

Comparison of awareness, attitude, and professional function of graduates and senior nursing students

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ABSTRACT

Background: Nurses are the biggest group of health system professionals and have a considerable effect on the quality of the health care currently being provided.

Purpose: To investigate awareness, attitude, and professional function of nurses from the view points of person himself, colleagues, instructors and service consumers (patients).

Methods: This research is a cross-sectional study carried out to compare the awareness, attitude, and function in employed nurses and senior nursing students. Subjects of the study were 54 employed nurses who had B.S degree from Shaheed Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and had been in service for 4 to 6 years in internal or surgery wards in one of the University's hospitals and were still working at the time of the study. Subjects were chosen with purpose based sampling method and were compared with 54 senior university students from the faculty of nursing and midwifery who were ready to pass their training period in internal or surgery wards and were chosen randomly. The tools for collecting data were 4 questionnaires on the degree of awareness, attitude, professional functioning, and the viewpoints of patients, supervisors, and instructors.

Results: Mean score of awareness for the nurses and students was 63.7 ± 3.2 and 45.3 ± 2.1 respectively ($P < 0.005$). Regarding internal and surgical care and updates of nursing, the score of the nurses has been higher generally ($P < 0.005$). But about paediatrics, health, and psychological nursing the two groups were almost alike. 52% of all the persons studied had a positive attitude toward nursing and 46% of them were indifferent. From the patients point of view all the nurses and students function was evaluated in a good level. But supervisors considered employed nurses better than the students with mean scores of 56.2 ± 4 and 53.4 ± 6 respectively. ($P < 0.002$) In subgroups of care and treatment, education and personal characteristics, there was no meaningful difference between supervisor's and instructors' opinions.

Conclusion: This research showed that employed nurses and students of nursing in Shaheed Beheshti University of Medical Sciences had a good level of awareness and mostly a positive attitude toward nursing. Patients had a favourable opinions about giving services and the behaviour of nurses and students.

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Introduction

Nurse is an important member in health care system. Nurses form the biggest group of health care professionals and have a considerable effect on the quality of the health care currently being provided. (1). Nowadays regardless of their clinical duty, all nurses should have technical – communication skills as well as an innovative and sensitive thinking in a developmental process. Developing these skills is time consuming and complex and it is difficult for nurses and employers to provide them (2).

One critique is always heard about universities and faculties that they don't prepare students for starting their activity in the field of nursing adequately and properly and this problem leads to lack of development of the skills and knowledge at the pace of rapid changes in today's technology. (3). Studies have shown that in spite of graduates sufficient knowledge on scientific and theoretical matters, they don't have efficacy and skills in clinical and practical settings and this lack of competency is in matters such as putting theory into practice, problem solving, and performing the skills related to . (4)

Medical education has a lot of components which are attached to each other like a chain in order to

make the student a capable graduate. Bloom has divided learning fields into three main parts attitude know ledge, and skill. Some researches have been carried out about attitude, awareness, and professional function of nurses in our country. These studies show that the newly employed nurses had the lowest score in patient education and the highest score in general skills and personal characteristics(5), and the verbal and non-verbal communication with the patients. (6) Also it has been shown that young nurses' attitude toward taking care of the elderly patients is better than their older colleagues and there is reverse relation between the variables of knowledge and age.(7)

Each of the above mentioned studies has researched on just part of the matters related to awareness, attitude, and professional functioning. Therefore this survey was designed for the purpose of complete study on awareness, attitude, and professional function from the view points of person himself, colleagues, instructors and service consumers (patients). In order to study changes in awareness, attitude, and professional function from the time of graduation, we compare senior nursing students and employed nurses. Results of this study will be useful for planners of medical education for proper nursing education.

Materials and Methods

This study is cross-sectional. We randomly selected 54 senior nursing students of Shaheed Beheshti faculty of nursing and midwifery and 54 nurses graduated from Shaheed Beheshti University of Medical Sciences working in the University's teaching hospitals in internal or surgery wards who had 4 to 6 years of in service experience.

To collect data, we used 4 questionnaires developed for employed nurses and senior students as follows.

