



Phenomenological Studies: The Nursing Manager Experience to Manage Nursing Staff During A Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The increase in cases of COVID 19 patients in hospitals increases the demand for human resource management, one of which is the nursing staff. Management of nursing staff, especially during a pandemic very necessary because the mismanagement of nursing staff can add to the heavier the nurse's workload, causing stress and fatigue that affect nurse performance to patient safety. The goals of this study to explore the experiences of nursing managers to manage nursing staff during a pandemic. A qualitative phenomenological research design was used in this study. Four nursing managers were selected using purposive sampling and the participants from three COVID-19 which three referral hospitals and one unreferral hospital. The participants were interviewed about their experiences via zoom and a semi structured interview guide. Four themes were developed: (i) Maximizing the ward, (ii) Nursing schedull adjustment, (iii) New staff recruitment, and (iv) Nursing staff maintenance. Hospital readiness, especially in the nursing field, is needed to prepare several policies that can be operationalized in the face of unexpected events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as regular training for all nursing staff in hospitals to be prepared both scientifically and practice in dealing with disease outbreaks to decrease anxiety.



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Kata kunci:

tenaga keperawatan
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ABSTRAK

Meningkatnya kasus pasien COVID 19 di rumah sakit meningkatkan tuntutan manajemen sumber daya manusia, salah satunya adalah tenaga keperawatan. Pengelolaan tenaga keperawatan khususnya pada masa pandemi sangat diperlukan karena salah urus tenaga keperawatan dapat menambah beban kerja perawat yang semakin berat sehingga menimbulkan stres dan kelelahan yang mempengaruhi kinerja perawat terhadap keselamatan pasien. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman manajer keperawatan untuk mengelola staf keperawatan selama pandemi. Desain penelitian yang digunakan kualitatif fenomenologis. Empat manajer keperawatan dipilih secara purposive sampling dan partisipan berasal dari tiga rumah sakit rujukan COVID-19 satu rumah sakit yang bukan rujukan. Para peserta diwawancarai tentang pengalaman mereka melalui zoom meet dan panduan wawancara semi terstruktur. Empat tema berhasil dikembangkan yaitu: (i) Memaksimalkan bangsal, (ii) Penyesuaian jadwal keperawatan, (iii) Rekrutmen staf baru, dan (iv) Pemeliharaan staf keperawatan. Kesiapan rumah sakit khususnya di bidang keperawatan diperlukan untuk mempersiapkan beberapa kebijakan yang dapat dioperasionalkan dalam menghadapi kejadian yang tidak terduga seperti pandemi COVID-19, serta pelatihan rutin bagi seluruh tenaga keperawatan di rumah sakit untuk dipersiapkan baik secara keilmuan maupun praktek dalam menangani wabah penyakit untuk mengurangi kecemasan.



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INTRODUCTION

The number of people who were exposed to COVID-19 increased very quickly and it spread briefly throughout the world, so since March 11, 2020, WHO has declared COVID-19 a pandemic (WHO, 2021). All sectors of life, especially health, face a surprising situation due to limitations in handling health problems that arise during the pandemic. Indonesia itself has experienced three aspects of limited capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic include, 1) limited human resources and facilities, 2) limited personal protective equipment (PPE), and 3) late claims for hospital operating costs (Sinaga, 2020).

Nurses have an important role in the handling of COVID-19 cases in hospitals. The rules are including triage of patients and detect suspected cases of infection, providing essential care in emergencies, assisting in decontamination and coordination with providers of other health services, and providing holistic nursing practice in managing multiple infections at the same time; play an important role in expanding maintenance services, and dealing with the patient's family (Xie et al., 2020). Therefore, effective and efficient management of nursing resources is needed by the nursing manager, because inappropriate management of nursing personnel can lead to several consequences, including neglect of actions in nursing care, the potential for failure to save the patient, the stress in job outcomes, and job dissatisfaction (Simpson, K.S., Lyndon, A., Ruhl, 2016), work fatigue which is caused by the decrease or decrease in nurses' ability to cope with the same environment daily (Cocker & Joss, 2016) and the emergence of stress.

