



THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS IN THE FORMATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER OF NURSING STUDENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the importance of the role of educators in shaping the professional character of nursing students, especially since this character is the basis for their readiness to face the demands of clinical practice. The purpose of this study is to explore students' experiences regarding how supervisors and lecturers affect the process of internalizing professional values. The study employed a phenomenological approach, involving ten students who underwent in-depth interviews to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their 10 experiences. The data analysis yielded five main themes: educator exemplars, mentoring in clinical simulations and practices, communication and team dynamics, affirmation of ethical values and professionalism, and challenges in applying professional character in real-life situations. The study's results indicate that the development of a professional character occurs through observation, direct guidance, intense interaction, and the inculcation of moral values by educators. In conclusion, educators play a crucial role in shaping students' professional identities, so that an exemplary and reflection-based learning approach needs to be strengthened in nursing education.

Keywords: nursing educators; nursing students; phenomenology; professional character; value formation

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INTRODUCTION

The current understanding of nursing education shows that the formation of professional character is an important foundation for students' readiness to carry out the role of prospective nurses. The nursing world emphasizes values such as empathy, responsibility, integrity, and the ability to make ethical decisions as the core of professional practice. (Sulosaari et al., 2023). Various educational institutions have applied pedagogical approaches to instill these values through theoretical learning, clinical practice, and community experiences. (Appiah, 2020; Nachinab & Armstrong, 2022; Salifu et al., 2022). In general, the role of educators is understood as a facilitator, guide, and role model who influences the process of internalizing character for students. (Hakim, 2023).

However, the process by which students develop professional character through direct interaction with educators is still unclear (Frøiland et al., 2022). Gaps in understanding arise when trying to understand the subjective dimension of students' perceptions of the role of educators, especially regarding relational dynamics, emotional experiences, and perceptions of exemplary behavior (Aase et al., 2022; Sakamoto, 2022; Zenani et al., 2023). In addition, several studies in Indonesia have explored how students articulate these personal experiences during their professional transformation (Clinic, 2022; Sumarni et al., 2021). This lack of insight hinders a comprehensive understanding of how phenomenological approaches can explain character formation (Sakamoto, 2022). Therefore, an in-depth investigation is needed to truly understand how educators affect students' character development from their personal perspective (Kabak et al., 2022).

This research is urgent because the formation of professional character is the main component in ensuring the quality of competent and ethical nursing graduates. This study offers a new

contribution through a phenomenological understanding of the form, meaning, and experience of students related to the role of educators in the process of forming professional character. This research aims to uncover in-depth the experiences of nursing students regarding how educators play a role in shaping their professional character.

METHOD

This study uses a phenomenological approach to explore the meaning of student experiences related to the role of educators in the formation of professional character. (Barroso-Corroto et al., 2024). This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal subjective experiences in depth, so that researchers can understand how students interpret the interactions, directions, and examples provided by educators during the learning process. Through phenomenology, the focus of the study is directed to the essence of the experience that is directly felt by students as part of the process of forming professional values. (Jiang et al., 2024).

The researcher applied a bracketing technique to hold personal assumptions so that the resulting interpretation truly reflected the participants' experiences. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 10 students who were selected by purposive sampling based on their involvement in academic activities and nursing practice. (Saab et al., 2021). The analysis follows the steps of data reduction, theme development, and the preparation of essential descriptions of the meaning of the experience. (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). Data is collected through in-depth interviews that are recorded and transcribed to capture the student's experience firsthand. The data were analyzed by thematic phenomenological analysis through the process of repeated reading, identifying important meanings, and arranging them into themes that describe the contribution of educators in the formation of students' professional character.

