NATIONAL NURSE COMPETENCE EXAMINATION: ANXIETY, PERCEPTION AND COPING STRATEGY AMONG NURSING STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

National nurse competency examination (UKNI) aims to measure standards of nurses approved with Nurse's Register License. This examination could induce anxieties that affect students' readiness, performance and graduation. The objective of this study was to describe coping strategy in dealing with national nurse competency examination and its related factors which are anxiety and perception. A descriptive study was performed on 80 nursing students at clinical rotation nursing program who enrolled in March 2017's nurse competency examination. German Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI-G), Perception Questionnaire and Coping Strategy Indicators (CSI) were used to measure exam anxiety, student's perception and coping strategy respectively. The results show that regarding to students' perception, 37 students (46,3%) demonstrated good perception and the rest (58,7%) showed poor perception. Fortytwo students (52.5%) experienced low anxiety and the rest (47.5%) experienced high anxiety. In regards to coping strategy in dealing with competence examination, 44 students were in good category (55%), while 36 students (45%) were in poor category. This study implies that information about the national nurse competence examination should be provided as earlier as possible, so that students could make adequate preparation.

Keywords: anxiety, coping strategy, Indonesian national nurse competency examination, perception

ABSTRAK

Uji Kompetensi Nurse Indonesia (UKNI) bertujuan untuk mengukur standar perawat yang ditunjukan dengan penerbitan Surat Tanda Registrasi (STR). UKNI dapat menyebabkan kecemasan yang dapat mempengaruhi kesiapan, penampilan dan kelulusan dari mahasiswa. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan strategi koping terkait dengan pelaksanaan UKNI dan faktor yang berkaitan yakni kecemasan dan persepsi. Penelitian deskriptif dilakukan pada 80 mahasiswa profesi yang mengikuti UKNI pada bulan Maret 2017. German Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI-G), Kuesioner Persepsi dan Coping Strategy Indicators (CSI) digunakan masing-masing untuk mengukur kecemasan terhadap ujian, persepsi mahasiswa dan strategi koping. Hasil menunjukan bahwa 37 mahasiswa (46,3%) memiliki persepsi yang baik terkait UKNI, sedangkan sisanya (58,7%) memiliki persepsi yang kurang. Empat puluh empat mahasiswa (52.5%) mengalami kecemasan rendah dan lainnya (47.5%) mengalami kecemasan yang tinggi. Berkaitan dengan strategi koping, 44 mahasiswa masuk dalam kategori baik (55%), sedangkan 36 mahasiswa (45%) masuk dalam kategori buruk. Penelitian ini mengimpllikasikan bahwa informasi tentang UKNI seharusnya diberikan sedini mungkin, sehingga mahasiswa dapat membuat persiapan yang baik.

Kata kunci: kecemasan, strategi koping, UKNI, persepsi

BACKGROUND

In Indonesia, national competency examination is a tool to measure knowledge, skills, and attitudes of health professionals in accordance with profession standards. Any health workers who deliver professional practice must hold a registration license (STR) from the government. To obtain the license, they first need to pass the competency examination organized by the Indonesian Health Professional Boards (MTKI) in cooperation with the higher education institution (PMK RI No. 46 year 2013). Act number 38 of 2014 chapter 1 article 16 on Nursing states that nursing students at the end of vocational and professional education must take the national competency exam. According to the circular of DIKTI number 704 / E E3 / DT / 2013 in 2013 nurse competence examination is held 3 times in a year: March, July, and November (Depkes, 2013).

Students' readiness in facing the competency test becomes one of the coping mechanisms for successful examination. Coping helps students to deal with stress and anxiety in exam situations, eliminate or change stressful conditions and keep away from excessive negative feelings. However, it depends on the selection of coping strategies and students' ability to produce adaptive behaviors and positive functions (Lazarus, 1991).

Coping strategies are influenced by students' knowledge and perceptions of the competency examination. Students' perceptions are influenced by internal and external factors. One of the external factors is novelty. Competency examination is a new experience for students. Meanwhile, internal factors are including knowledge/ experience, expectations, needs, motivation and emotions (Damayanti, 2007). About one third of clinical rotation students of School of Nursing UGM in 2016 showed sufficient level of perception (33.8%) (Nugoho & Harjanto, 2016).

The purpose of this study is to describe student coping strategy in facing national nurse competency examination and its related factors which are perceptions and anxiety.

METHOD

This is a descriptive study which conducted on March 30, 2017 (a day before competency examination). Respondents in this study were competence exam participants from School of Nursing, UGM consist of 80 respondents.

Questionnaire about competence exam perception developed by previous researchers with total 18 items was used to assess student's perception (Nugoho & Harjanto, 2016). While, coping strategies was measured using The Coping Strategy Indicator (CSI) developed by Amirkhan (1994) which consist of three scales with 33 questions in total. The 30 items Anxiety Inventory-German Test (TAI-G) was used to measure student's anxiety (Stöber, 2004).

In this study, several limitations have been identified and subsequently minimalized. Data was collected a day before national competency examination after students receive technical information about exam (post exam briefing session). As a result, time to collect the data in this study was quite limited and most of respondents already got distracted with other exam preparation activities.

RESULTS
Respondent's characteristic

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondents Characteristics (n = 80)

Characteristic	f	%
Age (Mean±SD)	24,44	1,98
17-25	77	96,4
26-35	3	3,6
Sex		
Female	78	97,6
Male	2	2,4

Table 1 shows that all respondents are first taker of the competency test. Majority of respondents aged between 17-25 years old and are female (97%).

