

Effects of nurse gender on nursing situations and difficulties experienced by nurses in a women's emergency psychiatric ward

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to clarify how a nurse's gender affected nursing situations and consequent feelings of difficulty experienced by nurses working at a women's emergency psychiatric ward. We conducted semi-structured interviews (mean interview time, 28 min) with 6 nurses (3 males, 3 females) who worked at a psychiatric hospital/women's emergency psychiatric ward in the Kinki region of Japan. The recorded contents of interviews were transcribed and coded, subcategorized, and categorized. Using 164 codes, we extracted 4 categories from 9 subcategories which were revealed as the effects of nurse gender on nursing situations and consequent feelings of difficulty experienced by these nurses in a women's emergency psychiatric ward.

A large proportion of patients in emergency psychiatric wards are often severely ill, at risk of harming themselves or others, and behaviorally unpredictable. In addition, unique circumstances emerge which often require medical staff to deal with patients who lack knowledge of their disease, or situations in which patients refuse medication. In light of these circumstances, our study subjects expressed "feelings of confusion, insufficiency, and conflict due to a gender difference." They also felt that their roles as professionals were hampered, for example, in "impairment of patient-nurse relationship by becoming overly conscious of a gender difference" or "situations in which effective utilization of the gender difference is prioritized too heavily." Furthermore, they encountered "situations in which inappropriate sexual interest is directed toward nurses" due to psychiatric symptoms.

Keywords: *nursing situations, nurse gender, emergency psychiatric ward*

1. Introduction

Many patients hospitalized in psychiatric emergency wards require urgent medical treatment and are at risk of harming themselves or others. As such, medical treatment and nursing care for these patients become complicated and diverse. In addition to dealing with patients with high levels of psychomotor agitation and those at risk of harming themselves or others, nurses must provide assistance for daily living that is impaired by psychiatric symptoms such as hallucinations and delusions, as well as continual support including rehabilitation towards self-reliance. Nurses face varying circumstances in these therapeutic environments which require them to conduct many forms of care for patients and their families. In particular, psychiatric nursing care often requires innovation and methods that effectively utilize gender differences. Historically, the field of psychiatry has had

many male nurses who became prominent due to their physical prowess (Akeno, 2004) [1]. In fact, this apparently lay down the customary practices of psychiatric care, in which female nurses dealt with bathing and male nurses handled violent situations (Yamada et al., 2007)[2]. For these and other reasons, male nurses are more numerous in the field of psychiatry than in other fields of medicine; this also means that psychiatry wards tend to present an environment in which persistent role division occurs along gender lines.

Gender differences among nurses have been studied from the viewpoints of male and female nurses as well as from patient perspectives, and many have focused on the social aspects of gender or gender roles and associated factors. Other studies have identified feelings of difficulty and insufficiency that emerge in such conditions, while still others have investigated the relevant factors concerning gender differences and role conflicts (Kojima