The Difference in Perception between Nursing Students and Clinical Teachers of the Characteristics of Clinical Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Background: clinical teachers play essential roles in nursing education. They link knowledge gained by students in classrooms into clinical settings. This makes the characteristics of clinical teachers need to be effective to facilitate nursing students in clinical settings.

Purpose: to compare the perception of nursing students and clinical teachers of the characteristics of clinical teachers at the Institute of Health Sciences of Citra Husada Mandiri Kupang, Indonesia.

Methods: a cross-sectional design was used in this research. Data was collected from third and fourth-year undergraduate nursing students (n= 201) and clinical teachers (n= 13). Two statistical tools were used to analyze and interpret the data: Weighted Mean and T-test.

Results: there was a statistical difference in the perception of nursing students and clinical teachers of the characteristics of clinical teachers in three subsets - professional competence, relationship with students, and personal attributes.

Conclusion: a gap in perceptions regarding the characteristics of the clinical teachers exists between both groups of participants. It is essential for the Institute to bridge the gap or to ensure that the students perceive their clinical teachers better.

Keywords:
Perception; characteristics; clinical teachers; nursing students.

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BACKGROUND
Clinical teachers are one of the key elements influencing the learning environment in nursing education. The roles of clinical teachers are vital as they guide, support, stimulate, and facilitate nursing students to link knowledge gained in the classrooms into clinical learning environments (Edgecombe, 2014). The characteristics of clinical teachers, therefore, must be effective to facilitate a decent learning process for the students in clinical settings (Hewitt-Thompson et al., 2016; Madhavanprabhakaran et al., 2013).

In order to assess the characteristics of clinical teachers, Sylvia Brown (1981), in her study at East Carolina University School of Nursing in Greenville, North Carolina, proposed the Clinical Teacher Characteristics Instrument (CTCI), which consists of 20 critical requirements of effective characteristics of clinical teachers. It is grouped into three subsets: professional competence, relationship with students, and personal attributes.

Based on Brown's CTCI, extended inquiries were conducted in other geographic and time differences to compare the perceptions of groups of participants, such as nursing students, clinical teachers, and faculties, of the effective characteristics of clinical teachers. When conducting a study at a community college located in southwestern Michigan, Counts (2001) found that no significant differences of views between the students and faculties. Both groups ranked similarly the most important characteristics of effective clinical teachers. Similar conclusion was made by Nahas et al., (1999) and Jahan et al. (2016). Meanwhile, one of the findings of the study of Madhavanprabhakaran et al. (2013) in Oman revealed that there was a significant difference in male and female students perception of three categories of clinical teacher characteristics: professional competence, relationship with students, and personal attributes.

These studies imply that there were various findings regarding the perceptions of participants of the most important characteristics of clinical teachers in particular clinical learning environments. Nonetheless, the results of the previous studies also show that more research is needed to explore the difference in the perception of how effective the characteristics of clinical teachers are.

OBJECTIVE
This study aims to reveal to what extent both nursing students at the Institute of Health Sciences of Citra Husada Mandiri Kupang (CHMK)[1], Indonesia and their clinical teachers differ in views of the characteristics of clinical teachers.

METHODS
Study Design, Setting and Sampling/ Participants
This study applied a cross-sectional design and was conducted in the Institute of Health Sciences of CHMK. Purposive sampling was used to recruit the respondents. The

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respondents selected consisted of two groups: third and fourth-year nursing students (n= 201) and clinical teachers supervising the students in particular clinical settings (n= 13).

Instruments

A set of questionnaires that was adapted and modified from the Brown's CTCI was employed in this study. It was translated into the Indonesian language. Of the 20 original items of the CTCI, the questionnaire used in this study only applied 19 items and added 13 new items. In total, there were 32 items of statements grouped into three subsets: professional competence (12), relationship with students (10), and personal attributes (10). Furthermore, to interpret the responses to the participants' statements on the questionnaires, a Likert's scale was employed, with the details below:

Table 1. The Interpretation of the Likert's Scale

Score	Verbal Interpretation	Extended Meaning
4.21-5.00	Always	Very good
3.41-4.20	Often	Good
2.61-3.40	Sometimes	Fair
1.81-2.60	Seldom	Needs Improvement
1.00-1.80	Never	Poor

Validation

A pilot test to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaires was conducted on 10 nursing students who did not participate in this study. The Cronbach's alpha was employed in the test with the result of 0.949. Since the result was greater than 0.70, it was indicated that the statements described in the questionnaire were consistent (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, to ensure that the statements already related to the objectives of this study, three experts in nursing areas were employed to check the content of validity of the questionnaires.

