level of Assertiveness, Self-esteem and Communication Skills among Nursing Students of Helwan University

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ABSTRACT

Background: Assertiveness is significant communication style that is essential skills for nurse students. Having assertiveness skills and high self-esteem is crucial for nursing students to ensure competent and safe practice. In addition, having excellent communication skills is necessary for nurse students before starting their carrier. **Aim of the study**: a descriptive study aimed to determine the level of assertiveness, self-esteem and communication skills among nursing students of Helwan University. **Design**: A descriptive design used in this study. **Setting:** This study carried out at the psychiatric and mental health nursing classes, Faculty of Nursing - Helwan University. **Sample:** A convenience sample of (104) university nursing students were included for the conduction of this study. **Tools of data collection:** The study tools divided into four tools. I: Socio-demographic Sheet. II: Rathus Assertiveness Scale. III: Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale and IV: Communication Skills Scale. **Results:** the present study show that the total score of nursing students regarding to assertiveness was low, more than three quarter of nurse students were unassertive. Regarding to self-esteem level only around ten percent of nursing students had high level of self-esteem, while the majority of nursing students had low level of self-esteem. In addition, most of nursing students had low level of communication skills. Ninety percent of students showed low communication skills. **Conclusion:** The level of assertiveness, self- esteem and communication skills among nursing students of Helwan University was low .**Recommendation**: Incorporating training program to improve level of assertiveness, self-esteem and communication skills as an eligible training course of the undergraduate nursing program.

Key words: Assertiveness, Communication skills, Nursing students, Self-esteem.

Introduction

The core of nursing is to establish interaction between nurse and patient. For that, effective communication skills are consider a critical component of quality and safety in health care and seen as index of professional competency in nursing. Failure in Communication still a key source for unsafe practice among health care professional and the level of communication between nurses and patients significantly influences patient outcomes (**Markid et al., 2019**).

Since nursing needs to communicate with an individual patient in particular, it is necessary for the students to have good communication skills before starting their career, communication skills for nurses are crucial in nursing practice but may be difficult to master. Previous studies founded that most of nurses had no training courses about communication skills (**Mohammed, Shazly & Mostafa, 2022**).

Self-esteem influences how nurses think, feel, and motivate themselves and act which un-doubted affects the care patients receive. It was reported that nurses with low self-esteem have an effect on the level and the quality of patient care in a negative direction. Nurses' with high level of self-esteem are confident, take pride in their work, and demonstrate respect and concern for patients and colleagues (**Mohamed, Abd El-Hammed & Thabet, 2016**).

Low self-esteem is becoming more common among nurses, despite the fact that level of self-esteem has long been known to be a significant predictor of stress adjustment. In addition, low self-esteem have been found as major problem in nursing professional. Therapeutic relationships with patients can only be developed by nursing students who have high levels of self-esteem (**Fawzy et al., 2020**).

Effective persons maintain self-respect and respect for others by means of assertiveness, which enables them to direct express one's true, basic feelings, needs, desires, opinions and personal rights in a positive, productive way without denying the rights of others. Assertive individuals claim their own rights, make requests of others, can say no to things they do not want, accept praise and can easily verbalizes their feelings (**Parray & Kumar, 2022**).

Assertiveness is essential skills for professional nurses and nurse students need to learn assertive skills to interact with patients, families and other health professionals effectively. Assertiveness help nurses to be more competent in the provision of quality patient care, more effective in communicating with others, and using their professional knowledge and skills. Finally, they become more influential in improving the health care delivery system (**Abdelaziz et al., 2020**).

Assertiveness is a substantial communication style that enhances successful relationships with patients, families, and colleagues. Assertiveness is an expression of self-esteem. Studies have shown that nurses who have assertive behaviors are generally have higher self-worth and are more successful in life (**Kanade, 2019**).

Significance of the study:

In order to ensure competent, safe practice and a therapeutic relationship with patients, student nurses must possess strong self-esteem and communication skills. Unfortunately, research revealed that just 3.3% of nursing students possessed a high degree of self-worth (**Hanafi, et al., 2016**).

