

FEELINGS OF NURSING STUDENTS IN THE CURRICULUM INTERNSHIP FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HEIDEGGER*

Márcia Gabriela Gomes Nascimento¹, Zélia Marilda Rodrigues Resck², Sueli de Carvalho Vilela²

ABSTRACT: Objective: to comprehend the feelings of Nursing students during the Mandatory Curricular Internship. Method: qualitative study using the theoretical methodological framework of Phenomenology: description, reduction and comprehension, and analyzed from the perspective of Heidegger. The data collection took place in the second half of 2016 using the focus group technique, with 13 students of the Nursing School of a Public University of Minas Gerais. Results: feelings of insecurity, fear, personal accountability, loneliness, anguish, joy, happiness and sadness emerged in the statements. Conclusion: psychological maturity and some personal characteristics are factors that can facilitate the experience and comprehension of these feelings, favoring the personal and professional growth. Knowing these experiences, the university can also contribute with strategies to ease them, aiding in the promotion of mental health.

DESCRIPTORS: Nursing students; Emotions; Clinical internship; Mental health; Universities.

SENTIMENTOS DE ACADÊMICOS DE ENFERMAGEM NO ESTÁGIO CURRICULAR SOB A ÓTICA DE HEIDEGGER

RESUMO: Objetivo: compreender os sentimentos dos acadêmicos de Enfermagem durante o Estágio Curricular Obrigatório. Método: pesquisa qualitativa com referencial teórico metodológico da Fenomenologia: descrição, redução e compreensão, e analisada sob a ótica de Heidegger. A coleta de dados ocorreu no segundo semestre de 2016, utilizou-se a técnica de grupo focal com 13 acadêmicos na Escola de Enfermagem de uma Universidade Pública de Minas Gerais. Resultados: emergiram nos depoimentos sentimentos de insegurança, medo, cobrança pessoal, solidão, angústia, alegria, felicidade e tristeza. Conclusão: a maturidade psicológica e algumas características pessoais serão fatores que facilitarão a vivência e compreensão desses sentimentos, favorecendo o crescimento pessoal e profissional. A universidade, conhecendo essas experiências, pode também contribuir com estratégias para amenizá-las, auxiliando na promoção de saúde mental.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Estudantes de enfermagem; Emoções; Estágio clínico; Saúde mental; Universidades.

SENTIMIENTOS DE ESTUDIANTES DE ENFERMERÍA EN LA PRÁCTICA CURRICULAR BAJO LA ÓPTICA DE HEIDEGGER

RESUMEN: Objetivo: Comprender los sentimientos de los estudiantes de Enfermería durante la Práctica Curricular Obligatoria. Método: Investigación cualitativa con referencial teórico metodológico de la Fenomenología: descripción, reducción y comprensión; analizada bajo la óptica de Heidegger. Datos recolectados durante el segundo semestre de 2016, utilizándose la técnica de grupo focal con 13 alumnos en la Escuela de Enfermería de una universidad pública de Minas Gerais. Resultados: Emergieron en los testimonios sentimientos de inseguridad, miedo, culpa personal, soledad, angustia, alegría, felicidad y tristeza. Conclusión: La madurez psicológica y algunas características individuales serán factores que facilitarán la experiencia y comprensión de estos sentimientos, favoreciendo el crecimiento personal y profesional. La universidad, conociendo tales experiencias, puede también contribuir con estrategias para aliviarlas, colaborando en la promoción de la salud mental.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Estudiantes de Enfermería; Emociones; Práctica Clínica; Salud Mental; Universidades.

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¹Registered Nurse Master's student in Nursing. Federal University of Alfenas. Alfenas, MG, Brazil.

²Registered Nurse. PhD in Nursing. Professor of Nursing of the Federal University of Alfenas. Alfenas, MG, Brazil.

