

Experiences of Nursing Students who Participated in Community Health Education: Volunteering for Parenting Classes in the Municipality

Shigemi Wachi^{1*}, Sayaka Kuwahara¹, Yoko Arai¹

¹School of Nursing, Kitasato University, Kanagawa, Japan

*Corresponding author

Shigemi Wachi, School of Nursing, Kitasato University, 2-1-1, Kitasato, Minami-ku, Sagamihara-shi, Kanagawa 252-0329, Japan
Tel/Fax: +81-42-778-9385, Email: wachi@nrs.kitasato-u.ac.jp

Submitted: 21 Dec 2021; Accepted: 26 Dec 2021; Published: 31 Dec 2021

Citation: Shigemi Wachi, Sayaka Kuwahara, Yoko Arai (2021) Experiences of Nursing Students who Participated in Community Health Education: Volunteering for Parenting Classes in the Municipality, *Journal of Nursing & Healthcare*. 6 (4): 1-6

Introduction

Early exposure training for university students in the medical field is seen as “an educational method that attempts to motivate students by exposing them to the field of medicine and medical care at an early stage of their education,” and it is deemed to have great educational significance because it fosters students’ humanity and motivation to learn [1]. Modern youth are becoming caregivers without the opportunity to witness or participate in parenting [2]. Globally, many countries have been experiencing super-low birth-rates and aging populations, and medical students’ experiences of contact with pregnant women and infants are becoming rarer. Practical training can also be a major stressor for students, as the relationship with teachers is a stress factor [3]; it is thus necessary to build relationships with teachers from an early stage.

At the authors’ affiliated university, the nursing college promotes social gatherings to facilitate faculty and student interactions. Each social gathering theme is decided by a faculty member, and students who wish to participate are invited to apply at the beginning of the academic year. In fiscal year 2019, the social gathering theme was “Implementation of Parenting Classes and Life Classes by University Students,” hence characterizing a community health education extracurricular activity. Students and faculty members volunteered to participate in parenting classes in Kanagawa monthly. Volunteering students were not evaluated, albeit we assumed that they gained novel experiences compared with those gained by conventional early exposure training. Therefore, this study aimed to examine nursing students’ experiences when participating in volunteer community health education.

Methods

Participants

The survey participants, totaling 13, were nursing school students at a university in Kanagawa area who volunteered for parenting classes about 20 couples, conducted from July to November 2019

in Kanagawa. Homogenous sampling was used for this study. The survey was conducted by asking students to describe their impressions after participating in parenting classes, and the contents were inductively analyzed.

Data Analysis

Descriptions regarding students’ learning and awareness were extracted and coded from their feedback content after participating in parenting classes, and subcategories and categories were extracted according to code similarities.

Qualitative data from the report were analyzed using the content analysis methods as guidance. Each interview was individually analyzed. Steps in the analysis were:

1. Verbatim records of recorded interview data were created, divided into content units with one meaning each, and all units describing uncertainty were extracted.
2. Similar or repeated content was accurately summarized to create codes.
3. Similar codes were grouped into subcategories.
4. This process was repeated at a higher abstraction level to obtain categories.

To assure credibility and validity throughout the entire study, a qualitative research specialist, in midwives were asked to supervise, examine and verify the concepts and categories. Furthermore, during analysis, three researchers (the first author and two coauthors) conducted the categorization independently.

Ethical consideration

Before the provision of written informed consent, the students were verbally informed that their personal names would not be disclosed, that they would not suffer any disadvantages owing to participation in this study, and that the data they would provide would not be made public. This study was conducted in conformance with “Ethical Guidelines for Medical and Health Research Involving Human Subjects”.

Details of volunteer activities

Study participants attended parenting classes in Kanagawa. The first half (60 minutes) of the class comprised lectures on “mental health after childbirth,” “what to do when your baby cries,” and “how to give a bath,” and the second half (60 minutes) comprised a simulation of bathing a baby and of a pregnancy experience. The students’ primary function was to support the pregnant women in the class through wearing a pregnant woman experience jacket, and promoting the pregnancy experience via a system that encourages involvement with the baby by enabling one to experience fetal movement. Four to five students participated in each class, and one or two teachers supervised them. Teachers advised on fetal knowledge and how to deal with future parents.

Results

Seventy codes and 22 subcategories were extracted from the participants’ impressions. Hereinafter, categories will be indicated using and subcategories using <>. Seven categories were extracted: [interest in and awareness of the couples’ relationships, feelings, and behaviors], [opportunities for experiencing stimuli related to midwifery care and understanding the pregnancy process], [learning throughout their entire participation in parenting classes], [learning through experiencing the work of public health nurses and midwives], [learning and experiencing joy through the relationship built with the couples in the practical portion of the class], [opportunities to increase learning motivation], and [opportunities for self-reflection] (Table 1).

