). The study showed that age, gender and experience were positively related with nursing practice for hospitalized older people ($p < .0.05$). Ageism was negatively related with the practice of nurses working with older people. Furthermore, education and perception of older people care were not related with nursing practice for hospitalized older people.

Conclusions: Considering that the practice of working with older people is considerably high in the clinical setting, continued efforts to promote advanced training and education of older people care among staff nurses, encourage positive attitude toward older people, and enhance a specialized unit for older persons are recommended.

Keywords: Ageism, Hospitalized older people, Nursing practice, Perception

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has been growing of ageing population for many decades. Bandung City, as the capital of West Java, is considered as one of the city with the highest percentage of older people in Indonesia. According to Indonesia health report, older people had the highest mortality rate in the hospital, and the morbidity rate among this group was around 26% from total population [1]. Older people are at risk for hospitalized and becoming the major consumers of health care service in Indonesia. A growing body literature reported that hospitalization tend to cause adverse health effect for older people [2], and increase in length of stay and financial cost [3]. The complexity of hospitalized older people care highlights the demand of nursing staff to possess knowledge and skill in providing care for this group [4].

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Numerous studies have explored the practice of nursing older people in long-term care setting. However, long term-care concept in Indonesia is not popular because most Indonesians consider it is shameful to send their older relatives to this setting, especially if there are still family members who could provide care. Consequently, family members and older people are likely relying on formal health care services such as a clinic or hospital.

In Indonesia, hospitalized older people were characterized with multiple chronic diseases, cognitive impairment, functional decline, and nutritional problems [5]. Indonesian government attempted to improve health care support for older people by developing service division in hospitals which exclusively provided health care service for this aged group [6]. In 2009, the Department of Health declared that health services for hospitalized older people should be a priority for health care professionals [7]. However, most hospitals were not prepared in providing geriatric ward due to the higher risk of longer length of stay and high financial maintenance [8]. The presence of health care facilities which focuses on older people is still limited, whereas only 5% of hospital had specialized care for older people [9]. Subsequently, the majority of hospitalized older people are likely treated in the same unit for adult patients, particularly in the medical-surgical units.

Nurses as the largest health care providers in Indonesia play a major role in providing care for hospitalized older people. Several scholars have suggested that nurses need to develop their practice of working with older people and value the expertise and skills of those who work for them [10, 11]. Benner's argued that nurses' individual characteristics and societal perception would influence them in developing their paradigms of nursing practice [12]. The application of nursing practice for older people requires a combination of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes [13].

Indonesian people are known for their strong tradition of family and community to respect and treat older people as in high status. However, when the older person is chronically ill and requires specialized care this would lead to a significant drain of the family's financial resources. As a result, hospitalized older people are considered as a burden for their family and children. The negative image of older people as a burden in the family which refers to systematic stereotyping and discrimination against older people or known as ageism has been thrives in cultures and societies. As members of society, nurses are not immune from holding this ageist attitude, which may influence the professional view when working with them.

A growing body of literature argued that nurse' belief and understanding on older people needs of physical, psychological and social wellbeing within the care process may support the practice of caring this group. However, previous study found that there was a paradox between the conceptual perception and the actual nurse perception of older people care [14, 15].

It is imperative for nurses working in the hospital to clearly articulate their attitude and practice in order to help patients and to improve their own professional status. On the other hand, the practice of nurses working with hospitalized older people was still hidden from both the public and the professional view compare to other area in health care service. The objectives of this study were to assess nursing practice for hospitalized older people, and its relationship with nurses' characteristics, ageism, and perception of older people care in Bandung city, Indonesia.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample of this study were nurses who had at least one year experience of caring hospitalized older people and worked at inpatient wards of the medical-surgical units. The sample size of this study was calculated by using Thorndike formula [16]. A total of 120 nurses were selected using a simple random sampling from two hospitals in Bandung city.

