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Nursing Students' Anxiety Related to Clinical Experiences

Sajid Iqbal *

Assistant Professor at Rehman Medical Institution College of Nursing, BSN, MSN from Aga Khan University School of Nursing and Midwifery, Pakistan

Noor-Ul-Haq

BSN Intern of Rehman Medical Institute, Peshawar, Pakistan

Abid Ullah

BSN Intern in Rehman Medical Institute, Peshawar, Pakistan

Zia Ur Rehman

BSN Intern in Rehman Medical Institute, Peshawar, Pakistan

Shoaib

BSN Intern in Rehman Medical Institute, Peshawar, Pakistan

Fawad Khan

BSN Intern in Rehman Medical Institute, Peshawar, Pakistan

Abstract: This research project is designed to assess the level of anxiety among nursing students regarding clinical experiences at a private nursing institute in Peshawar, Pakistan.

A Cross sectional quantitative study designed is used. Self-adopted, structured, and validated questionnaire is distributed among sample of 53 nursing students. Data are analyzed by using SPSS version 22. Chi-Square test is applied to find out significance of the variables. Results are given in the form of descriptive, and inferential statistics. Due to clinical training and practices, 11.3% students have sever anxiety. Results also signify that due to clinical practice, male students have more anxiety than female students. There is an immense need for ongoing follow-up of students' psychosocial health and development of effective coping abilities in them.

Keywords: Anxiety; anxiety in nursing students, Clinical related anxiety, DSM IV criteria of anxiety.

1. Introduction

Clinical practice has always been an integral part of nursing education; it prepares student nurses to be able of "doing" as well as "knowing" the clinical principles in practice (Admi, 1997). In nursing, the clinical experience has been observed as anxiety enhancing factor, which may affect students' learning (Mohamed *et al.*, 2012). In this section of the study, problem statement, research purpose, objectives, research questions, and in the last significance of the study to the nursing field will be highlighted.

It has been experienced by researchers of this study that nursing students suffer from high level of anxiety during their clinical exposure. Literature also reveals that nursing students have clearly identified clinical experience making them suffer from anxiety, and majority of the students had mild to moderate anxiety levels (Chang *et al.*, 2005). According to researchers, nursing students experience clinical anxiety because many institutes cannot perform well in their students coping mechanism; therefore, ultimately, their students learning level remains generally low (William and Bill, 2004). Thus, it is cleared that anxiety affects learning and specifically in nursing, clinical anxiety demotivates students.

The aim of the study is to identify the level of anxiety among nursing students regarding clinical practice, experience and learning. Research question designed for the study is as following;

What is the level of anxiety among nursing students regarding clinical experiences?

The study is significant as the exploration of anxiety level will help in further cause and effect studies on clinical anxiety. Also, the results of this study will help in setting recommendations for management of clinical related anxiety. Effective management may enhance students learning and motivation in nursing field.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Clinical Anxiety among Nursing Students

In a descriptive study Beck and Srivastava (1991) have revealed that, in Australian nursing training programs, most anxiety provoking aspect is clinical exposure of students. Similarly, other studies have also identified that clinical exposure, especially initial one, is anxiety provoking in nursing students (Hart and Rotem, 1994; Melo *et al.*, 2010).

Moreover, in two other research studies, Sources of Stress Index in Nursing (stress and anxiety measuring scale) was used to measure stress and anxiety among nursing students. The studies' results have showed that little stressors and anxiety improve the well-being of nursing students and their educational process while its long experience causes stress and anxiety that affect students' learning (Gibbons *et al.*, 2008; Gibbons, 2010). Another study has shown that clinical practice is the larger part of nursing education and generally the time spent in clinical causes more anxiety than in class room. The study has also identified that low level of anxiety can act as a motivator and performance enhancer but high levels can be debilitating and can threaten students' success in the nursing program (Moscaritolo, 2009). Thus, it is proven fact that clinical aspect of nursing training is generally more anxiety provoking than class room teaching.

2.2. Effects of Anxiety on Nursing Students

A study was conducted in university of Hong Kong in which thirty Chinese undergraduates nursing students were selected for assessment of clinical anxiety (Cheung and Au, 2011). The results of the study suggested that anxiety about potential occupational hazards at clinical site can affect the learning and clinical performance of nursing students. In the clinical setting, students often rely on support from more experienced nurses or physicians to guide them. If the appropriate support is not available, Students can experience high levels of anxiety that leads to inadequate clinical experience (Cheung and Au, 2011; Melincavage, 2011).

Anxiety has been considered one of the crucial factors that influence students learning as described by researchers that anxiety can affect each of the learning domains, influencing students' ability to perform at cognitive, affective, and psychomotor level. These studies have also reported that cognitive deficits such as misinterpretation of information or blocking of memory and recall occur as a result of high anxiety levels (Kitchie, 2008; Meisenhelder, 1987).