Data collection and Ethical Considerations

Prior to commencing the study, the procedures of this study were approved by the Dean and the panel members of the Faculty of Graduate School of Trinity University of Asia, Philippines. Moreover, official permission for data gathering was obtained from the authoritative person in the Institute of Health Sciences of CHMK. Following this, the respondents were recruited and given the questionnaire to be filled out. The questionnaires were distributed between March 23 and 27, 2017. Before completing the questionnaire, each respondent was given an informed consent letter to fill out and sign. They were explained the purpose, risk and benefit of the study, the role of respondents, the right to refuse or withdraw from the study, and the confidentiality of the information provided by respondents.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Two statistical tools in version 24 of IBM SPSS Statistics were used to analyze and interpret the data: 1) *Weighted Mean* used to find the mean of each subset of the clinical teachers' characteristics, and 2) *T-test* to examine whether a significant difference exists between the perception of nursing students and clinical teachers of the characteristics of the clinical teachers. The t-value was set at 1.96; meanwhile, the cutoff for statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

RESULTS

Table 2 reveals the demographic data of the participants. Of the 201 students involved in this study, the majority of them were female (71.1%), compared to only 28.9% of male students. Similarly, most of the teachers were also female (76.9%), compared to only 23.1% of male teachers. In terms of age, almost all students (96.5%) were in the cohort of 20-25 years, followed by 26-30 years (2.5%) and 31-35 years (1%). Moreover, most of the teachers participating in this study were between the ages of 26 and 30 (84.6%), whilst the remaining teachers were those aged 31-35 years (15.4%). Neither student nor teacher was over the age of 36.

Table 2. Participants' demographic

Categories	Students (n=201)		Clinical Teachers (n=13)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Sex				
Male	58	28.9	3	23.1
Female	143	71.1	10	76.9
Age				
20-25	194	96.5	0	0
26-30	5	2.5	11	84.6
31-35	2	1	2	15.4
>36	0	0	0	0

Table 3 shows the assessment of both groups of respondents on the characteristics of the clinical teachers in the subset of professional competence. Of the 12 items of statements, the Weighted Mean revealed that 5 items were scored higher than 4.21 - interpreted as "always" - by the students and 7 items of the characteristics of clinical teachers were indicated as "often". None was indicated as "sometimes", "seldom", or "never". These results also mean that the student participants valued the professional competence of their clinical teachers as "good" since the overall mean was 4.14. Meanwhile, 10 out of the 12 items of statements were interpreted as "always" by the clinical teachers, and the remaining items were "often". This makes the overall mean of this subset was 4.4, meaning that the clinical teachers perceived their characteristics in terms of professional competence as "very good".

Table 3. The Summary of Assessment in the Subset of Professional Competence

No	Statement	Nursing Students		Clinical Teachers	
		Mean	Verbal Interpretation/ Extended Meaning	Mean	Verbal Interpretation/ Extended Meaning
1	Have good presentation skills	4.46	Always/ Very Good	4.69	Always/ Very Good
2	Evaluate students fairly and periodically	4.10	Often/ Good	4.46	Always/ Very Good
3	Explain course assignments, evaluation methods, and grading procedures clearly	4.22	Always/ Very Good	4.46	Always/ Very Good
4	Demonstrate role modelling	4.18	Often/ Good	4.00	Often
5	Show competence in clinical skills in nursing	4.29	Always/ Very Good	4.46	Always/ Very Good
6	Relate theory to nursing practice	4.26	Always/ Very Good	4.38	Always/ Very Good
7	Show genuine interest in patient and their care	4.03	Often/ Good	4.54	Always/ Very Good
8	Provide positive feedback on student progress	4.07	Often/ Good	4.85	Always/ Very Good
9	Facilitate student's awareness of their professional responsibility	4.22	Always/ Very Good	4.92	Always/ Very Good
10	Being available in the clinical settings	3.71	Often/ Good	4.00	Often
11	Use learning activities, readings and assignments that facilitate understanding of course content	4.13	Often/ Good	4.31	Always/ Very Good
12	Update knowledge by attending seminars, short courses and reading journals	3.96	Often/ Good	4.23	Always/ Very Good
	Overall Mean	4.14	Often/ Good	4.44	Always/ Very Good

