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Professional Values Among Undergraduate Nursing Students

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Abstract

Nowadays it is compulsory for the nurses to have knowledge and awareness concerning professional values as standards to provide safe and high-quality ethical care. Professional values are the primary standards that any profession must have. Lack of knowledge regarding the importance of professional values makes it harder for the nurses to take decisions in case of any ethical issue. Professional values were five caring, activism, professionalism, justice and trust. Nurses' perspective on professional values affects decision-making and patient care. **Aim:** To assess the professional values among undergraduate nursing students. The research question was what are the perception regarding professional values among under graduate nursing students? The social learning theory and Bandura's model helped as a frame work for this study Bandura's model described that there is a link between nursing students, professional values and demographics. **Methods:** The study setting was an undergraduate baccalaureate school of nursing in the Lahore. Using a convenient sampling method, the data was collected using a modified version of the NPVS-R tool. (01) for not important. (02) for somewhat important. (03) for important. (04) for very important and (05) for most important. The NPVS-R was a five-dimension (caring, trust, justice, activism and professionalism) tool that consists of 26 items that are used to measure the level of professional values among the nursing students, the sample size was 133. The present study that is a cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted in 2018 in Lahore, Pakistan. **Results:** The study concluded that there is no effect of demographics on the perspective of professional values among the baccalaureate nursing students. The value of caring scored highest on the scale which comprised that all the students provided caring as the most important professional value and the lowest was seen in the case of activism. The study showed that the activism decreased with the increase in the age group of the student. Seminars, workshops' and reflective courses about professional values should be conducted regularly by faculty members and clinical instructors as they play a vital role model for nursing students. The need to adoptive constructive and collective partnership between university staff and field-based staff because the clinical setting serves as a significant for professional values development

Keywords: professional values; nurses; attitude

Introduction

Nowadays it is necessary for the nurses to have expertise and awareness regarding the professional values as code that is required to give absolute patient care and provide high quality ethical care (Poorchangizi et al., 2017).

There are certain nursing values that are considered to be the core professional values these include honesty, patient privacy, care and trust. Protection of patient's rights and

safety of his personal rights are some of the values that are important for every nursing professional. Nonetheless the ICN combined all these values into five major one's: caring, activism, professionalism, trust, and justice (Chisholm-Ford et al., 2016).

According to study carried out by Caldwell & Miller (2016) the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) published that there are approximately 2.7 million nurses

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that are registered (RNs), and in 2011, and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2012) estimated that there were 259,100 students enrolled in nursing degrees. Regarding this increasing number of nurses and nursing students, it is essential that the development of core professional values does not get neglected. Ignored value education could result in failure of better patient care. (Caldwell & Miller, 2016).

Professional values are the primary standards that any profession must have. These values are of greatest importance as they appear as certain guidelines and motivational behavior that can be followed in any profession (Lai & Lim, 2012).

Dehghani *et al.* (2015) found that care for the patient is considered to be the most important work of nurse, which requires nurses to have great knowledge regarding the core professional values. The application of these values increase the chances of optimum patient care, nurses job satisfaction, their interest in nursing and their responsibility towards the organization (Dehghani *et al.*, 2015).

Professional values can prove to be a major source to promote nurse's ethical competency and their ability to handle ethical concerns. Most of the nurses are familiar with the moral principles but they lack the competency to acknowledge the professional values that are connected with these ethical issues (Kim *et al.*, 2015).

Knowledge about the importance of professional value is necessary for every nursing student. It was observed that the nursing values that were shown by the nursing students were formulated as a result of interaction and observation of action of other nurse educators (Karimi *et al.*, 2014).

According to the 2013 Gallup poll, since 2005, 80% of Americans rate the moral standards of nurses and honesty as "very high" or "high" (Caldwell & Miller, 2016).

If future nurses are not developing the values that are expected for practice, they may be unable to fulfill the professional and ethical roles described by the Code of Ethics published by the American Nurses Association (ANA, 2010).

