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**PERSPECTIVE**

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## **UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF NURSES IN INDONESIA: A PERSPECTIVE FROM A NURSE**

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Indonesia has produced a significant number of nursing schools. According to the latest information from the Directorate General of Higher Education, there are 733 nursing schools in Indonesia, which consist of 368 schools providing a vocational nurse training, and 385 schools providing professional nurse training that represent a large increase over previous years. It is expected that these nursing schools can produce a huge number of nurses that are able to fulfill the need of society in Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> But, as the matter of fact, nursing shortage is still happening in Indonesia, specifically in terms of unfulfilled position. Ministry of Health (MOH) estimates that the need of nurses are 87,874 nurses of 118,788 health workers at hospitals, and an estimated 10,146 extra nurses are needed at primary health care level.<sup>1</sup> This condition tells that

the unequal distribution is a big challenge in Indonesia.

The unequal distribution of nurses is a crucial issue to address due to the health care needs of the people, especially in underserved rural and remote area. Ministry of Health indicates that there are 87 districts located within 27 of 33 provinces in Indonesia are left behind regarding access to basic health care services. There are also 92 districts in the outermost small islands and 34 small outlying islands that do not have basic services.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it leads to the question, “*Where are Indonesian nurses going?*” Nurses actually prefer to migrate in the big cities in Indonesia, such as in DKI Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, East Java, and North Sumatera.<sup>3,4</sup> It is because the job opportunities are available in those cities while the technology has a great influence for nurses to move.

In this regard, to cope with the unequal distribution of nurses, Government of Indonesia initiates the contract scheme program or called “Pegawai Tidak Tetap” in Bahasa Indonesia to distribute not only nurses but also medical doctors to the remote and rural areas, and also provide additional incentives for those who work in those areas.<sup>5</sup> However, many nurses are rejected to be placement in those areas. Literature indicated that difficulties of geographic with lack of transportation and infrastructure facilities in most areas outside of Java, Bali, and Sumatra Island are the causes of rejection. While low salary, lack of facilities and uncertainty of future carrier of nurses are also considered the other importance factors for unequal distribution of nurses in Indonesia.<sup>3</sup> Morel (2014)<sup>6</sup> said that there are many factors influencing recruitment and distribution of health professionals, including nurses in rural and remote areas such as financial factors, professional factors, location, family and other factors.

Therefore, based on this condition the nurse leaders need to have a great strategy to provide pull factors to increase the intention of nurses to fulfill the positions in the locations or areas needed, especially in rural and remote areas. The nurse leaders also need to prepare for investment and increase the effectiveness of recruitment of new nurses to those areas. However, the author remarks, “The loss of nurses to other provinces or to locations in the city/district where the jobs are, including rural and remote areas is considered a positive investment and create market equilibrium. In contrast, if nurses just keep staying in the location that there are no jobs available, it will be considered a negative investment.”

#### Declaration of Conflicting Interest

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This study is the original work of the corresponding author.

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