ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Nursing Student's Anxiety About Career During the Pandemic Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the clinical learning process and experience of nursing students, which triggered their anxieties about careers. Therefore, this study aims to describe the level of anxiety of nursing students about careers during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Methods:** This descriptive study was conducted using a surveyed design with 99 nursing students as respondents. The data were collected through online anxiety career questionnaires and the level of anxiety about a career was used as a variable. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and distribution frequencies by Microsoft Excel. **Results:** The study discovered that 45 respondents had a moderate level of anxiety about careers during the pandemic. Furthermore, approximately 61% of the respondents aged 21 years have this characteristic, and most of them were female, namely 85 respondents (84.2%), with the majority of the population of Sumedang being 92 respondents (91.1%). **Conclusion:** Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the anxiety of nursing students about careers. The effort of the universities to increase the students' clinical skills competence such as internship programs, provided an understanding of the job prospects and careers that are needed to reduce anxiety.

Keywords: Anxiety, Students, Nursing, Career, Pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the teaching activities of students at every level of education, including universities, which has consequently limited learning and led to the closure of schools. Meanwhile, learning during a pandemic requires students to adopt various changes in many learning methods, especially those related to clinical or field practice that needs to be implemented to support students' knowledge and skill experience. This needs to be diverted through online learning (1-3) to improve student competence, skills, support careers, and professionalism (4).

The lack of learning experience that enables students to master clinical skills creates anxiety in their future careers as nurses. A previous study showed that the COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected students' emotional and psychological health (5) and caused fear of losing skills, anxiety on plans, and exams (6). It has also been shown that the final year students are concerned about competition in getting a job due to a lack of confidence in their ability and experiences (7). This is due to the students' perceptions of the ineffectiveness of online

learning to achieve competent skills.

According to the World Health Organization (2017), depression and anxiety are the most common mental disorders, which ranked first and second for three decades (1990-2017), with approximately 3.6% of the world's population suffering from anxiety. The basic health research (2018) showed that the prevalence of emotional disorders at the age of 15 years and above in Indonesia was 9.8%, while the prevalence within the 15-24-year age range was 10% due to employment status as students (5, 8). Ortega et al. (2021) showed that final year nursing students who experienced the COVID-19 outbreak had twice the risk of developing mental health disorders higher than those who did not experience the pandemic (9).

Anxiety is an ordinary condition experienced by individuals due to fear or worry (10), which lead to panic and causes other psychology and mental problems when it is not overcome or adjuster. In the measurement of Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs), mental disorders occupy the highest number compared to other diseases, namely 14.4% globally and 13.4% in Indonesia (9). Similarly, final year students also face several assignments, therefore, when they experience anxiety before its implementation, it impacts final grades or exam results. A previous study by Thinagar and Westa (2017) also stated that anxiety is one of the

factors influencing exam results (11).

A preliminary study conducted on February 22th, 2021, on 13 final-year nursing D3 students at one of the universities in Sumedang showed that 62% or 8 people experienced anxiety within normal limits, 38% or 5 people are in a low category, and none are in the moderate to high category. Furthermore, 10 people felt unsure of their skills and did not have the confidence to compete globally, while 6 people claimed to have no orientation about their careers after graduation. Previous studies have discussed student anxiety, however, the anxiety of the final year nursing students during the pandemic is not examined yet. Therefore, this study aims to describe the level of anxiety of nursing students about careers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design
This is a descriptive quantitative study with a survey design.

Participant and Setting
The population in this study were 115 final year students of the DIII Nursing study programand were selected using the total sampling technique. However only 99 students were willing to participated.

Ethical Considerations
This study has fulfilled the ethical research principles and was approved by the research ethics committee, Sumedang Campus of UPI No. 0610/UN40.K2.D1/PT.01.04/KM/2021.

Data Collection
The instrument used anxiety questionnaires to face the world of work refers to the anxiety aspects of Greenberger and Padesky developed by Nugroho (2010). The questionnaire consisted of 40 questions, and the validity and reliability of the instrument were tested at a 5% confidence level, where n = 30. Out of the questions, 24 items were valid with a range of values 0.429-0.679, and the item reliability test showed the value of = 0.924. This showed that the items of the study instrument are valid and reliable. In addition, online questionnaires via a google form were used to collect the data. The respondents' score acquisition was categorized into normal (< 42), mild (43-54), moderate (55-66), Severe (67-78), Panic Level (≥79).

Data Analysis
The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and distribution frequencies by Microsoft Excel. The level of anxiety was determined by calculating the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) with the limit scores (χ).

RESULTS

The level of anxiety of nursing students about careers during the COVID-19 pandemic is shown in table I and II. Based on table I, the students who experience the most anxiety are 21 years old. Approximately 61 students have moderate anxiety levels with 25 respondents or 41.0% within the same age group. Furthermore, female students experienced the most anxiety, where 85 students have moderate anxiety levels and 41 respondents or 48.2% are students.

Table II showed that out of 99 students, 45 experienced moderate anxiety, and only 7% percentage had anxiety within normal limits.