RESULT

The Role of Educators in the Formation of Professional Character of Nursing Students: A Phenomenological Study. The results of the study show that students interpret the formation of professional character as a process that grows through direct experience with educators, both in classroom learning, laboratory practice, and clinical practice. (Hur & Lee, 2021). This real interaction shapes students' perspective on professional attitudes, which then develops into principles that they try to apply in various learning situations. Based on in-depth interviews with ten participants, five main themes were found that describe students' experiences in building professional character. Participant description (P):

Theme 1: Educators as Professional Character Models

Students see educators as tangible examples of how professional character is applied in academic and clinical settings. (Valdez et al., 2023). The attitude of educators who are consistent, disciplined, empathetic, and responsible is the main reference for students in imitating professional behavior.

P1: *"I learned discipline because the lecturer always showed that attitude in every activities....."*

P2: *"Seeing the lecturer being respectful and patient made me imitate him....."*

P3: *"The way the lecturer handles difficult situations gives an example of how to behave professional....."*

P4: *"The attitude of the lecturer is a real picture of the character that I have to build....."*

P6: *"I learned to restrain myself and think clearly because the lecturer always gives example....."*

Thus, students understand that professional character can be learned through the example shown by educators. This theme is the starting foundation that naturally encourages students to need more intense mentoring in real practice.

Theme 2: Mentoring and Guidance of Educators in Character Building

In line with the process of emulating educators, students emphasized the importance of direct mentoring provided by educators during learning and clinical practice. (Nes et al., 2023). Real

tutoring helps students strengthen their understanding of how professional character is applied in action.

P2: *"When I am guided by lecturers, I am more confident in choosing the right attitude....."*

P4: *"The guidance in the clinic helped me understand how to act positively professional....."*

P5: *"Direct direction from the lecturer made me better understand my responsibilities as a prospective nurse....."*

P7: *"Mentorship helped me deal with situations that I had never experienced before. previous....."*

P9: *"I know which attitude is right thanks to the lecturer's instructions....."*

This mentoring strengthens the character-building process while facilitating students in uniting professional values with real experience. This experience then flows into the need for more open communication with educators.

Theme 3: Open Interaction and Communication with Educators

In addition to mentoring, students emphasized that open communication with educators is an important element in the formation of professional character. (Kaldheim et al., 2023). Through conversations, discussions, and feedback, students can understand themselves, improve their attitudes, and improve their professional abilities.

P3: *"Discussions with lecturers helped me understand how to behave in certain situations....."*

P6: *"The lecturer's input made me know which parts needed to be improved."*

P7: *"I learned to express my opinion politely because I was often trained teachers....."*

P8: *"Good communication makes me brave to make decisions....."*

P10: *"The lecturer reminded me to listen to others before behave....."*

This interaction makes students more reflective of the behaviors and choices they make. The experience prepares them to accept the moral and ethical values instilled by educators.

Theme 4: Inculcating Ethical Values and Professionalism by Educators

Students explained that one of the most important roles of educators is to instill ethical values that are the basis of professional character. (Mulang et al., 2023). Honesty, integrity, empathy, responsibility, and care are core values that educators always emphasize.

P1: *"The lecturer emphasizes honesty in all the decisions I make....."*

P3: *"I learned that ethical decisions are sometimes more important than finishing a quick task....."*

P6: *"I became more cautious in my actions after seeing the example of the lecturer...."*

P8: *"The professionalism taught by the lecturer became my guideline during practice"*

P10: *"I always remember the ethical values taught by lecturers when facing clinical Situation"*

This theme affirms that professional character is not only technical but is built through strong moral values. However, applying these values in real-life situations is not always easy for students.

Theme 5: Challenges in Applying Professional Character in Real Situations

Despite receiving examples, guidance, communication, and value instilling, students still face various obstacles in applying professional character consistently. (Hur & Lee, 2021). The real situation in the clinic is often different from the one that is demonstrated or taught.