Student's Coping Strategy in Dealing with the Competency Examination

Table 2. Students' Coping Strategy in Competence Exam (n=80)

Coping Strategy	f	%
Problem solving	76	95
Seeking social support	2	2.5
Avoidance	2	2.5

Assessment of coping strategies used CSI instruments which consist of 3 scales: problem solving, seeking social support, and avoidance. In Table 2. each respondent was assigned to one of coping strategy classification based on the highest score attained.

Table 3. Level of Students' Coping Strategy Dealing with Competence Exam (n = 80)

Level	f	%
Good	44	55
Poor	36	45

Student Perceptions of Competency Examination

Table 4. Students' perceptions of Competence Examination (n = 80)

Category	f	%
Good	37	46.2
Poor	43	53.8

The students' perception on competency exam was categorized into good and poor with cutoff point of mean score (74.05) was used as standard. If the score falls above the mean, it means a good perception, while if the score falls below the means, it means poor perception. From Table 4, it is identified that more than half of students show poor perception (53.8%)

Exam Anxiety

Table 5. Respondents' Exam Anxiety Frequency Distribution (n = 80)

Exam Anxiety	f	%
Worry	78	97,5
Emotionality	1	1,25
Interference	1	1,25
Lack of Confidence	0	0

Assessment of exam anxiety used TAI-G instrument which assess 4 aspects. The 4 aspects are worry, emotionality, interference, and lack of confidence. These aspects are presented to examine specific anxiety experienced by respondents. In Table 5, each respondent was assigned to one of the four anxiety aspects based on the highest score attained.

Table 6. Students' Anxiety Level at Competency Exam (n = 80)

Anxiety level	f	%
High	38	47.5
Low	42	52.5

From table 6, it was found that more than half respondents experienced low exam anxiety (52.5%).

DISCUSSION

Factors influencing utilization of coping strategies according to Sarafino (1998) include age, sex, education level, employment status and type of stressors. Coping strategies used by individual were influenced by physical fitness, positive beliefs or views, problem-solving skills, social skills, social support and resources (Mu'tadin, 2002). This research show that majority of students (95%) used "problem solving" as a strategy to deal with the exam anxiety. Previous studies showed that adaptive coping such as proactive coping and problem-focused coping are more common when experiencing exam anxiety, especially during preparation period.

Yussof, Low and Yip (2010) explain that coping strategies are specific efforts, both in the physical (behavioral) and psychological that a person uses to direct, tolerate, decrease or minimize stressful events. Effective coping uses an approach by incorporating customized strategies (Bartram & Gardner, 2008; Yussof et al., 2010). Effectiveness of this type of coping can be determined by whether or not it can control stressors. Young adulthood is the period of permanent coping mechanism development. As a result the use of effective coping mechanisms plays a role in reducing stress. According Lazarus (1991), each type of coping strategies is related. Problem solving are a part of problem focused coping, avoidance as a forms of emotional focused coping and social support is a combination of problem focused coping and emotional focused coping (Jenkins, 2012). Yeon (2012) stated that merging some coping is possible to deal with different stressful situations.

The exam situation raises anxiety to the participants. The number of respondents experienced low exam anxiety was greater than those experienced high anxiety (52.5% compare to 47.5%). Exam anxiety may affect student's performance in learning process. However, if it could not be managed, anxiety may become a serious problem and can affect student's achievement. According to Wijaya, Rihadini and Setiawan (2015), there are several factors affecting exam anxiety. One of them is coping mechanism. Coping mechanism used by each individual is different. A study suggested that individuals with good coping mechanisms are likely to experience a mild degree of exam anxiety.

Vitasari et al. (2010) states that higher anxiety experienced by student implies lower academic achievement. Low academic achievements related to excessive anxiety indicate cognitive impairment when students unable to understand their learning, as they will compare their ability to others and worry about unfavorable performance (Cassady & Johnson, 2002).

Exam anxiety is often triggered by situations and examinees. According to Bonaccio and Reeve (2010) the source of exam anxiety could be divided into three domains: individual perceptions of the test, self, and exam situations.

Table 4 showed that more than half participants have poor perception about the competence exam (53.8%). It indicates that there are students who did not understand about competence exam. Research conducted by HPEQ discovered that over 60% of Indonesian health-study students have fair perception on the objectives and implementation of competency exam, competency exam accomplishment, and

re-competency exam mechanisms. One of problems related to pre-implementation competency exam is socialization and debriefing. At the pre-implementation stage of competency exam, debriefing and socialization session is organized by institutions to prepare students. Socialization and debriefing session are also needed to shape student's perceptions of competency exam (HPEQ Student. 2013).

Walgito (2004) found that experience, learning process and knowledge also play a role in the process of forming individual perceptions. Research conducted by Panjaitan (2014) reveals that experience is proportional to perception. More experience result the better individual perception.

CONCLUSION

Exam still raise anxiety among students. Effective coping mechanism and develop positive perception of the test are needed for successful examination. Exam participants need to be more active to seek information about competency exam. Nursing educational institution also need to hold socialization and debriefing of competency exam as early as possible. At the practice level, nursing education institution is suggested to shape the students' perception regarding competency examination. Appropriate supervision, supports, and approach are needed for student's best performance during the exam. Further studies to identify strategies for developing positive perception and enhancing effective coping mechanism among students are needed.

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