- 1- A questionnaire obtaining patient's opinion on nurses professional behaviour communication and care, education, and personal characteristics.
- 2- A questionnaire of supervisors' and instructors' opinions on professional behaviour in the above mentioned fields.
- 3- A questionnaire assessing the awareness of participants in internal and surgical fields, nursing updates and paediatrics, society's health, and psychiatric nursing. These questions were chosen from the questions of nursing

student's final exams based on expert opinions of faculty members of internal and surgery, nursing updates, paediatrics, health of society, and psychiatric nursing. The questions were all essentials of nursing.

- 4- A questionnaire assessing the subjects' attitude toward nursing profession.

Scientific validity of data collecting tools was determined by test retest item analysis method. For analysing data, Chi square test, Mann Whitney test, and Spearman's coefficient were used.

Results

Table one shows the comparison of awareness mean scores gained by nurses and students. There is a significant difference between the scores of nurses and students in the fields of internal medicine, surgery, and updates. That means nurses were more aware of these matters. But regarding paediatrics, health, and psychiatric nursing there has not been any difference between the two groups. Also in general with a statistically significant difference, employed nurses had were more aware than nursing students.

Table two compares the distribution of frequency about the attitude toward nursing between nurses and students for each question. In the two groups 36 persons expressed agreement and certain agreement in response to the question on changing one's job if possible. (66.6%) In response to this question that with the chance of living another life, would they like to become a nurse again, the number of persons agreed and certainly agreed were 11 among nurses (20.4%) and 9 among students (16.7%) About their introducing themselves proudly as nurses, 21 nurses (37.1%) and 9 students (16.7%) agreed or certainly agreed. In general 28 persons in each group i.e 56 persons totally, (52%) had a positive attitude, 50 persons were (46.3%) and only 2 nurses had negative attitude. The mean score given to the attitude item was 42.72 ± 8.1 for nurses and 43.24 ± 6.4 for students. Mann Whitney's test showed no significant difference between nurses' and students opinions in the field of attitude. 98.1% of employed nurses and 89% of the students had a positive view about the question "respecting patient's religious, cultural, traditional and native beliefs." The least score gained was for questions number 5 and 14 that refer respectively to teaching curative and caring affairs and visiting patients

TABLE 1. Comparison of mean scores of the questions in different fields of awareness between nurses and students

Fields tested	Nurses	Students	P
Internal, surgery nursing	67.91 ± 3.0	41.09 ± 2.6	<0.001
Updates on nursing	60.32 ± 1.1	48.68 ± 1.1	<0.004
Pediatric nursing	53.03 ± 2.3	55.97 ± 1.47	Not significant
Health	53.19 ± 2.4	55.81 ± 2.0	Not significant
Psychiatric nursing	52.65 ± 1.4	56.35 ± 1.1	Not significant
Total	63.68 ± 3.2	45.32 ± 2.1	<0.005

regularly. The score gained for both questions is 46.3%.

Concerning the questions addressing patient's mental state and his companions' and the effort in preparing a private setting to examine the patient, the score gained for the students is 54%. About the question referring to regular visit of the patients by the students of nursing. The least gained score is 48%.

Table 4 shows that from the view point of supervisors, employed nurses have gained the highest score (94%) on truthfulness and friendliness. The score 69% for being on time at the beginning of the shift and unhurried leaving the shift at the end as well as handling the wards' equipments with care at the end of the shift. Finally for the question related to training the patient before performing diagnostic tests and clinical exams, the least score is gained. (59%).

Also students of nursing have achieved the highest score (91%) on "performing their role in accordance to moral and legal principles", "faithfulness towards secrets and being trustworthy", and also "truthfulness and friendliness" from the viewpoint of instructors. For the question related to educating the patient before doing diagnostic tests and clinical exams, the lowest score was achieved (39%).

