

Language Related Difficulties Experienced by Student Nurses

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Abstract

In a culturally diverse society, English as a universally accepted language, is needed for student nurses for communication in hospital, community setting and teaching learning. The aim of the study was to assess the language related difficulties experienced by student nurses. A quantitative research approach was adopted for the study. The research design chosen was cross sectional - descriptive research design. Sample of 151 student nurses studying B.Sc. Nursing in a selected college of Nursing were included in the study. Purposive sampling technique was used. Questionnaire to assess the personal characteristics and rating scale to assess the language related difficulties were used for the collection of data. Analysis of language related difficulties revealed that among 151 student nurses, 52% of them had experienced high level of language related difficulties and 48% of them had experienced moderate level of language related difficulty.

Keywords: Language difficulties, student nurses, ESL, communication problems, and problems during oral presentation

Introduction

Nursing curriculum is designed to assist the nursing students to develop competency in nursing education and practice, to demonstrate leadership at various levels and to provide quality nursing services at different levels. The curriculum is implements based on two aspects as theory and practice. Nursing theory enables student nurses to acquire knowledge related to wellness, health promotion, illness prevention and disease management. It also includes learning a whole range of skills related to nursing practice. Nursing practice in the community and clinical area enables the students to implement the theoretical knowledge gained in classrooms, simulation labs and laboratories into practice. The syllabus is framed in such a way to enable the student nurses acquisition of clinical competence, communication, teaching learning, and administrative competence. The course content, medium of instruction and the examinations are in English. At the completion of the course, the graduate nurse needs to gain confidence

to render services in culturally diverse areas of world, communicate and collaborate with the team efficiently, for which proficiency in English language is an essential component. Competency in English language enhances the students' ability to use the language at ease in their professional work.

Need for the study

The main inhibition in learning English was the role of English in the society as a foreign language and attrition mainly due to intervals between phases of learning English and lack of free time to spend on learning English. The results of the study conducted among 69 students in nursing and midwifery groups revealed that reading, translating and writing skills have been rated as the most important skills needed. Furthermore, the students indicated need for listening and speaking skills.^[1] a study to investigate the perceived learning challenges as well as the coping strategies employed by nursing and health sciences using a 26 item self-reported questionnaire

with a 5 – point Likert type scale revealed that the students struggle with the issue of limited language proficiency.^[2]

A study was conducted among 249 nurse students to determine the communication problems experienced in clinics. Data was gathered with a questionnaire consisting of 21 questions. Findings revealed that 76% of nurse students experienced communication problems in the clinics. The communication problems experienced were more in medical nursing course (53%), and training and research hospital of Health Ministry (46%) and with nurses in general units/wards (68%).^[3]

With increasing cultural diversity in healthcare, nurses with English as second language backgrounds are becoming more valuable in providing culturally competent care, and it is essential that they are given appropriate support not only to achieve in their academic programmes but also to communicate effectively in the clinical setting. Enhancing English language and communication skills will maximize the potential for success as Registered Nurses.^[4] A study to explore the perceived needs and challenges of English use revealed that though nursing students face challenges in general and discipline specific English use, their motivation to improve their English proficiency was not strong.^[5] Hence, the investigator had made an attempt with an aim to identify the language related difficulties experienced by student nurses.

Statement of the problem

A study to assess the language related difficulties experienced by student nurses at selected college of nursing, Perinthalmanna, Kerala.

Objective of the study

- To assess the language related difficulties experienced by student nurses.

Assumption: Language related difficulties are more among student nurses.

Materials and Methods

1.1. Research approach: Quantitative approach

1.2. Research design: Cross sectional – descriptive research design

1.3. Setting of the study: The study was conducted at a selected college of Nursing, Perinthalmanna, Kerala.

1.4. Population: Students who are studying B.Sc. Nursing degree course at a selected college of Nursing, Perinthalmanna, Kerala.