Table 1. Experiences of students who participated in the parenting class

Category	Subcategories	Main code
Interest in and awareness of the couples’ relationships, feelings, and behaviors	Awareness and understanding about the couples’ reactions and changes through the pregnancy experience system	Understanding the couple’s enthusiasm to welcome their baby; being more aware of the physical characteristics of pregnancy through the partner’s experience of pregnancy
	Interest in male partners’ deepening of understanding of pregnancy	Interest in the couples’ conversations and reactions after the pregnancy experience
	Interest in the various behaviors of the couples	Drawing attention to the positive attitude and hard work of the participants
Opportunities for experiencing stimuli related to midwifery care and understanding the pregnancy process	Real feeling of contact with the couples	Feelings of having been in real contact with couples
	Understanding the experience of pregnancy through the pregnancy experience system	Feel the experience of being pregnant by wearing a pregnancy experience jacket
	Valuable opportunities for experiencing stimuli related to midwifery care	The opportunity to experience stimuli that cannot be experienced in a classroom setting; the value of listening to real couples’ conversations and the fears and expectations of pregnant women
Learning throughout their entire participation in the parenting class	Gaining new knowledge and experiences.	Experiencing roles through engaging in the practical experiences with different couples
	Learning about the importance of experience in health education	Learning the importance of pregnancy and childcare experiences in health education
	Opportunity to learn about the necessity and purpose of the parenting classes	Learning about the need for couples to participate in parenting classes
	Feeling the difficulties related to engagement in nursing practice	Feeling the difficulty when teaching couples about how to bathe a baby
Learning through experiencing the work of public health nurses and midwives	Learn how public health nurses and midwives interact with couples	Learning how to use one’s own midwifery experience to treat a baby.
	Learning how to relate to couples through advice from faculty members	Learning how to relate to partners through the advice of faculty members and others
	Deepening the understanding of the roles of public health nurses and midwives and considering career choices	Deepening the understanding about the roles of public health nurses and considering career paths based on the experiences
Learning through the relationship built with the couples in the practical portion of the class	Learning that the simulation of pregnancy deepens the understanding and relationship of the couples	Learning how to understand couples through the experience of pregnancy and fetal movement

Learning and experiencing joy from the relationship built with the couples in the practical portion of the class	Experiencing joy from building a relationship with the couples	Joy derived from the couple's positive words and actions toward the interactions with students.
	Deepening the understanding about how to interact with couples	Considerations about which interactions may encourage couples to communicate with their unborn child.
Opportunities to increase learning motivation	Increased desire to support pregnant women and their families	An increased willingness to support the health of the child and of the mother
	Increased motivation to actively participate again	Increased willingness to re-engage in parenting classes
	Increased learning motivation	Increased learning motivation to prepare for parenting classes
Opportunities for self-reflection	Reflecting upon one's behavior and lack of knowledge	Reflecting on time allocation owing to excessive break time
	Concerns about participating for the first time	Concerns associated with first-time participation in parenting classes
	Feeling that one was able to help the couple	The feeling of having provided appropriate support for, and being able to play a role in, couples' learning

1. Interest in and awareness of the couples' relationships, feelings, and behaviors

This category refers to students who witnessed the atmosphere of couples' attitudes toward participation and conversations in the class, thereafter, reporting that they had developed interest in and awareness of various changes in the pregnant women and their partners throughout the educational intervention. This category comprised three subcategories and 16 codes: <awareness and understanding about the couples' reactions and changes through the pregnancy experience system>, <interest in male partners' deepening understanding of their pregnant partner>, and <interest in the various behaviors of the couples>.

2. Opportunities for experiencing stimuli related to midwifery care and understanding the pregnancy process

This category investigated opportunities for experiencing stimuli related to midwifery care that cannot be experienced in conventional clinical practice learning, and for understanding the pregnancy process. Students reported that these were achievable through their interaction with pregnant women and their partners. It comprised three subcategories and six codes: <real feeling of contact with the couples>, <understanding the experience of pregnancy through the pregnancy experience system>, and <valuable opportunities for experiencing stimuli related to midwifery care>.