The survey was conducted in 12 countries with a total of 22,000 employees and found that 53% of employees experienced stress due to inadequate manpower management (White, 2014) and increased burden of work, and lack of supervision (Engetou, 2017). During a pandemic, Nurse managers have responsibilities specifically in making decisions regarding staff and patients, planning and monitoring nursing care the frontline nurses who provide this care. The very nature of the COVID-19 virus is easily contagious, making nurses susceptible to exposure and falling ill, so they must self-isolation, this condition causes a shortage of nursing staff in the hospital. Based on this, this research was conducted to know the management of nursing staff in hospitals during a pandemic.

METHOD

Participant characteristics and research design

The participant is nursing manager in government and private hospital. The researchers contacted 7 nursing managers by phone and whatsapp, but 3 participants withdrew from the study when the research will start, and only 4 people indicated their willingness to be participants. A qualitative study was conducted using a descriptive phenomenological approach

Sampling procedures

The participant is nursing manager based on the following criteria: (1) having more than 5 years of work experience; (2) approximately 3 years of managerial experience, (3) ability to communicate well in Indonesian, and (4) consent to participate in this study. Data was

collected by interview and lasted for 2 months from September to October 2021. The participants accessed the zoom from their own personal devices. Each interview lasted approximately an hour, and each participant was interviewed only once. The interviews were automatically recorded by a secure zoom platform, were interview lasted approximately an hour and only once the participants was interviewed. Ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee Health Polytechnic of Ministry of Health East Kalimantan. The interview of participation as a 60- to 70-min audio-visual interview via zoom platform that focused on their experiences to manage nursing staff during a pandemic. During the interview, when participants raised sensitive information during interview, maintenance of confidentiality was reconfirmed. the researchers used number (P1 to P4) to protect the identity of the participants. Every participant payment is made to participants in the amount of two hundred thousand rupiah in the form of packages

Data analysis

The interview were record with the participant's permission, and were transcribed verbatim immediately after the interview. Coding for data reduction was undertaken by the researcher and not computer software-assisted. Approach to analysis was followed (Smith et al., 2009): (1) reading and rereading the transcripts; (2) initial noting of meaningful phrases making descriptive comments regarding what participants related and conceptual comments at a more interpretive level; (3) developing emergent themes in each transcript; (4) searching for connections across transcripts; and (5) looking for patterns at which point higher order themes and superordinate themes are explained. Data reliability was determined using Lincoln and Guba criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The first author, with the master's degree in nursing management, who are very interested in qualitative research. The typed transcripts were carefully checked by listening to each recording again and confirmed with the participants that the researcher read the contents verbatim to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts. Reliability was validated using a peer-reviewed analytical process. Research members who are concerned with qualitative research studies completed analysis of text data word by word and then cross-analysis was carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This is the first qualitative study in Samarinda to explore the experiences of nursing managers to manage nursing staff during a pandemic. The following are the results of the qualitative data analysis of the nursing manager's experience in the management of nursing staff in hospitals during a pandemic. Four the theme was successfully set, as follows:

Themes	Subthemes
Maximaizing the ward	Combining ward
Nursing schedull adjustment	At the begining of pandemic During pandemic
New staff recruitment	The new nurses The volunteer
Nursing staff maintenance	Reguler health screening Daily support Mental streightening

Theme 1. Maximizing the ward

In this theme, the four nursing managers said that optimizing their nursing staff by uniting wards with the same characteristics, the existing nursing staff can be more efficient so that other staff can be maximized in wards that really need nurses.