Corresponding author:

Márcia Gabriela Gomes Nascimento
Universidade Federal de Alfenas
R. Gabriel Monteiro da Silva, 700 - 37130-001 - Alfenas, MG, Brasil
E-mail: mgabriela.gomes91@gmail.com

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● INTRODUCTION

In relation to mental health among university students, it has been shown that the university is an environment that requires a lot from the students and this burden of responsibility can increase the probability of problems related to mental health or intensify them when they already exist⁽¹⁾. In the area of Nursing, authors highlight that there is a high level of psychic suffering among the students of the course compared to students of other areas and, due to these manifestations, there is an interest of Nursing professors, who are concerned with the training of the student⁽²⁾.

Generally in nursing schools the course is divided in two main axes, the basic nucleus in the first years of the course and the professional one in the later years. All curricular contents seen in both axes should be focused on the health disease process of the citizen, the family and the community, related to the current epidemiological and professional reality, in order to integrate the actions in Nursing care, so that the students can manage to put into practice all the knowledge provided during their training⁽³⁾.

In the final years, the students go through an internship period⁽³⁾. The internship activities involve, in addition to improving techniques and procedures, the possibility for the students to develop the capacity to recognize and manifest their own professional identities⁽⁴⁾. Being a transitional period, they face various feelings during the process⁽⁴⁾. Although the internship generates anxiety, fears, insecurity and emotional exhaustion, it is the moment in which the students begins to position themselves and try to transmit security to the client⁽⁵⁾. In this way, the curricular internship is a period conducive to suffering and crises, therefore it becomes important to identify the students' experiences in this moment, learning what their feelings are, in order to help them to go through this period with the least possible harm and contribute to their mental health.

The aim of this study was to comprehend the feelings of Nursing students during the Mandatory Curricular Internship.

● METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach, with the theoretical methodological framework of Phenomenology, analyzed considering Heidegger's existentialism. Existence is fundamental to the comprehension of Being-there and is its essence as a possibility of being-in-the-world, which should not be neglected and discarded by forgetfulness⁽⁶⁾. For Heidegger, the phenomenon is what is shown and how it is shown. Thus, in order for the phenomenon not to arrive at forgetfulness, it is its veiling that becomes the object of phenomenology⁽⁷⁾.

The study is part of the Master's dissertation, entitled "Perception of undergraduate nursing students regarding their mental health in the curricular internship", developed at the Nursing School of a Public University of Minas Gerais. The participants were undergraduate students from a university, with a mean age of 22 years that were enrolled in the Compulsory Curricular Internship, that is, students from the 8th and 9th periods that constitute the final year of the course. They were invited verbally and through an invitation letter, and the project was presented to them. Of the 21 students enrolled in the Curricular Internship, 13 students participated in the study at the Nursing School of a Public University of Minas Gerais.

The data were collected in the second half of 2016, through the focus group technique⁽⁸⁾, with the meetings scheduled according to the availability of the students. Two focus groups were carried out with the participation of seven students in the first group and six in the second, with each student participating in only one group. As inclusion criteria it was defined that the participants would be undergraduate students enrolled in the 8th and 9th periods of Nursing, regardless of gender and age.

The focus group meetings lasted for 50 and 40 minutes, occurred in an appropriate private room with movable chairs arranged in a circle, which was easily accessible and free from interference. The meetings were moderated by the researcher and had an observer with knowledge about the technique. Two MP4 recorders were used to record the discussions, having previously obtained permission from

the participants of the groups. The following guiding statement was used: “talk about being a student of Nursing in the compulsory curricular internship in relation to your mental health”.

The recordings were transcribed in full and the three moments of phenomenology: description, reduction and comprehension, were used for the data analysis⁽⁹⁾. In the final phase, categories were constructed, through the most relevant nuclei of meaning of each discourse to unveil the phenomenon, and inferences were made based on Heidegger’s existentialism. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, they were randomly named by the letter A (acadêmicos - students) followed by numbers, according to the sequence of the statements. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee under authorization No. 1.725.400 and followed the Directives and Norms Regulating Research with Human Subjects, Resolution No. 466/12 of the National Health Council⁽¹⁰⁾.