3. Learning throughout their entire participation in parenting classes

This category refers to parenting class experiences that provided opportunities for students to gain considerable practical knowledge and experience through simulating the bathing of a baby and the experience of pregnancy. These experiences also enabled students to learn the necessity and importance of health education and the difficulties related to nursing practical work. There were four subcategories and 16 codes for this category: <gaining new knowledge and experience>, <learning the importance of experience in health education>, <opportunity to learn the necessity and purpose of parenting classes>, and <feeling the difficulties related to engagement in nursing practice>.

4. Learning through experiencing the roles of public health nurses and midwives

This category refers to the guidance and advice for students, provided by public health nurses, midwives, and faculty members, that provided them the opportunity to concomitantly learn how to treat couples and consider career choices. There were three subcategories and nine codes for this category: <learn how public health nurses and midwives interact with couples >, <learning how to relate to couples through advice from faculty members >, and <deepening the understanding of the roles of public health nurses and midwives, and considering career choices>.

5. Learning and experiencing joy through the relationship built with the couples in the practical portion of the class

Students reported learning that the relationship between couples deepened after they became familiar with the pregnancy experience system that simulates fetal movement. They also reported having the opportunity to consider how to relate to the couples through enjoying the relationships that they built with them. There were three subcategories and seven codes: <learning that the simulation of pregnancy deepens the understanding and relationship of the couples>, <experiencing joy from building a relationship with the couples>, and <deepening the understanding about how to interact with couples>.

6. Opportunities to increase learning motivation

This category refers to students' reports that learning how midwives interact with pregnant women increased their desire to help them, leading to an increase in their own learning motivation. It comprised three subcategories and eight codes: <increased desire to support pregnant women and their families>, <increased motivation to actively participate again>, and <increased learning motivation>.

7. Opportunity for self-reflection

This category refers to students' reports that, while reflecting on the lack of adjustment such as time allocation and lack of knowledge, it is demonstrated, through teachers' support, that couples

find their role helpful; it comprised three subcategories and eight codes: <reflecting upon one's behavior and lack of knowledge>, <concerns about participating for the first time>, and <feeling that one was able to help the couple>.

Discussion

Interest in and awareness of the couples' relationships, feelings, and behaviors, opportunities for experiencing stimuli related to midwifery care, and understanding the pregnancy process.

Through participation in the parenting class, the students gained valuable insights by experiencing the understanding of pregnant women by their partners and the changes in their relationships. Additionally, they had opportunities that could stimulate their interest in midwifery, like when they experienced how nurses interact with pregnant women and their partners and what pregnancy is like.

However, a report has shown that students' nursing practice experiences are often negative, described through expressions like "anxiety," "reluctance," and "being unsure [4]." In this study, students were able to gain interest in and awareness of the couples' relationships, feelings, and behaviors, and to stimulate their interest and understanding of the midwife role and how to provide midwifery care; these yielded positive descriptions from students regarding parenting classes, that may stem from their motivations, as the current sample comprised students who volunteered for classes. Since the participants were interested in midwifery or public health nursing, this implies that they were able to gain considerable insight into their future aspired profession and also more interest in the midwifery care environment apropos pregnant women and their partners. Furthermore, there may be a difference between the volunteer work during parenting classes and actual nursing practice experiences; for example, the pregnant women and their partners participating in parenting classes were all generally healthy. In reality, in clinical nursing practice, people are often diseased, and that may hinder nurses' ability to understand and relate to care receivers. Hence, healthy care receivers may have been easier for students to deal with.

Second, students' behaviors were not evaluated. In nursing practice education, students are evaluated on their: communication with patients, nursing care, and the practical records that they conduct. In this parenting class, students were volunteers, only receiving the advice of the participating midwives, public health nurses, and faculty members, without evaluation. Thus, students being in an environment unrelated to educational evaluations may have evoked further positive descriptions about parenting classes.

One study indicated that early exposure practice lowers students' ability to self-evaluate, [5] and it is presumed that differences in self-perceptions and the students' own immaturity have an impact. As some students' self-evaluation ability may decrease owing to negative experiences related to nursing training, future studies should assess students' self-perceptions before and after participation in a volunteer community health education program, and stakeholders in students' well-being and educational success should provide support for students should negative experiences arise.

1. Learning throughout their entire participation in parenting classes

Added to better understanding the necessity and purpose of parenting classes, students reported that they gained new nursing knowledge and experiences through their participation. They also mentioned grasping the importance of experience in health education better, and the difficulties surrounding nursing clinical practice. Prior to engaging in parenting classes, researchers informed students that the purpose of their participation was simply to "think about support for childbirth and childcare, as well as about the feelings of pregnant women and their families amid participation in health education." Although not a detailed explanation, students still indicated that the learning outcomes of their participation went beyond their imagination. Students further reported that they learned by taking lectures alongside the participating pregnant women and their partners, and by participating in and observing the care delivery of midwives and public health nurses in the practical portion of the class.

