

# KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS REGARDING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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**Abstract:** Introduction: The study was carried out in Fatima Memorial Hospital, Lahore. Effective communication shows knowledge, thoughts, and feelings of people besides showing who they are and what they know. It includes trust, active listening, and time control. Overall, the aim of the study undertaken was to explore the knowledge and attitudes of nursing students regarding effective communication skills. Objective: To identify the knowledge and practices of undergraduate nursing students regarding effective communication skills. Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study design was used to conduct this study at a tertiary care hospital Lahore. An adapted questionnaire was used to get the information by using purposive sampling technique. A sample size of 105 was calculated for a predicted event frequency. The data were analyzed by using SPSS Statistical Software. The data were analyzed using frequency and percentage Results: The total numbers of 105 student nurses of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year were interviewed. The majority of the study participants were lack of knowledge regarding effective communication skills. The majority of students strongly agreed that clinical communication skills and interpersonal relationships are important in nursing care. Conclusion: Based on the results, it is concluded that effective communication skills for nurses are important components for today's nursing education. Furthermore, effective communication skills should be a part of training programs to highlight its importance.

**Keywords:** Comfort, Effective communication, KAP.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nursing is not simply the capacity to accomplish a series of routine tasks rather it is a holistic practice including physical, psychological, social, environmental, and political features of an illness and its impact on patients and their families. Effective communication has long been identified as the foundation of high-quality care in nursing. Communication is frequently taken for granted as it is a part of everyday life. Communication is the process of exchanging information either in a verbal or nonverbal way and creating relationships with others (Bramhall, 2014). Effective communication shows knowledge, thoughts, and feelings of people besides showing who they are and what they know; full communication includes trust, active listening, and time control (Jason, 2012). Clinical communication skills are defined by Shafakhah et al (2015), as "Communicating with patients, their family members, and other health care team". (Cucek et al., 2017) Describe the communication skills such as verbal skills, nonverbal skills, active listening skills, voice management skills, cultural awareness, and written communication. However, there are following barriers that are effectively impacted communication e.g. Noise, lack of privacy and patient anxiety, lack of time, staff conflict, high workload (Bramhall et al., 2014). Communication is an important part of nursing in all areas of activity including prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and health promotion. Every communication has content and relationship aspects and later classifies the former. This is called meta-communication; each person responds to the content of the communication in the context of the relationship

that exists between the communicators. During the training process, nursing students should know the importance of communication. They should be able to establish the relationship of trust and empathy with their patients and family. Nursing communication skills are associated with higher patient satisfaction, better health outcomes, greater adherence to treatment, and more active self-management of chronic disease (Ferreira et al., 2016).

The study was conducted in 2016 by nursing students of Taif College about an attitude toward communication skills. They used a communication scale attitude score (CSAS) on 110 students. These students were from the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th-year classes. Its study finding shows that initially students give importance to communication skills but during their final year they devalue communication skills. As indicated by finding, the positive attitude had a share of 45.2% whereas negative attitude toward communication skills had 42.1%. There is no big difference in their attitude towards learning communication skills (Al bizrah et al., 2016). A study conducted in 2012 showed the positive attitude of nursing students towards communication skills changed from the first to last year of the study program. (Steckler R. et al., 2012). Sabanciogullari et al (2012), found that instructors have established effective and amenable communication with students because students expect to be the considerate and fair manner in their student life or in the time of learning or gaining knowledge. The study conducted by Shafa Khan et al (2014) among 200 students, 50% females or 42% were males indicates the significant correlation between nursing student communication, behavior, and treatment communication ability score ( $P < 0.0001$ ). This finding reveals students have to need to improve their communication skills to work in clinical settings. Nursing students with time learn more about their communication skills have increased knowledge and a good attitude.

## 2. RESULTS

The majority of the participants, 90.5%, were female. Most of them were 21 to 23 and from 3<sup>rd</sup> year class. The majority of those students strongly agreed that clinical communication skills and interpersonal relationships are important in nursing care. In this study, 105 students in practical clinical training completed the questionnaires.

