



Moral Courage Among Clinical Nurses: A Comparison of Government Hospital and Private Hospital

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Abstract. Strengthening moral courage is one of the effective ways to overcome moral distress that causes a lot of physical and emotional disturbance to a person, which affects their satisfaction with the profession. This study aimed to describe the moral courage in implementing the daily nursing practices of nurses in Indonesia. We applied the survey analytic research design in this. This research was conducted in 5 different locations, namely government and private hospitals in Makassar City, using multistage random sampling. The number of samples is 405 nurses. The results of the Moral courage nurses who work in Makassar city hospitals are at a moderate to the high level, and there is no difference in the level of moral courage nurses in government hospitals and private hospitals.

Keyword: moral courage, nurses, private hospital, government hospital



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INTRODUCTION

Moral pressure can cause many physical and emotional symptoms that affect a person's satisfaction in seeing his profession (1), and moral courage has been introduced as an effective way to overcome moral distress (2-5). Moral courage is a highly valued element of human morality, and today, moral courage is recognized as part of nursing care (4-5). In the context of moral courage, nurses' experiences and suffering related to moral distress have encouraged the nursing profession to find effective ways to reduce the impact of moral distress (6-7). Moral courage has been introduced as an effective way to overcome moral distress (2-5). Moral courage is a highly valued element of human morality, and today, moral courage is recognized as part of nursing care (4-5). A serious and focused approach to the concept of moral courage has begun to emerge as a result of renewed interest in the ethical virtues of nursing (4)(8).

Frey D, Schaefer M, and Neumann (1999) in Numminen & Katajisto (2018) explain that in nursing, moral courage is described as the capacity of nurses to overcome fear in facing problems directly contrary to the core values of nursing professionals (9). Ethical courage can overcome fear due to shame and humiliation in admitting mistakes, opposing immoral or unwise orders, preventing injustice, and rejecting evil conformity (10).

Treatment is considered a form of ethical endeavor (11). Nurses face ethical problems in their daily practice, which must be resolved for the benefit of the patient, leading to nursing morale (12). In addition, sometimes personal or organizational barriers have restricted nurses from fulfilling their moral duty towards their patients and acting according to their values, leading to nurses' moral distress (13). Moral courage is associated with moral pressure to support nurses in dealing with the negative consequences of moral disturbance (14-17). Several situations require moral courage, including violation of human rights, the occurrence of injustice, humiliation of one's dignity, people being maltreated, discrimination against foreigners or minority groups, violence against individuals, and harassment (9).

In the nursing literature, moral courage was discussed in the era of Florence Nightingale (11). According to Lightning, many personal traits and competencies, the righteous disposition is an essential characteristic of a nurse (11). Moral courage has been discussed in the nursing literature and rise over the past two decades (18). Most articles still provide a general definition of moral courage and discuss the need and strategies for promoting benevolence and courageous action to provide good nursing care (18). In addition, Bjarnason & Lasala (2011) have also discussed studies that focus on nursing leadership and the role of the environment in supporting moral courage (19). Moral courage has also been associated with moral distress to support nurses against the negative consequences of honest distraction (14-17).

Empirical research, where the main focus is on moral courage, is highly scarce (18)(20). Several studies on moral courage are still focused on the authenticity of the concept of good moral courage (18). The investigation into the picture of moral courage possessed by nurses is not known to date.

OBJECTIVE

This study aimed to describe the moral courage nurses possess in Indonesia, especially the city of Makassar, in implementing daily nursing practices.

METHOD

A survey analytical research with a cross-sectional study approach was applied in this study to identify and analyze a phenomenon of moral courage among clinical nurses at the hospital. This research was conducted in 5 different locations, namely government and private hospitals in Makassar City. In the study, researchers used multistage random sampling. The first stage was selecting hospitals using simple cluster sampling so that several hospitals were established. The second stage, determining the number of samples for each location using proportional random sampling and samples for each hospital, was selected using simple, simple random for each inpatient room, emergency room, ICU, operating room, and polyclinic. The number of samples in this study was 405 nurses.

The instrument used in this study was the Professional Moral Courage Questionnaire (Connor, 2017). The validity test results obtained a value of 0.414-0.895 ($r_{\text{table}} = 0.3494$). It is concluded that all question items are valid. The value of Cronbach 'alpha' > 0.60 is 0.756. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires directly to nurses. Data analysis used the Kruskal Wallis test and the Mann-Whitney test.

Ethical considerations were safeguarded since this project was authorized by the Ethics Committee of the Hasanuddin University through Act No. 1205/UN4.6.4.5.31/PP36.

