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## Research Article

# Experience of Nursing Student during Geriatric Nursing Practice: A Narrative Qualitative Study

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### Abstract

**Aims:** Older adults are often accompanied by chronic disease which makes nursing care more complex. The experiences of students providing care to older adults can encourage them to gain a deeper understanding, find effective strategies when facing challenges, and realize their own needs as future nurses. This study aimed to determine the experiences of nursing students in carrying out geriatric nursing practice.

**Methods:** This study employed a qualitative study using a narrative research design. The purposive sample consisted of twelve nursing students who had completed 2 weeks of geriatric nursing. The variables explored were experiences of nursing students during geriatric nursing practice. Data collection used in this study was a student's reflective assignment. The analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach.

**Results:** All respondents were willing to participate in the study. Five themes emerged, including family assistance during care, the patient's condition while undergoing treatment, students' feelings and competencies when caring for the elderly, changes in a better understanding of the elderly, and expected goals to be achieved by students.

**Conclusions:** This study focuses on the implementation of care for elderly patients in the hospital, which promotes the need for students to improve their skills in providing nursing care.

### Keywords:

Clinical; Elderly; Experience; Nursing Students

## INTRODUCTION

The population aged 60 years and above is expected to increase by 22% by 2050 worldwide (1). In Indonesia, the population aged 60 years and over increased from 2019 to 2022 by 1.08%. This population is a vulnerable group, and this condition can be a challenge for the country. This challenge relates to the health system that needs to be prepared to deal with the increase that has occurred. In Indonesia, 10.48% of the population is elderly, with 65.56% being young elderly, 26.76% middle elderly, and

7.69% old elderly. Specifically, the elderly population in Banten province between 2022 and 2024 continues to increase. The increase in the elderly population that occurred from 2022 to 2024 in Banten was 139.620 (2). This increase in the elderly population needs to be considered, especially in the health aspect to support the condition of the elderly who remain productive (3)

Health complaints cause physical helplessness and lead to dependence on others. This can also affect the life

expectancy of the elderly. Healthy life expectancy in Indonesia in 2019 was 63 years with a life expectancy of 71 years. This shows that the elderly will spend 8 years of their life in a sick or disabled condition. Thus, it is necessary to have proper health management for the elderly when they are healthy or sick (2). One of the efforts in managing health is preparing health workers through nursing education. Nursing students learn geriatric nursing in academic and profession programmes. Gerontic nursing refers to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of nurses in providing care to elderly patients. The role of the nurse should be to promote the health and well-being of elderly patients. By taking part in geriatric nursing practice, nursing students know that nurses have an important role in the complexity of the conditions of elderly patients (4).

Previous research has found that nursing students feel that they are still building their professional identity, transitioning in their confidence when providing care to patients, transitioning confidence in providing care to patients, and still need to improve clinical skills. In addition, students gain experience in developing strategies in dealing with difficulties when practising in hospitals (5). In addition, nursing students in their practice are prepared to be able to provide specific health services for elderly patients. Specific health services are needed to address older people's conditions related to degenerative diseases, chronic illnesses, and disabilities (6).

Students' experience in geriatric nursing is important. Previous research on geriatric nursing experience through reflective writing by health workers has been carried out, but there are still limitations in research related to the experience of nursing students. Reflective writing of student experiences helps students to learn from their mistakes, successes, and worries during their geriatric practice (7). Experience from students can be used as material for improvement in developing the curriculum and preparing nursing students

better. Despite of its importance, the study on nursing students' experiences in caring for the elderly in hospitals was limited (8). Prior study has found that during clinical practice students anticipate changes among older people's conditions such as hearing loss, poor health, and difficulty speaking. Students have the experience of listening to the daily life of elderly patients, patients' experience of living with illness, and about patients' hopes for their lives (9). Thus, this study aimed to better understanding how nursing students' clinical practice experiences during geriatric practice through reflective writing among nursing students.

## METHODS

### Study Design

This study employed narrative representations to analyze the nursing students' experience on geriatric nursing practice in hospital settings. The methodology used in this qualitative study is based on specific guidelines for thematic analysis from Braun and Clarke which consist of identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within the data and describing data in rich detail (10). This study was conducted over a period of 3 months. This research was conducted through the learning management system at the faculty of nursing of one of the private universities in Indonesia.

