Evaluation of Students- Instructor Relationship in Nursing Education at the University of Baghdad, Iraq

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ABSTRACT
Background: The student-instructor relationship as well as effective learning strategies is an important component of an academic program that magnifies the feeling of trust and respect between the students and instructor. Therefore, evaluation of the student-instructor relationship provides crucial understanding to reach a good academic environment.
Objective: The study aims at assessing the students - instructor relationship within the educational environment and evaluating the emotional perception toward relationships among nursing students and their instructors.
Subjects and Methods: The study was conducted on Nursing Collegians of Morning and Evening Studies at the Nursing Faculty, at Baghdad University. The assessment approach was used over six months (from January 2018 to June 2018) to achieve the study objectives. A sample of 200 Nursing Collegians was recruited. Student-Instructor Scale was adopted and used for the current study. The scale consisted of 36 items. The scale defines two domains regarding instructor relationships; the first domain is regarding the connectedness with an instructor, and the second domain of the scale is concerned with instructor anxiety.
Results: The students show higher scores of instructor connectedness and anxiety (89% and 83%) which means they perceive a strong feeling of connectedness with an instructor and show generalized anxiety regarding this relationship at the same time.
Conclusions: There is a strong positive relationship between students and instructors in nursing education, and this positive relationship is an important moderator for improving the student's academic performance.
Keywords: Student-Instructor, Relationship, Nursing Education, Student-Instructor Scale, University of Baghdad.

INTRODUCTION

The efficacy of the student-instructor relationship can be a contributing factor to students' achievements and resilience. As reported by previous studies factors concerning the protection of students such as "caring relationships, higher expectations and opportunities" have an influence on the improvement of students' achievement and performance [1,2].

The identification of learning strategies and learning assignments has been devoted to various theories and research as affecting factors to students' academic achievement and orientation [3,4]. And also there is a study that examines the effect of student-instructor association on learning outcomes. The nursing collegians who show a positive connectedness with the instructor have higher achievement levels [3,5].

The most ineffective instructor does not link the student's background to the nature of the educational and academic program, so students feel that the instructor is unfaithful and untrustworthy. They show characteristics of cultural destruction and inability that seek to diminish the student's cultural values and scientific background [6,7]. The student-instructor relationship as well as effective learning strategies is an important component of an academic program that magnifies the feeling of trust and respect between the students and instructor [8]. **A study conducted in 2016** reported that the three important components of the student-instructor relationship: are "the teaching-learning environment, exchange of information, and mentor-peer association" [9,10]. **Beutel** also categorizes

five components for understanding the student-instructor relationship which is "providing information, instructing, facilitating, guided participation and mentoring" [11].

Developing effective learning practices requiring focusing on the student-instructor relationship. Creating a positive supportive environment based on building trust and respect between the student and instructor has been shown essential for a relationship as maintaining the sense of caring in that relationship and learning environment to be understood. The instructors should exhibit positive perspectives, convictions, and anticipations for the students as learners. An academic setting aims to improve the student's abilities related to social, ethical, and intellectual aspects by creating a supportive relationship between the student and instructor [12].

Griffith and Bakanauskas (1983) studied the student-instructor relationship in nursing education, they stated that the instructor is significant in facilitating the role of students by helping them to learn and develop personal and professional competencies. They see that in terms of power, female instructors may show power over the students causing them to feel more threatened and incompetent. It has found a positive correlation between self-concept and academic performance based on the instructor showing open communication to facilitate positive self-concepts [13].

The study aims at assessing the student-instructor relationship within the educational environment and

evaluating the emotional perception toward relationships among nursing students and their instructors.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

The study was conducted on Nursing Collegians of Morning and Evening Studies at Nursing Faculty, Baghdad University.

The assessment approach was used over six months (from January 2018 to June 2018) to achieve the study objectives. Issues regarding administration and arrangement of the study were achieved by requesting the permission from Deanship/Student's Affairs Department at Nursing Faculty in Baghdad.

A total of 200 Nursing Collegians from Baghdad University were recruited for the study, using a convenient sampling method (non-probability sample).

To determine the accepted sample size to be recruited in this study, Soper [14] was applied as parameters of an anticipated effect size of 0.15, the desired statistical power level of 0.80, one predictor, and a probability level of 0.05; the minimum required sample size was 54.

The instrument used was composed of two dimensions; firstly, the letter cover and the socio-demographic characteristics of Nursing Collegians are gender, class level, and study type, and secondly, concerned with the Student-Instructor measure.

Student-Instructor Scale [15] was used and adopted for this research. The scale has 36 items. All items on the scale were rated on a 5- Likert scale and scored as follows: agree strongly (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and disagree strongly (1). The scale defined two domains regarding instructor relationships. The first domain regarding connectedness with the instructor scored as low= as 11–27 and high= as 28–55. A higher score refers to a strong feeling of connectedness with an instructor and a lower score refers to the avoidance of an instructor. The second domain of the scale was concerned with instructor anxiety and scored as low= 8–20 and high= 21–40, the higher score refers to "generalized anxiety" about an association with an instructor and the low-level score refers to "less threatening perception" of the instructor connection. The items related to the first domain are 3, 6, 11, 12, 17, 21, 23, 29, 30, 35, and 36, while items related to the second domain are 4, 5, 7, 8, 22, 25, 31, and 34.

