

## Effect of a Training Program on Intern Nursing Students' Professionalism

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### Abstract

**Background:** Professionalism in nursing reflects the act of providing quality patient care while honoring the values of respect, advocacy, and responsibility. Professionalism also extends to a nurse's ability to communicate clearly and self-reflect on behaviors and actions, always striving for both professional and personal development **Research Aim:** to assess the effect of a training program on improving intern nursing students' professionalism **Research design:** A quasi experimental design was utilized from January 2021 - May 2021. **Research Setting:** The study was carried out at faculty of nursing affiliated to Fayoum University **Sample:** The subjects were 165 intern nursing students through convenience sample. **Tool:** A self-administered questionnaire after translated to Arabic language, containing three parts (Demographic characteristics, Professionalism scale) **Results:** Mean score of scientific and technical domains pre intervention were  $6.87 \pm 2.34$  and  $5.23 \pm 1.76$ , while post intervention was  $12.76 \pm 3.56$  and  $10.90 \pm 3.24$  and follow-up were  $11.80 \pm 3.24$  and  $10.13 \pm 2.80$ . Additionally, mean score of face to face interview and peer review domains pre intervention was  $5.60 \pm 1.34$  and  $7.12 \pm 2.56$ , while post intervention were  $10.50 \pm 2.24$  and  $13.21 \pm 3.01$  and follow-up were  $10.03 \pm 2.65$  and  $12.43 \pm 2.70$ . **Conclusions:** This study concluded that more than two thirds of studied intern nursing students had low professionalism pre intervention, while improved to more than half of them had high professionalism post intervention and follow-up with high significant difference at p value  $< 0.01^{**}$ . **Recommendation:** Provide education program for head nurses about benefits of achieving professionalism at work. Assess the factors that hinder achieving professionalism at nursing.

**Keywords:** Behavior; Nursing; Professionalism; Intern students.

### Introduction

Professionalism is defined as the conduct, goals, or qualities that characterise or mark a profession or a professional person. A profession is defined as a calling that necessitates specialised knowledge and, in many cases, extensive academic preparation (Lecours et al., 2021). Nursing professionalism encompasses a set of values that are critical to improving the methods, standards, and judgments that guide nursing practices every day while elevating the quality of patient care (Franjic, 2020).

Professionalism in nursing refers to the act of providing excellent patient care while upholding the principles of respect, advocacy, and accountability. Professionalism also includes a nurse's capacity to communicate properly and self-reflect on behaviours and actions, with a constant desire to improve both professionally and personally (Elksas et al., 2021). A study from Iran categorises the many aspects of nursing professionalism into three categories: cognitive, attitudinal, and psychomotor (Santangelo, 2021).

Continually learning about professional conduct and applying it in work contexts is the cognitive form of professionalism. Finally, nurses who use this skill should learn to prioritise and make decisions successfully (Masters & Rushing, 2021). While the attitudinal dimension of nursing professionalism guides nurses as they perform their jobs and grow in their careers, attitudes should coincide with practical standards and organisational goals. The ability to be flexible and make sacrifices for the greater good is critical to navigating future professional obstacles (Alvehus, 2021).

Furthermore, the psychomotor aspect of professionalism in nursing promotes the idea that as professionals gain experience, they can do more than build their clinical skills. They can sharpen their management skills and better understand the inherent obligations and commitments involved in the practice of nursing. Over the span of their careers, nurses can implement proven methods to bolster their self-discipline and self-learning skills (Vaz, 2020).

Conflict resolution, critical thinking, double-checking work, adaptability, and leadership are all required for nursing professionalism (Lau et al., 2020). When it comes to these abilities, critical thinking entails making decisions based on facts and objective analysis. Keeping careful, unambiguous notes in the patient record, paying attention to detail, and adhering to the nursing care plan (Paulsen & Kolst, 2022). Double-checking work will help to avoid mistakes that could affect patient care. Adaptability means being able to alter approaches when the situation calls for it. Leadership is motivating oneself or a group to work toward achieving a specific goal. Having the ability to grow, as well as dedicating time to personal development, can aid in understanding goals, strengths, and weaknesses (Vaismoradi et al., 2020).

