

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A correlational-descriptive study was conducted to describe factors influencing self-concept and its subconcepts of hospitalized chronically ill school-age children. This chapter presents conclusions of the findings, implications for nursing practice, nursing education, and nursing research, and recommendations for further research.

Conclusion of Findings

Based on the findings of this study, the conclusions are drawn as follow:

1. Majority of hospitalized Chinese school-age children with chronic illness have at least average level of self-concept;
2. Academic achievement(GPA) is the strong predictor of self-concept and most of its subconcepts, including social behavior, academic competence, and physical appearance and attribute;
3. Age is the predictor of overall self-concept, social behavior subconcept, and popularity subconcept;
4. Sex is the predictor of self-concept subconcepts as social behavior, anxiety, and popularity;

5. Duration of illness is the predictor of physical appearance and attribute subconcept; and

6. Type of illness is the predictor of popularity subconcept.

Implications of Findings

Implications in Nursing Practice

Findings of this study provide important implications for nursing practice. The findings support the needs for clinical nurses to be knowledgeable about self-concept of hospitalized school-age children with chronic illness, and to analyze what factors influence their self-concept development. Also, the nurse can use the findings to encourage positive self-concept development of these children according to their previous academic achievement, age, sex, illness type, and duration of illness.

The findings that academic achievement(GPA) is the strong predictor of self-concept and most of its subconcepts provide important implications for the clinical nurses to arrange the hospitalized chronically ill child to meet and interact with teachers and classmates, so that they can have opportunities in positive self-concept development. The continuing academic achieving of hospitalized chronically ill children can also enhance children's positive perception of social behavior, physical attribute perception, and popularity

aspects. The importance of maintaining contact with school work during hospitalization can be emphasized to parents and teachers by school and hospital nurses.

The finding that age is another predictor of self-concept provides suggestion for nurses to consider the age difference when formulate nursing care plan for a particular child. Emphasizing a child's role in mastery of various age-appropriate tasks throughout the hospitalization and their ability to be active participant, may help prevent a negative self-concept and enhance positive self-concept development.

As sex is a predictor of self-concept subconcepts as social behavior, anxiety, and popularity, the finding provide support for nurse to consider the sex difference while caring for them. Girls seemed to be more anxiety and more sensitive about their social behaviors and popularity, especially girls in Chinese culture. Thus the emotional support, patiently explanation and comfort seem to be more necessary for ill children, especially for girls.

The study results also suggest that duration of illness and type of illness are predictors in physical appearance and attribute and popularity respectively. These finding highlights the importance of clinical nurses to provide chronically ill children with psychological support aimed at improving their low body-image and poor popularity which may have an adverse effect on their self-concept

development, especially for those with longer duration of illness and disease with physical feature change and physical disability.

Implications in Nursing Education

Findings of this study provide implications for nurse educators to emphasize roles of nurses in enhancing positive self-concept development and preventing negative self-concept of these children, and it can also help nurse educators to consider proper influencing factors while developing curriculum content of pediatric nursing.

Implications in Nursing Research

Findings of this study also provide implications for nursing research. A nursing research program of self-concept improvement of hospitalized school-age children can be developed based on the findings that self-concept can be predicted by GPA and age, some subconcepts can be predicted by age, sex, GPA, type of illness, and duration of illness.

Recommendations

For further research, several recommendations are suggested. The modification of the Piers and Harris Self-concept Scale is needed to be done on Chinese school-age children to make it better fit with Chinese culture.

Replication of this study with random selected sample, larger sample size, and expanded illness type is recommended to be done to provide more confidence in generalization of this study.

A comparison study on self-concept of hospitalized and non-hospitalized children with and without chronic illness is also recommended. In addition, other possible influencing factors, such as severity of illness, family's interpersonal function, social support network and finances, and children's temperament etc, may need to be explored further, because the proportions which all the predictive variables accounted for were not higher than 20 %, exploring of other influencing factors can provide more suggestions in nursing intervention according to individual and group differences.

A study of self-concept of school-age children with one specific chronic illness (for example: leukemia) is also recommended to be done to provide more information for those children. Finally, a longitudinal study using the same design is recommended to investigate the changes of self-concept on hospitalized school-age children with chronic illness. It will provide a direction of effective nursing intervention on improving self-concept of hospitalized chronically ill school-age children.