● RESULTS

This study is part of a category that was nominated “the nursing student: experiences and coping”, composed of three subcategories, one of them being the feelings experienced during the curricular internship, which will be addressed in this study. In the statements of the Nursing students, the feelings that appeared were insecurity, fear, personal accountability, loneliness, anguish, joy, happiness and sadness. In addition to experiencing these feelings during the curricular internship, they also related them to the future given the demands of the labor market.

Insecurity appeared in the statements of the students in two forms: in relation to the performance of the practice in the compulsory curriculum internship and in relation to the future in dealing with the labor market.

[...] I’m going to do a technique, [...] I’m going to administer a certain medication, and often we don’t know, that is, we know, but do not remember at the time. Then you say: wow! It seems that I do not know anything, understand? (laughs). That’s when I think that there is this issue of insecurity, that feeling of insecurity in our head that should have already gone... (A8)

Regarding the future, insecurity appeared because they felt alone to face the competitive labor market.

[...] But, I do not know, it is already making me insecure. You know? And the world outside is competitive [...]. (A3)

[...] Wow, in a few days I’m a nurse, I’m alone, what does the job market offer? What do I have to offer the job market? Where will I go? Which path will I take? (A4)

[...] it is insecurity of what is to come. (A11)

Already the feeling of fear was manifested in relation to the new, and in facing the future:

[...] So I’m going to the ICU from here (pause). Tomorrow! (laughs). I’m totally unprepared, I did not sleep at night, I’m scared to death. (A9)

[...] Now at this stage we are in the final stretch of university, we are afraid to graduate, we do not know if the profession we have chosen will be our livelihood. (A11)

Personal accountability was another condition mentioned. The students made themselves accountable in relation to the practical learning and felt unable to show difficulty performing a procedure or to show that they could not do it.

[...] so I was able to absorb everything that was proposed, but I could have absorbed much more and differently. (A5)

Personal accountability can also lead to feelings of guilt over the expectation that they could have performed a technique better or acted better in a given situation.

[...] what sometimes happens is that I could give the best of me there [...] and I’m not able to achieve my objective, sometimes when I get home I think I could have done it like that. (A8)

Another feeling reported was loneliness. This is related to the distance from their families and also tied to the lack of support from the professors during internship practices.

[...] Family far away, so all like this. I already called my mother several times. Mother, I'm leaving, I don't want to stay here anymore, I feel alone. Even with friends I felt alone. I did not feel supported. (A3)

[...] It's a very stressful field and you need guidance. You need a professional mirror and I did not have it. So it was very difficult for me and I was alone like this ... completely [...]. (A5)

The anguish is tied to the suffering of the Nursing student's own existence, that is, the feeling of anguish is related to the knowledge acquired during the graduation course and whether this will be enough when faced with the labor market.

[...] and I felt that I did not learn enough of what I could have learned. So it's horrible anguish. (A5)

The pre-professional students also felt desperation in relation to the finitude of the time that refers to what is to come after graduation.

[...] I see that my psychological health is not good. At the same time, that I'm smiling I see myself in despair, when I look at the clock, and I see the date. Then it gives me that desperation. That thing, my God, there it is. I have this much time and what am I going to do? And what will happen when I leave? And next Monday what am I going to do? (A4)

In the statements of the Nursing students there was ambivalence of these feelings, sadness appeared due to not being able to execute procedures during the internship and the lack of monitoring by the professors in the execution of these procedures, which was coupled with the feeling of joy at being in the final stretch of the course. The happiness was referred to by the students through the burden of learning that emanated in their practical experiences during the internship.