In fact, students who receive increased training in the area of professional development begin their nursing career more

prepared to handle the rigours of nursing practice, as well as be an asset to their healthcare organization. In a less direct way, patients, the community, and other interdisciplinary team members are also stakeholders in this project (Iheduru-Anderson, 2020). There are many scales and tools used to assess the improvement of the students' professionalism. Such as the social learning theory and Bandura's model and the nursing students' professional behaviours scale (NSPBS), Nursing Professional Values Scale-Revised (NPVS-R) (Poorchangizi, 2019; Goz & Geckil, 2010).

### **Significance of the study:**

Nursing students' growth should include professional nursing ideals such as integrity, impartiality, honesty, and objectivity. As a result, nursing students must build competence, which encompasses professional behaviors and nursing ideals including trustworthiness, impartiality, honesty, and objectivity. As a result, boosting nursing students' professionalism should include a focus on ethics. Furthermore, nursing students' professional behaviour should be developed through the socialisation process with nursing instructors (Tomas et al., 2021).

### **Aim of the study:**

This study aimed to assess the effect of a training program on intern nursing students' professionalism, through:

- Assess intern nursing students' professionalism behavior.
- Apply training program for intern nursing students about professionalism.
- Evaluate the effect of training program on intern nursing students' professionalism

### **Research hypothesis:**

**H:** Training program will have a positive effect on intern nursing students' professionalism.

## Method

### Research design:

A quasi experimental design was utilized from January 2021 - May 2021.

### Research Setting:

The study was carried out at the faculty of nursing affiliated to Fayoum University, which is supervised by the Ministry of higher education.

### Subjects:

Convenience sample contained nursing students of the Internship year at Faculty of Nursing, Fayoum University regardless of their age, gender and previous education.

### Sample Size:

The estimated sample size was 165 intern nursing students, at confidence level 95%, and the precision rate at 0.05 by using the equation devised by Thompson (2012) as the total number of available nursing students at Internship year was 360 students.

$P= 0.5$ ,  $N=$  Total population,  $Z= Z$  value "1.96",  $D=$  Standard Error,  $n=$  sample size

### Data Collection:

An Arabic questionnaire was adapted by the researchers after extensive literatures review. It was intended to measure professionalism among intern nursing students, it consisted of two items:

**Part I: Demographic characteristics of intern nursing students:** included age, gender, previous education level and residence and previous training course about professionalism

**Part II: Professionalism scale:** It was adapted from Kim et al., 2017. It contains 28 items divided on seven dimensions as: (1), Scientific dimension (5 items) as: Is subjective and objective data of the client accurately collected?; (2), Technical dimension (4 items) as: Are the resources necessary for treating the client used in an effective manner?; (3), Ethical dimension (4 items) as: Is the role of the client's advocate being practiced?; (4), Aesthetic dimension (3 items) as: Am I practicing empathy and reacting sensitively to the client?; (5), Existential dimension (3 items) as: Do I have a holistic understanding of the client?; (6), Face-to-face interview dimension (4 items) as: Motive for the application and aspirations; (7), Peer review dimension (5 items) as: Utilize nursing knowledge, make clinical decisions, and analyze critical situations.

### ❖ Scoring system:

Each item was scored with Likert scale with three points Agree, sometimes, and disagree, with scores 3, 2, 1 respectively for positive items and vice versa for negative items and total score divided to high professionalism if score >70%, moderate if score 50 to 70% and low if score < 50%.

### Pilot Study:

To assess the applicability of the constructed tools and the clarity of the included tools, a pilot research was done with 17 intern nursing students who represented 10% of students in the previously indicated settings. The pilot was also used to estimate how long it would take each respondent to complete the questionnaire.

### Reliability and validity:

The legitimacy of the information was determined by a panel of specialists from administrative nursing departments, and their opinions on the format, layout, consistency, accuracy, and relevance of the tools were

sought. Cronbach's Alpha 0.914, which is considered outstanding dependability, was used to test the reliability of the system.