Research instruments

Data were collected using four sets of questionnaires:

Demographic characteristics were collected, including age, gender, education level, and working experience

The Professional Development of Registered Nurse questionnaire (PDRS) was used to measure nursing practice for hospitalized older people [17]. The questionnaire consists of 28 items, scored on a five-point Likert Scale (1= never, 2= seldom, 3= sometimes, 4= often, 5= always). Ranges of possible score 1-2 points (low performance), 2.01-3.00 (low to moderate practice), 3.01-4.00 (moderate to high practice), 4.01- 5.00 (high practice).

The Fraboni Scale of Ageism (FSA) used to measure level of ageism [18]. It consists of 29-items that rate the negative opinion towards older people using Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, and 4= strongly agree). Statements that represent positive rather than negative opinion towards older adults had reversed scoring (item numbers 8, 14, and 21–24). Possible

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents (n=120)

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	%
Age (years)		
≤ 30	42	35.0
31-44	70	58.3
≥ 45	8	6.7
Mean±*SD* (33.94±5.16), *Range* (26-48)		
Gender		
Male	21	17.5
Female	99	82.5
Education		
SPK (High school diploma)	4	3.3
Diploma degree	83	69.2
Bachelor degree	33	27.5
Experience (years)		
1-3	21	17.5
4 -5	21	17.5
>5	78	65.0

Table 2 Means of nursing practice for hospitalized older people, level of ageism, and perception of older people care

Variables	Mean	SD	Range
Nursing practice for hospitalized older people	4.07	.49	1-5
Ageism (FSA)	66.61	6.00	50-81
Perception of older people care	3.61	.42	1-5

scores of FSA ranged from 29–116. The higher score indicates higher level of ageism.

The nurse' perception of care questionnaire consists of 41 statements, which measure nurse perception of older people care using a five-point Likert scale, from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5) [19]. For data analysis, these score were reversed. The mean score were assessed by averaging the scores of the constituent items. Mean score less than three indicated low perception of older people care and greater than three showed higher perception.

Instruments were back translated to Indonesian version. The content validity of the instruments was checked by five nursing experts in Gerontological nursing. The Cronbach' alpha coefficients of the Professional Development of Registered Nurse (PDRS) questionnaire, the Fraboni Scale of Ageism (FSA), and The Nurse' Perception of Care questionnaire were .860, .764, .849, respectively.

Ethical consideration

The study was reviewed by the Hospital Ethical Committee (No.914/Dirut/VI/2014, dated June 26, 2014). A cover letter explaining goal, procedures, and confidentiality accompanied the questionnaires. It was explained that participation was voluntary and refusal would have no consequences. Participants who agree to participate in the study would have been signed a consent form.

Data analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using Statistical Packages for the Social Science version 22.0 (Chulalongkorn University license) Data were analyzed used descriptive statistics, the Spearman non-parametric correlation and Pearson correlation. Spearman correlation test was used to explore the relationship between nurses' characteristics and nursing practice for hospitalized older people. Pearson correlation test was applied to explore the relationship between ageism, perception of older people care and nursing practice for hospitalized older people.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1. The data from this study showed that the mean age of the respondents was 33.94 (range 26-48 years). The majority of them were female (82.5%), and held Diploma background (69.2%). Approximately 65% of the respondents had more than five years' working experience.

Table 2 showed the mean score for nursing practice for hospitalized older people score was 4.07 (SD = .49). The overall mean score of ageism was 66.61 (SD = 6.0). The mean score for nurses' perception of older people care was 3.61 (SD = .42).

Table 3 The relationships between nurses' characteristics and nursing practice for hospitalized older people

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (πho)	*p-value*
Age	0.182	0.047*
Gender	0.243	0.008*
Education	-0.086	0.348
Experience	0.300	0.001*

Table 4 The relationships between ageism, perception of older people care and nursing practice for hospitalized older people

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	*p-value*
Ageism	-0.286	0.002*
Perception of older people care	0.099	0.283

The result of Spearman correlation test was shown in Table 3. In nurses' characteristics, three (age, gender, and experience) of the four variables showed positive relationships with nursing practice for hospitalized older people with a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4 illustrated that there was a negative relationship between ageism and nursing practice for hospitalized older people with a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). In contrast, the study found no significant relationship between nurses' perception of older people care and nursing practice for hospitalized older people.