Salehian *et al.* 2016 observed that social justice and patients honor was the most common nursing value to be reported, through providing proper and equal patient care. The review identified that these values were similar within cultures, providing indication that there exists a humane prospective to the nursing profession internationally (Salehian *et al.*, 2016).

"Professionalization" is an essential element in the careers that are related to health care. The notion of professionalization is expressed and suggested as the most important element of many professions and this has a long history, especially in social environment. Powerful

appearance and multiple meanings of the term professionalization result in distinctive definitions with various functions and nature (Seada & Fathi Sleem, 2012).

All nurses, regardless of where they practice, will care for patients who have origins in other parts of the world. While the American Association of Colleges of Nursing has identified the relevance of social justice and the International Council of Nurses has denoted the significance of social responsibility in the nursing profession, demonstration of social justice within undergraduate nursing education is infrequent (Waite & Brooks, 2014).

According to Rutherford, (2014) observed that trust in health care profession is related to the willingness to seek medical treatment and commitment to the continuity of that treatment, and nurses being the trust care provider's impact patient care outcomes. Trust shown to nurses by the patients can be firmly linked to the greater patient care and the lower cost regarding the patient health care. The access to patients health care is effected when the nurses are not given proper knowledge regarding the role as a patients privacy protector (Rutherford, 2014).

Overall, a profession is comprised of the use of knowledge obtained by an individual in an institution which is made up of three main elements: steps taken on the basis of primary or initial knowledge or the use of practical and applicable knowledge to solve everyday problems, and the knowledge that is dependent on the skill of an individual. Adoption of nursing professional values is an important element of professional nursing practice.

Study Gap: Professional values as used by the nursing profession are responsible for maintaining high standards of patient care. Most of the nurses are unaware of the professional values that are associated with their profession. Nurses professional values system is necessary for the optimal patient care and safety. Research related to ethics and behavior done in Pakistan. But related to the importance and relationship among perception of professional values in undergraduate nursing has not been conducted in Pakistan. The present study was an attempt to discover the dimensions of these professional value baccalaureate nurses that were extensively researched upon on international level.

Research problem: The nurses have to face ethical issue regarding the patient care. Lack of knowledge about the professional values makes hard for them to make decisions about these ethical issues. The nurses should realize that just giving medicine is not their reasonability so the nurses have to take care of patients from all aspects.

A study was conducted by Farida Himat Khan in 2013, at Shifa College of Nursing, Islamabad, Pakistan it was subjected to the perception of students' knowledge



regarding ethics. The study formulated that the regard for ethical knowledge in the students were higher in posttest (4.00) then the pretest (2.26) and ($p=0.003$). The nursing students regarded knowledge of ethics and their applicability to the highest value.

The dimensions of professional values which I cover in my study will uncover to which extent the decline in knowledge of these professional values among baccalaureate student nurses occur. (Khan, 2013).

Purpose of the study: To assess the professional values among nursing students of Lahore School of Nursing the University of Lahore.

Literature Review

The study conducted by Shahriari *et al.* (2013) found that the persons are associated with the nursing profession are constantly being judged on the basis of their selfless attitude and their ability to provide optimum health care. Professional attributes are the reflection of personal experiences and are acquired through the social position of nurses (Shahriari *et al.*, 2013).

There have been conducted many studies about the professional values, Chisholm-Ford (2016), considered that professional values as vital part of nursing profession. The responses that were calculated comprised of 98% and all the participants were female with a age group ranging from 19-39 years. The overall score that was formulated by the tool was high (4.40 ± 0.51). Trust scored highest (4.62 ± 0.41) and Caring lowest (4.20 ± 0.52). Most respondents that aged (25-39 years) showed more importance to the items related to Professionalism and professionalism was regarded as the highest scoring item whereas caring scored lowest on the scale, Activism and Justice; while the respondents that aged (19-21 years) showed very little importance towards the professionalism and thus scored lowest (Chisholm-Ford *et al.*, 2016).