### Sample

The sampling method used in this study was a purposive sample of 12 nursing students from an internship program that under the supervision of the researcher. This research was conducted at the final stage of geriatric nursing practice. Nursing students were chosen starting from the internship program because students in this program provide geriatric care for two weeks in a hospital setting and have completed their undergraduate nursing education. Students who are in the internship program at targeted faculty and had done reflective journal were the inclusion criteria.

### Instrument

In this study the researcher used a question guide that contained six questions. This question guide is used as a reference question in the reflection assignment done by students. Nursing students conduct journal reflections after completing geriatric practice in the hospital. Furthermore, students upload the reflection journal document in the form of a document on the learning management system.

### Data collection

Data collection was carried out after the researcher obtained ethical approval. Then researchers provide an explanation related to the research to students and ask for approval to access and analyze student

reflection documents. Researchers download journal reflection documents that have been uploaded by students after students give their approval. The researcher then conducted a thematic analysis. Two researchers independently analyzed students' reflection documents, after which the researchers discussed their findings until reaching an agreement on the themes that emerged.

### Data analysis

Data analysis in this research used a thematic analysis approach. The process of thematic analysis followed the six phases (Table 1) outlined by Braun and Clarke (10–12).

**Table 1. Five steps of thematic analysis**

Phase	Description of process
1. Familiarizing with data	Transcribing, reading, and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data, collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes	Gathering data and collating codes into potential themes
4. Reviewing themes	Checking the themes in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine each theme and generate clear

## RESULTS

The sample in this study was mostly female (75%). The study identified five themes and thirteen subthemes (Table 2). The results of thematic analysis research on the experiences of nursing students during geriatric practice that can be identified are 5 themes, namely: 1) family assistance during hospitalized older adults, 2) the patient's condition while undergoing treatment, 3) students' feelings and competencies when caring for the elderly, 4) changes in a better understanding of the elderly, and 5) expected goals to achieved by students. The following is a detailed explanation for each theme produced in this research (Table 2):

**Table 2. Five emerging themes and sub-themes**

Themes	Sub-themes
Family assistance during hospitalized older adults	Family participation during care for older adults
The condition of the older adults during hospitalization	Negative feelings Positive feelings

	Participation of older adults
Students' feelings and competency	Negative feelings Positive feelings Competency
Changes in a better understanding of the elderly	Caring for the older adults Be more grateful Hope for oneself Effective communication approach
Expected goals to achieved by students	Action plan for the older adults in the future Action plan for oneself

### Family assistance during hospitalized older adults

The results of this study found that students have different experiences related to family involvement in elderly care. In this case there are students who find family involvement in elderly care, but there are also those who do not.

*"When I did nurse assessment, the elderly and families were very cooperative and happy to talk". (P8)*

*"When pushing the patient into the operating room, none of his family members were present". (P1)*

*"The patient feels that his wife is not paying enough attention to him". (P3)*

### The condition of the older adults during hospitalization

Students found that the hospitalized elderly felt negative feelings such as worried about their health condition and hopelessness.

*" The patient was afraid and anxious about his illness, the wound that did not heal, the patient was worried that if the wound did not heal then his leg could be cut off and he could not walk." (P2)*

*" I have encountered many geriatric patients who have felt unable to continue their lives, they think what I am living for, I can't do anything now." (P9)*

Students found that the elderly who were cared for had positive feelings such as decreased anxiety.

*"According to the patient, the patient's anxiety disappears if he shares stories with his family, nurses, doctors and children, but if the patient is alone, he remembers his illness that cannot be cured because the patient has had diabetes for several years." (P2)*

*"When pushing the patient to the operating room, the patient seemed calm even without the help of family." (P1)*

Participation of elderly even though they are in the process of hospitalization.

*"I enjoy talking to elderly patients during gerontic practice because when I ask questions, patients will tell me many things." (P1)*

*"The elderly are still productive and can play an active role." (P4)*

### Students' feelings and competency

Nursing students have positive feelings while providing care to the elderly.