### **Ethical considerations:**

In the initial stage of the study, each intern nursing student was informed about the study's purpose and benefits, and no one may begin the questionnaire without giving their agreement to participate in data collecting for the current study. At the Research Ethics Committee, it was revised by the Ethical Committee (REC). The students were assured that all information would be used purely for research reasons, and that they could reject to participate in the study or withdraw at any time before completing the questionnaire without facing any consequences.

### **Procedures:**

We were accessible for data collection two days a week, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at faculty of nursing. The pretest, educational programme session implementation, and posttest data were collected during a four-month period from January 2021 - May 2021.

### **Study framework**

The framework of the study was conducted through the following four phases:

**Assessment phase:** After three months from the start of the internship year, the professionalism of intern nursing students was assessed, and when a lack of professionalism was identified as a problem among interns, the literature was searched. Pre, post, and follow-up assessments were conducted prior to the commencement of the intervention program by interviewing participants using the questionnaire sheet.

**Planning phase:** based on the findings of the assessment phase; goals, priorities, and expected outcomes were formulated to meet participants' needs to embed the training program.

**Implementation phase:** The educational program consisted of 3 consecutive sessions, the duration of each session 30- 40 minutes. The first session was knowledge; the definition of professionalism, concept of professionalism as a guiding tenet that enhances outcomes for nurses, patients, organizations and systems, Organizational structures, key elements and processes that support development of effective nursing professional practices. The second session included attributes of professionalism, identify and discuss the evidence related to each attribute of professionalism. The third session was strategies for success, behaviors of effective nurses who exhibit professional practices in their workplace, benefits of professionalism. Sessions were set up in a small classroom and students were seated at tables that were arranged in a square configuration so that all students were facing each other. Interactive lectures using PowerPoint slide show, small groups' discussion, and assignments to create pathways for professionalism. Small groups (20 intern nursing students) were used in the interactive sessions.

**Evaluation phase** (immediate post-test and follow up after 3 weeks): We used the same pre- test questionnaire to assess the effect of training program on intern nursing students' professionalism. The test was applied immediately at the end of the training program and three weeks later.

### **Study Limitations & Overcome:**

The researcher looked through the literature from a variety of disciplines to develop a suitable technique for surveying intern nursing students before and after the intervention. Several professional behavior tools were discovered, however they were not suited for usage at the level of the intern nursing students. Another limitation, the available class room was small, therefore the researcher divided the participants into small groups (20 students) to keep space between them and provide them with preventive

measures (facial mask and 70% alcohol for hand scrub) to avoid corona virus infection.

### Data analysis:

Data collected from the studied sample was revised, coded, and entered using Personal Computer (PC). Computerized data entry and statistical analysis were fulfilled using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Data were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of mean and S.D. The test statistic Pearson's correlation coefficient assesses the statistical link, or association, between two continuous variables. A linear technique to modelling the relationship between a scalar response and one or more explanatory factors is known as linear regression. A chi-square (2) statistic is a test that compares expected data to actual observed data. No significant p value >0.05. Slight significant p value <0.05. High significant p value <0.01.

### Results:

**Table (1):** Among a total of 165 intern nursing students who responded to the questionnaire, the mean age of participants was  $22.35 \pm 0.81$  years. Among the participants, 132 (80%) were female. Moreover, 137 (83%) were urban residents. According to previous education, 124 (75.2%) had secondary education. Also, 158 (95.8%) did not attend training courses about professionalism.

**Table (2):** Mean score of scientific and technical domains pre intervention were  $6.87 \pm 2.34$  and  $5.23 \pm 1.76$ , while post intervention was  $12.76 \pm 3.56$  and  $10.90 \pm 3.24$  and follow-up were  $11.80 \pm 3.24$  and  $10.13 \pm 2.80$ . Additionally, mean score of face to face interview and peer review domains pre intervention was  $5.60 \pm 1.34$  and

$7.12 \pm 2.56$ , while post intervention were  $10.50 \pm 2.24$  and  $13.21 \pm 3.01$  and follow-up were  $10.03 \pm 2.65$  and  $12.43 \pm 2.70$ . Furthermore, there were high significant difference between mean score of subjects at all domains at pre, post, follow up at p value <0.01\*\*.

