

# The Relationship between Nursing Staff Communication Skills and Quality of Nursing Care in A Pediatric University Specialized Hospital

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## Abstract

**Background:** Studies were done all over the world related to communication skills and quality of nursing care but most of studies were done in that context based on others perspectives'. Nursing staff are the dominant hand in health care system, their skills development particularly communication skills could improve quality of care especially when dealing with children.

**Aim of Study:** The aim of this study is to assess the relationship between nursing staff communication skills and quality of nursing care in Pediatric University Specialized Hospital.

**Subjects and Methods:** A descriptive correlational design was utilized to collect data which was conducted in 4 Icu units in a Pediatric University Specialized Hospital affiliated to Cairo University Hospitals in Egypt. The sample was equated of 40 nurses of nursing staff and their assigned 40 patients who meet criteria. Data were collected through Glasgow coma scale; demographic data, medical and nursing datasheet was reviewed. It was also collected by utilized two observational checklists used in data collection were developed by the researcher. Developed tools are Communication Skills (CSOC) and quality of nursing care (QOC), these tools were validated by experts' opinions and pilot-tested. The time framework of the study was April 2018 to February 2019.

**Result:** The study revealed that (67.5%) of the studied sample had unsatisfactory communication skills and (75%) of the studied sample had unsatisfactory quality of nursing care. Also there was a highly statistically significant relation between communication skills and quality of nursing care.

**Conclusion:** A strong positive relationship between nursing staff communication skills and quality of nursing care in the selected pediatric hospitals is what current study resulted in.

**Recommendations:** The study recommended that training courses on communication skills for nursing staff should be conducted, studies should be encouraged in the field of communication in nursing career as it is an important element in quality of care.

**Key Words:** *Communication skills – Pediatric nurse – Quality of nursing care – Nursing process.*

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## Introduction

**COMMUNICATION** is a vital element in nursing in all areas of activity, including prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, education, and health promotion. Communication skill is a core skill for all healthcare professionals and nursing staff in particular, as nurses spend more time with patients and relatives than any other healthcare professional [1]. Nurses working in Intensive Care Units (ICU) find it especially challenging to communicate with very ill patients [2]. Communication between nurses and these patients requires specific knowledge, skill and commitment. Some studies have shown that in real-world clinical practice most of the complaints received from patients in intensive care units on health professionals are related to ineffective communication and not to the lack of clinical skills [3]. Nurse-patient communication is highly important especially when the patient is a child because childhood is one of the most important stages of development [4]. Recent studies showed that most medical errors were not really due to defect in medical technologies or negligence of healthcare providers; rather, they were absolutely related to ineffective communication between patients and healthcare providers [5]. The Joint Commission's analysis of 2012, 2013 and first-quarter 2014 data revealed that in all three time frames, communication was one of the top three leading causes of sentinel events, a patient safety event unrelated to the patient's illness or condition that results in death, permanent harm or another qualifying negative outcome [6].

### *Significance of the study:*

Patient communication is crucial. Because the time spent at a hospital is usually stressful for patients and their families, they often tend to get impatient and angry if they feel that they are not being treated well. Also bad or ineffective commu-

nication can take a bad situation and make it worse. It leads to problems and could even endanger a patient's life. A nurse who is good at communicating can get the message across clearly, can save a lot of time, also get a lot more information out of a patient, resulting in quicker diagnoses and more effective treatment plans. These are just some of the reasons why it is necessary for all nurses to sharpen and practice their communication skills so that they can improve. Being able to communicate well make nurses act and perform their job in a professional way which will improve their image in the community. This study will contribute in assessing nature of relationship between communications skills and quality of nursing care in selected setting in Egypt.

#### *Research questions:*

What is the relationship between nursing staff communication skills and quality of nursing care in Pediatric University Specialized Hospital?

### **Subjects and Methods**

*Research design:* A descriptive correlational design was utilized for this study.

*Setting:* The study was conducted at a Pediatric University Specialized Hospital affiliated to Cairo University Hospitals within time frame from April 2018 to February 2019, the selected Intensive Care Units (ICU) were (third floor ICU units which contain two ICU unit; one is critical cardiac ICU and the second is cardiac rehabilitation ICU-fourth floor ICU-fifth floor ICU).