1.5. Sample size: 151 student nurses.

1.6. Sampling technique: Non probability – purposive sampling technique.

1.7. Description of the tool: The tool consists of 2 sections.

- **Section A:** it consists of items to assess their personal characteristics, which included age in years, year studying, medium of instruction in school and attendance at English training courses before starting the present nursing course.
- **Section B:** It consists of items to assess the language related difficulties especially in writing and speaking. The tool is a five-point rating scale with strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. The highest total score was 90. It is assumed that the higher the score the more the language related difficulties experienced by student nurses.

1.8. Validity and reliability of the tool:

The tool was validated by experts from Nursing and English. The reliability was assessed by test retest method. The tool was considered to be valid and reliable.

1.9. Data collection procedure:

The data was collected after obtaining permission from IEC and authorities of college of Nursing. Informed content was obtained from the student nurses who were willing to participate in the study. After explaining the purpose of the study and ensuring confidentiality of data, the data was collected from 151 student nurses who were pursuing B.Sc. Nursing course in the selected college of Nursing. The collected data was tabulated, organized and analyzed by using descriptive statistics.

Findings

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of student nurses based on their personal characteristics.

S. No	Characteristics	Categories	Frequency n(151)	Percentage (%)
1	Age in years	17 - 18	20	13
		18 - 19	35	24
		19 - 20	67	44
		Above 20 years	29	19
2	Year studying	First year	26	15
		Second year	53	36
		Third year	37	25
		Fourth year	35	24
3	Medium of instruction in school	English	131	87
		Malayalam	20	13
4	English training course before stating the present Nursing course	Yes	131	83
		No	20	13

Table 1 reveals that majority of the student nurses 44% were in the age group of 19 - 20 years, 24% were between 18 - 19 years of age, 19% above 20 years of age and 13% between 17 - 18 years of age. It also reveals that 36% were studying in the second year, 25% in the third year, 24% in the fourth year and 15% in the first year of B.Sc. Nursing course. The medium of instruction in school was English for majority (87%) of the student and nurses and had undergone English training classes before starting the present nursing course.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of student nurses based on their language related difficulties scores.

S. No	Aspect	Categories	Frequency n(151)	Percentage (%)
1.	Language related difficulties	Low (18 -36)	-	-
		Moderate (37 - 54)	73	48
		High (55 - 90)	78	52

Table 2 indicates that majority (52%) of the student nurses had experienced language related difficulties and the remaining 48% of the student nurses had experienced moderate level of language related difficulties.

Discussion

In the present study, the investigator found that among the 151 student nurses, 44% of them were in the age group of 19 - 20 years, 36% were studying in the second year, 83% had English as their medium of instruction in school. Analysis of language related difficulties revealed that 52% of the student nurses had experienced high level of language related difficulties and 48% of them had experienced moderate level of language related difficulty. The highest language related difficulties were noticed in areas such as making grammatical errors while speaking and writing in English, and difficulty to speak fluently in English with mean score of 3.4 and 3.2 respectively. The findings of this study is consistent with another study conducted among 23 internship student nurses pursuing diploma in Nursing from a selected school of Nursing, Tamil Nadu. The study revealed that all participants 100% were experiencing language difficulty with highest perceived difficulties related to inability to explain, speak with grammar accuracy and correct grammar mistakes.^[6]

Nursing Implications

As a nurse educator and administrator, one has to aim to enhance the language competency of nursing students. As English holds the prestigious position as a universal language of communication, we need to make the student nurses understand the value and importance of English language in their professional work at hospital or community setting or in teaching learning process. Provision of adequate support and guidance are essential for the student nurses to meet the language needs and overcome the language difficulties that they may face in their career.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study it can be concluded that there is language related difficulties experienced by the student nurses. Review of related studies clearly indicates language problems has an impact on the psychological wellbeing too. Hence steps may be initiated at school and college to enhance their language proficiency.

Conflicts of Interest: None

Source of Funding: None

Ethical Clearance: Obtained from Institutional ethical committee

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