**Figure (1):** Regarding professionalism scale, 71.5% of studied intern nursing students had low professionalism pre intervention, while 58.8% of them had high professionalism post intervention and 55.8% of them had high professionalism at follow-up. Also, there was high significant difference at p value <0.01\*\*.

**Table (3):** There was high significant relation between previous education and training courses with their total professionalism at p value <0.01. While there was slight significant relation between gender with total professionalism p value <0.05. On other hand, there was no relation between residence of the students with total professionalism at p value >0.05.

**Table (4):** There was high positive correlation between scientific dimension and technical, ethical, aesthetic, existential, face to face and peer review at p value <0.01\*\*. In addition, there was high positive correlation between aesthetic dimension and existential, face to face and peer review dimensions at p value <0.01\*\*. Furthermore, there was slight positive correlation between existential dimension and face to face and peer review at p value <0.05.

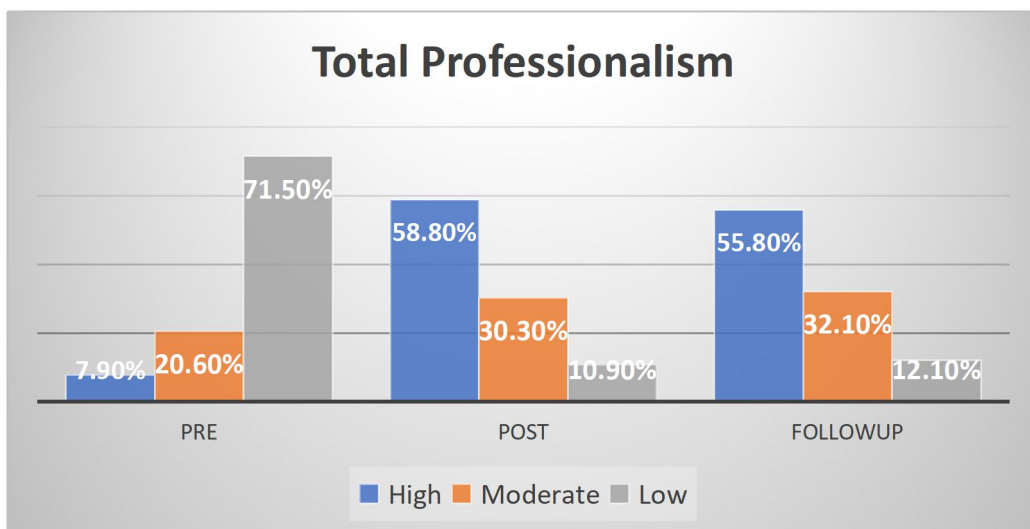
**Table (5):** There was high positive predict effect of Previous education "Technical health", training courses on total professionalism at p value <0.01. Also, there was slight positive predict effect of female gender on total professionalism at p value <0.05. Meanwhile, forced to study nursing had negative predict effect on professionalism.

**Table (1):** Distribution of studied intern nursing students according to their characteristics (N=165)

Items	N	%
<b>Age</b>		
Mean SD	22.35±0.81	
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	33	20
Female	132	80
<b>Residence</b>		
Rural	28	17
Urban	137	83
<b>Previous education</b>		
Technical health institute	41	24.8
Secondary school	124	75.2
<b>Previous training course about professionalism</b>		
Yes	7	4.2
No	158	95.8
<b>Forced to choose nursing</b>		
No	123	74.5
Yes	42	25.5

**Table (2):** Mean score of studied intern nursing students according to their professionalism scale domains pre, post and follow-up (N=165).