Dale [6] has described the act of learning and the rate of memory retention in students one week after the experience; specifically, 10% of what is read and 20% of what is heard remains in the memory one week later, whereas 70% of what is observed and 90% of what is actually experienced remains in memory during the same timeframe. Hence, students' experiences in parenting classes may have been more memorable than reading learning-related books or videos. Still, although practical learning can be effective in providing students with actual field practice, if students lack knowledge or are not ready, this type of learning method may not inspire a greater understanding of nursing practice [7]. Therefore, it is necessary to examine whether the learning outcomes acquired through the process are sufficient, such as through assessing whether students correctly understand the necessity and purpose of parenting classes.

2. Learning through experiencing the roles of public health nurses and midwives

Students reported to have experienced, and gained a deepened understanding about, the public health nurses' and midwives' roles. They were able to consider/evaluate their career choices, learned how public health nurses and midwives conduct care delivery and interact with care receivers, and how to interact with care receivers through advice from faculty members.

An overview of career development support at medical colleges showed that colleges provide students with "self-discovery skills," "self-actualization skills," "problem-solving skills," "interpersonal skills," and "self-expression skills" through practical career education courses, hence adopting learning methods related to engagement in clinical practice [8-10]. Concurring, the authors' affiliated university also supports students in acquiring the abilities necessary for career development through lectures, exercises, and practical training during their four years of study. In the current job-hunting condition provide by the university, students need to decide the type of work they want to engage in during the first semester of their third year, participate in internships at hospitals and facilities, and then decide where to work.

By participating in parenting classes, students had the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the roles of public health nurses and midwives through actually experiencing these roles and reflecting about their potential career choices; this may play a part in supporting their career development. Kudo [9] clarifies the four ability areas necessary for career development, being “power to be involved,” “power to gaze,” “power to seek,” and “power to scold,” and their specific abilities and attitudes. He states that “the ability to write” is the ability to form a career, and that it is a concrete attitude to collect and examine multifaceted information on career paths and occupations after graduation. From these reports, it is considered that the students’ experience of the public health nurses’ and midwives’ roles has led to their career development. Furthermore, to improve the practical skills of first-time learners, it is necessary to not only conduct early exposure training as an opportunity for students to produce subjective experiences of practice, but also to make students recognize the learning opportunities in the experience; moreover, teaching staff and clinical staff should be involved in the education process to help students gain this awareness [11]. This study showed that students were able to deepen their understanding about nurse-care receiver interactions by learning about how midwives and public health nurses interacted with participants and receiving advice from faculty members. Therefore, the involvement of public health nurses, midwives, and faculty members led to a better learning experience for students.

3. Learning and experiencing joy through the relationship built with the couples in the practical portion of the class

The students reported that the experience of pregnancy through simulations deepened the couple’s understanding of their relationships, the couple’s relationships per se, students’ relationships with couples, and that they enjoyed building their relationships with couples. Although the interactions between students and care receivers at the practical portion of the class were short, students were still able to observe the couples, consider how to interact with them, practice the interactions, and enjoy seeing couples’ responses. According to a report by Watanabe et al. [12] nursing students can experience anxiety before practical training, even in the final stages of on-site training. Another study remarked that this may be due to the lack of successful experiences in practical training [13]. Hence, the accumulation of successful experiences, even if to a small proportion and if related to volunteer work, in the practical setting of a community health education intervention may lead to reduced anxiety about on-site practice for students.

4. Opportunities to increase learning motivation and for self-reflection

Students reported having experienced increased learning motivation, desire to deliver to pregnant women and their families, and willingness to actively reengage through participation in parenting classes.

Early exposure training is “an educational method that attempts to motivate students by exposing them to the field early in their education.” In nursing, the importance of early exposure training has been reported to assure proper education in basic nursing practices [14, 15]. Many who participated in parenting classes were first- to third-year students of practical training- in maternal nursing practice. By participating in the class, these students were exposed to

the on-field nursing care delivery for pregnant women and their families, something that they reported as being promotional to their learning motivation and their desire to deliver nursing care for this population. Therefore, despite being a volunteer extracurricular activity, parenting classes helped with learning motivation, much like early exposure training does. Adults are motivated to learn by factors that come from within their hearts, rather than external factors, [16] namely, goals that affected a clear vision of the future, such as aiming to deliver care to pregnant women and their families or to use parenting classes as a learning experience to become a good nurse, may have motivated the nursing students in our sample to learn.