DISCUSSION

The study focused on the relationships between nurses' characteristics (age, gender, education, and experience), ageism level, perception of older people care and nursing practice for hospitalized older people. This study demonstrated that the practice of nurses working with hospitalized older people was considerably high performed in the clinical setting (4.07± .49). The finding is consistent with the previous study which argued that the complexity of hospitalized older people care requires more care provision from nursing staff [4]. In other words, this result indicated that most of nursing practice at the hospital will focus on providing care for older people.

The result from this study demonstrated that age differences and working experiences were related with nursing practice for hospitalized older people at *p-value* <0.05. Younger nurses often feel frustrated because of the perceived disconnection between their vision of nursing and the reality of nursing practice [20]. While, senior nurses with years of experience are considered highly proficient in thoughts and exhibit skilled practice for dealing with complex health care [21]. This result is similar with previous study which showed that nurses with advanced experience were associated with better practice [22]. From this research, it seems clear that senior nurses with advanced working experience are likely to perform better practice for hospitalized older people compare to younger nurses with limited experience.

The study found that gender had weak relationship with nursing practice for hospitalized older people. This may be due to a change in gender roles within the Indonesian society. In Indonesia, as in Southeast Asia, there is a particular emphasis that women or daughter take major roles in providing personal care for older people, while men or son are still considered as the breadwinner of the family [23]. The current situation of the gender roles have been changing, with women becoming increasingly involved in work, school and other obligations, making it more difficult for them to be the primary caregiver of an aged parent. Consequently, women felt burdened and emotionally stressed when providing care for older people than men as caregivers [24, 25].

Nurses who work in a clinical setting had moderate level of ageism (66.61± 6.0). This study implied that as members of society, nurses are not immune from holding this ageist attitude, which may influence the professional practice on older people. The result of this study showed that ageism had negative relationship with nursing practice for hospitalized older people. This finding was consistent with Hanson' study which pointed out that ageist attitude toward older person would negatively affect the care provision for this group [26].

Education and perception of older people care were not related with nursing practice for hospitalized older people. This was contradictory to the previous evidence which argued that nurses with higher level of nursing education are associated with better practice of caring hospitalized older people [19]. The finding in this study implied that adequate geriatric nursing content is lagging in the nursing

education. Indonesian nursing curriculum is still dominated by the bio-medical concept which focused on disease processes and the curative treatment. A report by Brown et al. [27] showed that the practice of working with older people became less desirable as a result of education process.

Regarding to perception of older people care, it was revealed that nurse had high perception of older people care. The result implied that older people needs of physical, psychological and social wellbeing should be the central objective in older people care. However, the study did not find a relationship between high perception of older people care and nursing practice for hospitalized older people. In contrast with de Almeida Tavares et al study, nurse who had high perception of older people care was related to the delivery of better practice for older people [28]. In Indonesia, nurses who enter the real clinical setting are likely to deliver nursing practice based on what they were told or observed from the actual practice [29]. In addition, the difference result may be due to the fact that nurses are practicing in situations where there is a different perception between the older patient's needs and the demands of the organization. Nursing practice for hospitalized older people is very challenging and that requires nurses to integrate the patient's expectation of care within the health care service.

LIMITATION

It should be noted that the data presented in this paper concern the practice of nurses working with older people in just two hospitals in Indonesia, which, therefore, limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to staff in other clinical settings.

RECCOMENDATIONS

This study provides some insights about the complexity of older people care, the actual practice, and the related factors. The educational background was not related to nursing practice for hospitalized older people, which means that nursing education program in Indonesia has limited content of older people care. Nurse educators in the academic and clinical setting are suggested to work together to evaluate and establish advanced Gerontological nursing education that encompasses older people need and their family. Given the practice of nurses working with older people was highly performed in the clinical setting and the prevalence of ageism among nurses, nursing organization is encouraged to promote positive attitude toward older people, and enhance a specialized unit for them.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed evidence of the expanding role and nature of the practice of nurses working with older people and some related factors. Nursing practice for hospitalized older people was considerably high performed in the clinical setting in Indonesia. Therefore, nurses need to be prepared for advanced skill and practice for older people care.

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