[...] so this gives a certain joy, at the same time a certain sadness. (A8)

[...] So, in the ICU we would go from heaven to hell in thirty seconds, in so much as, we would be happy to be there, happy to be having all the burden of learning that they generate for us. (A13)

● DISCUSSION

The Heideggerian existentialist view involves the aspects of being-there, that is, the experience of aspects intrinsic to the person of the student in the period in question. For Heidegger⁽⁷⁾ being-there is the being that is revealed in the existence itself, that is, it is the ontological constitution of an entity that exists. Therefore only the being exists there and only he is able to ask for his being.

Feelings are subjective experiences experienced by individuals in certain moments and situations of their life⁽¹¹⁾. Thus, during the internship the Nursing undergraduates experienced various feelings, since it is at this moment of the course that the student is faced with several conflicts due to the demands of the professional exercise. The students' appreciation of these feelings is indispensable for the construction of the personal and professional identity⁽¹²⁾. Insecurity from the existentialist perspective means that individuals are characterized by a reduction of the identity of themselves and their reality⁽¹³⁾. The uncertainty regarding practical procedures is worrying, since the students are in the final phase of the course, about to leave the university and face the labor market⁽¹⁴⁾ and to experience different situations they may come across in their future professional life⁽¹²⁾.

The results presented in this study are in agreement with those presented in another study⁽¹⁵⁾ that dealt with the professional future, in which the subjects highlighted the entry into the labor market in a direct relation with the possibility of not being absorbed by it, and regarding the preparation for the professional practice. Insecurity is related to the fear associated with confronting new experiences, with the expectation of negative evaluations regarding the capacity and ability, at the same time encountering the dynamics of being placed in the world. For Heidegger⁽⁷⁾ the Dasein, when it is launched because of temporality, has the condition of possibility and discovery of the being itself. In this way, the future is constituted by several opportunities, by virtue of which the entity can retract or develop, so when the student being feels insecure about what is to come, this feeling is seen as natural,

since the student is faced with a world immersed in possibilities.

In the case of fear, this is considered to be caused by an entity that generates a threat to the individual, therefore, it is configured in a state of mind that characterizes it as improper and because it does not have its own temporality⁽¹⁶⁾. For Heidegger only the self can feel fear, whereas the Dasein, while being-in-the-world, is a being in occupations, and being danger is the threat to the being⁽⁷⁾. Fear seems to be inherent in the curricular internship⁽⁴⁾, since undergraduates seem to feel unprepared for the unfamiliar situations they will face, such as the performance of tasks required by the teachers⁽⁵⁾. Heidegger^(7:195) states that fear "is in every case something which we encounter within-the-world and which may have either readiness-to-hand, presence-at-hand, or Dasein-with as its kind of Being"

The self-accountability also pertains to academic activities and the expectations of the teachers in relation to them may lead the students to seek improvement in their theoretical-practical skills⁽¹⁵⁾. For Heidegger, guilt is more of a fault or a deficiency, the origin of which is in the Dasein itself. Thus, in its ontic sense, guilt can be overcome, however, ontologically, it is a condition of human existence. Thus, it is not for the Dasein to try to overcome it, but to acknowledge it and take responsibility for its being⁽¹⁷⁾.

The fact that the Nursing students are distant from their families contributes to the increase in difficulties in the university, causing interpersonal relationship problems⁽¹⁸⁾. Loneliness is usually a term used to designate abandonment or absence of the other, however, for Heidegger this feeling is a primordial condition for each of us. Thus, being-there experiences itself from loneliness, and through finding itself alone in the world⁽¹⁹⁾. Just as loneliness is not synonymous with abandonment, another feeling that has not only a negative dimension is anguish, also expressed by the Nursing students, and which in the existentialist view can be turned to a positive experience in view of the awareness of the human condition, faced with the existential "nothing"⁽²⁰⁾. Thus, anguish appears as a condition of being-there and by being-in-the-world itself. So that the world is no longer able to offer anything, not even the Co-presence of others⁽⁷⁾. One study⁽²¹⁾, in discussing guilt and anguish from Heidegger's perspective, highlighted that the latter represents a threat to the seeming tranquility of the being-there phatic. The author explains that the being is released into the world and thus is immersed in the impropriety of the quotidian giving the feeling that everything is in order. However, the moment anguish arises, man is withdrawn from this supposed tranquility and is cast in the face of his condition of being launched and abandoned in the world, of an entity that always has to realize his being.

