



Iranian staff nurses' attitudes toward nursing students

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SUMMARY

Introduction: Clinical education is an indispensable part of the nursing education. Clinical nurses play an important role in this teaching learning process. The quality and quantity of student–nurse interactions in the clinical area can either facilitate or hamper students' learning.

The rationale of this research was to probe into staff nurses' attitudes toward nursing students within the context of clinical education in Iran. The nursing literature seems wanting in issues related to staff nurses' attitudes toward nursing students. Thus, we draw on Peplau's interpersonal relations in nursing to address staff–student relationship. That is, the nursing student was taken as the client.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional design was selected for this study. The entire staff nurses of Medical and Surgical units ($n = 82$) employed at Dr Fatemi and Imam Khomeini hospitals of Ardabil medical sciences university were selected. Stagg's questionnaire and a demographic tool were used to gather data. Attitudes were measured using a five-point Likert scale. Attitudes of staff nurses were inspected using cross tabulations and frequencies.

Findings: The results demonstrated that attitude scores toward nursing students were low and moderate. Some nurses (45.71%) believed that working with students is pleasant and most (98.57%) have thought that staff should have a good relationship with nursing students. Furthermore, staff nurses pointed out that there is a need to overhaul the educational system of nursing students (94.3%), that nursing students do not acquire the sufficient clinical skill (67.14%), and that the students are not prepared enough for the clinical task (51.43%).

Conclusion: According to the results of the staffs' feelings on the relationship between nurse and student, it seems that nurses should cultivate an atmosphere which ends to empathy, assurance and sincerity of nursing students.

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Introduction

Nursing practice is an indispensable part of the nursing education (Dunn and Hansford, 1997) and includes about 50% of the nursing syllabus, which provides chances for nursing students to practically experience their future career, and allows them to take their theoretical knowledge to the real world (Elcigil and Sari, 2008). For learning to occur, providing positive experiences for students during the practice process is essential. Learning experiences in the practice process considerably influences both the learning outcome and the acculturation of students into the nursing profession. Although learning outcome and acculturation are bound to the nature of the overall experience, a considerable role is assigned to the types of humanistic relations that are initiated and fostered between the nurses and the students (Atack et al., 2000).

The staff nurses have all experienced the student role and most of them have memories of clinical experiences which had been both stirring and disappointing. Because of their position in the clinical environment, staff nurses are precious contributors to the learning

experience of students. Professional and caring interactions between students and staff nurses are vital to augment not only student education, but also the outlook of nursing (Porter and Willing, 2001). Dunn and Hansford (1997) state, warm and sympathetic interpersonal relationships between staff nurses and student nurses are central to a constructive learning environment. Also Campbell et al. (1994) emphasize that to enhance the student's capacity to learn and his/her self-confidence the clinical setting should have appropriate interactions and positive feedbacks of the staff.

Similarly, Betz (1985) affirms that the standards, viewpoints and attitudes of the nursing staff have a notable impact on the behavior of the students and the growth of a professional nursing distinctiveness. Nurses should control their negative attitudes because the students form the future of professional nursing (Jackson and Neighbors, 1988). Nevertheless, nurses often harbor attitudes that damage students' learning (Stagg, 1992). Kramer (1974), cited in Hyland et al. (1988), argued that interpersonal support was robustly linked with work contentment. The best ambience is guaranteed when the staff's behavior is considerate and compassionate toward students.

The nursing literature seems wanting concerning the studies that deal with staff nurses' attitudes toward nursing students. Nevertheless, it is regularly commented on the part of the students and nurses that both parties experience negative attitudes toward each other (Gillespie,

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1992; Reutter et al., 1997; Frieburger, 1996). Such far-from-ideal situations could seriously challenge the quality of nursing profession.

The conceptual framework of this study is the interpersonal relations theory in nursing developed by Hildegard Peplau. The focus of Peplau's model is the relationship between the client and the nurse. The attitudes may have positive or negative effect on the development of rapport. Also, the attitudes of nurses and patients are the most significant factors in the length of the first stage of Peplau's theory. In this study, the student is considered as the client on the grounds that s/he is in need of knowledge and experience. So, for the development of rapport between nurses and students, the positive and negative attitudes should be recognized and attended to. Moreover, nurses should be conscious of their own feelings towards students.

The student/nurse relationship develops through four interpersonal procedures: orientation, identification, exploitation and resolution. Each stage requires the student and the nurse to carry out specific responsibilities. To facilitate meeting the student's needs, the nurses exhibit many roles, such as a stranger, a resource person, a teacher, a leader and a surrogate. At first, the nurses take on the stranger role when they accept the student without a preliminary evaluation.