Table 4. The Summary of Assessment in the Subset of Relationship with Students

No	Statement	Nursing Students		Clinical Teachers	
		Mean	Verbal Interpretation/ Extended Meaning	Mean	Verbal Interpretation/ Extended Meaning
1	Respect student as an individual	3.97	Often/ Good	4.54	Always/ Very Good
2	Being approachable	3.60	Often/ Good	4.31	Always/ Very Good
3	Being supportive & helpful	3.83	Often/ Good	4.46	Always/ Very

No	Statement	Nursing Students		Clinical Teachers	
		Mean	Verbal Interpretation/ Extended Meaning	Mean	Verbal Interpretation/ Extended Meaning
4	Permit freedom for discussion	4.03	Often/ Good	4.62	Good Always/ Very Good
5	Being realistic in expectation of student's performance	3.74	Often/ Good	4.54	Always/ Very Good
6	Being sensitive to student's feelings and problems	3.38	Sometimes/ Fair	4.46	Always/ Very Good
7	Listen attentively	3.96	Often/ Good	4.46	Always/ Very Good
8	Being fair	3.92	Often/ Good	4.46	Always/ Very Good
9	Alleviate student's anxieties	3.34	Sometimes/ Fair	4.08	Often/ Good
10	Create an atmosphere in which students feel free to ask questions	3.89	Often/ Good	4.54	Always/ Very Good
	Overall Mean	3.76	Often/ Good	4.45	Always

In the subset of relationship with students (Table 4), the assessment of the students showed the overall mean of 3.76. The student perceived their clinical teachers as "good". Of the 10 items of statements, 8 items were categorized "often" by the students, while 2 items were categorized "sometimes". Moreover, the self-assessment of the clinical teachers showed the overall mean of 4.45. Only the item of "Alleviate student's anxieties" (4.08) was categorized "often" by them, whilst the remaining items were "always".

Table 5. The Summary of Assessment in the Subset of Personal Attributes

No	Statement	Nursing Students		Clinical Teachers	
		Mean	Verbal Interpretation/ Extended Meaning	Mean	Verbal Interpretation/ Extended Meaning
1	Demonstrate good communication skill	4.38	Always/ Very Good	4.54	Always/ Very Good
2	Collaborate with other disciplines	4.20	Often/ Good	4.23	Always/ Very Good
3	Exhibit responsibility	4.25	Always/ Very Good	4.38	Always/ Very Good
4	Respond confidently	4.24	Always/ Very Good	4.62	Always/ Very Good
5	Exhibit autonomy	4.18	Often/ Good	4.62	Always/ Very Good

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No	Statement	Nursing Students		Clinical Teachers	
		Mean	Verbal Interpretation/ Extended Meaning	Mean	Verbal Interpretation/ Extended Meaning
6	Being organized and well-prepared	4.15	Often/ Good	4.46	Always/ Very Good
7	Being cooperative and patient	3.83	Often/ Good	4.23	Always/ Very Good
8	Being enthusiastic and cheerful	3.86	Often/ Good	4.69	Always/ Very Good
9	Display a sense of humor	3.53	Often/ Good	4.31	Always/ Very Good
10	Will to admit error	3.42	Often/ Good	4.00	Often/ Good
	Overall Mean	4.00	Often/ Good	4.41	Always/ Very Good

In terms of personal attributes, Table 5 demonstrates the assessment of the respondents on the characteristics of the clinical teachers. It is revealed that nursing students appraised the clinical teachers as "often". The overall mean calculated by the Weighted Mean was 4.00 (Good), with 7 items of statements were interpreted as "always" and 3 items were "often". Meanwhile, the teachers also appraised their characteristics as "very good", with the overall mean of 4.41. 9 out of 10 items were rated "always" and only one item was rated "often".

Furthermore, table 6 revealed the results of the T-test in the three subsets of the characteristics of clinical teachers: professional competence (3.049), relationship with students (7.421), and personal attributes (3.241). Since the computed t-value in all the subsets was greater than the t-value (1.96) – with the cutoff for statistical significance at .05 – the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. These results also imply that the difference in the perception of the characteristics of clinical teachers between the nursing students and clinical teachers was statistically significant.

Table 6. Summary of the T-test Analysis

Subsets	Computed t	Remark	Decision
Professional Competence	3.049	Significant	Reject Ho
Relationship with Students	7.421	Significant	Reject Ho
Personal Attributes	3.241	Significant	Reject Ho

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to compare the perception of nursing students and clinical teachers of the characteristics of the clinical teachers at the Institute of Health Sciences of CHMK, Indonesia. The results of the Weighted Mean applied in this study revealed that the

perception of the 201 nursing students was different from that of the 13 teachers in all three sub-scales – professional competence, relationship with students, and personal attributes.

