Abstract

The aim of this study is to describe from parents’ point of view the distinctive features of the child and family integrity. It will give an increased understanding of integrity in child healthcare context. This study seeks answers to questions: What characterizes child and family integrity in the child healthcare context? What experiences parents have in child and family integrity in the child healthcare context? In this study integrity means inviolability, personal space, privacy and respect for self determination.

The study emanates from the caring science that has been developed at the Department of Caring science, Åbo Akademi University, Finland. The theoretical perspective is based on the caring science and the basic concepts are constituted of; the human being as an entity of body, soul and spirit, health, suffering, caring and ethos. The methodology is based on the hermeneutical tradition.

The method used in the study was a questionnaire and the data was collected from parents in a parent association. Parents had experiences in different contexts in the hospital with their children who were in ages 4–12 years. Eleven parents responded and questions were analyzed according to the content analysis.

The result reveals a deeper understanding of integrity. Child and family integrity is characterized as respect for the unique human beings dignity, the child and the family is listened to, believed, consulted and they are treated well. Distinguishing features were integrity that also respects the child and family's space and integrity that supports participation. The result in parents' experiences of the child and family integrity became: the human beings dignity was confirmed, the family space was respected and the child and the parents were invited to participate in the hospital community. The parents described also offending and poor experiences. They had experiences where the human beings dignity was not respected.

The result shows that integrity has many different meanings for the individual child and family. Respect for the child and family integrity requires understanding that the child and the family are vulnerable in the hospital. It is important that the individual child and family's needs and hopes are taken into consideration, they are respected and their dignity will be confirmed. Through promoting the child and family integrity, dignity violations of care can be prevented.