Then, as a resource person, they provide answers to queries the students may have. The teaching nurse, a combination of all the roles, develops knowledge of the students' prior repertoire and their ability to process information. The leadership role entails the nurse to assist the student attain goals through a cooperative and active participant relationship. In the surrogate role, the nurse's attitudes and behaviors make feeling tones that reactivate feelings produced in a previous relationship (Jackson and Neighbors, 1988). Overall, it can be said that the nurse's roles are essential contributors to the development of interpersonal relationship between the students and nurses (Jackson and Neighbors, 1988).

According to Peplau, environment is composed of physiologic, psychological and social factors. Environment is in fact the context of relationship between nurse and the client (Cooke, 1996). When a positive environment is present, the interpersonal relationship is full of respect, trust and empathy. This could lead to learning, maturity and personality growth of the student and the nurse. On the other hand, a negative environment, which entails distrust and disrespect, could hamper learning and personal growth (Jackson and Neighbors, 1988). In Peplau's theory, the attitude of nurses and patients toward each other is a factor that affects the progress of their relationship.

Therefore, as Turkoski (1987) contends, the improvement of a positive student–staff relationship in clinical experiences is as significant as the acquisition of technical skills. In fact, the staff attitude is closely related to the success or failure of the students in the clinical setting (Forchuk et al., 1998).

It should also be noted that, according to Forchuk (1992), the nurses' and the clients' attitude is the most important factor in the first stage of the Peplau's theory. Therefore, we felt that in order to secure a blossoming relationship between nursing staff and the students, there is a need to probe into the current positive and negative attitudes between them. In addition, it seems that nurses should be aware of their own thoughts and feelings toward students and the possible consequences.

Methods

Aim

The interpersonal relationship, which is easily affected by environmental factors, will be explored in this research. Furthermore, because there are no published reports of application of Peplau's theory particularly in education (to our knowledge), this study was designed to probe into the attitudes of Iranian nurses toward nursing students based on Peplau's theory that can be a valuable source for instructors and authorities in understanding the current situation and attend to possible drawbacks.

Design

A descriptive cross-sectional design was used to investigate the nurse's attitudes about nursing students. The study was also planned to recognize factors that may influence or relate to the nurses' attitudes. Two teaching hospitals of Ardabil University of Medical Sciences (i.e. Dr. Fatemi and Imam Khomeini Hospitals) were chosen for data collection because only these two hospitals had the Medical and Surgical units.

Sampling

A consensus sample of 82 nurses who had the inclusion criteria (i.e., voluntary participation and having at least 6 months of experience in the clinical setting) was drawn from the population of 89 nurses who work in the medical and surgical units of the hospitals (two separate wards). These wards were chosen because students spend most of their clinical placements in these wards.

From 82 questionnaires, 72 of them were returned (response rate = 85.4%) and included in the sample. Only 2 questionnaires completed by the nurses were excluded from the sample because of incompleteness. Thus, the final study sample consisted of a total of 70 participants. It is also worth to note that 47.14% of the subjects were in the age range of 25–30, 98.1% were female, 85.72% had a baccalaureate degree, and 25.71% had 1–3 years of experience in nursing.

Data collection

Data were gathered using a demographic data sheet and a questionnaire constructed by Stagg (1992). The demographic data sheet extracted personal data from the registered nurses. The personal data consisted of age, sex, university degree, years of nursing experience, the ward, and hospital the nurse worked in. The questionnaire collected information about attitudes that nurses had toward nursing students. Stagg's questionnaire, on the other hand, consisted of 41 questions to be answered on a five-point Likert Scale. The response choices ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* with *undecided* as the midpoint. The items attended to attitudinal factors included time, motivation, knowledge, personal issues, professional issues, instructor/student relationship and the background comparisons.

The questionnaire was translated to Farsi (Iran's official language) and the translation validity was assessed by doing back translation. To find the questionnaire (content) validity, 7 nursing instructors responsible for the clinical teaching of nursing students reviewed it for duplicate or unclear questions and also important areas not probably addressed. The validity of the questionnaire was 87.3% in simplicity, 80.8% in relevancy and 79.42% in clarity. In addition, the reliability of the questionnaire determined 89.28% through the Alpha-Cronbach Coefficient.

Data analysis

In order to look at staff nurses' attitudes, completed questionnaires were coded and the data were entered into SPSS for analysis. Frequency distributions were made on factors related to time, motivation, knowledge, professional issues and instructor/student relationship. The responses were collapsed into three categories: agree, disagree and undecided because of the low distribution of other responses. Moreover, to decide the association, cross tabulations and non-parametric statistical test of chi-square (with significance level of 0.05) were employed to find the relationships between the overall attitude scores and the variables of age, university degree, years of nursing experience, and length of employment. Also, the overall attitude of the subjects was calculated separately for each participant (ranged 41–123) and was categorized to three levels (low, moderate, high). However, because of

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