Moreover, a lack of confidence prevents some nurses from exercising crucial communication skills, which is a major contributing factor to dangerous practices among healthcare professionals. In addition, it is important for nurse profession

to acquire knowledge regarding the effective use of assertive behavior and become more assertive in the workplace **(Mansour et al., 2020).**

Aim of the study:

This study aimed to assess the level of assertiveness, self-esteem and communication skills among nursing students of Helwan University through the following:

1. Assess the level of assertiveness among university nursing students.

2. Assess the level of self-esteem among university nursing students

3. Assess the communication skills of university nursing students.

Research question

What are the level of assertiveness, self-esteem and communication skills among nursing Students of Helwan University?

Subject and Methods

A descriptive study carried out on nursing students who had studied in psychiatric and mental health department, Faculty of Nursing, Helwan University, the researcher used appropriate tools to achieve the aim of the study.

The subject and methods for this study were portrayed under the four main design as follows:

I.   Technical Design.

II.   Operational Design.

III. Administrative Design.

IV.   Statistical Design.

Technical Design:

The technical design for this study research design, research setting, and subjects of the study and tools of data collection.

Research Design

A descriptive research design was utilized to achieve the aim of this study.

Research Setting

The study was conducted at the psychiatric and mental health nursing classes, Faculty of Nursing - Helwan University. It is governmental educational institution, which offer bachelor degree in nursing science.

Sampling

The subject of research was composed of nursing students who had studied psychiatric and mental health curriculum in the first semester of an academic year 2021-2022, the total coverage number of students was (104) university nursing students. The subjects were selected by convenience sampling method.

Tools for Data Collection:

The data were collected through the following tools:

The First Tool: Nursing Student's Socio-demographic Characteristics Sheet

It was developed by the researcher and consist of Socio-demographic data sheet is used for recording of socio-demographic data of the nursing students. This tool had two parts:

Part A: It has total six items related to socio-demographic information of the nursing students that were include age, gender, marital status, residence, pre-university education, previous attendance to assertive training courses.

Part B: It has total six items related to nursing student' families which includes type of family, size of family, residence, father and mother education, father and mother occupation, family income.

The Second Tool: Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS)

That was developed by **Rathus (1973)** to measure a student's level of assertiveness. It is a standardized, short structured, self-administered six point rating scale. It contains 30 items out of which 17 are described as negative and 13 of them as positive. Six points along with their scoring range from very uncharacteristic of me (-3) to (+3) very characteristic of me. Scores range between - 90 to +90. Higher scores indicate that subjects perceived themselves as being high assertive in their relationships with other people.

Scoring system: Each statement was rated on a Likert scale that ranges from (+ 3) very characteristic of me to (-3) very uncharacteristic of me range from −90 to +90. Higher scores indicate that subjects perceived themselves as being high assertive in their relationships with other people and vice versa. Those who receive below +10 as a total score are considered unassertive and those with a total score above +10 are considered assertive.

RAS	Nonassertive	-90: +10
	Assertive	+10.1: +90

The Third Tool: Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

That was developed by **Rosenberg (1965)** to measure student's self-esteem and self-worth. It is a standardized, short structured, self-report 10 items Likert scale.

Scoring System: Items were answered on a 4-point scale from strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 are negative items and 1, 3, 4, 7 and 10 are positive items. Scoring for negative items was reversed, i.e., (0) for strongly agree and three for strongly disagree, and so on. Scores range from zero to 30. The higher the score indicates the high self-esteem (Above 15 indicate high level of self-esteem – from 0: 15 indicate low level of self – esteem).

Self-esteem	Low	from 0: 15
	High	from 16:30

The Fourth Tool: Communication Skills Scale

This scale has been originally developed by **(Alhmaidat, 2007)** to assess communication skills among university students. The scale consists of (32) items measuring four communication skills: listening, speaking, understanding others and emotional management.