In details, the nursing students perceived the characteristics of their clinical teachers in the subset of professional competence as "good". Only 5 items in the subset of professional competence have met the expectation of the students. Perceiving differently, the teachers identified their characteristics in this subset as "very good", with 10 out of 12 items were rated equal to or above 4.21. However, to some extent, the perceptions of the teachers were in line with that of the students. Both groups recognized the availability of the teachers in clinical settings as an issue, reflected in the lowest score given to this item. It could be assumed that the teachers were often not available for the students whenever they needed it. Whereas the presence of the teachers in clinical settings is of the utmost importance for nursing students. Their regular presence can help students in various ways, such as assisting students in dealing with stressful clinical situations, providing nursing care, and answering questions arising during clinical learning experiences (DeYoung, 2009). That way, the students could find their best to advance their clinical competencies.

The difference in the perceptions between the students and their teachers was also noticed in the subscale of relationship with students. The nursing students considered the characteristics of their teachers as "good"; meanwhile, the teachers considered their characteristics as "very good". None of the items has met the expectations of the students yet, and both the sensitivity of the teachers and their roles in alleviating the anxieties of the students remained a matter of concern to the relationship between the teachers and the students. Almost similar to what the students highlighted, alleviating the anxieties of the students were also recognized as an issue by the teachers. As anxiety has an enormous impact on nursing students' learning, it is essential for the teachers to always encourage the students with supportive characteristics to reduce their anxiety levels in clinical settings (Ramzan et al., 2017).

In the subset of personal attributes, the students indicated the characteristics of their teachers as "good". Of the 10 items of statements, only three items met the expectations of the students and both having a sense of humor and willingness to admit errors were the critical personal attributes of the teachers highlighted by the students. Meanwhile, from the viewpoint of the 13 clinical teachers who participated in this study, it was indicated that the characteristics of the teachers were "very good". However, similar to the assessment of the students, that of the teachers also highlighted the issue of their willingness to admit errors made by the students. It could also be said that the teachers cannot acknowledge the students' mistakes in clinical learning environments. Nelwati et al. (2013) pointed out that in clinical settings, students work with patients, and a few mistakes and failed procedures might have a considerable impact on the patients' life. This makes clinical training is usually associated with pressures for nursing students and the students often get into many errors. Clinical teachers with decent personal attributes, including correcting students' mistakes without criticizing, are needed here (Ismail & Baza, 2015). This may increase students' confidence in practicing nursing care, which in turn may enhance their expected clinical competence.

Meanwhile, based on the results of the T-test conducted in this study, it has also been

found that there was a statistical difference in the perception of both groups of participants in the three subsets: professional competence (3.049), relationship with students (7.421), and personal attributes (3.241). That said, the teachers overrated their characteristics, compared to the ratings given by the students. The teachers recognized that their characteristics met the requirements or were effective enough, reflected in most items rated above 4.21. Contrarily, most aspects of the characteristics of the teachers were still rated below the expectation of the students. These findings are in contrast with the previous studies (Counts, 2001; Jahan et al., 2016; Nahas et al., 1999). Future research should, therefore, seek to explore in-depth the reasons why a gap in perception between the two groups of participants still exists.

With all these points in mind, it is indicated that more attention is needed in promoting clinical teachers with better characteristics as the characteristics performed by the teachers highly affect the clinical outcomes of the students (Ismail & Baza, 2015; Khan et al., 2012). Clinical teachers with poor characteristics might lead to the unsatisfactory achievement of the students in clinical settings. Conversely, the better the characteristics shown by the teachers might increase the competency of nursing students.

CONCLUSION
The characteristics of clinical teachers have been suggested as one of the essential determinants of nursing student outcomes in clinical settings. After comparing the perception between 201 nursing students and 13 clinical teachers at the Institute of Health Sciences of CHMK, Indonesia, this study found that the characteristics of the clinical teachers in the three subsets - professional competence, relationship with students, and personal attribute - were perceived differently by both groups of participants. This also means that a gap in perceptions regarding the characteristics of the clinical teachers exists between both groups which is something that should be explored more deeply in future studies.

It is therefore necessary for the Institute to bridge the gap or to ensure the students perceiving their clinical teachers better. In this respect, items of the characteristics of the teachers that have met the requirement of the students need to be maintained. Meanwhile, items that have been below the expectation of the students need to be accelerated, such as towards regular training conducted for the teachers. More effective characteristics of the teachers, in turn, could have a huge impact on the students at the Institute to find their best in enhancing clinical competencies needed.

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