Domains	Pre Mean SD	Post Mean SD	Follow-up Mean SD	T test P value
Scientific dimension	6.87±2.34	12.76 ± 3.56	11.80 ± 3.24	14.578 <0.01**
Technical dimension	5.23 ± 1.76	10.90 ± 3.24	10.13 ± 2.80	15.600 <0.01**
Ethical dimension	5.10 ± 1.32	11.02 ± 2.35	10.23 ± 2.04	13.215 <0.01**
Aesthetic dimension	4.65 ± 1.21	8.02 ± 0.99	7.86 ± 0.87	15.007 <0.01**
Existential dimension	3.98 ± 0.97	8.16 ± 1.21	7.93 ± 1.20	16.132 <0.01**
Face-to-face interview	5.60 ± 1.34	10.50 ± 2.24	10.03 ± 2.65	17.001 <0.01**
Peer review	7.12 ± 2.56	13.21 ± 3.01	12.43 ± 2.70	15.699 <0.01**



**Figure (1):** Distribution of studied intern nursing students according to their total professionalism scale pre, post and follow-up (N=165).

**Table (3):** Relation between intern nursing students’ characteristics and total professionalism score post intervention (N=165).

Items	High		Moderate		Low		Chi-square P value
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
<b>Gender:</b>							
Male	9	27.3	14	42.4	10	30.3	<b>6.780</b>
Female	88	66.7	36	27.3	8	6	<b>&lt;0.05*</b>
<b>Previous education:</b>							
Technical health institute	30	73.2	8	19.5	3	7.3	<b>16.709</b>
Secondary school	67	54	42	33.9	15	12.1	<b>&lt;0.01**</b>
<b>Residence:</b>							
Rural	11	39.3	12	42.9	5	17.8	<b>1.980</b>
Urban	86	62.8	38	27.7	13	9.5	<b>&gt;0.05</b>
<b>Training course:</b>							
Yes	6	85.7	1	14.3	0	0	<b>14.081</b>
No	91	57.6	49	31	18	11.4	<b>&lt;0.01**</b>

**Table (4):** correlation matrix between studied professionalism dimensions (N=165).

Domains	Scientific	Technical	Ethical	Aesthetic	Existential	Face-to-face	Peer
Scientific dimension		0.578 <0.01**	0.613 <0.01**	0.499 <0.01**	0.710 <0.01**	0.577 <0.01**	0.628 <0.01**
Technical dimension			0.357 <0.05*	0.590 <0.01**	0.346 <0.05*	0.774 <0.01**	0.608 <0.01**
Ethical dimension				0.514 <0.01**	0.563 <0.01**	0.430 <0.01**	0.616 <0.01**
Aesthetic dimension					0.600 <0.01**	0.503 <0.01**	0.722 <0.01**
Existential dimension						0.340 <0.05*	0.301 <0.05*
Face-to-face interview							0.785 <0.01**

**Table (5):** Linear regression model for total professionalism post intervention (N=165).

Model	Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Forced to choose nursing	-.198	.033	.125		4708	<.05*
Gender "female"	.259	.046	.199		3.646	<.05*
Previous education "Technical health" training	.280	.063	.213		5.879	<.01**
	.208	.040	.176		5.308	<.01**

a. Dependent Variable: Total professionalism  
b. Predictors: Age, gender, previous education and training courses

Model Summary				
R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.	F Change
.367	.398	16.070		<.001

## Discussion

Professionalism of student nurses must be taught and learned in formal nursing schools. Professional values are embedded in nursing training curricula. Professionalism is demanded of new nurses, thus nurse training programmes must help students absorb it. Nurse educators must consequently impact future nurses' professional progress. (Julie et al., 2019). In the present study, the authors evaluated the effect of a training program on improving nursing students' professionalism.

The present study findings, more than two thirds of studied intern nursing students had low professionalism pre intervention, while more than half of them had high professionalism post intervention and more than half of them had high professionalism at follow-up. Furthermore, there were high significant difference between mean score of subjects at all domains of professionalism at pre, post, follow up at p value <0.01\*\*. This shows the extent of the positive impact of the training program, and this effect may be due to the preparation of the program based on the level of intern nursing students observed during the pre-test, used different illustrative

method, and allow to student to ask questions to detect feedback.