*"I enjoy talking to elderly patients during gerontic practice because when I ask questions, patients will tell me many things." (P1)*

*"This experience was a good experience for me, I was able to learn to practice holistic nursing care to the elderly, even though what I did was not perfect, but I was happy to learn." (P7)*

*"My feelings hearing the patient's story I feel empathy and continue to encourage the patient that the wound*



*on his leg ca be healed, I think the anxiety experienced by the patient is a lack of knowledge and enthusiasm from the family, the patient needs attention.” (P2)*

*“I did not experience any difficulties in communication”. (P2)*

Nursing students encounter negative feelings when providing care to the elderly.

*“In addition, caring for an elderly person requires me to be cheerful, patient and compassionate. Because caring for the elderly is not easy”. (P1)*

*“The difficult thing that I encountered was when caring for patients with conditions that are difficult to communicate with such as patients who are less willing to open up, patients who have decreased consciousness, dementia conditions, and so on.” (P10)*

Nursing students realize that in providing care to the elderly, competence is needed.

*“I truly learned that when entering old age, humans will experience various declines. Thus, special care is needed that is different from ordinary patient care.” (P9)*

*“Through the patient's stories, I understood the patient's family situation. It was not that the patient's children were not attentive, but that they were too busy to pay for hospital care.” (P1)*

### **Changes in a better understanding of the elderly**

Geriatric practice helps students understand how to care for older adults.

*“Be more critical and patient because elderly patients have decreased physical abilities so they will need more help and require a strong knowledge base.” (P1)*

*“As a nurse, it is important to pay attention to the patient's condition, especially in geriatric care.” (P12)*

*“I found many changes that occur in the elderly including physical changes and mental changes.” (P8)*

Students feel more grateful after undergoing geriatric practice.

*“I feel grateful that I still have parents who are always there with me even though it's just my mom at the moment.” (P3)*

After students have experience caring for the elderly, they have expectations for their parents.

*“I feel grateful to still have parents and think how in the old days hopefully our children could love their parents.” (P1)*

Students learn to communicate effectively when talking to the elderly.

*“Actively listening to the patient's story, paying attention to the patient by listening to what the patient feels, providing clear information to the patient and giving more attention.” (P2)*

*“Communication during my education to patients and families uses discussion and lecture methods.” (P5)*

### **Future care plan for the older adults**

Students have an action plan on what they need to do better to elderly patients in the future.

*“Being present with the patient, listening to the patient's complaints, not only asking about the pain felt but also making the patient become more enthusiastic about treatment.” (P3)*

*“Being a nurse who can make them smile and laugh, being a nurse who can always provide caring and can improve the quality of life.” (P6)*

They have a plan for themselves in providing care to the elderly in the future.

*“I realized that we need to keep our bodies healthy from our diet, sleep patterns, exercise, activities and more. Because what we do in the present has an impact on our future.” (P9)*

*“As a nurse who continues to update my knowledge, I will continue to look for interventions that have the latest research evidence so that I can take more appropriate actions.” (P10)*

## DISCUSSION

Nursing students encounter the same thing as previous research that family assistance is needed by elderly patients. A hospital stay carries a significant risk of injury, especially for elderly patients, and family members are essential in providing care (13). When the elderly are hospitalized, they are usually accompanied by family members. Assistance carried out during patient care can be in the form of providing support to help the older adults do daily activities such as eating, bathing, and other daily activities. The support provided by the family to the elderly can affect the care process in the hospital and the health status achieved by the elderly. Family support patterns carried out during treatment are related to eating, mobilization, adherence to taking medication, level of depressive symptoms, decreased function, length of treatment, and rehospitalization and death. Psychological support is one of the most frequent supports provided by families during elderly hospitalizations (14).

According to prior study, a vital component of high-quality treatment for elderly hospital patients is the involvement of their families. Family involvement can make the quality of care better through different dimensions of involvement such as regular visits, social-emotional support, advocacy, and personal care such as family participation in meeting planning about continued care (15). Hospitalization undertaken by the elderly has an impact on their feelings. They can have positive or negative impacts on outcomes including staying alive, disease, fatigue/condition, complaints, daily functioning, social activities and intimate relationships, hobbies, living situation and mental well-being. The difference between what the older adults expect and the outcome they receive can lead to negative feelings. Negative feelings can include fear, worry, helplessness, and sadness (16).