RESULTS

Characteristic of respondents

Table 1. The characteristic distribution of respondent

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Age	Young Adult	166	39.7
	Adult	252	60.3
	Elderly	0	
Sex	Man	65	15.6
	Woman	353	84.4
Level of education	Diploma 3 of Nursing	113	27
	Bachelor of Nursing		
	News Profession	77	18.4
	Master of Nursing	225	53.8
Length of Employment		3	0.7
	Length of Employment before The new length of employment	103	24.6
Occupation		315	75.4
	Charge Nurse	41	9.8
	Leader nurse	36	8.6
	Nurse	341	81.6

Table 2. Frequency of the nurse's Moral Courage level

Hospital			
Variable	Level	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Moral Courage	High	101	24.2
	Moderate	307	73.5
	Low	10	2.4
Government Hospital			
Variable	Level	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Moral Courage	High	57	19.7
	Moderate	210	78.1
	Low	10	2.2
Private Hospital			
Variable	Level	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Moral Courage	High	44	28.5
	Moderate	97	71.5
	Low	0	0

Table 3. Comparison of the mean Moral Courage of nurses in Makassar City hospital

Variable	Hospital type	Mean	SD	p
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<i>Moral Courage</i>	Hospital A	84.34	± 21.2	0.081 ($p > 0.05$)
	Hospital B	87.86	± 9.19	
	Hospital C	84.35	± 13.6	
	Hospital D	86.94	± 10.8	
	Hospital E	86.35	± 10.3	

^a Probability using the Kruskal Wallis Test

Based on the table above, the hospital with the highest mean value in moral courage is Hospital B, 87.86 (SD ± 9.19), Hospital D, with an average moral courage level of 86.94 (SD ± 13.6). Hospital E with a mean moral courage level is 86.35 (SD ± 10.3), and Hospital C with an average level of moral courage is 84.35 (SD ± 13.6), and the lowest is Hospital A, namely 84.34 (SD ± 21.2). Although there is a difference in the mean value of moral courage nurses, this is not significant. As evidenced by the results of hypothesis testing using the Kruskal Wallis test, the p-value is 0.081 ($p > 0.05$). It concluded that there is no significant difference in nurses' level of moral courage between a hospital in the city of Makassar.

Table 4. Comparison of the mean Moral Courage of nurses in government hospitals and private hospitals in Makassar City

Variable	Type of Hospital	Mean	SD	p
Moral Courage	Government hospital	85.24	± 16.2	0.126 ($p > 0.05$)
	Private Hospital	86.69	± 10.6	

Probability using the Mann Whitney-test

Based on the table above, the mean value of government hospitals in the moral courage level is 85.24 (SD ± 16.2), while the mean value of private hospitals in the moral courage level is 86.69 (SD ± 10.6). From these results, it can be seen that private hospitals have a higher average value of moral courage than government hospitals. However, based on the hypothesis test results using the Mann-Whitney test, the p-value was 0.126 ($p > 0.05$). It concluded that there was no significant difference in the level of moral courage of nurses between nurses government hospitals and private hospitals.

DISCUSSION

The results showed no significant difference between moral courage nurses between government and private hospitals. The levels of moral courage for nurses in public and private hospitals are at moderate to high levels. Oktavia (2013) states that the majority of hospital nurses have an act of high courage. This shows that hospital nurses generally have the emotional strength and an increased willingness to achieve goals despite facing internal and external challenges (21). According to Lachman (2010), nurses who have high courage understand that there may be unwanted consequences for their actions but realize that maintaining a high level of integrity is more important than avoiding effects, while nurses with low courage generally know what to do. However, it could not do because of lack of confidence or fear of shame or punishment.

Taraz et al. (2019) reported that the moral courage of nurses in government hospitals and teaching hospitals was at a moderate level (22). Stokes (2019) outlines several reasons that hinder the moral courage of nurses, including fear of being fired, fear of being demoted, being

reprimanded in specific ways, and worrying about being bullied by colleagues (23). Ariawan et al. (2019) explained that every nurse is often less sensitive about the importance of morals when carrying out nursing care for various reasons (24). Moral distress is a frequent phenomenon in nursing, creating paradoxes in nursing and affecting high-quality nursing services. Much of the research on nursing ethics and morals over the past decade has shown that nurses are not fully prepared to provide the best possible nursing care or have not contributed appropriately to their patients (25).

Psychological research has shown that moral courage is influenced by cognitive information processing in self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and interpersonal and group norms (11). Moreover, social forces shape decisions to act morally with courage due to subjective and group norms and social identity (26). Moral courage has been recommended to address moral distress (14), which has been recognized as a significant problem with negative consequences indicating a problem area that requires overcoming it (11). Moral courage is a virtue that requires ethical judgment and action and is an essential element in the general moral competence of nurses (27).

Sasongko et al. (2012) stated an influence between moral courage and ethical decision-making by a person (29). If someone has the desire to speak and do what is right in the face of forces that will make someone act in another way, then that person's intention will arise to report an act of fraud. Murray (2010) explains that moral courage is perceived as the pinnacle of ethical behavior that requires a firm commitment to fundamental ethical principles regardless of personal risks, such as emotional anxiety, threats to reputation, loss of work, shame, isolation from colleagues, and retaliation (29).

With increasing age and experience, nurses will be better able to face internal and external challenges. This makes nurses have the emotional strength, which involves the ability to achieve individual goals. Young adult nurses have the same highest character strength in the vitality dimension. The physical condition at this age is still good, which supports nurses to be energetic in carrying out activities and be enthusiastic. In late adulthood, the highest character strength is integrity. This is in accordance with the development task according to Erikson, namely achieving ego integrity, which is accepting the life they live (21).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Moral courage nurses who work in Makassar city hospital are moderate to high.

RECOMMENDATION

Every nurse manager continuously increases nurses' moral courage because moral courage is one way to overcome the problem of moral distress of nurses. Furthermore, research on interventions to strengthen and maintain the moral courage of nurses is needed to minimize the distress problems experienced by nurses in daily practice.

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