Data collection has been collected through the utilization of self-report. The instrument of the study was disseminated after the acceptance of the participant.

Ethical Considerations

The instrument's content of this study was reviewed by "Institutional Review Board (IRB)" in Nursing Faculty at Baghdad University before conducting the study. In expansion, the participants' agreement was obtained before engagement in this study. This work has been carried out by The Code of Ethics of the World Medical Association (Declaration of Helsinki) for studies involving humans.

Data Analysis:

All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 26.0 (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Quantitative data with normal distribution were given as mean and standard deviation (SD) and compared by Student t-test. Nominal data were given as a number (n) and percentage (%). The Chi-square test was implemented on such data. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the correlation between domains of the students-instructor relationship. P-value ≤ 0.05 was considered significant.

RESULTS

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of participants.

Variable		No	%
Gender	Male	47.5	47.5
	Female	52.5	52.5
	Total	***200***	***100***
Class Level	Freshman	27	13.5
	Sophomore	61	30.5
	Junior	64	32
	Senior	48	24
	Total	***200***	***100***
Study	Morning	113	56.5
	Evening	87	43.5
	Total	***200***	***100***

No: Number, %" Percentage.

The descriptive analysis in this table reveals that 52.5% of the students are females; the class level refers that 32% are juniors, 30.5% are sophomores, and 24% are seniors; 56.5% of them are from morning study at college.

Table 2. Evaluation of Emotional Perception toward Relationship among Students.

Evaluation	Student-Instructor Connectedness		Student-Instructor Anxiety	
	No	%	No	%
Low	22	11	34	17
High	178	89	166	83
Total	**200**	**100**	**200**	**100**
Mean ± SD	**34.60 ± 6.522**		**25.30 ± 4.738**	

No: Number, %" Percentage, SD: Standard deviation. Low connectedness= 11 – 27, High connectedness= 28 – 55, Low anxiety= 8 – 20, high anxiety= 21 – 40.

Table 2 indicates that students show higher scores of instructor connectedness and anxiety (89% and 83%) which means they perceive strong feelings of

connectedness with an instructor and show generalized anxiety regarding this relationship at the same time.

Table 3. Correlation between Instructor Connectedness and Instructor Anxiety among Students

Correlation		Student-Instructor Connectedness	Student-Instructor Anxiety
Student-Instructor Connectedness	Pearson Correlation	1	0.411
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	0.001
Student-Instructor Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	0.411	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	-

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between the domains of instructor connectedness and instructor anxiety.

DISCUSSION

It has been observed from our analysis for students that the females from morning study at second- and third-class levels were the highest percentages seen with sophomores and juniors. The finding related to the female gender may reveal that females are more engaged in nursing studies considering the opportunity to get an appointment which usually is a central appointment in Iraq. The finding related to the class level may be interpreted by the sampling method and those who engaged in the study were distributed over the four class levels, but the highest percentages were shown with second and third class levels. The finding related to morning studies could be explained by the higher number of stents that are accepted in the study according to the policy of the university concerning the acceptance plan of students' number as well as the evening study being canceled in the College of Nursing recently.

The analysis of students' responses regarding the students-instructor scale indicated that students have shown higher scores of instructor connectedness and anxiety which means they perceive a strong feeling of connectedness with an instructor and show generalized anxiety regarding this relationship at the same time. Nursing students may feel a strong connectedness with an instructor, and they have anxiety toward losing or reducing the such feeling of connectedness, the feeling of strong connectedness may be contributed to the empathetic relationship and ethical behavior that the instructor engaged while dealing with students; strength of the students-instructor relationship. On the other hand, the students have the feeling of a trusted and worthy relationship due to the acceptance of the instructor for them which makes them more connected with their instructors. Another explanation of strong

connectedness between the students and instructor may be due to the nature of the curriculum which has clinical and practical aspects; the relationship between students and instructor may be strengthened while communication and training.

The high score of anxiety among the students may be explained by many factors such as worries about losing the trusted relationship with their instructor, and worries about being embraced by their instructor or colleagues while failing in academic or clinical performance. The student–instructor relationship can improve the student's academic performance, a study found that a perceived relationship with the instructor can influence positively the students' academic achievement and expectations [12]. Cushman reported that students usually respond to instructors that are intelligent, caring, and show more knowledge [16]. Another study found that instructors are supportive of student's academic performance through their listening, encouraging, and respecting behaviors [16].

The bivariate correlation refers to a significant positive correlation between the two domains of the student-instructor relationship. Such findings may interpret the interaction between students' feeling of connectedness to instructors and feelings of anxiety to lose a such relationship. Despite a higher score in the anxiety domain, a significance correlation is seen, which means there is a connection between the two domains; when the feeling of connectedness is increased, the feeling of anxiety is increased. A study found supportive evidence that found a positive correlation between the domains of the student-instructor scale [15].

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The single setting of the study and sampling methods may influence the generalizability of the results.

CONCLUSIONS

A strong positive relationship between students and instructors was found in nursing education, and this positive relationship is an important moderator for improving the student's academic performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Replication of the study on a large sample with more variables influencing the student-instructor relationship in the academic and clinical environment of nursing education is recommended. Conducting an evaluation from related to the student-instructor relationship and considering the result of the evaluation in developing the curriculum course plan is needed.

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