**Table: Characteristics of the participants (n=105)**

Characteristics	Percentage (%)
<b>Age(in years )</b>	
21-23	90.5%
24-26	9.5%
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	98.1%
Male	1.9%
<b>Class</b>	
2nd year BSC.N	34.3%
3rd year BSC.N	43.8%
4th year BSC.N	21.9%

**Table 2: Knowledge of study participants (n=105)**

Q.no	Questions	(%) of rightAnswer	(%) of wrongAnswer
1.	What are the two communication goals in any interaction?	38.1%	61.9%
2.	Task communication involves which of the following?	71.4%	28.6%
3.	Task and relational communication must?	9.5%	90.5%
4.	In narrative practice, the clinician?	45.7%	54.3%
5.	In narrative clinical practice. The clinician?	65.7%	34.3%
6.	One of the three principles of bearing witness is to recognize the patient's individuality. In order to do this, the clinician must?	10.5%	89.5%
7.	The four dimensions in the quality-of-life model don't include?	20.0%	80.0%
8.	Person-centered messages accomplish all of the following except?	32.4%	67.6%

Results have shown that the majority of the study participants were lack of knowledge regarding effective communication skills. In the study, there were a total of eight MCQs based questions to assess the knowledge of undergraduate nursing students regarding effective communication skills. There is only one question out of eight which shows the maximum percentage of rightness marked by students which was item number two. 71.4% have knowledge about task communication which involves the content of the message and includes the “tasks” of communication, such as instructing, encouraging, and supporting.

**Table: 3 Percentage Attitude score of study participant (n=105)**

Variables	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
In order to be a good nurse, I must have good communication skills	1.9	1.0	3.8	16.2	77.7
I cannot see the point in learning communication skills.	21.0	29.5	27.6	19.0	2.9
Nobody is going to fail their nursing program for having poor communication skills	15.2	33.3	26.7	21.0	3.8
Developing my communication skills is just as important as developing my knowledge of nursing	1.0	2.9	6.7	36.2	53.3
Learning communication skills will help me respect patients.	0.0	2.9	4.8	31.4	61.0
I have not got time to learn communication skills	17.1	41.9	14.3	19.0	7.6
Learning communication skills is interesting	0.0	1.0	6.7	43.8	48.6
Learning communication skills is fun.	5.7	15.2	26.7	40.0	12.4
Learning communication skills is too easy	2.9	13.3	28.6	41.0	14.3
Learning communication skills has helped me or will help me to respect my colleagues.	1.0	1.9	5.7	45.7	45.7
I find it difficult to trust information about communication skills given to me by non- clinical lecturers	6.7	19.0	40.1	26.7	7.6
Learning communication skills has helped or will help me recognize patients rights regarding confidentiality and informed consent	0.0	1.9	8.6	45.7	43.8
Communication skills teaching would have a better image if it sounded more like a science subject.	3.8	11.4	21.0	45.7	18.1
When applying for nursing, I thought it was a really good idea to learn communication skills.	1.9	6.7	14.3	45.7	31.4
I do not need good communication skills to be a nurse.’	50.5	29.5	11.4	4.8	3.8
I find it hard to admit to having some problems with my communication skills	4.8	21.9	38.1	31.4	3.8
Learning communication skills is applicable to learning nursing.	1.0	2.9	9.5	56.2	30.5
I find it difficult to take communication skills learning seriously.	6.7	34.3	30.5	25.7	2.9
Learning communication skills is important because my ability to communicate is a lifelong skill.	1.0	1.9	8.6	33.3	55.2
Communication skills learning should be left to psychology students, not nursing students	29.5	42.9	18.1	9.5	0.0
It is important to clarify the treatment plan with patients	1.0	3.8	10.5	37.1	47.6
Checking for patient understanding is generally unnecessary.	32.4	35.2	12.4	11.4	8.6
Even though cohesiveness is a desirable state for health care teams, there is little an individual member can do to promote it.	1.9	9.5	44.8	36.2	7.6
Good communication is a core clinical skill	0.0	1.9	7.6	41.0	49.5

