

Comparison between the professional behavior of nursing students and employed nurses

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ABSTRACT

Background and objective: observing professional behavior by nurses is very important because the highest level of caring for patients is done by this group. To have an effective medical relationship between the nurse and the patient, offering nursing services with professional behavior is necessary. this study aimed to compare the professional behavior of nursing students and employed nurses. **Methods:** The present study is a descriptive cross-sectional study that clinical nursing students from the first year to last year were selected using census method and employed nurses in selected hospitals of Medical Sciences Faculty of Abadan were selected using quota sampling method. Overall, 376 people participated in this study and Data were collected by using a modified questionnaire "professional behavior of nurses" Gaz et al and finally analyzed by SPSS software. **Results:** The average score for the professional behavior of nursing students was 105.11 ± 15.44 from the total of 135 scores and for the clinical nurses, this was 112.48 ± 13.01 which shows a meaningful statistical difference ($p = 0.001$). **Discussion and conclusion:** The results showed that the average score of professional behavior of clinical nurses was higher than nursing students. According to the findings of this study, the promotion of the professional behavior of nursing students by improving the nursing education programs and providing good conditions for using the resources, making the nurses more familiar with their profession and employing the experienced professors for teaching the professional ethics are useful factors in rising the professional socialization level of nursing students.

Keywords: Professional behavior, nursing students, nurses, nursing education

Introduction

In many of the human societies, maintenance and restoration of health are very important and the healthcare and treatment sector plays an important role in this affair and is responsible for health maintenance in human society ^[1]. The nurses are the biggest group of service-providers in treatment system and their professional behavior and commitment towards the patients is very effective in the patients' recovery ^[2]. To have an effective medical relationship between the nurse and the patient, offering nursing services with professional behavior is necessary ^[3]. The professional behavior as an inseparable part of nursing profession is a set of values, norms and suitable and profession-related behaviors achieved by acquiring knowledge, attitude and

skill and results in a commitment towards a specialized field ^[4, 5]. The promotion of nurses' professional behavior not only plays a role in patients' health and increase in their satisfaction rate, but also is effective in increasing the quality of services in medical centers and promotion of health in the society ^[2]. The nurses should be informed of professional behavior and ethics theories, since being familiar with the issues like the codes and principles of ethics and the standards related to the patient's rights help the nurses make proper decisions during the care for help-seekers and offer an effective and ideal care ^[3]. To offer a care along with the professional behavior, the nurses should have a theoretical knowledge and clinical experiences. They also need to have a proper professional behavior in applying this knowledge and behavior ^[6]. One of the necessities of teaching the principles of professional behavior and ethics to the nursing students is the presence of instructors with proper professional and ethical characteristics, since they, as educational leaders, can help the excellence and internalization of professional behavior principles in the students ^[7]. Researches show that the graduates lack the required efficiency and skill in applying the theoretical knowledge and decision-making in practice in scientific and

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clinical environments, though they possess the theoretical and practical fundamentals^[8].

In Torabpour et al, the findings show that the status and privacy of the patients in medical centers are not considered^[9]. Glicken et al showed that professionalism in the students' behavior during the third semester was less than the first semester and there was a meaningful difference between the professional behavior marks taken by self-report and the ones the personnel ad given to them^[10]. But, Heshmati Nabavi et al conducted a research on the comparison of nurses' professional behavior which doesn't show a meaningful statistical difference between the professional behavior marks of the employed nurses and nursing students^[11].

The overview of the studies shows that the conducted studies in this field are very rare. On the other hand, to promote the nursing students' and the employed nurses' professional behavior, there should be information about the current conditions. And since the professional behavior is a very complicated structure which should be assessed in different learning environments, it seems that examination and evaluation of professionalism, as an important capability for the nurses, is important and not only in Iran, but also all over the world, training, evaluation and promotion of the capability have been specially emphasized. Therefore, the research aims at comparing the average of the professional behavior of nursing students and employed nurses in selected hospitals of the medical university of Abadan.

Method

The current research is a cross-sectional descriptive study conducted in nursing faculty and selected hospitals of the medical university of Abadan. The research community was first-year of clinical to last-year students of nursing and employed nurses in selected hospitals. The sample volume was determined by pilot results (20 nursing students and 20 employed nurses) and by the following formula and considering $\alpha = 0/05$ and the capacity of 90%.

$$n = \frac{2(z_{1-\alpha/2} + z_{1-\beta})^2 \sigma^2}{(\mu_1 - \mu_2)^2}$$

The criteria for selecting the samples included having a bachelor degree in nursing or being student in first-year of clinical to last-year of nursing. The criteria for putting the samples aside from the research were not answering the 20% of the questions in the questionnaire and being a guest or transferred student.

The number of the first-year of clinical to last-year students of nursing according to the census method and considering the above-mentioned criteria as 176 and all of them participated in the study. Within the clinical nurses, sampling was done by quota method, so that based on the ratio of the employed nurses in each hospital to the total number of the nurses employed in the selected hospitals on medical university of Abadan the ratio of the sample from each hospital to the total volume of the

sample in clinical nurses' community was calculated and totally, 202 clinical nurses entered the study.