These results supported with the study conducted by **Bussard & Lawrence, 2019** about Role modeling to teach communication and professionalism in prelicensure nursing students, in USA and stated that intervention improve communication and professionalism among nursing students. Also, **Li et al., 2019** who conducted a systemic review about Effectiveness of problem-based learning on the professional communication competencies of nursing students and nurses and Eleven articles found that PBL improved nursing students' or nurses' communication skills, whereas just one article found no significant difference between PBL and the traditional technique **Hammer, 2006** performed study about Improving Student Professionalism During Experiential Learning, reported that positive role modeling is considered the most important means of improving professionalism among students.

**Tuirán-Gutiérrez et al., 2019** done study about improvement of Inter-Professional Collaborative Work Abilities in Mexican Medical and Nursing Students: A Longitudinal Study and found that the



control group of medical students showed a deterioration in the development of collaborative work skills ( $p < 0.01$ ). This degradation did not occur in the experimental group. A substantial boost in the development of collaborative work skills ( $p < 0.05$ ) was reported in the experimental group of nursing students. The differences ( $p < 0.001$ ) were clearly linked to the professional field of study. A quasi-experimental study involving a pretest and posttest on 101 students found that following the nursing internship, the students' levels of burnout and professional commitment increased (Ayaz-Alkaya et al., 2018).

According to factors affecting professionalism, there was high positive predict effect of Previous education "Technical health", training courses on total professionalism at  $p < 0.01$ . Also, there was slight positive predict effect of female gender on total professionalism at  $p < 0.05$ . Meanwhile, forced to study nursing had negative predict effect on professionalism. These factors form 36% of variance at professionalism. These results cohort with A systematic search of quantitative research published through December 2015 by Sibandze & Scafide, 2018 who reported that the level of nurses' education appears to play an important role in developing both an awareness and an integration of professional values into practice

Kim & Kim, 2019 conduct study about Influence of nursing students' clinical practice learning environment, self-leadership, and clinical practice belonging on nursing professionalism on 246 senior nursing students in China and reported that there were significant differences in nursing professionalism according to the subjects' satisfaction with the nursing major and satisfaction with the amount of nursing.

Pai et al., 2021 performed a study on Factors that Influence Professional Socialization in Nursing Students and discovered that enhancing nursing

competence is a major element in improving students' professional socialization. Kim & Yoo, 2020 conducted a study with 234 nursing students from three universities in two regions of South Korea to examine the effects of nursing professionalism and emotional intelligence on clinical performance ability in nursing students. They concluded that an intervention that improves nursing students' nursing professionalism and emotional intelligence should be considered to improve clinical performance ability in nursing students.

In addition, our results found that there was high positive correlation between scientific dimension and technical, ethical, aesthetic, existential, face to face and peer review at  $p < 0.01^{**}$ . Also, there was high positive correlation between aesthetic dimension and existential, face to face and peer review dimensions at  $p < 0.01^{**}$ . Furthermore, there was slight positive correlation between existential dimension and face to face and peer review at  $p < 0.05$ . These results supported with Lombarts et al., 2014 who designed and deployed survey instruments amongst 5920 physicians and nurses working in European hospitals and stated that there was high correlated between scale domains. Furthermore, Kim et al., 2017 Developed and validated a nursing professionalism evaluation model in a career ladder system and showed that there was high significant correlation between all dimensions of professionalism model.

## Conclusion

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This study concluded that more than two thirds of studied intern nursing students had low professionalism pre intervention, while improved to more than half of them had high professionalism post intervention and follow-up with high significant difference at  $p < 0.01^{**}$ . Furthermore, intern nursing students who previously enrolled at technical health, attended training courses, female students and choose nursing

without coercion had positive effect on professionalism behavior.

### Recommendation

The following are some of the recommendations made by the study:

- Provide a professional development program for head nurses, emphasizing the advantages of obtaining professionalism at work.
- Provide a professional development program for nurses on the job.
- Examine the elements that obstruct nursing professionalism.
- More study is needed on the effects of perceived stress and professional values on clinical performance in practice nursing students.

### Declaration of Conflicting of Interests

Concerning the research, writing, and/or publication of this paper, the authors disclosed no potential conflicts of interest.

### Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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