Table I: Description of Anxiety Levels by Age and Gender (n=99)

Variables		Nor-mal	Mild anxiety	Moderate anxiety	Severe anxiety	Panic level	Total
Age							
20 years old	F	1	8	20	5	1	35
	(%)	(2.9)	(22.9)	(57.1)	(14.3)	(2.9)	(100)
21 years old	F	6	16	25	13	1	61
	(%)	(9.8)	(26.2)	(41.0)	(21.3)	(1.6)	(100)
22 years old	F	0	2	0	1	0	3
	(%)	(0.0)	(66.7)	(0.0)	(33.3)	(0.0)	(100)
Gender							
Male	F	3	7	4	0	0	14
	(%)	(21.4)	(50.0)	(28.6)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(100)
Female	F	4	19	41	19	2	85
	(%)	(4.7)	(22.4)	(48.2)	(22.4)	(2.4)	(100)

Table II: Description anxiety level of nursing student about career (n=99)

Category	Frequency	Prosentase (%)
Normal level	7	7
Mild anxiety	26	26
Moderate anxiety	45	46
Severe anxiety	19	19
Panic level	2	2

DISCUSSION

The age of students is in the early adult stage (18-40 years), where a person is included in the productive working period (12). It was also discovered that the students who experienced the most anxiety were within the younger and older ages. Moreover, several studies have shown that the older a person is, the higher the maturity and the lower the anxiety level (13).

Previous studies stated that anxiety in women is often higher than in men (12-17) because men prefer alternative activities as a diversion when faced with pressure, problems, and negative emotions/feelings, while women are more likely to reflect a lot about their problems. According to Albert (in Nazneen, 2019), fluctuations in hormonal changes experienced

by women, such as during menstruation, puberty, pregnancy, and menopause, trigger mental health disorders. Meanwhile, the results of this study showed that the most experiencing anxiety is female students with 48.2% because women dominated the number of nursing students. Similarly, parenting, social, and cultural influences also regulate different emotions between women and men (15).

The family environment during the pandemic influenced the psychology or anxiety condition of each member (18). Meanwhile, additional stressors usually occur at home because parents face layoffs, economic difficulties, struggle in balancing work responsibilities, and impacting psychological health. During the pandemic, family welfare was also disrupted because they can not meet their physical, mental, spiritual, social needs and services (2, 5).

Walean et al. (2021) stated that the factors causing anxiety in students during the pandemic were more often related to academic problems and status. Meanwhile, the final year students transition from their academic life as students to the world of work (18). According to Siswanto (2021), 75% of students experienced moderate anxiety levels when facing their final project during the COVID-19 pandemic (19). Previous studies have discovered that anxiety about a career occurs in students who are writing final assignments, which leads to procrastination or delay in the task. Also, medical or nursing students face other exams, such as the competency test which can be a pressure affecting the students (9, 17, 19). Poon SHL et al. (2021) expressed that the welfare of final year students is less than optimal due to fear and uncertainty about the future and worries concerning the expectations of people (20).

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the academic abilities of students. Previous studies stated that after several months of lockdown, many reports of students experienced a decline in academic ability, low average grades, difficulties in independent and online learning, and fear of inability to study. Furthermore, the students were at risk of experiencing decreased feelings, happiness, and well-being, which has affected their academic success. During the pandemic, the causes of mental illness in adolescents increased and placed the students at risk of experiencing mental health decline and an increase in stress (1, 3, 9, 21). Meanwhile, one of the causes of career anxiety in adolescents is the fear of not getting a job due to low academic scores (4). Grande et al. (2021) discovered that there was a linear relationship between higher mental well-being and academic ability (1, 21). However, this is in contrast with the results of Lindasari et al. (2020) which showed that there is no significant relationship between student anxiety and academic achievement, as shown by the clinical practice competence of this study (12).

In this study, it was discovered that the anxiety of nursing students about a career at a moderate level with 45 students (46%) due to a lack of knowledge or education about the labor market (4, 12). Before joining the labor force, students need to be trained with clinical practices that describe the life they have not lived. Similarly, Belle et al. (2021) identified that work experience/internship in students who have upbeat coping styles (PCS) has a strong influence on positive psychological capital (PsyCap). Students who graduate become very anxious due to the fear of unemployment after graduation. Statistically, the International Labor Organization (in Belle et al., 2021) stated that 14% of working hours or approximately 400 million jobs fell globally in the second quarter of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (22).

Moreover, nursing students are currently in a condition where there is an increase in various anxiety stressors factors. Students are also experiencing temporary anxiety in form of emotional reactions that arise in certain conditions due to provisional threats (17, 19). Meanwhile, state anxiety expresses more volatile feelings and is affected when a trigger becomes a strong predictor in determining a career (4, 21).

During the pandemic, the need for nurses was increased, and was considered a hero on the front line. They provided more challenging nursing care, faced tension and concern about exposure, which can be transmitted to their families, and increase intention to resign (23). This led to a decrease in job satisfaction and increased turnover intention due to negative team orientation, work constraints, and work/family conflicts. Although the job opportunities and career prospects for nurses during the pandemic are pretty promising, when the anxiety of students about careers is not resolved, it impacts the level of resignation from their profession. Furthermore, it leads to the possibility of choosing other jobs that are not in the medical profession (4, 19, 22, 23).

Several conditions such as frustration with past experiences, fear of failure, negative orientation, evaluation, and self-feelings about abilities affect career anxiety (23). Therefore, it is necessary to overcome and reduce anxiety through various means, which include dhuha prayer therapy, career guidance services, information services, and increased social support. This is because people tend to experience personality and emotional disorders such as negative self-concept, anxiety, pessimism, and low self-esteem when they do not have clear career choices.

The limitation of this study includes that this study investigated the level of work anxiety in Diploma nursing students at a university in Sumedang, therefore, it cannot provide an assumption of a broader range of anxiety.

One of the implications of career anxiety for nursing practice is the possibility of changing professions after graduation. Therefore, universities are expected to provide mental health services such as counseling and implement mental health awareness-raising programs and health/education service centers. Subsequently, universities need to collaborate with the health office and other related agencies to actively plan and promote health education by holding training programs or internships to replace lagging clinical practices.

CONCLUSION

The lack of practical clinical learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the anxiety of nursing students about careers. Therefore, it is recommended that universities facilitate mental health services or therapy to overcome and prevent increased anxiety.

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