The data was gathered via a two-part questionnaire the first part of which includes demographic information including sex, age, marital status, total average, the rate of interest in nursing profession, the desire to change the field of study in the future and the second part of it is "examining the professional behavior". This questionnaire is designed by adjusting the "questionnaire of nurses' professional behavior" of Goze and colleagues and Heshmati Nabavi et al have approved its reliability and validity^[11]. Its validity rate was calculated to be 76% according to Cronbach's alpha. This questionnaire was composed of 27 items and the choices "always", "often", "I have no idea", "sometimes" and "never" based on Likert scale. The scores are calculated from 5 for "always" to 1 for "never". The scores achieved from this questionnaire were at least 27 and at most 135. They were completed after receiving the ethics code and required licenses by the researcher and with stating the research aims for the participants and getting their conscious satisfaction by going to the sections in a suitable time. It should be mentioned that the samples completed the questionnaire freely and without the direct supervision of the researcher and the researcher gathered them at the end of work shift.

The participants were ensured that the data gathered from the questionnaire will be confidential and will be stated in general after analyzing the data. The data was analyzed by SPSS software, descriptive statistics (percent, frequency, mean and standard deviation) and the statistic tests of t-test, ANOVA and Mann-Whitney-u.

Results

From the 376 participants in this study, 174 participants were the first-year of clinical to last-year students of nursing (46.28%) and 202 of them were clinical nurses (53.72%). The demographic characteristics of the samples in the groups of nursing students and clinical nurses are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of demographic variables

| variables | | nursing students | clinical nurses |
|---|---------|------------------|-----------------|
| age | Mean±SD | 22±2.25 | 31.45±6.90 |
| Gender | Male | 75 (43.1) | 41 (20.3) |
| | female | 99 (56.9) | 161 (79.7) |
| marital status | Single | 157 (90.2) | 98 (48.5) |
| | Married | 17 (9.8) | 104 (51.5) |
| the rate of interest in nursing profession | high | 94(54) | 124(61/4) |
| | middle | 61(35/1) | 61(30/2) |
| | low | 19(10/9) | 17(8/4) |
| the desire to change the field of study in the future | Yes | 51 (3.29) | 73 (36.1) |
| | No | 123 (70.7) | 129 (63.9) |

The average score for the professional behavior of nursing students was 105.11 ± 15.44 from the total of 135 scores and for the clinical nurses, this was 112.48 ± 13.01 which shows a meaningful statistical difference ($p = 0.001$). In examining the questionnaire items, there was a meaningful statistical difference between the two groups in some items which are shown in table 2.

Table 2: The average score of professional behavior items for nursing students and clinical nurses

| Item | nursing students | clinical nurses | P value |
|---|------------------|-----------------|---------|
| When I take care of the patients, I completely focus on them. | 4.1 | 4.51 | 0.001 |
| I comment on the social issues affecting the healthcare. | 3.51 | 3.50 | 0.989 |
| I cooperate with other members of healthcare-treatment team. | 4.02 | 4.45 | 0.001 |
| To meet the help-seekers' needs, I provide the necessary services regardless of their personality aspects. | 3.97 | 4.28 | 0.001 |
| I comment on the ways of developing the nursing cares. | 3.56 | 3.62 | 0.421 |
| I communicate with other members of the team without any discrimination. | 4 | 4.41 | 0.001 |
| I organize the care environment so that it becomes pleasant and desirable for the patients. | 3.65 | 3.84 | 0.026 |
| I try to represent a positive image of nursing profession via my behavior and personality. | 4.13 | 4.25 | 0.115 |
| I make a disciplined and coordinated work place for myself and my colleagues. | 3.94 | 4.21 | 0.002 |
| I respect the people's right of accepting or rejecting the treatment. | 3.83 | 4.15 | 0.001 |
| I make an environment in which we can discuss the professional problems. | 3.5 | 3.4 | 0.593 |
| I can understand my patient's problems. | 3.7 | 3.9 | 0.035 |
| I can determine my patient's problems. | 3.44 | 3.37 | 0.644 |
| I decide according to my knowledge, skills and professional experiences in caring for the patients. | 3.79 | 4.04 | 0.005 |
| I care for the patient and plan for it. | 3.78 | 4.08 | 0.001 |
| I respect for the people's privacy and protect it. | 4.23 | 4.60 | 0.001 |
| I protect the confidential information about the patients. | 4.22 | 4.66 | 0.001 |
| I offer my services to the patients respectfully. | 4.17 | 4.61 | 0.001 |
| I show my empathy in caring. | 4.13 | 4.47 | 0.001 |
| I use the resources equally in offering services. | 4.08 | 4.38 | 0.001 |
| I don't behave immorally. | 4.2 | 4.51 | 0.001 |
| I report the immoral activities. | 3.58 | 3.89 | 0.002 |
| I don't act illegally. | 4.02 | 4.48 | 0.001 |
| I report the illegal activities. | 3.60 | 3.86 | 0.013 |
| I protect the healthcare and treatment documents completely. | 3.99 | 4.41 | 0.001 |
| I decide about the facts according to true and sufficient information gathered. | 3.98 | 4.18 | 0.02 |
| I protect the society against the spread of wrong information about the profession and professional activities. | 3.86 | 4.30 | 0.001 |

Mann-Whitney U

Using ANOVA statistics test there was a meaningful difference between the interest in nursing field and the average score of professional behavior for nursing students ($p = 0.02$). Also,

there was a meaningful difference between the desire to change the field of study in the future and the average score of professional behavior for nursing students using t-test ($p = 0.01$).