"...we optimize according to the division...we will reduce the excess to isolation..." (P1)

"...the same homogeneous rooms are now combined so that the total the nurse does not scatter" (P2)

"...taking from other care units that we can place in the covid room" (P3)

"...Patients are filled on one floor so we can use staff to another ward"(P4)

In this study's findings, participants take several steps in managing their nursing staff to provide nursing care including maximizing the ward to optimization nursing staff. Maintaining appropriate staffing in healthcare facilities is essential to providing a safe work environment for healthcare personal (HCP) and safe patient care, and rotating HCP that support to position patients care activities (CDC, 2021). Optimal nursing staff will is critical to providing high-quality and cost-effective care, and studies have shown that [appropriate nurse staffing helps achieve clinical and economic improvements in patient care](#), including: enhancement of patient satisfaction and HCAHPS scores, reduction in medication errors, patient mortality, hospital readmissions, and length of stay, improved safety outcomes by reducing incidents of falls, pressure ulcers, and healthcare-associated infections (HAIs), reduced patient care costs through avoidance of unplanned readmissions, and prevention of nurse fatigue (Kluwer Wolters, 2016).

Theme 2. Nursing schedull adjustment

Within this theme, the managers explained how their to manage nurse shift schedulling. Two subthemes were as follows: (a). Schedulling at the beginning of the pandemic (b) Schedulling during pandemic

Sub-theme a: Schedulling at the beginning of the pandemic

Every managers had difference experience to manage schedulling nurses at the beginning of the pandemic, this scheduling is adjusted to the situation and conditions as well as the policies of each hospital applied several scheduling patterns to nurses in their respective hospitals.

"Nurses are divided according to the number of patients" (P1)

"Office 2 weeks off 2 working weeks" (P2)

"Nurse service every 6 hours" (P3)

Sub-theme b: Schedulling during pandemic

After trying scheduling patterns at the beginning of the pandemic, as knowledge about COVID increases, the participants return to their normal schedule

"...the shift back to normal... we already have a lot of knowledge about the virus"

"... as usual ...morning shift, afternoon shift, night shift and off...coz we always update bout COVID" (P2)

"now we understand more about covid...now we are running 3 shifts 7710" (P3)

The participants made schedull adjustment at the beginning and during pandemic, and scheduling is a very crucial thing because it must prevent nurses from being overtired. During the pandemic, nursing managers have various responsibilities including calculating the number, ratio, and composition of nurses (Asmaningrum et al., 2021) and nurse schedule adjustment is one of the mitigation measures suggested when facing a shortage of health staff (CDC, 2021). In line with previous research on the experience of nurses during pandemics and epidemics, it was found that the unpreparedness of the nursing field to face crises affects nurses in doing their jobs during the pandemic (Fernandez et al., 2020).

The participants make schedule change at the beginning of the pandemic and during the pandemic. Previous research stated that to meet the composition of the workforce and reduce the occurrence of stress, flexible schedule changes can be made (Asmaningrum et al., 2021). Nurses should not be tired and stressed due to long shift schedules, therefore it is necessary to continuously evaluate the schedule for every shift to find out the nurse's response. This means that to ensure nurses have sufficient rest time, reduced workload and reduced stress can be done with flexible shift arrangements (Gao et al., 2020). There is no longer shift in the nurse's schedule adjustment, the participants keep the nurses from getting tired and things that are also taken into consideration in meeting the needs of existing staff must be adjusted to the capabilities of a country or region. So there will be differences to fulfill needs of the country in each country or region (Sugianto et al., 2022).

Theme 3. New staff recruitment

The participants stated that their hospital recruited new personnel to meet the needs of nurses. Two subthemes were identified: (a) The new nurses (b) The Volunteers

Sub-theme a: The new nurses

Two participants said new nurses just placed in general ward

"We have quotas for the new workers, but not put in the isolation COVID room..."(P1)

"...recruiting new HR but not being placed in the COVID room just for in the non-COVID room..." (P3)

Sub-theme b: The Volunteers

The one participants said the recruitment volunteers for COVID room

"Yes... the volunteer volunteers were recruited... for COVID-19" ...and their contract only 6 months (P2)

There is a period when the number of COVID-19 patients is increasing, which requires hospitals to recruit additional personnel. In this study, the recruitment of new nurses and volunteers were placed differently, where new nurses were placed in the general unit while the volunteers were devoted to the covid room and this is based on the different policies and needs of each hospital. Hiring new nurses and volunteers is an effort to fulfill the shortage nursing. Additional recruitment of health workers is one of the contingency capacity strategies to reduce staff shortages (CDC, 2021). In this study, the number of nursing staff was

reduced because many nurses were ill due to exposure to the COVID-19 virus and were therefore required to self-isolate by the hospital. This study is supported by a review finding that the problem nurses face when dealing with COVID 19 is staff shortages (Al Thobaity & Alshammari, 2020) and data reveal that the health workers most exposed to COVID 19 in some countries are nurses (International Council of Nurses, 2021).