<b>Nurses and other health professionals must work to collaborate more effectively</b>	0.0	1.9	6.7	48.6	42.9
<b>Acknowledging the patient experience is not necessary in nurse-patient relationships</b>	18.1	41.0	19.0	16.2	5.7
<b>Dealing with the emotional problems of patients is the responsibility of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers not nurse</b>	1.0	43.8	17.1	15.2	2.9
<b>Giving information about lifestyle is important in nursing practice</b>	0.0	4.8	7.6	57.1	30.5
<b>Addressing patient's emotions and psychological issues is absolutely essential in nursing today</b>	0.0	2.9	8.6	47.6	41.0
<b>Good nurse-patient communication improves patient's health outcomes</b>	1.0	2.9	4.8	34.3	57.1
<b>Patients are generally unaffected by nurses nonverbal responses</b>	9.5	34.3	26.7	21.9	7.6
<b>Nurses need to be aware of their body language and use of personal space when talking with patients</b>	0.0	2.9	8.6	42.9	45.7
<b>I do not feel confident in my ability to express a sense of caring to my clients/patients</b>	10.5	38.1	21.9	24.8	4.8
<b>If I am not relating well to a client/patient, I try to analyze what I can do to reach him/her.</b>	1.0	8.6	27.6	52.4	10.5
<b>I feel comfortable in touching my clients/patients in the course of care giving</b>	0.0	11.4	31.4	44.8	12.4
<b>I convey a sense of personal strength to my clients/patients</b>	1.0	4.8	21.0	58.1	15.2
<b>Clients/patients can tell me most anything and I won't be shocked.</b>	1.0	18.1	38.1	34.3	8.6
<b>I have an ability to introduce a sense of normalcy in stressful conditions</b>	1.0	4.8	38.1	39.0	17.1
<b>It is easy for me to consider the multi-facts of a client's/patient's care, at the same time as I am listening to them.</b>	1.0	9.5	28.6	47.6	13.3
<b>I have difficulty in suspending my personal beliefs and biases in order to hear and accept a client/patient as a person</b>	4.8	27.6	39.0	21.9	6.7
<b>I can walk into a room with a presence of serenity and energy that makes clients/patients feel better</b>	1.9	1.9	19.0	58.1	19.0
<b>I am able to tune into a particular client/patient and forget my personal concerns</b>	2.9	10.5	27.6	47.6	11.4
<b>I cannot be bothered to turn up to sessions on communication skills</b>	6.7	40.0	23.8	20.0	9.5
<b>Learning communication skills has helped me or will help me facilitate team-working skills.</b>	0.0	1.9	5.7	41.9	50.5
<b>Learning communication skills has improved my ability to communicate with patients.</b>	1.9	1.0	2.9	30.5	63.8

According to our study result (50.5%) subjects having negative outcomes related to item number 18 by marking on strongly disagree and subjects have neutral opinion regarding to variable number 14, 19, 26, 40 and 43 and the percentages is lie between (38.1%- 40.1%) these are the Maximum percentages related to each item mentioned above and their options. Similarly subjects disagree about variable number 2, 3, 6, 8, 21, 23, 25, 29, 30, 34 and 36 they show negative outcome regarding to study and their percentage distribution lie between (29.5% - 43.5%).Majority of participants shows positive outcome regarding to research study by marking agree on variable number 11, 14, 13, 15, 16, 17, 28, 31, 32, 37, 41, 42, 39, 38, 44 and 45 and the maximum percentage related to each item is in between (39.0%-58.1%).Also a large number subjects shows positive outcome by marking on strongly agree on variable number 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 20, 22, 24, 27, 31, 33, 35, 36, 43) and their percentages is lie between (38.8%-77.7%). 0.0% 2.9% 8.6%42.9% 45.7%.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

**Research Method:** Research design organizes the research and explains all the most important measures of the research plan including the method and sample of the study (Neumann, 2017). Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods are the three research methods. Quantitative method is used to test a theory while qualitative method is used to build a theory (Creswell, 2019). Quantitative research method is used in the present study because of its orientation with the research inquiry and purpose of the research.