The feeling of despair is the synthesis of the self with the consciousness or unconsciousness of having a self. This feeling can occur in a temporal way, that is, sporadic, when there is a lack of reflection in relation to immediate situations, and the consciousness of the self disturbs the individual, generating a discomfort that the person in despair hopes will pass⁽²²⁾. Thus, despair reveals how man runs his life and makes his choices, as well as showing the degree of inauthenticity of the being, which can be expressed in a greater or lesser degree of intensity⁽²³⁾. This provides the human being with an encounter with his life, in which he must make choices aimed at continuing to live in a continuous illusion or to move forward and transform his existence⁽²³⁾.

The only pleasant feelings that were expressed by the students were joy and happiness, however, these were linked to sadness, also present in their experiences during the obligatory curricular internship. Joy is an emotion that anticipates the satisfaction afforded by overcoming the obstacles in the individual's life⁽²⁴⁾. Happiness "is the absence of displeasure. To be happy is what every existing being desires", man seeks happiness without even knowing its form and essence^(20:56). Therefore, being happy is a possibility that is inherent in existence, that is, man chooses to be happy or not⁽²⁰⁾. Contrary to joy and happiness, sadness is an inhibited relationship with the world, in the face of frustrating situations in life⁽²⁴⁾.

Ambivalence can be characterized by difficulties in ordering and naming and making sense of the world. The being may feel unable to stand before the choices of his own feelings and the innumerable situations placed in existence⁽²⁵⁾. However, ambivalence about feelings can also be considered as healthy growth for the individual, in which he takes full responsibility for his feelings, and for simply being alive, as well as developing his constructive capacity⁽²⁶⁾.

A limitation of the study was that it does not allow generalizations on the perception of mental health in Nursing students, since it was restricted to studying the 8th and 9th periods of the course.

● CONCLUSION

It was possible to observe that the final year undergraduate students of Nursing experienced a range of feelings that could interfere with their mental health, since these arose due to the suffering of their experiences during the obligatory curricular internship. All the feelings come up during various stages of life. What differs is that they emerge in a short period and in an intense way, observed by the intonation of the statements and attitudes when discussing the subject. In the existentialist view, these feelings can have a positive side, since the being-there is becoming present in the being-world when it comes to the future profession and, with that, the person can become more aware of his personal and professional identity. In this way the Dasein is an entity that exists, is-there and exists in the everyday reality so that this being-there is a being in the world. On the other hand, if the feelings are not well elaborated, that is, if the entity present in the world is not able to experience the worldly conditions with its tensions, mental suffering can emerge or can intensify when it already exists.

Some factors can favor the experience and comprehension of these feelings, with psychological maturity and some personal characteristics being factors that can facilitate the personal and professional growth. However, it is important for institutions to be aware of how their future graduates manifest and express themselves in relation to such feelings and, thus, provide them with psychological support. This should be directed toward enabling them to comprehend the stages experienced during the undergraduate course and to minimize the harm related to the suffering and, with that, to favor the mental health of the future professionals.

The population was made up of nursing undergraduate students from one University, and the experiences of the curricular internship may be different in other contexts. However, due to the small number of studies that deal with this subject, this study will contribute to the production of knowledge and may help in the elaboration of other studies that investigate the mental health of university students from different areas of activity. At the University in study, there was concern regarding the mental health of the students and this study can help in the implementation of programs and strategies to reduce the suffering of the undergraduate students, specifically those of the final year of the Nursing course.

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