*Subjects:* A sample of (40) nurses (31 staff nurses, 4 charge nurses and 5 head nurses) and their assigned (40) patients who meet criteria in the selected four ICU units from all nursing staff levels working during morning shift and accept to participate. The sample was statistically equated.

#### *Inclusion and exclusion criteria:*

Inclusion criteria for nurses: Years of experience is more than 6 months-permanent nurse. Inclusion criteria for patient: Age 7-11 years-fully conscious patient which is detected through using Glasgow coma scale-at least an overnight stay in hospital. Exclusion criteria for patient: Emergency cases-Neonatal cases-Patients with neurological disorders -Mental retard patient.

*Tools of data collection:* Data for the present study was collected by utilizing the following tools:

- *1st tool:* Communication Skills Observational Checklist (CSOC) (tool 1): This tool was developed by the researcher for measuring nursing staff com-

munication skills, through using the concept of caring adopting by Milton Mayer 8 major ingredients as necessary for caring in nursing (knowledge, alternating rhythms, patients, honesty, trust, humility, hope and courage) and the five 'Cs' of caring (compassion, competence, confidence, conscience and commitment) [7]. Which consists of two parts (personal data for nurses, work environment related data and communication skills).

*Scoring system:* Each item of communication skills observational checklist was checked by the researcher as three-point Likert scale as following: Correct (2) partially correct (1) not correct (0). The scores of each part and for the total observation checklist were converted into percent scores.

- *2nd tool quality of nursing care observational checklist (QOC) (tool 2):* This tool was developed by the researcher for measuring quality of pediatric nursing care, through reviewing and adopting the model of nursing process [8] and it contain items of child care similar to [9]. This consists of (five categories include steps of nursing process (assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation and evaluation). Five categories of nursing process measuring quality of care.

*Scoring system:* Each item of quality of nursing care observational checklist was checked by the researcher as three-point Likert scale to assess quality of care as following: Always (3) sometimes (2) never (1). The scores of each part and for the total observation checklist were converted into percent scores.

*Validity and reliability:* The developed tools were formulated and submitted to a seven experts in the field of nursing administration and quality assurance departments from the faculty of nursing cairo university and the selected hospital to assess the content validity. Reliability was assessed to confirm the validity of the tools.

*Pilot study:* A pilot study was conducted on in May 2018 on 10% of the sample to estimate the needed time for data collection and to test feasibility, clarity and the applicability of the study tools. And to detect any possible obstacles that might face the researcher and interfere with data collection based on the result of the pilot study. Since no changes were needed in the data collection tools. The pilot sample was included in the main study sample.

*Methods of data collection:* Once an official permission was obtained from the director of the hospital to proceed with the proposed study. As

well as the director of nursing service administration. Meeting and discussion was held between the researcher and the nursing administrative personnel in each selected ICU unit to make them aware of the objectives of the research. Data collection was started by selecting participants according to the study inclusion and exclusion criteria. Then each participant was interviewed individually to make them aware of the objectives of the research, ask his/her acceptance to participate in the study, taking consent. Later collecting demographic data and work environment related data in communication skills tool. Then each participant was observed by the researcher using communication skills observational checklist according to availability of assigned patients who met the study inclusion and exclusion criteria. Each participant was interviewed individually, observed twice for two check lists and medical and nursing sheets was reviewed for about 6 months starting informal for two weeks in April 2018 until permission done and formal from May to July 2018, then in January and February 2019.

**Ethical consideration:** An official primary approval to conduct the proposed study was obtained from the Research Ethical Committee, Faculty of Nursing, Cairo University then an official permission was obtained from the director of Specialized Pediatric University Hospital. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary; each participant had the right to accept or refuse participation in the study. Informed consent was obtained from the study subjects. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured through coding the data, every participant had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, participants were assured that this data will not be reused in another research without permission, data collected was used in the purpose for the research only and the entire needed sample in the study was followed until been analyzed.