According to another study conducted by Katie and Caldwell, (2016) in the Midwest of the United States. The NSPV-R was used to measure professional values. Results demonstrated that there were no significant differences in nursing values of the students. As grade level increases the professional values trends decreases. The study also indicated that as the age increases professional values of trust trended upward (Caldwell & Miller, 2016)

Professional values are important in regard to any profession; it means that they are either learned or are equated by observing other people behavior. "Importance of professional values from clinical nurses" perspective, indicated that the total score of nursing profession was high. The study showed that their exist an important relationship among the work experience and the involvement of nurses in professional moral training ($p<0.05$) of Iranian nurses (Poorchangizi *et al.*, 2017).

It has been reported in USA in which the correlation between self-esteem and professional values was observed, 47 senior nursing students from the United States they were surveyed according to the revised nursing professional value scale, level of confidence (Rosenberg's self-esteem study) and the ability of making ethical decisions were analyzed.

The study revealed that there exists a serious relationship ($p<0.05$) between the professional values of the nursing student and the level of confidence that is displayed by the students (Iacobucci *et al.*, 2013).

A study was conducted by Bang *et al.* 2011 showed that views of South Korean nurses regarding the professional values (NPV) and compared the NPV scores between groups based on the age, gender and other demographic factors. The study was conducted on 529 students, mostly female (96.4%), with a mean age of 22.29 years, the sample was collected from six universities which were located all over the country. The study indicated a significant difference in scores on the basis of region. There was no relation between the NPV scores of the students, there was a 0.05 level of similarity based on the academic year, gender and the professional performance of the student (Bang *et al.*, 2011).

Today globalization, shortage of nurses and the constant start of new diseases there stands a need for utmost patient care that may result in moral problems for nurses thus they need to have appropriate knowledge regarding the professional values and they should be competent enough to apply those values in the decision making regarding such ethical issue (Goz & Geckil, 2010).

A study was conducted in Iran by Parvan *et al.* 2011 which was based on the educational rank of universities and production of professional values in the undergraduate students of those universities. A survey was used to discover the professional values of nursing profession among 240 BSc students that were selected from type 1 and type 3 universities. The study revealed no difference among the university rank and the development of professional values. However both groups related patient care as the most important professional value (Parvan *et al.*, 2012).

A study that was conducted in Turkey whose sole purpose was to identify the perception of professional values by the nursing students based on certain variables. All undergraduate nurses attending the nursing school were the main focus of the study. The sample group contained 397 nursing students selected from a baccalaureate program in Turkey. The study revealed that the age of the students and the year of academics showed some effect on the professional values of the students. Values dominated their nature that is an essential component of humanistic nursing care. They are important to nursing care and are central in

taking certain ethical issue related decisions during the practice (Kaya, Kaya, Şenyuva, & Işık, 2012)

Materials and Methods

Research Design

Descriptive cross-sectional design was used in this study. It will give an overview of what are the perceptions of nursing students regarding the professional values.

Research Setting

The setting for this study was Lahore School of Nursing (The University of Lahore) Pakistan.

Study Population

Study population for this research were the Nursing students of Lahore School of Nursing (The University of Lahore).

Duration of Study

The study was conducted from January 2018 to May 2018 in the area Lahore School of Nursing (The University of Lahore) Pakistan.

Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria of study were:

- Students of 4 years BSN (generic).
- Students of 2 years Post RN (PBSN).
- Willing to participate.

Exclusion Criteria

Exclusion criteria of study were:

- Students who will be not willing to fill up the forms.
- Students of 2-year MSN.

Sampling Technique

Convenient non-probability sampling technique was used for the data collection.