This survey which was carried out on the students and graduates of Shaheed Beheshti University of Medical Sciences" faculty of nursing and midwifery in the years 2002 and 2003 showed that the degree of awareness in employed nurses with 4 to 6 years of experience who had graduated from Shaheed Beheshti University of Medical Sciences was significantly higher than in students. Mean scores for nurses and students were 64 and 45

TABLE 2. Comparison of the distribution of frequency of student and nurses' opinions about attitude toward nursing job

Questions on attitude	Favourable responses			
	Nurses		Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1- It's enjoyable to perform nursing duties	35	64.8	34	62.9
2- I would change my job if it was possible	36	66.6	36	66.6
3- It's my most joy to meet the patients needs.	45	83.3	43	79.6
4- If I could live a new life, I would become a nurse again	11	20.4	9	16.7
5- nurses are no good parents for their children	19	35.2	16	29.6
6- I take pride in my introducing myself as a nurse among others	21	37.1	9	16.7
7- Sense of responsibility and being punctual is vital for nursing	53	98.1	53	98.1
8- A nurse should be a patient and neat person.	52	96.3	52	96.3
9- Nursing as a profession prevents nurses from playing other roles.	29	53.1	26	48.1
10- Nursing does not need academic education	2	3.8	7	12.9
11- Nursing is a profession needed in the society	53	98.1	51	94.4
12- Giving services in nursing is like prayer	40	74.1	42	77.8

TABLE 3. Frequency distribution of patients’ opinions regarding professional behavior of employed nurses and students in the internal and surgery wards.

No.	Professional behavior	Good		Fair		Weak	
		Student	Nurse	Student	Nurse	Student	Nurse
1	Listens carefully to your talks about your sickness.	61	74	35	24	4	2
2	Requests you to ask him if you have a question and answers them willingly	56	65	39	35	5	0
3	Provides you with the information necessary about your sickness	59	61	37	37	4	2
4	Uses words which are meaningful to you	72	85	28	11	0	4
5	Teaches you how to handle curative and caring affairs	61	46	39	48	0	6
6	Pays attention to your complaints and tries to solve them	61	59	39	41	0	0
7	Is willing in answering your questions and tries to convince you	59	61	41	37	0	2
8	Understands your mental state and your companions and gives them relief	54	59	46	37	0	4
9	Has enough patience for nursing	59	59	41	39	0	2
10	Is kind, temperate, and good natured and has friendly manner	85	83	15	17	0	0
11	Respects your religious, cultural, traditional and native beliefs	89	98	11	2	0	0
12	Is truthful and friendly. Tells everything to you and doesn't seem to be hiding anything from you.	83	98	17	11	0	0
13	Is faithful to your secrets and is trust worthy.	80	85	20	15	0	0
14	Visits you regularly	48	46	52	48	0	6
15	Tries to prepare a private and safe place for your physical examinations.	54	65	46	35	0	0

respectively. In the fields of internal medicine and surgery and updates of nursing, nurses were generally more aware but in the fields of paediatrics, health and psychiatric nursing, the two groups were almost similar. All the employed nurses and nursing students had positive (52%) and indifferent (46%) attitude and had almost no negative attitude. Asking the patients, the professional functioning of all nurses and students was assessed in a good level. But based on supervisors’ opinion, employed nurses have gained a higher score. With dividing the questions related to the assessment of professional functioning into 3 subgroups of care and treatment, education, and personal characteristics, there is no significant difference between the opinions of supervisors and instructors. The older the nurses, the better the

opinions of supervisors about them. The higher the score given to the students by the instructors, the better their attitudes towards their job and the better their assessment results by patients.

Discussion

The study showed that employed nurses had higher degrees of awareness than nursing students. This matter is also true about the subgroups of internal medicine, surgery, and updates. With a significant difference We may say that employed nurses in hospitals could have achieved more awareness via hospital educational conferences, professors and residents of the hospital, and because of their higher experience and encountering different diseases.