A research study has also indicated that female students suffer more clinical related anxiety than male students (Canbaz *et al.*, 2007). To conclude, anxiety in the clinical setting has negative effects that lead to compromised students' learning, decreased clinical performance and deficits in intellectual level of the students.

3. Research Gap and Conclusion

Different studies have been conducted on "Nursing students' anxiety related to clinical practice" but to the knowledge of researchers, almost all of these studies have been conducted in countries other than Pakistan. The studies have identified that clinical exposure is one of the key causes of anxiety in nursing students. Also, it has been identified that above mild level of anxiety affects students' performance and health. Therefore, exploration of clinical anxiety among nursing students in Pakistan and other developing countries is highly important.

4. Methodology

A Cross sectional quantitative study design is used because in cross-sectional study design, researcher can gather the information at one point in a limited time period (Bland, 2001).

The study population included students of Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and License Practical Nursing (LPN) of private sectors nursing institution in Peshawar, Pakistan. Semester-I students of BSN and all Post RN BScN students were excluded.

Random sampling technique was utilized for data collection. According to Oppenheim (1992) and Benedetti *et al.* (2010) a random sample is meant to be an unbiased representation of a group and it increases the internal validity of quantitative research and is considered a fair way to select a sample from a larger population.

Data were collected through structured, self-adopted and pre-tested questionnaire. The tool was divided in three sections including demographic data, General questions related to anxiety, and DSM-4 Criteria for Diagnosing anxiety.

A software "OpenEpi" was used for sample size calculation. By taking 95% confidence level and 5 % marginal error, sample size was 53 in the population size of 186.

Statistical analysis was performed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 22. For data analysis in descriptive statistic, percentages and frequencies was calculated for nominal and ordinal data, while in inferential statistic chi-square Test were applied for continuous variables.

Study approval was taken from the director of the institution. Informed consent was taken by informing each participant about the research title, purpose of the study, and their rights regarding participation. The participation in the study was on voluntary basis and participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

5. Findings

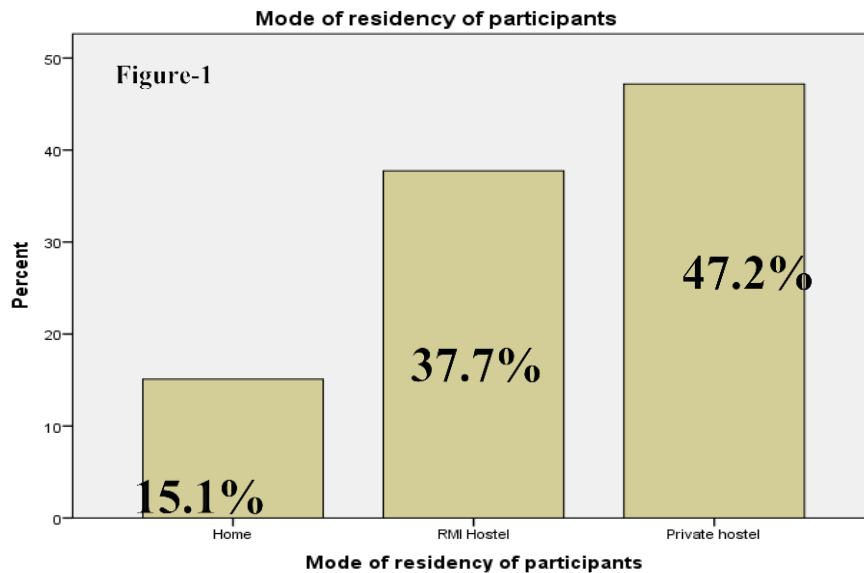
5.1. Demographic Findings

Out of total sample (53), the male and female ratio was 52.8% and 47.2% respectively. Besides, 18.9% students were in the age between 15-20 years, 79.2% were in 21-25 years of age, and only 1.9% students were in the age above 25 years. Moreover, acadmic qualification was also identified and the participants were from different classes of the selected population as shown in table-1.

Table-1. Academic qualification of the participants

Participants	Frequency	Percentage of participants
Second year BSN	13	24.5%
Third year BSN	26	49.1%
Fourth year BSN	8	15.1%
L.P.N	6	11.3%
Total	53	100.0%

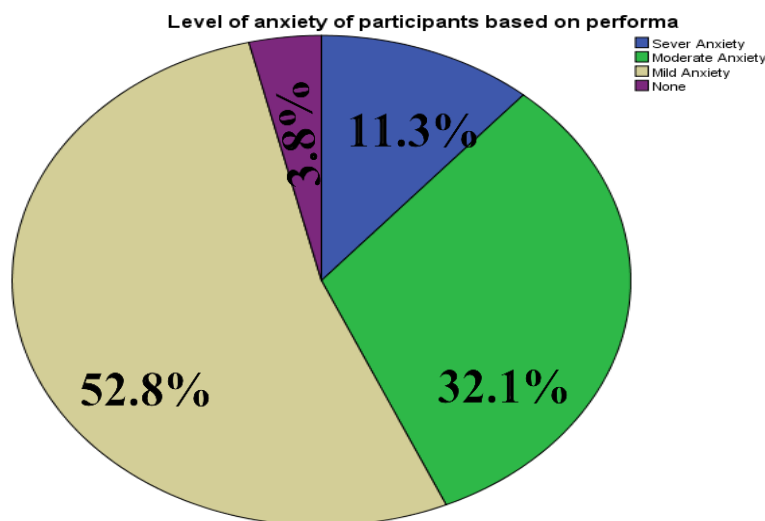
The students participated in the study were having different mode of residency during off college hours as shown in Figure-1.