Sample Size

Sample size was determined by using the Solven's formula include was

(Slovenes 1960). This formula is given as follows.

$$n = N / \{ 1 + N (e)^2 \}$$

n = (sample size), N = Total population, (e) = margin of error.

$$n = N / \{ 1 + (0.05)^2 \}$$

$$n = N / 1 + N(0.05)^2$$

$$n = 200 / 1 + 200(0.0025)$$

$$n = 200 / 1 + 0.5$$

$$n = 200 / 1.5$$

$$n = 133$$

The sample size was 133.

Data Collection Instrument and Tool

The data was collected with the help of the revised version of the NPVS-R tool. 01 for not important. 02 for somewhat

important. 03 for important. 04 for very important and 05 for most important. The NPVS-R is a five-dimension (caring, trust, justice, activism and professionalism) tool that consists of 26 items that were used to calculate the level of professional values that are present in the nursing students. The caring element consist of 9 items, the professionalism dimension consist of 4 items, activism dimension consist of 5 items, justice dimension consist of 3 items and the trust dimension consist of 5 items (Chisholm-Ford et al., 2016).

Data Analysis Method

The data was examined with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the data.

Ethical Consideration

Before the fieldwork ethical clearance was obtained from University of Lahore, then formal Letter of cooperation was requested from (IRB) Institutional Review Board. Response of students were anonymous and data collector informed the nursing students of University of Lahore that they had full right to discontinue or refuse to participation in the study. A letter of agreement was also be attached with the questioner to obtain the permission of each nursing student. Beside this, the data collectors were trained on their responsibilities for describing the purpose of the study, giving orientation, telling importance of honest and sincere reply, on responding to the questions.

Results

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

A total of 133 questinnaires were distributed and the response rate was 100%. There were 46 (34.6%) candidates of age 18-21years, 29 (21.8%) candidates of age 22-25years, 27 (20.3%) were of age 26-29years, 25 (18.8%) were of age 30-33years while 6 (4.5%) were of age 34-37years. There were 20 (15%) males and 113 (85%) female candidates. There were 65 (48.9%) candidates of Bs Nursing (generic) while 68 (51.1%) were candidates of Bs Nursing (post RN).

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There are five dimensions of NPVS-R tool that are Caring, Professionalism, Justice, Activism and Trust. The Caring has nine items while Professionalism has four, Justice contains three, whereas Activism and Trust had five items each. An overall mean score of 4.63 ± 2.49 was obtained for the tool. The dimensions were ranked according to their



mean values. Caring ranked first (34.47±4.63), while the Justice dimension ranked lowest (11.29±2.49) (see Table 1). Table 1 also shows the percentage of respondents who answered “most important” on all items. Justice had the highest percentage of 9.2% and caring had lowest percentage of 0%.2%.

The mean caring score of all candidates was 34.47±4.63 and no respondents stated “most important” on all items. The mean trust score of all candidates was 19.46±3.32 and 5 (3.8%) respondents stated “most important” on all items. The mean activism score of all candidates was 18.26±3.49 and 6 (4.5%) respondents stated “most important” on all items. The mean professionalism score of all candidates was 14.89±2.82 and 1 (0.8%) respondents stated “most important” on all items. The mean justice score of all candidates was 11.29±2.49 and 12 (9.02%) respondents stated “most important” on all items.

Data shown in Table 2 in caring dimension, highest score was calculated for “Listen attentively and patiently to client’s questions and concerns” i.e. 4.25±0.88. While

“Willing to take risk to protect clients and colleagues” has least score i.e. 3.34±1.04

In professionalism dimension, highest score was calculated for “Documentation of care is honest and accurate” i.e. 4.19±0.87. While “Refuses to participate in care if ethically inappropriate” has least score i.e. 3.24±1.29

In trust dimension, highest score was calculated for “Maintains correct procedures and protocols when no one is looking” i.e. 4.11±0.89. While “Provides competent care that is culturally sensitive” has least score i.e. 3.74±1.04

In justice dimension, highest score was calculated for “Protects health and safety of the public” i.e. 3.87±1.01. While “Provides nondiscriminatory nursing care” has least score i.e. 3.59±1.18

In activism dimension, highest score was calculated for “Utilizes nursing research findings to guide your practice in the clinical area” i.e. 3.90±0.96. While “Participates in activities of Student Nurses, Associations” has least score i.e. 3.44±1.24.