Moreover, although the students presented, through self-reflection, negative descriptions regarding their actions during the class, their lack of knowledge, and their worries associated with first-time participation, they also demonstrated positive descriptions because they deemed their participation as helpful to the couples they interacted with.

The theoretical background of early exposure training describes it as an experiential learning model in which learning occurs when the experience is meaningful to learners; since self-reflection is paramount to find meaning in one’s actions, writing down one’s self-reflections about a process is said to be essential for early exposure training [11]. In my view, the result of having the opportunity for self-reflection from the students was that the experience was not just an experience, but was linked to learning from that experience. It may thus be important for students to write down their impressions about practical educational interventions, so that participating in parenting classes can become an effective learning experience.

Conclusion

Nursing students’ participation, as volunteers, in community health education was shown to be a meaningful learning experience. Specifically, it was an opportunity for them to gain interest in and awareness of the couples’ relationships, feelings, and behaviors; to stimulate their learning regarding midwifery care; to understand the pregnancy process; to learn about various topics regarding midwifery; and to enhance their learning motivation and self-reflection.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the public health nurses and midwives of the Atsugi City Health Promotion Division. We would like to thank Editage (www.editage.com) for English language editing.

Funding

The authors did not receive any external funding for this study.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest related to the content of this paper.

References

1. Emura M, Ohtsubo Y, Oda Y, et al. (2014) Changes and topics in early experimental practicum in medical science. *Proceed-*

- ings of the Saga University Institute of Holistic Education 2: 51-56.
2. Shing-Jen CHEN (2007) School education and the cultivating of nurturance in young people in Japan The Research and Clinical Center for Child Development Hokkaido University Collection of Scholarly and Academic Papers1: 19-26.
 3. Fujisawa M, Ujiie M, Hatakeyama H, et al. (2018) Student stress in clinical practice of nursing faculty. Iwate Medical University Annual Report of Liberal Arts Education and Research 53: 39-50.
 4. Shimato H, Ishioka K, Itou H (2018) Survey report on students' internal experiences in psychiatric nursing practice by qualitative analysis using process records. Bulletin of Aomori Chuo Gakuin University 29: 57-62.
 5. Kono K, Takeuchi S, Nishida Y (2018) Early clinical experiences in physical therapy education reduce self-rating for emotional intelligence. Science and Research in Physical Therapy 9(1): 15-18.
 6. Dale E (1969) Audiovisual methods in teaching 3rd edition The Dryden Press, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York.
 7. Saiki T, Kikukawa M (2013) Effective teaching methods and meaningful learning methods in medical education (1). Medical Education 44(3): 133-141.
 8. Yamazaki S (2017) On the Current Status and Future prospects of Career Education at Faculty of Nursing. Doshisha Women's College of Liberal Arts. Doshisya Kango 2:1-6.
 9. Kudo E, Kemuriyama S, Kikuchi E (2015) Study on a suggestion to improve the seminar of first-year medical student from the viewpoint of career development. The Journal of Japan Academy of Health Sciences18(3) :139-148.
 10. Hirokawa S, Ishiki M (2015) Validation of the programs based on the educational practices for the Medical Education in University of Toyama. Report 1 : Curriculum development and evaluation in the "Introduction to the Iatrolgy Course" for the first year medical students. Toyama Medical Journal 26(1): 7-10.
 11. Kikukawa M, Saiki T (2013) Effective teaching methods and meaningful learning methods in medical education (2). Medical Education 44(4): 243-252.
 12. Watanabe C, Kakiuchi I, Shimazaki M, et al. (2014) Nursing students' sense of accomplishment and anxiety about clinical practice in practical training: focusing on their expectations and experiences before and after the final training. Journal of Matsumoto Junior College 23: 77-82.
 13. Inayama A, Ito M, Matsumoto K, et al. (2018) A study on self-efficacy of nursing students for effective neighborhood practice. Kawasaki Journal of Health and Welfare 28(1): 37-46.
 14. Shibuya E, Ikeuchi A, Sakama I, et al. (2010) Learning and Effectiveness of Early Nursing Experience: An Analysis of Post-Practice Reports. Bulletin of the Faculty of Nursing, Ibaraki Christian University 2(1): 55-62.
 15. Iwawaki Y, Takishita K, Imanishi M, et al. (2008) Factors related to learning effectiveness and practice satisfaction of basic nursing practice as early experiential learning. Bulletin of Kyofu Medical College Nursing 17: 31-39.
 16. Watanabe Y (2007) Basic principles and proposals for adult pedagogy: implications for professional education. Medical Education 38(3): 151-160.

Copyright: ©2021 Shigemi Wachi. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.