P2: *"Sometimes I have difficulty applying the lecturer's advice during field conditions, different....."*

P3: *"There was a disagreement with a friend that confused me behave....."*

P5: *"I need a lot of practice to be consistent in my professional manner....."*

P7: *"The clinic situation made me have to adjust quickly....."*

P8: *"Imitating the professional attitude of lecturers is not always easy; it takes time and experience....."*

These findings show that the formation of professional character is a long and continuous process, which requires students to continue to practice, think reflectively, and adapt. The five themes are interconnected, forming a pattern of students' experiences in understanding and building professional character in nursing education.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the role of educators has a significant influence on the formation of the professional character of nursing students. Students' experiences reveal that the learning process focuses not only on clinical and theoretical skills, but also on the formation of professional values, attitudes, and ethics. These findings are in line with the principles of nursing education that emphasize the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in shaping students' professional identities. (Zenani et al., 2023). Educators play the role of figures who instill professional values through actions, interactions, and examples, which then become models for students to internalize the right character. (Park & Kim, 2023).

The study of Indonesia's example of educators emerged as the most prominent theme. Students observe and imitate the discipline, empathy, honesty, and consistency of educators in carrying out responsibilities (A Hermino, 2020). This example is the basis for students to understand professional standards of conduct and apply them in clinical practice and academic interactions. These results strengthen the literature study that Indonesia shows that the role model of educators is one of the effective means of shaping students' professional character, because observation of real behavior allows students to understand professional values contextually, not just theoretically (H Kereh et al, 2022).

In addition to examples, students highlighted the importance of direct mentoring. Consistent and structured guidance helps them develop confidence and professional decision-making skills. Clear direction and delivery with a humanist approach make it easier for students to receive input and improve behavior. (Nes et al., 2023). This mentoring serves as a bridge between theory and practice, allowing students to apply professional values in real-world situations and face clinical challenges better prepared. (Lillekroken et al., 2024).

Open communication with educators is also a key factor in character building. Students assess that constructive and supportive interactions allow them to express their opinions, ask questions, and evaluate decisions reflectively. (Nes et al., 2023). With good communication, students learn to manage emotions, build empathy, and understand the importance of listening to others before acting. These findings are in line with previous research showing that positive interpersonal relationships between educators and students strongly determine the internalization of moral and professional values.

In addition, students emphasize the cultivation of ethical values and professionalism as important aspects of the role of educators. Values such as honesty, integrity, empathy, responsibility, and care are the foundations that are always emphasized. Educators who are able to instill these values through direction, example actions, and evaluation encourage students to internalize the principles of professionalism. (Mareli et al., 2021). This shows that professional character is not only technical ability, but also built on a strong moral foundation, which guides students in decision-making in clinical practice. (Hur & Lee, 2021).

However, students also face challenges in applying professional character. Differences in situations between theory and real practice, conflicts with peers, or different learning styles of educators sometimes make it difficult for students to adjust. Nonetheless, the consistency of educators in demonstrating professional behavior helps students stay focused on the goal of character formation. (Bae et al., 2023). This challenge confirms that the process of professional character formation is ongoing, requiring practice, reflection, and real experience to internalize the values taught. (Hur & Lee, 2021).

Overall, these findings confirm that the formation of the professional character of nursing students is influenced by five main factors: educator examples, mentoring, effective communication,

instilling ethical values, and students' ability to face challenges. These five factors are interrelated and form a coherent pattern of experience, so that students can understand, internalize, and apply professional character in their entirety (Brodowicz-Kr et al., 2022; Noviani et al., 2023). The results of this study provide important implications for nursing education practice, namely the need for educators to realize their role as professional models, provide consistent guidance, build positive communication, emphasize ethical values, and help students realistically face practice challenges.

Thus, this discussion emphasized that the success of the formation of students' professional character does not only depend on the learning materials, but also on the quality of interaction, example, and guidance provided by educators. Educators who are able to integrate aspects of exemplary communication, guidance, and professional ethics in every academic interaction as well as clinical practice will create a meaningful learning experience, ultimately resulting in nursing graduates who are competent, characterful, and have high integrity in the profession.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that the role of educators is very decisive in the formation of the professional character of nursing students through example, guidance, communication, instilling ethical values, and challenging professional character. With this influence, students can internalize the principles of professionalism and apply them in clinical practice consistently.

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