**Statistical analysis:** The collected data were scored, tabulated and statistically analyzed by computer using "Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) program version 20". Descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages for qualitative variables, and means, standard deviations and medians for quantitative variables. Statistical significance was considered at  $p < 0.05$ . Appropriate statistical test were applied for data analysis.

## Results

Table (1) reveals that three quarters of the sample (75%) were females and more than half of the sample (65%) was in the age category 21-30

and married (57%). Also more than the third (42%) had diploma education while 30% had Bachelor degree. More than half (57%) had 1-10 years of experience and more than the third (35%) worked in El-Nagar Unit while more than three quarters (77.5%) worked in medical unit and 45% long shift with more than half of the sample (57%) worked 2-3 shifts. Table (2): Reveals that the majority of the studied sample (67.5%) had unsatisfactory communication skills while only 32.5% had satisfactory level. Table (3) reveals that the majority of the studied sample (75%) had unsatisfactory quality of nursing care while only 25% had satisfactory level. Table (4) reveals that there is a highly statistically significant relation between communication skills and quality of nursing care. All those with unsatisfactory communication skills had unsatisfactory quality while the majority of those with satisfactory skills had satisfactory quality.

Table (1): Socio-demographic data and work related data of studied sample (n=40).

Items	No.	%
<b>Gender:</b>		
Female	30	75.0
Male	10	25.0
<b>Age (years):</b>		
21-30	26	65.0
31-40	6	15.0
>40	8	20.0
Mean=31.6, SD=9.7		
<b>Marital status:</b>		
Single	17	42.5
Married	23	57.5
<b>Education:</b>		
Diploma	17	42.5
Technical Institute of Nursing	11	27.5
Bachelor degree in nursing	12	30.0
<b>Experience (years):</b>		
1-10	23	57.5
11-20	9	22.5
>20	8	20.0
Mean=11.6, SD=10.3		
<b>Unit name:</b>		
El-Naggar ICU	14	35
Intensive & Intermediate ICU	13	32.5
Cardiac ICU	9	22.5
Cardiac rehabilitation	4	10
<b>Unit type:</b>		
Surgical	13	32.5
Medical	27	77.5
<b>Type of shift:</b>		
Morning	8	20.0
Mix	9	22.5
24 hours	5	12.5
Long	18	45.0
<b>Number of shifts/week:</b>		
2-3	23	57.5
4-5	13	32.5
6-7	4	10.0
Mean=3.7, SD=1.3		

Table (2): Levels of communication skills among studied sample.

Levels	No.	%
Unsatisfactory (<50%)	27	67.5
Satisfactory (>50%)	13	32.5

Table (3): Levels of quality of nursing care among studied sample.

Levels	No.	%
Unsatisfactory (<50%)	30	75.0
Satisfactory (>50%)	10	25.0

Table (4): Relation between level of communication skills and level of quality of nursing care.

Communication skills	Quality of nursing care				Chi square	p-value
	Unsatisfactory		Satisfactory			
	No.	%	No.	%		
Unsatisfactory	27	100.0	0	0.0	27.6	0.0001*
Satisfactory	3	23.1	10	76.9		

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to assess the relationship between nursing staff communication skills and quality of nursing care in Pediatric University Specialized Hospital. This study was conducted in four ICU units and a sample of 40 nurses (31 staff nurses, 4 charge nurses and 5 head nurses) were involved randomized. Regarding to the results of demographics of sample (75%) of nurses are female, (30%) have bachelor degree which consistency with other study [10].

In this study nurses are observed to detect their communication skills with patients based on two concepts. The study results of levels of communication skills among studied sample show that the majority of the studied sample had unsatisfactory communication skills while only third of them had satisfactory level. As it shows that nursing staff have poor communication skills, which differ from results of other studies [10-12] as these studies reveals that nurses have high level of communication. And agree with an Indonesian study [13], as resulted that nurses have low level of communication. The investigator observations that low level of nursing staff communication skill might be due to lack of knowledge, the gap in the application of theory in actual clinical practice, unavailable and unapplied policies, procedures and job description and unavailability of systematic organization among disciplines.

