



Original Article



Attitudes Towards Learning Communication Skills Among University Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

A major skill of nurses for achieving high-quality care is their ability to communicate effectively with patients, and this has been considered very valuable in the patient healing process.

Objectives: To assess the learning attitudes of university nursing students towards communication skills and to find out the association of demographic characteristics of students with their attitude level. **Methods:** This cross-sectional analytical study design was conducted on 230 student nurses studying in a four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. Permissions were obtained from the Ethical Review Committee and the Head of the Department for data collection. Data were collected via non-probability purposive sampling. Communication Skills Attitudes Scale was used to assess the attitude of university nursing students. Student's t-test and One-way analysis of variation were used to identify the differences in Positive Attitude Scores and Negative Attitude Scores between demographic variables. **Results:** Most of the study participants (77.4%) were male and 94% belonged to the age group 18-25 years. There was a significant difference in the Positive Attitude Score between gender and education of the students with p-values of 0.009 and 0.015 respectively. Furthermore, education level is the only variable that shows a significant association with a Negative Attitude Score with a p-value < 0.0001. **Conclusions:** It was concluded that female students had more positive attitudes compared to their counterparts. Third-year students had a more positive attitude compared to other study years.

INTRODUCTION

A major skill of nurses for achieving high-quality care is their ability to communicate effectively with patients, and this has been considered very valuable in the patient healing process [1]. Communication helps to adhere to therapy, which increases the effectiveness of treatment in Primary Care [2]. The information and views of the nurses themselves may influence communication. The relationship between attitudes to communication was not explored in several studies [3]. Communication is the process of gathering and exchanging information among two or more individuals, vital for nurses in providing high quality safe, and secure medical care to patients. In addition, it is crucial that nurses can communicate their

ideas and show them in practice [4]. The healthcare professional must be able to understand the roles and responsibilities of others, as well as their teamwork and communication skills in a complex environment. Inter-professional collaboration between all health and social care professionals, in particular doctors and nurses is essential to improving the safety and quality of treatment for patients. According to a literature review, communication failures between healthcare team members contribute significantly to the incidence of hospital side effects. By providing quality nursing care, patients feel satisfaction about the care they receive. Nurses demonstrated caring behaviours with competency



and skills and also communicated effectively with patients. It helps in providing proper medical care and treatment by the nurses to their clients [5]. Nurses are not only providing specific tasks in routine but rather providing holistic care including all perspectives that are required by patients in their treatment. Furthermore, managing the queries of patient's families and decision-making in an emergency is also a requirement of nurses in their clinical areas. Effective communication is widely considered to be the basic principle of high-quality nursing care because healthcare workers play an integral part in relationships and interactions [6]. It is imperative to study the attitude of nursing students toward patient communication, to understand their beliefs and behavior. It is also a vital aspect of assessing the relevance of clinical care and healing. In addition, it is important to evaluate the attitude of students toward patient's communication, so they can better understand the behavior and be able to communicate effectively to achieve adequate communicative competence [7]. These skills are needed to provide safe nursing care, teamwork, healthcare and management for decision-making and problem-solving. The basic aspects of assessing patients' needs, enhancing the clinical skills of nurses and providing better care are part of communication skills. Research evidence showed the vital role of communication in many health outcomes relating to care, such as better use of quality healthcare services, improved client's attitude towards compliance, develop social backup or developments in therapeutic outcomes and prevention [8]. Limited research has been conducted in Pakistan related to identifying the attitude of student nurses at the university level towards communication. In addition, this study will not only identify nurses' attitudes about communication but also its association with the demographic characteristics of the study participants.

The study aimed to assess the learning attitudes of university nursing students towards communication skills and to find out the association of demographic characteristics of students with their attitude level.

METHODS

This cross-sectional analytical study design was conducted on student nurses who were studying in Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs. Data were collected via non-probability purposive sampling. This study was conducted at Jinnah College of Nursing, Sohail University from November 2022 to December 2022. Only students (of both genders) who were enrolled in the 4-year BSN program and had ages- between 18-35 years were part of this study. One-year diploma programs, Master's in nursing programs, and students who were enrolled in other programs (one-year speciality courses) were not part of this study. The sample size was calculated through OpenEpi software, by taking the 81.80% score for yes

response of facial expression, with a confidence interval of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. The estimated sample was 229 participants [9], but the principal investigator took data from 230 participants for round figures. Data were collected from a self-administer demographic questionnaire form followed by 26-item questionnaires Communication Skills Attitudes Scale (CSAS). The scale was formerly designed by Rees et al., Positive Attitude Score (PAS) and Negative Attitude Score (NAS) have 13 items respectively: including items P4, P5, P7, P9, P10, P12, P14, P16, P18, P21, P23, P25 and the reversed score of items P22 for PAS and items N2, N3, N6, N8, N11, N13, N15, N17, N19, N20, N24, N26 and the reversed score of item N1 for NAS. The total score for both categories was from 13 minimums to 65 maximum scores. Permission was obtained from the Ethical Review Committee (ERC) (Protocol# 000245/22-22) of Sohail University and Permission from the Head of the Department (HOD) was also taken. Written informed consent was taken from all study participants. All scores were transferred into the statistical data analysis software R Studio. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were calculated for data analysis. Parametric tests, t-tests and one-way analysis of variation (ANOVA) were used to identify differences in PAS and NAS between demographic variables and the significance level was set as 5%.