**Study design:** This was a descriptive cross-sectional study carried out at Fatima Memorial hospital (FMH). The study was approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of (FMH) and after an explanation of the study objectives, written informed consent for taking part in the study was obtained from all the students. The nursing students' communication skills were assessed using a self-administered questionnaire which consisted of three different parts. The first part of the questionnaire was related to the demographic data. The second part which involved attitude behavior and the third was knowledge.

**Research Population:** According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2018), population is a complete set of a related universe; while a research sample refers to a subset of the population that is used to generalize the results back to the population. Target population consists of individuals with similar characteristics that the researcher can identify and investigate (Creswell, 2019). The target population of the present research was the undergraduate nursing students of Fatima Memorial hospital (FMH).

**Sampling:** Purposive sampling is a form of nonprobability sampling that allows researchers to make the decision about who would be included in the sample based on the inclusion criteria of the study and who have knowledge of the study and willingness to participate in the research (Jupp, 2018). Purposive sampling technique is used in the present research to select the nursing students of the undergraduate programme. Participants who fulfilled the inclusion criteria of the study were included.

**Data collection tool:** Instrument of the present research is an adapted questionnaire to get the information from respondents. The questionnaire is attached in appendix. The research instrument has three parts: socio-demographic data, attitude and knowledge related.

**Data analysis:** Data was analyzed by using SPSS version 22. The researchers were interested to assess the knowledge and attitude of undergraduate nursing students regarding effective communication skills.

### 4. DISCUSSION

Accurate communication is a principle for nursing care and some experts have referred to this skill as the heart of nursing care (Namdar, Rahmani, & Ebrahimi, 2016). It is imperative to teach communication skills to the nursing students who take care of patients in hospitals (Xie et al., 2013). Unfortunately, the present study findings demonstrated that most nursing students required improvement in their communication skills in both clinical communication behavior and treatment communication ability. Lambrini Kourkouta et al. (2014) stated that if nurses wanted to be successful in their work, they had to study communication and interpersonal relations through special courses and internships. They also needed to learn various aspects and applications of communication in various fields of nursing (Kourkouta & Papatianassiou, 2014). Our study revealed that nursing students in higher semesters had better communication skills. These determinations are consistent with those obtained in World Health Organization (WHO) survey which indicated that communication ability of the nurses who graduated from colleges or universities was significantly higher compared to those who received lower educational levels (WHO, 2016).

### 5. CONCLUSION

While it is accepted that communication skills are vital for nursing practice and that these can be learned and developed through skills training, the attitude of the student towards learning these skills is a key factor. This study has examined nursing students' attitude towards communication skills. In the current study, it was identified that positive attitudes towards communication skills increased slightly from the second to the third year of the nursing programme and in the last year of the programme, they decreased slightly. However, it was also identified that the negative attitude towards communication skills also decreased slightly from the second to the final year.

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One of main findings of our results was that communication skills were recognized as a very important part of nursing practice by the students are given above **Table 3**. Effective communication skills for nurses are important components for today's nursing education.

### 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study review brought about the direct association of effective communication with attitude and knowledge in the field of nursing. The area of this study is not very broad, therefore more studies could be done to improve communication and to educate nurses about communication skills, barriers, behavior, attitude etc. Nurses should have to enhance their active listening skills and to participate in workshops and seminars. To support students by face-to-face interviews, reinforce positive behavior by acknowledging when person has made an attempt to do something they find difficult. Nursing students can boost their communication skills by using clear, concise and correct statements. The nursing student should use online communication tools that help in gaining more knowledge. Development of materials such as public service announcement, television broadcasts, videos, posters and workbooks among other media channels. According to Central Plank of Compassion in Practice nurses should have to keep in mind these 6Cs - care, commitment, courage, communication, compassion and competence. Nurses are backbone of any health care setting a positive attitude can increase the regularity of guarantee patient satisfaction and good performance. It is recommended that further identifies what problems have to faced students and eliminate negative factors from them.

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