Theme 4. Nursing staff maintenance

The consequence of the pandemic for nurses is anxiety and work fatigue which makes them very vulnerable to being exposed to the COVID-19 virus, so hospitals provide several things to maintain the health of nurses. Three subthemes were identified: (a) Regular health screening (b) Daily support and (c) Nurses mental straightening

Sub-theme 1. Regular health screening

All participant said, there is a check every month to find out if there are nurses who have been infected with the virus
"*There are regular checks on nurses...*" (P1)
"*...every month, the nurses are checked by PCR...*" (P2)
"*...nurse at PCR every month...*" (P3)
"*...the nurse is once a month..." we swab antigens...if they positive, we direct the PCR*" (P4)

Sub-theme 2. Daily support

Two participants said, to maintain the body's resistance, the nurses are provided with vitamins, masks and extra money
"*...we give daily vitamins and masks*" (P1)
"*...vitamins ... every day given the same extra pudding...*" (P3)

Sub-theme 3. Nurse mental strengthening

Two participants said the mental support for nurses by providing experts.
"*...conducting counseling because the focus is on giving a peace to nurses.*" (P1)
"*...there are psychiatrists and clinical psychologists, ... they have a role for backing up nurses' mentality*" (P2)

Maintenance of nursing staff is a management effort to maintain nursing staff owned by the hospital. Through this maintenance, the expected productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency of nursing staff are well maintained (Stimpfel et al., 2012). Efforts made by the hospital in maintain nursing staff is the right thing because it focuses on the protection of physical conditions (monthly PCR/Antigen checks, administration of vitamins and masks), mental (there is counseling, the availability of psychiatrists and clinical psychologists) and nurses' emotions to stay healthy in doing their jobs. This matter proves that the hospital is very concerned about the security and safety of the welfare (extra padding) of the nursing staff it has. By ensuring the safety and physical health of nurses, the resilience of nurses increases in terms of the number of nurses (Zahednezhad et al., 2021) and preventing nurses from falling ill requires the role of the hospital in addition to setting nurse shift schedules, it can also provide rest time for nurses (Sugianto et al., 2021)

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study only involved 4 nursing managers who were willing to be participants, this number of participants most likely affected the uptake of data received by the researcher, so that it could affect the results of the study, but the results of the study were considered quite helpful in answering research questions because the participants came from referral and unreferral hospitals, include public and private hospital.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This research can reveal the experience of the respondents as nursing managers in managing nursing personnel during a pandemic. The distribution of nurses till the recruitment of nurses and volunteers explains the efforts to always find the number of nursing personnel required needed during the pandemic as COVID-19 cases increase. Settings the nurse's service schedule is also a key in the management of nursing staff in the hospitals during a pandemic. The hospital also performs personnel maintenance nursing care by meeting the safety and health needs of nurses by performing early detection, and physical and psychological protection of nurses. Hospital readiness, especially in the nursing field, is needed to prepare several policies that can be operationalized in the face of unexpected events such as the COVID-19 pandemic to decrease anxiety. Suggestions for further research can be to conduct similar research using a larger number of participants so that more information can be obtained then it is also necessary to triangulate the head of the room to get more real information.

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ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All study participants received an invitation by phone and whatsapp containing information about the study and an informed consent document. Participant confidentiality was guaranteed, the researchers used initial P1 to P4 to protect the identity of the participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee Health Polytechnic of Ministry of Health East Kalimantan

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no competing interests

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