Scoring System: Each statement was answered on a likert scale that ranges from (1) very low extent, (2) to small extent, (3) moderately, (4) to large extent, and (5) very large extent. Higher scores are indicator of higher communication

skills (above 65 indicate high level of communication skills, from 45 to 64 indicate moderate level of communication skills, and less than 45 indicate low level of communication skills).

Communication skills	High	Above 65
	Moderate	45-64
	Low	less than 44

Content Validity and Reliability:

The revision of the tools for content, validity, its clarity, relevance, comprehensiveness, understanding and applicability was done by a panel of expertise (3 expertise). Internal consistency and reliability were measured by using Cronbach's alpha-coefficient test.

According to validity and reliability of **Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS),** the scale has relatively high internal consistency and stability. The spilt-half reliability was 0.77 and the test–retest reliability 8 weeks later was 0.86 and reliability was calculated by test retest method and Cronbach £=0.86, split half= 0.71 **(Rathus, 1973).**

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale has internal Consistency that ranges from 0.77 to 0.88 with test retest reliability ranges from 0.82 to 0.85. The reliability was; Cronbach £=0.82, split half= 0.73.

communication skills scale, validity has been found by applying two criterion scales, their correlation coefficient with the communication skills scale were (.68 &.71), while reliability has been estimated by two methods: stability method which value was (0.78), and the internal consistency method which was (0.72).

Administrative design

Approvals to carry out this study was obtained from Dean of Faculty of Nursing –Helwan University. An official letter to carry out this study was directed to Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing Department, in Faculty of Nursing - Helwan University.

Ethical considerations

Verbal approval was obtained from each participant before collection of any data and after explanation of the study aim in simple and clear manner. Before taking the consent, the subjects were assured about the study confidentiality and anonymity. The nursing students were informed that they are allowed to choose to participate or not in the study and that, they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted before starting data collection on 10% of psychiatric mental health nurses (5 nurses) to test the clarity and applicability of the study tools, and identify the time required to fill each tool.

Fieldwork:

The actual fieldwork was started on beginning of September 2021. Before starting the data collection, the researcher met with university nursing students after introducing herself, the researcher distribute the tools, the researcher explained the aim and objectives to them, while the researcher was present to assure that all questions were completed. Data was

collecting using structured self-written questioner format and each student fill the questionnaire individually at the Faculty of Nursing in Helwan University.

Statistical Design

The collected data were organized, reviewed, coded and tabulated. Statistical analysis was done by computer with statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 25 as used to estimate the statistical significance difference between variables of the study. Researcher coded and analyzed the collected data using tables and figures. For qualitative variables, data were analyzed using numbers and percentages. For quantitative variables, the mean and stander deviation was used. The Chi-square (X2) test was also used. The statistical significant of the result was determined as ≤ 0.05 significant.

Result

Table (1): Distribution Socio-demographic characteristics of nursing students' under study:

Items	N	%
Age (in years):		
20 - 21	53	51.00
≤ 22	51	49.00
Mean ± SD = 21.50 ± 0.630		
Sex:		
Male	26	25.00
Female	78	78.00
Marital status:		
Single	82	78.85
Engaged	17	16.35
Married	5	4.80
Divorced/widow	0	-
Residence:		
Urban	77	74.00
Rural	27	26.00
Pre-university education:		
General secondary school	74	71.15
Nursing school diploma	27	25.97
Technical institute diploma	3	2.88
Have you attended any training courses in? Assertiveness:		
Yes	6	5.80
No	98	94.20

Table (1): shows that, more than half (51. %) of nursing students were in the age group 20-21 years with a mean age of 21.50 ± 0.630, and more than two thirds (%78.00) were female, while most of nursing students (78.85 %) were single. As regards to their residence, the majority of studied nurse students (74.00 %) lived in urban areas. According to their pre-university education, the majority of them (71.15 %) were in general secondary schools.