RESULTS

This study was completed by 230 students. The mean value for PAS was 50.03 with an SD of 5.9 and the mean value for NAS was 45.40 with an SD of 7.16. The majority of the study students were male 77.4%. Out of 230 participants, 94% belong to the age group 18-25 years. This study shows that the most highlighted study year of the student is the 4th year (42.6%)(Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of the Demographic Variables of the Study Participants(n=230)

Variables	Categories	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	178 (77.4)
	Female	52 (22.6)
Age	18-25	216 (93.9)
	26-30	14 (6.1)
Marital Status	Single	206 (89.6)
	Married	24 (10.4)
Education	1 st year	25 (10.9)
	2 nd year	49 (21.3)
	3 rd year	58 (25.2)
	4 th year	98 (42.6)

Table 2 shows the comparison of positive attitudes towards learning communication skills between gender, age, marital status, and education. This table also shows similar comparisons for negative attitudes toward learning communication skills. Female students had more positive attitudes in comparison with their counterparts. There was

no notable statistically significant difference in PAS between age groups and marital status of students. 3rd year students had a more positive attitude as compared to other study years. A significant difference was observed in PAS between gender and education of the students with probability values of 0.009 and 0.015 correspondingly. Table 2 exhibits that male students had slightly greater negative attitudes toward skills. However, 4th year students had a more negative attitude as compared to other study years. Education was the only variable where NAS significantly contrasted p-value <0.0001 f^*

Table 2: Comparisons of PAS and NAS Between Demographic Variables (n=230)

Variables	Categor-ies	PAS			NAS		
		Mean	SD	p-value	Mean	SD	p-value
Gender	Male	49.8034	5.87733	0.009*	45.6910	7.04145	0.262 †
	Female	52.2500	5.91732		44.4231	7.55982	
Age	18-25	50.2870	5.87474	0.489	45.2546	7.00598	0.214 †
	26-30	51.4286	7.35594		47.7143	9.29374	
Marital Status	Single	50.3350	5.89083	0.873	45.2913	6.93613	0.574 †
	Married	50.5417	6.67884		46.3750	9.01116	
Education	1 st year	50.9600	4.95379	0.015 f^*	39.7600	5.50212	<0.0001 f^*
	2 nd year	48.5714	7.93725		42.8163	7.45451	
	3 rd year	52.1724	4.58502		45.3276	7.71962	
	4 th year	50.0204	5.52591		48.1837	5.63741	

*p-value < 0.05 considered as significant;

†: P-value obtained from t-test

f^* : p-value obtained using ANOVA

DISCUSSION

Attitude is one of the main elements which either increase or decrease the learning capabilities of the learner. Findings of a study conducted in Thailand by Kleebua *et al.*, [9] evident that there is a relationship between attitude toward life on the learning outcome of students. This present study focuses on the assessment of the attitude of student nurses at the university level about learning communication skills and their association with various demographic characteristics. This study's findings highlighted that females have more positive attitudes towards communication skills compared to male participants. These findings were similar to the study conducted in Korea [10], which showed that female students had good scores compared with male students. Another study carried out by Jordon (2022) also evident that female students have better communication skills than male students [11]. This evidence shows that female students are more interested in learning communication in different parts of the world. This study evident that there is a significant difference in PAS between gender and the education of the students. These findings were opposed to a study conducted among medical students that showed no significant difference in gender with PAS [12]. Another study conducted on Pakistani medical students also highlighted that there was no significant association of

gender with PAS [13]. In contrast, a study conducted in Slovenia evident that PAS is significantly associated with the education level of students [14]. The finding of this current study revealed that gender, age and marital status were the variables that showed no significant association with NAS. A study conducted on medical students in Pakistan brought similar findings, where gender was the variable that showed no association with NAS [15]. Another study conducted among medical students in Oranjested, Aruba showed similar findings [16]. The findings of this study evident that 3rd years students have a more positive attitude towards communication skills as compared to other classes. A study conducted in Iran in 2015 showed that students who were enrolled in higher semesters showed good communication skills [17]. In contrast, a study conducted on medical students in Pakistan (2018) showed that with the seniority of students, attitudes towards communication skills decline [14]. It was observed that the majority of the participants in this study were male. These findings were opposed by the studies conducted in Egypt [18] and Jordon, where the majority of the participants were female. This observation shows that enrollment of male nurses is higher in the field of nursing in our local context. Most of the participants in this study were in the age group of 18–25 years of age. A study conducted in the USA in 2021, showed that the mean age of the study participants was 22.77 years. Another study also had the mean age of the study participants in the same category. In contrast, a study conducted in Egypt showed the participant's ages were between 30–35 years [18]. This study finding revealed that more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the participants were single. These findings were similar to a study conducted in Jordon [11] and USA 2019 [19] showed that most of the participants were unmarried. Most of the participants in this study were from the 4th year. Previous studies showed opposite findings, study conducted in 2023 showed most of the study participants were belong to 1st year in their study [18]. In addition, studies conducted in 2021 and Saudi Arabia in 2018 [20] showed that the highest number of participants were in their 3rd year of studies. One more study conducted in Slovakia (2017) showed that most of the participants were in the 2nd year of their study career [21].

CONCLUSIONS

It was concluded that female students had more positive attitudes as compared to their counterparts. Third-year students had a more positive attitude as compared to other study years. Male students had slightly greater negative attitudes toward learning communication skills.

Authors Contribution

Conceptualization: AA

Methodology: AA, SN

Formal analysis: AR

Writing review and editing: SJ

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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