The hospitalization process undertaken by the elderly can have a positive impact.

Previous study states that positive feelings are the result of a person's efforts when try to accept the current situation (16). Other positive feelings that can arise are the creation of a sense of security and a decrease in feelings of anxiety. In this case, positive feelings can be created in elderly patients with help of family involvement in the elderly care process (17). In the elderly care process, participation of the older adults depends on several factors, namely good communication between staff, patients and their family. Patients' participations include sharing information, feelings, and accepting health instructions (18).

Nursing students in this study reported similar feeling to the previous research, namely feeling positive feelings when providing care to the elderly. The main positive feeling that is often felt is that of being happy. Providing care to patients is a special situation that makes nurses feel satisfied and useful. Positive feelings exist when students feel accepted by patients and when patients recognize their skills. Personalized care for elderly patients can be a source of both positive and negative feelings. Situations that can trigger negative feelings in students are encountering patients who are unable to communicate during the treatment process. Negative emotional reactions can make nursing students doubtful about their professional future and their learning process (19). However, to provide good quality care to the elderly, nurses must have a positive and caring view of the elderly rather than viewing the elderly as sick, and old (20).

Elderly people who are included in vulnerable populations need to be given special care. Nurses in the care process must build a caring relationship with the elderly who have physically and psychologically undergone many changes. Care for the elderly that students can do is by knowing the elderly, knowing their life history, and a calm tone when interacting with them (21).

In line with previous research, the main

difficulty faced by communicating with elderly patients (22). Forms of communication difficulties can include uncommunicative patients, aphasia, and difficulty in initiating communication. These difficulties can be caused by lack of experience, first-time contact with patients, and lack of clinical training. Thus, there is a need for a strategy used by students to be able to interact with the elderly. Ways that can be used to communicate with the elderly include maintaining eye contact and active listening (21). In terms of communicating, nurses need to ensure that the elderly feel that they are listened to, and their concerns are validated in a not judgmental way. Nurses also need to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses when communicating with others to build effective communication. Effective communication is essential to ensure that the needs of the elderly are met (23). This effective communication helps students provide better care, so communication and knowledge of the elderly become a package practiced to achieving quality care.

Providing elderly care must not only pay attention to the communication approach taken but also pay attention to the obstacles nursing students must be able to provide elderly care. Previous research found that nursing students find it difficult to care for the elderly due to a lack of understanding, skills, and experience in caring for the elderly. This difficulty can have a negative impact on students' attitudes when providing care to the elderly. Thus, students need to be encouraged to always act following existing norms, namely respecting older adults, loving parents, and being devoted to parents (24). Student experiences can influence students' desire to care for the elderly in their future careers as nurses. Student experiences also encourage students to be able to plan better care for the elderly in the future. By having a plan that students want to achieve, students can train their ability to make decisions related to the care provided to the elderly. So that the plans made directly

affect the quality of care provided to the elderly and the needs of the elderly can be met (8,25).

This study acknowledges several limitations, including the fact that the sample was obtained only from students under the researcher's supervision. However, the number of participants undoubtedly contributed to the variation of the results. Another limitation was that in this study, the validation process to the participants could not be carried out due to the students only submitting the reflection as the assignments.

## CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the implementation of care for elderly patients in the hospital, which promotes the need for students to improve their knowledge and skills to providing nursing care. Students have experienced that family involvement in the patient care process is important. Students experience the positive and negative feelings that exist when practicing geriatrics that are felt by themselves and also patients. By practicing geriatrics, students gain a better understanding of the elderly, how to provide care, and plan for better practice in the future.

This study has implications for future nursing education, especially in geriatric nursing. Nursing education should provide enough nursing students adequate knowledge and skills about geriatrics before they apply nursing skills in the hospitals. Furthermore, this study has also implications for nursing students, who should be concerned about geriatric changes both physical and psychological. Understanding these changes makes the nursing process for geriatric patients more convenient.

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