Table (2): Distribution of Socio-demographic characteristics of families of nursing students' under study:

Items	N	%
Family type:		
Nuclear	56	53.80
Extended	48	46.20
Parents live together:		

Yes	93	89.40
No	11	10.60
Father education:		
Illiterate	3	2.90
Read/write	10	9.60
Basic	15	14.40
Secondary	31	29.80
University	45	43.30
Mother education:		
Illiterate	13	12.50
Read/write	11	10.60
Basic	10	9.60
Secondary	37	35.60
University	33	31.70
Family income:		
Insufficient	11	10.60
Just Insufficient	75	72.10
sufficient and saving	18	17.30
No. of family members:		
2 – 4	14	13.46
5 – 7	81	77.88
8 – 10	9	8.66

Table (2) this table   reveals that, more than half of the studied nursing students (53.80%) were live in nuclear families, and (89.40%) of them lived with both parent. According to parental education, nearly half of nursing students (46.7%) their fathers had university education, while (31.70%) of student' mothers had university education. According to family income, slightly less than three quarters of nursing students (72.10 %) had just sufficient income and More than three quarters of students (77.88 %) their family included 5-7 members.

Figure (1): reveal that, the majority of students under study were unassertive (78.57 %) more than three quarter, while less than one quarter (21.43 %) of studied nursing students were assertive.
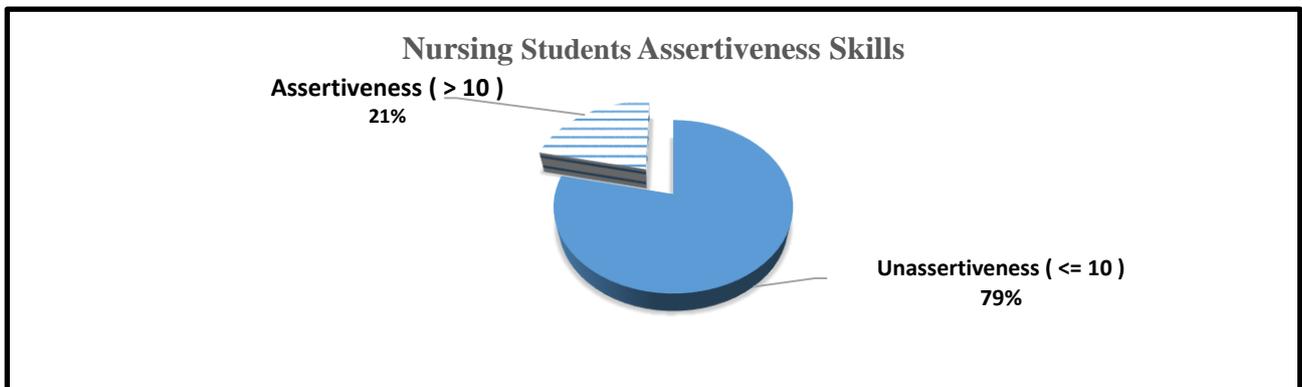

Figure 1: Distribution of nursing students' in relation to their level assertiveness skills

Figure (2): illustrates that, the majority of students under study were low in score in regard to their level of self-esteem (87.76 %) more than three quarter of nursing students.
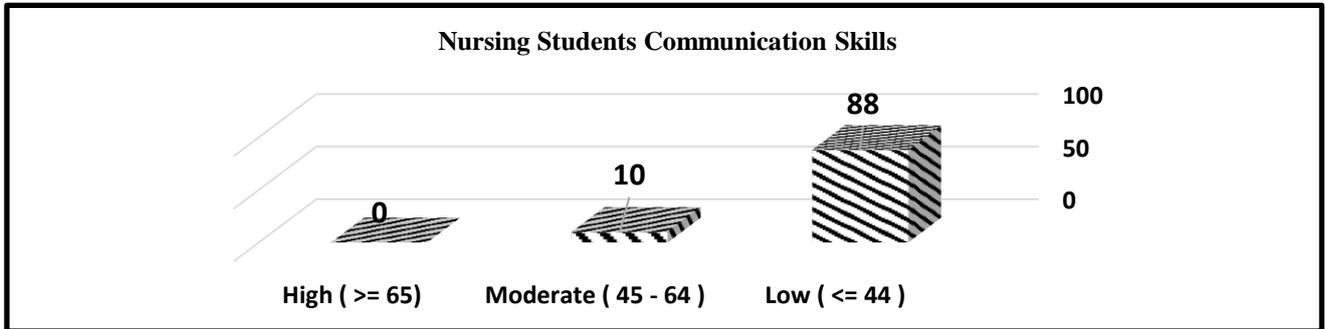