The students financial status in terms of fee paymnt was also explored in demographic data; 58.5% particeptents were on self finance, 35.8% were on loan, and 5.7% were on Scholarship. Furthermore, the institutions in which students had studied before joining nursing training were also explored. 69.8% students had studied in private colleges, while 30.2% had studied in governmnet institutions.

5.2. Clinical Anxiety in Nursing Students

From descriptive analysis of the data, one of the significant findings of the study was that 11.3% students who participated in this study had sever anxiety. Also, 32.1% students were in moderate anxiety while 52.8% were in mild anxiety and 3.8% did not report any symptoms of anxiety as shown in Figure-2.



5.3. Inferential Analysis of the Study

Chi-Square test was applied to identify association between anxiety levels of participants with the variables such as age, gender, mode of finance, mode of residency, and mode of study before joining nursing training.

Association between anxiety level and gender of participants was significant ($P = 0.030$). The male students were mostly affected. Result of our study alarms that, out of 28 male students, 6 students had severe anxiety, 10 students had moderate while 12 students had mild level of anxiety.

Association between level of anxiety with age of the participants was not significant ($P = 0.819$), but 77.1% students of age between 21-25 years were affected. Association between mode of finance and anxiety level was slightly significant with ($P = 0.065$) as students with self-finance mode were mostly effected by different levels of anxiety. It is also worth mentioning that, all those students who had severe level of anxiety were on self-finance mode.

Moreover, association of anxiety with marital status was not significant with ($P = 0.126$). Also, the mode of residency ($P = 0.261$), mode of study before nursing ($P = 0.786$), and academic qualification ($P = 0.381$), were not significant to the level of anxiety.

6. Discussion

Current study has shown that due to clinical experiences, 11.3% nursing students had severe level of anxiety, 32.1% students had moderate level of anxiety while 53.8% had mild level of anxiety. Similar findings were identified in a study conducted on 30 female nursing students, in Abha, Saudi Arabia. The study indicated that due to clinical experiences, 6.7% nursing student had severe level of anxiety while 53.3% had moderate level of anxiety (Mohamed *et al.*, 2012). The percentage of severe level of anxiety in current study is notably higher than the study conducted in Saudi Arabia because of male nurses' involvement in target population of current study.

Besides, a research conducted in New Zealand has identified that female nurses faced more clinical anxiety (Harding, 2007) while current study has identified that male nursing students face more anxiety on clinical site than female students. The possible reason for males' clinical anxiety has been explained; male nurses often face challenges of gender discrimination, especially in specialties like obstetrics and gynaecology, where patients often prefer to have female nurses (Canbaz *et al.*, 2007). Also, the difference in anxiety levels could be due to low aptitude of males for nursing profession due to various reasons like societal stigmatization, inferiority complexities etc. However, this aspect needs further exploration.

Current study has few limitations. This study is conducted in private institute, therefore, the result may not be generalizable to government sector institutions. Also, there was a chance of response bias due to self-report questionnaire. Besides, the sample size could have been larger by involving other private institutions but due to time constrain that was not possible.

7. Conclusion

This study is conducted in a private institute in Peshawar. The study focuses on level of anxiety in nursing students related to clinical practices. The significant and critical feature of the study is the finding, which shows that 11.3% of nursing students suffer from severe level of anxiety due to their clinical experiences. Results of the study also signify that due to clinical practice, male students have more anxiety than female students. The results of this study will help the clinical supervisors to design strategies for more effective clinical teaching. Also, the study will help in devising further exploration studies on the topic.

Recommendations

This study signifies that further study should be conducted to elaborate the causes of anxiety related to clinical practices. A study conducted on 19 student's nurses enrolled in a baccalaureate program at a university in the southern region of the United States, has hypothesized that the use of simulation may increase confidence and decrease anxiety in nursing students (Sudbury *et al.*, 2011).

Students must be taught effective stress coping strategies in first and second semester of their training. Besides, there should be a students' psychologist to work on psychosocial aspect of students' health. It is also important to mention that based on individual student's personality and coping abilities, they should be given exposure of clinical environment. Furthermore, Students should be frequently appreciated upon timely accomplishment of their clinical tasks. Also, Group therapies should be conducted especially among those who have issues with clinical exposure.

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