Table 1: Ranking of dimensions according to mean ± SD, with percentage response to “Most Important” on all items

Dimension	Rank	Mean±SD	95% Confidence interval	Percentage of respondents stating most important on all items
Caring	1	34.47±4.63	18.9-20.0	0 (0%)
Trust	2	19.46±3.32	14.4-15.4	5 (3.8%)
Activism	3	18.26±3.49	36.7-35.3	6 (4.5%)
Professionalism	4	14.89±2.82	10.9-11.7	1 (0.8%)
Justice	5	11.29±2.49	17.7-18.9	12 (9.02%)
Total score		98.38±13.27	96.1-100.6	

Table 2: Mean scores of dimensions by age group

Dimensions	18-21 (n=46)	22-25 (n=29)	26-29 (n=27)	30-33 (n=25)	34-37 (n=6)	Maximum score	F-test	P-value
Caring	35.15±3.83	34.76±2.86	34.22±5.73	32.92±6.41	35.50±1.76	45	1.072	0.373
Professionalism	14.70±2.71	15.07±2.74	14.89±2.94	14.76±3.23	16.00±2.28	20	0.322	0.863
Trust	19.80±2.76	19.45±3.47	19.26±3.90	18.92±3.70	20.00±2.76	25	0.346	0.846
Justice	11.74±2.20	11.00±2.62	11.00±2.63	11.48±2.65	9.83±2.64	15	1.116	0.352
Activism	19.00±2.89	18.07±3.51	18.11±3.95	17.64±3.81	16.83±4.12	25	0.999	0.411
Total score	100.39±9.95	98.34±12.09	97.48±16.38	95.72±17.22	98.17±6.74	130	0.539	0.708

Table 3: Mean scores of dimensions by gender group

Dimensions	Male (n=20)	Female (n=113)	Maximum score	T-test	P-value
Caring	33.10±7.70	34.72±3.85	45	1.444	0.151
Professionalism	13.75±4.20	15.09±2.47	20	1.977	0.050
Trust	18.60±5.00	19.61±2.94	25	1.257	0.211
Justice	10.65±2.96	11.41±2.40	15	1.255	0.212
Activism	17.90±4.77	18.33±3.24	25	0.503	0.616
Total score	94.00±22.41	99.15±10.88	130	1.609	0.110

Table 4: Mean scores of dimensions by program group

Dimensions	Generic (n=65)	Post RN (n=68)	Maximum score	T-test	P-value
Caring	35.03±3.70	33.94±5.35	45	1.630	0.176
Professionalism	14.95±2.70	14.82±.96	20	0.265	0.791
Trust	19.66±3.02	19.26±3.60	25	0.687	0.493
Justice	11.68±2.37	10.93±2.57	15	1.750	0.083
Activism	18.62±3.26	17.93±3.69	25	1.139	0.257
Total score	99.94±11.23	96.88±14.90	130	1.331	0.185

Data was compared for score of different dimensions in age groups. At the early age of 18 to 21 Caring, Justice and Activism were higher whereas professionalism was lowest. Activism lowers with the age whereas caring remains constant throughout the age and shows no impact of age on professional values (Table 2).

Data was compared for score of different dimensions in genders. There was insignificant difference for all dimensions and total score of candidates. Thus, showing no impact of gender on professional values and both genders paying equal attention to professional values (Table 3).

Data was compared for score of different dimensions in both degree programs. There was insignificant difference for all dimensions and total score of candidates. Thus, showing no impact of degree program on professional values and candidates of both degree programs paying equal attention to professional values (Table 4).