Figure 2: Distribution of nursing students' in relation to their level of self-esteem

Figure (3): shows that, the majority of students under study were low in their score in regard to their level of communication skills (89.8%), only (10.2%) of studied nursing students were moderate and no one of studied student were high in regard to communication skills score.
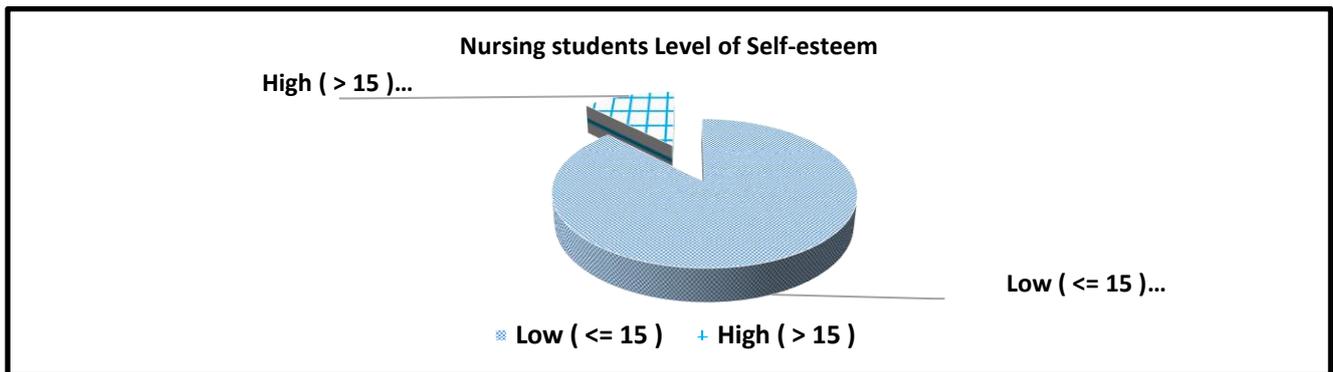

Figure 3: Distribution of nursing students' in relation to their level of communication skills

Table (4): Relations between Nursing Students' Assertiveness skills and Their Socio-demographic Characteristics (n=104)

Socio-demographic variables	Assertiveness				x2	P.value
	Low		High			
	N	%	N	%		
Male	13	56.5%	10	43.5%	8.678	0.003*
Female	64	85.3%	11	14.7%		
Marital status						
Single	62	78.5%	17	21.5%	0.006	0.997
Engaged	11	78.6%	3	21.4%		
Married	4	80.0%	1	20.0%		
Residence:						

Urban	54	75.0%	18	25.0%	2.056	0.152
Rural	23	88.5%	3	11.5%		
Pre-university education:						
General secondary school	55	77.5%	16	22.5%	1.459	0.482
Nursing school diploma	21	84.0%	4	16.0%		
Technical institute diploma	1	50.0%	1	50.0%		
No. of family members:						
2 -- 4	6	50.0%	6	50.0%	6.758	0.034*
5 -- 7	64	82.1%	14	17.9%		
8 -- 10	7	87.5%	1	12.5%		
Family income:						
Insufficient	10	90.9%	1	9.1%	5.271	0.072
Just Insufficient	57	81.4%	13	18.6%		
sufficient and saving	10	58.8%	7	41.2%		

Table (4): Reveals statistically significant difference between "**assertiveness skills level**" and "**sex**" (p=.003), female students had more tendency to have low level of assertiveness skills (85.3%) than male students (56.5%), another statistical significant difference between "assertiveness skills" and " **No. of family members:**" (p=.034). Furthermore, the present study revealed no statistically significant differences between "**marital status**" and "assertiveness skills" (p=.997), another no statistically significant difference was found between level of "assertiveness skills" and "**family income**" (p=. 072). There was no statistically significant difference between "assertiveness skills" and " **Pre-university education**" (p=.482).