Discussion

This research was for comparative examination of the professional behavior status in students and clinical nurses the results of which showed that the average score of professional behavior for clinical nurses was higher than nursing students and the obtained results were aligned with the results obtained by Jabbari et al.^[12] and Kim et al.^[13].

It can be stated that the gap between the theoretical and clinical educations is the reason for the differences observed between the professional behavior of nursing students and the clinical nurses. When in practice and in clinical environments, the students observe something different from what they have learned theoretically, their professional socialization process becomes disturbed and they get away from the professional standards and these cause damage to nursing profession^[14].

To solve this problem, the effectiveness of clinical educations can be increased and the interaction level between the clinical and educational institutions can be risen. These can decrease the gap between clinical and theoretical education^[11]. On the other hand, clinical education is not only the responsibility of educational institutions, but also all of the people offering health and medical services have a part in it. Therefore, clinical and educational institutions, together, play a role in clinical education affair^[15].

Since any of the clinical and educational institutions have some strengths, the proper cooperation between them can make the nursing profession achieve its goals. Moreover, we need a formalized participatory program in the managerial level of clinical and educational institutions^[14]. Educational institutions are the best place for nurse training and employing experienced clinical instructors can promote the quality of clinical educations for the nurses^[5].

Generally, the students looked up to their instructors and this is very effective in learning the professional attitudes and behaviors by the students. The more interactions in clinical and educational environments make them to face with these professional values and internalize them in nursing students.

It seems that acquiring experience via moral cares, humanistic services and empathy with the patients increases the professional behavior of clinical nurses. The factors have an important role in formulation of professional behavior in the nurses and promote their ability of solving sophisticated problems and moral decision-making. The researches show that accountability, respecting for the values, respecting for the patients' rights and good management increase the professional behavior in nurses^[16].

Generally, it can be said that nursing students cannot achieve the required professional qualifications via passing some academic courses on professional behavior. To achieve this, they should be under suitable educations and plans when they

are students and also during their work life ^[17]. The proper programming on the coordination between theoretical and practical courses can cause the representation of specialized cares with considering the patient's rights and the principles of professional behavior.

In comparing the desire change the field of study in the future with the score of professional behavior between the nursing students and employed nurses, it was shown that there is a meaningful difference between the desire to change the field of study with the score of professional behavior in nursing students. This result is consistent with the results obtained by Price et al ^[18] and Bi Shiveh Moqaddam ^[19]. This difference is because of the inability of the students in managing the professional challenges, inadequacy of professional socialization and the mismatch of clinical environments with the conditions in which the students have been grown and educated. In fact, the difference between the ideal values transferred to the students in educational institutes and what is in the clinical environments and the real life cause the students to lose their motives and plan to change their field of study. As a result of this motivelessness decreases the will to attempt more and learn and perform the professional behavior.

The results of this study have shown that the eager towards nursing profession in nursing students is meaningfully less than that of the employed nurses. In this regard, Heshmati Nabavi et al ^[11] is consistent with the current study. These results can show that the more the nursing students become familiar with facts of clinical environment, the less interested they would be in the profession and the more they would prefer to change their field of study.

The limitations of the current study are the application of self-report method for evaluating the professional behavior in nursing students and clinical nurses. Also, the individual conditions (physical and mental) of the participants in the time of filling in the questionnaire are worth noting. It can be effective for complementation of the considered tools.

Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, the promotion of the professional behavior of nursing students by improving the nursing education programs and providing good conditions for using the resources, making the nurses more familiar with their profession and employing the experienced professors for teaching the professional ethics and more interaction between the clinics and educational institutions are useful factors in rising the professional socialization level of nursing students. They also decrease the gap between the clinical and theoretical education and finally, cause the realization of health system mission and promotion of society health. Since the evolutions of modern world changed the need to a moral approach in clinical and treatment profession into a necessity. In addition to the knowledge and skill which are essential for dealing with this profession, the development and promotion of the values, attitudes, moral norms and social skills which form the human

personality and the principles and skills of professionalism should be considered, so that the students, after graduation, do their best to promote the society health by performing their professional tasks.

Having professional ethics and considering the moral standards, having job conscience, organizing the clinical environment in terms of a proper management and efficient education leads to making discipline in the organization and offering effective clinical services to the help-seekers. Therefore, the nursing students perform the ethical behavior and the regulations governing the environment gradually cause the experience acquisition and promotion of professional behavior.

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