Conclusion

The study aimed to provide an insight towards the better understanding of development of professional values in nursing students. The literature that is available in this regard seeks to show the effects of variables on the professional values of nursing students with respect to their degree and their nursing experience. The study used the NPVS-R tool to measure the professional values among the

baccalaureate nursing students, this study determined that there was no relationship among the professional value and the age, gender and the degree of the nursing students. When applying the social learning theory of Bandura, the results indicate that the social learning theory doesn't seem applicable as the nursing professional in this sample were not affected by age gender and degree of education. The relationship on the basis of professional experience were not analyzed in this study that could have yielded some different aspects. The professionalism appeared to be increased with age but the value is very low. Caring for the patient scored highest in the study and that maintains its value with the advancement in the age group of the student. Activism appears to be decreases with age which yields to some important questions that have to address in order to increase activism in the nursing professionals for the betterment of the nursing profession.

Discussion

The study determined that although the participants score low in some categories, professional values were somewhat high among the nursing students who participated in the study. However, the younger students showed caring, justice and activism whereas with the increase in age there appears to be a slight increase in professionalism while the activism appear to have decreased with the increasing age. Essentially this study showed that the individuals have



values that are equitable for the making of a good professional individual. The effects that professional values have in the actual practice of nurses have not been analyzed in this study and may have been able to generate some different perspective on professional values of nurses in Pakistan.

The five items on which the 18- 34 age group scored the highest scores may be related to the high level of professional sincerity. On the contrary all the nursing students maintained caring as the main and most important professional value while the item “willing to take risk to protect clients and colleagues” received the lowest score 3.34 ± 1.04 . Only a small portion of students indicated that it was important to assist in emergency while they are off duty. Apart from the fact that nursing is regarded as a helping occupation there is still cultural implication in the students attitudes towards rendering help to others (Jeffreys, 2012).

On the other hand the fact of pressure from the authorities and the constant stress to meet personal deadlines and the increase in action taken against the nursing professionals have compelled nurses to focus more on the documentation of care of patients rather than providing the actual care (Kahouei et al., 2014). “Documentation of patient is honest and accurate” received the highest score 4.19 ± 0.87 it was also intended that it was a major quality in providing care for the patients (Chisholm-Ford et al., 2016).

Lack of critical thinking skills among nursing students are poignant in their ability to make sound decisions. The main and the utmost responsibility of the nursing students as well as the nursing professional is to make sure that the patients are provided with utmost care. This can only be achieved when all the patients are treated with dignity, respect and care which can only be provided to the patients when the students have the knowledge about the concerned professional values (Reising, 2012).

The study points out towards the fact that the score of activism decreases as the age of the nurse’s progress and this renders to the fact that the lack of activism may result in lack of new and upcoming research techniques which makes the patient care to be irrelevant. The study showed that the participants scored the lowest in items regarding “participates in activities of Student Nurses, Associations”. Eventually this lack of interest in the emerging sciences will lead to the negligence in education and training opportunities for students and nursing professionals alike (Benner, 2012).

Students in the oldest age group showed a slight increase in the professionalism which is not very significant whereas the activism seem to be decreasing as the age increases and there is significant increase in trust and justice. Low ranking in activism were also found in some other studies (Parvan

et al., 2012). The low-ranking items show that these are the areas where there is necessary to take steps for the improvement of professional values so that the nursing profession could be taken towards further betterment regarding its every aspect.

Limitations

The study had numerous limitations which comprised an inability to generalize the data due to the process of convenient sampling. This study was conducted in only one hospital and although all the nursing of BS nursing Post RN and the students of BS generic nursing were invited to take part in the study only a few opted to become a part of the survey. The sample of the students that completed the survey contained only a few male students that comprised the data collected on the basis of the gender.

The time limit that was given to complete this study was very short that provided to be a milestone in the study. It is possible that the students from which the data is collected could have overstated their professional values. The fact that the students knew that they were being a part of the study could have made the students to be subconsciously alter their true responses. This flaw can be altered if the same study is catered form different universities providing a large pool of participant from which the data has to be collected.

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