Discussion

It is essential for nursing students to have assertiveness, high self-esteem and communication skills in order to ensure competent and safe practice. The aim of study was to assess the level of assertiveness, self-esteem and communication skills of university nursing students.

Results of the current study showed that more than two thirds of participants were female. This may be due to the fact that female are the prominent gender in nursing practice. Similarly, **Ahmed, Desouki, Mourad, & Mohamed Barakat, (2022)** who found that the majority of nursing students were females. Concerning the marital status, the present study found that most nursing students were single. This result may due to most of student nurse at age group between 20-21 years old, this range of age most of individual are unmarried. The result of the current study also, showed that the majority of studied nursing students had general secondary school education pre-university.

According to Socio-demographic characteristics of families of nursing students, the finding of the present study reveals that, more than half of the studied nursing students were in nuclear families, and the majority of them lived with both parent. According to parental education, nearly half of nursing student's fathers had university education while one

third of student's mothers had university education. Concerning the income of the studied group, the present study show that slightly less than three quarters of them had just sufficient income.

Regarding students' assertiveness level, data analysis revealed that only less than one quarter of studied nursing, students were assertive. These results were similar to those of **Morsi, &Prince, (2021),** who stated that only one third of nursing students reported assertive behaviors. This may be due to that the students in the current study were in the late adolescence and assertive skills are still developing. Likewise, a study by **Chakraborty, Ray, & Mani (2020),** who assessed assertiveness of nursing students, and stated that about, half of nursing college students were 'Somewhat Assertive' and only 14% of nursing college students were assertive.

Similarly, **Ahmed, Fakhry , & Saad, (2019)** who examined the effect of the training program about conflict resolution strategies on nursing students' assertiveness, the study was conducted at the Technical Institute of Nursing, Zagazig University. Students in the two grades academic year were included in study; the study demonstrated that nursing students had low levels of assertiveness

Regarding students' self-esteem levels, data analysis revealed that, the majority of students under study were low in score concerning their level of self-esteem. Although high level of self- esteem is critical for nurse students and nurses because, low self-esteem have negative effects on patient care. Low self-esteem have an effect on the level and the quality of patient care in a negative direction.

These findings also supported with the study carried out by **Mahmoud, Al Kalaldeh, & El-Rahman (2013),** who investigated the effect of assertiveness training on assertiveness and self-esteem, and stated that the student's score were not high in concern to self-esteem level. On another hand, regarding nursing students' level of self-esteem, the result of the current study was contradicted with **Morsi & Prince, (2021)** who stated that more than half of nursing students reported high self-esteem.

Regarding students' communication skills levels, data analysis revealed that, the majority of students under study were low in score concerning their level of communication skills. This result may due to the fact that nursing education curricula focus on theoretical knowledge and technical skills while the communication component is often deficient **(Grady et al., 2020).** Also, although it is well known that communication skills for nurses are crucial in nursing practice but may be difficult to master. Previous studies founded that most of nurses had no training courses about communication skills **(Mohammed, Shazly & Mostafa, 2022).**

Conclusion

Base on the current findings, it can concluded that, the level of assertiveness , self-esteem is low, and the level of communication skills is unsatisfactory among the majority of nursing Students of Helwan University.

Acknowledgements

Recommendation

- The nursing education should aim at enhancing the self-esteem and communication skills of students giving the appropriate theoretical knowledge and skills required to practice as a nurse through different educational programs.

- Incorporating training program to improve level of assertiveness, self-esteem and communication skills as an eligible training course of the undergraduate nursing program

- Regular in-service training programs to be developed for nursing students' to consider assertiveness skills in their performance.

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