As a whole after measuring quality of nursing care among studied sample. The study reveals that levels of quality of nursing care among studied sample the majority of the studied sample had unsatisfactory quality of nursing care about 75% while only quarter of studied sample had satisfactory level. This result is similar to results of other studies [14-16], but it was from nurses' perspectives and it showed that, 93.0% of nurses have no sufficient qualified nurses in the nursing process. But the current study results are unlike results in a Brazilian study in a Pediatric Hospital [17,18].

Showing relation between level of communication skills and level of quality of nursing care. The study reveals that there is a highly statistically significant relation between communication skills and quality of nursing care. All those with satisfactory and unsatisfactory levels as unsatisfactory communication skills had unsatisfactory quality while the majority of those with satisfactory skills had satisfactory quality which answer the question of the current research that nursing staff communication skills could impact quality of nursing care in the selected setting. In congruence with what said by [19] that resulted that delivering care, communicating with patients and family caregivers, as nurses spent time in communicating with patients and effort is done in order to drive quality of care which mentioned that relation between nurse communication skills and efforts to drive quality care is positive. Also it agree [20] who mentioned that communication skills can affect the quality of care and also recommended that managers should consider effective communication training to provide quality of care.

### Conclusion:

A strong positive relationship between nursing staff communication skills and quality of nursing care in the selected pediatric hospitals is what current study resulted in.

### Recommendations:

Training courses on communication skills for nursing staff should be conducted in order to improve their way dealing with patients, also improve their exchange of patient related information, better dealing with patient health situations, better care provided, which finally makes patient satisfied, nurses have self-esteem and providing quality nursing care. Nurses should try more gaining patients and family trust by being more skillful and showing advocacy for patient and family. Also give family hopeful information about their children conditions. It is important to involve nursing staff in educational programs in the application of the-

oretical framework of nursing process in clinical situations, to achieve quality of care; also for continuous staff development. Encouragement of conducting studies in the context of nursing communication skills using large scale and number of patients also considering all shifts. Also adopting studies for nursing communication with physicians, technicians, workers and others.

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## العلاقة بين مهارات التواصل لهيئة التمريض وجودة الرعاية التمريضية بمستشفى الأطفال الجامعى التخصصى

أجريت دراسات فى جميع أنحاء العالم تتعلق بمهارات التواصل وجودة الرعاية التمريضية، لكن معظم الدراسات أجريت فى هذا السياق بناء على منظور الآخرين. طاقم التمريض هم اليد الأكثر فاعلية فى نظام الرعاية الصحية. تنمية مهارات هيئة التمريض وخاصة مهارات التواصل يمكن أن تحسن جودة الرعاية التمريضية خاصة عند التعامل مع الأطفال.

الهدف: هدف هذه الرسالة هو تقييم العلاقة بين مهارات التواصل لهيئة التمريض وجودة الرعاية التمريضية بمستشفى الأطفال الجامعى التخصصى.

التصميم: تصميم هذه الرسالة هو وصفى ترابطى.

العينة: عبارة عن عينة من ٤٠ فرد من هيئة التمريض و ٤٠ حالة المسئولين عنهم.

الموقع: لقد أجريت الرسالة بمستشفى الأطفال الجامعى التخصصى التابعة لمستشفيات جامعة القاهرة ووزارة الصحة.

الأساليب: إثنين من قوائم الملاحظة تم إنشائها بواسطة الباحث وهم كالتالى قائمة ملاحظة مهارات التواصل لهيئة التمريض وقائمة ملاحظة جودة الرعاية التمريضية.

النتائج: لقد أظهرت النتائج أن أغلبية عينة البحث (٦٥.٥%) لديهم مستوى مهارات تواصل غير مرضى وأغلبية عينة البحث (٧٥%) لديهم مستوى جودة رعاية تمريضية غير مرضى. أيضاً يوجد علاقة إحصائية عالية بين مهارات التواصل لهيئة التمريض وجودة الرعاية التمريضية.

الملخص: يوجد علاقة إيجابية قوية بين مهارات التواصل لهيئة التمريض وجودة الرعاية التمريضية فى مستشفى الأطفال الجامعى التخصصى.

التوصيات: عقد دورة تدريبية لهيئة التمريض فى مهارات التواصل وتشجيع الأبحاث فى هذا المجال.