TABLE 4. Frequency Distribution of employed nurses and students of nursing on the basis of supervisors and instructors opinions about their professional behavior

No.	Professional behavior	Good		Fair		Weak	
		Student	Nurse	Student	Nurse	Student	Nurse
1	Listens to patients questions about the diseases (symptoms and complications) carefully and answers to each of them properly.)	65	82	32	17	3	1
2	Teaches he patient before doing diagnostic tests and clinical exams	39	59	52	39	9	2
3	Offers required training to patient and his family	54	74	43	24	3	2
4	Tries his best to fulfil his duties and responsibilities	65	91	35	7	0	2
5	Dose not enter the ward late and is not in a hurry to leave it during his turn	65	69	33	24	2	7
6	Takes responsibility and is ready to answer about the nursing cares he offers.	76	85	24	13	0	2
7	His activities are in accordance with moral and legal principles	91	93	9	7	0	0
8	Has good humane relationship with patient and his companions	85	89	15	9	0	2
9	Has good relationship with colleagues and doesn't make challenge and contact.	83	82	17	17	0	1
10	Simply adapts with new circumstances	78	83	22	15	0	2
11	Takes part in evaluating nursing cares and assessment of colleagues	65	85	35	13	0	2
12	Is committed to religious principles and acts in accordance with them	85	76	15	24	0	0
13	Is faithful to secrets and is trustworthy	91	91	9	9	0	0
14	Is truthful and friendly	91	94	9	6	0	0
15	Gives a complete report from patients status when changing turns	44	82	52	13	4	5
16	Cooperates properly with the doctors of the ward in order to treat the patients	61	91	32	7	7	2
17	Is aware of the patients status	46	91	50	7	4	2
18	Is serious in handing in and exchanging the equipments of the ward when changing turns	61	69	35	26	4	5
19	Consults with supervisor and others when needed	80	93	17	6	3	1
20	Uses the wards equipments correctly and tries to protect wards properties	57	87	43	11	0	2

Other studies in other countries confirm the abovementioned matters. In a comprehensive research conducted on 999 nurses in England, a questionnaire including one, demographic questions, and a questionnaire related to degree of awareness, was sent for nurses. Among these nurses 333 persons worked in critical care units

and 666 in general wards. Only 555 answers were received. (56%) Among those who responded, 189 (57%) were nurses of critical care units and 366 (55%) nurses of general wards. The age range for the nurses was 20-63 with the mean age of 31. Most of them were women. Results from this study

showed a growth of awareness especially in the nurses of critical care units. (8)

Regarding the attitude it was shown that employed nurses and students of nursing had positive (5.09%) and indifferent (46.2%) attitudes and had no negative attitude.

In general 189 critical care units' nurses and 366 of those working in general wards have participated in this research by filling the questionnaires. Critical care units' nurses stated that they have greater communication with medical staff and they work with independence under the supervision of medical staff and in accordance with their directions and think of their jobs being much more valuable than their colleagues' job in general wards. Nevertheless, nurses of general wards too, referred to a high independence in their jobs. However they evaluated their job as fair to weak. However promoting a culture of respect between doctors and nurses and supporting nurses when performing their tasks independently can have a positive effect on nurses perception of their job(9). In another research about the attitude, much attention is paid to nurses' environment and the coordination between doctors and nurses. The results showed that when the nurses had been paid attention to, and consulted with on special matters like patients discharge, they have had better feeling (10).

About the professional behavior the results showed that there was no difference between employed nurses and student from the view point of patients. Asking the instructors and supervisors, nurses have been evaluated better and this matter has had a significant relation with the nurses age, that is the older the nurses were, the better they were evaluated by the supervisors. The nurses score by the supervisors were higher than students' score by their instructor. The older the nurses, the higher their evaluation score.

About the betterment of the evaluation of the supervisors from the nurses than the one about the students by their instructors we can say that this matter could have happened because of nurses constant presence in the ward and by patients bed and their increased communication with patients, because the students have to devote some of their internship hours to the conferences and instructors speech. On the other hand it seems that because of their having more experience, nurses have met their superiors, opinions better than the students or because of their experience nurses have adapted better with the wards circumstances and purposes

and have approached the favourable level. Of course getting experience by encountering different patients and diseases, facing professors and the students of different medical majors, and using hospitals conferences and clinical education, can familiarize employed nurses with new findings and their required information and in this way provide the supervisors satisfaction more.

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