

A DESCRIPTIVE CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY ON NURSES' KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CARE OF ELDERLY PATIENTS

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Abstract

Background

Elderly patients require specialized nursing care due to age-related physical, psychological, and social changes. Nurses play an important role in promoting safe, respectful, and quality care for older adults. Adequate knowledge and positive attitude are essential for improving elderly patient outcomes.

Aim

The aim of the study was to assess nurses' knowledge and attitude towards the care of elderly patients at Jinnah Hospital Lahore.

Methods

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was used. The study was conducted among staff nurses working in medical and surgical wards of Jinnah Hospital Lahore. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 142 nurses. Data were collected through an adapted questionnaire regarding knowledge and attitude towards elderly patient care. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. Frequencies and percentages were used to present the findings.

Results

The results showed that 68 (47.9%) nurses had poor knowledge, 39 (27.5%) had moderate knowledge, and 35 (24.6%) had good knowledge regarding elderly patient care. Regarding attitude, 90 (63.4%) nurses had a positive attitude, while 52 (36.6%) had a negative attitude towards caring for elderly patients.

Conclusion

The study concluded that nurses had a positive attitude but inadequate knowledge regarding elderly patient care. Regular geriatric nursing training, workshops, and continuous professional development programs are recommended.

Introduction

Old age is a period when irreversible physiological, spiritual and social changes and losses of roles are experienced and the adaptation of the system to the environment decreases. Elderly individuals often experience more than one health problem

and visit health institution usually (Argaw, Tamiru, Ayalew, & Habte, 2019). This domain usually starts after fourth decade and continues till deaths. During this time human being changes physically and physiologically (Ali, Khan, Ali, & Bibi, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) divides

people over the age of 60 into three sub-periods: young-old (60-74 years old), old (75-90 years old), and oldest (more than 90 years old) (Sedri, Zakeri, Zare Zardiny, & Tavan, 2022). Around the world, there is a significant increase in the proportion and absolute number of elderly people (Organization, 2015).

There are an estimated 605 million adults over the age of 60 in the world (Mohammed & Omar, 2019). In 2050, the world will have two billion older adults, with 80% of them living in developing nations (J. O. Faronbi, O. Adebowale, G. O. Faronbi, O. O. Musa, & S. J. J. I. j. o. A. n. s. Ayamolowo, 2017b). Elderly people may require long-term psychosocial treatment, nursing care, or hospitalization for a variety of health issues. As a result, the demographic and health utilization trends of the present strongly suggest that there will be a rapidly growing demand for nurses who are well-qualified to care for people who are older. Nurses with the drive to care for the elderly are in high demand (Mahmud, Begum, Akhter, & Research, 2020).

Nurses play a crucial role in the delivery of healthcare and the prevention of diseases. They give medical services to all groups, including the disabled, ill, and elderly. As a result, they need to have the proper training for caring for adults who are senior. The provision of geriatric nursing care may be impacted by nurses' unfavorable attitudes towards patients and lack of expertise, according to research (Ali et al., 2020). In order to provide comprehensive and high-quality treatment, nurses must be knowledgeable about geriatrics and have a favorable attitude towards them. In the medical field, a positive outlook always yields favorable results, and this is also true for the treatment of geriatric patients (Cheng et al., 2022).

The level of care delivered to the elderly and the registered nurses' willingness to work with them both seem to be influenced by their attitudes and knowledge. With increase in the older population, which is linked to chronic sickness, as well as a decline in physical capability and an increase in dependency, necessitates the need for registered nurses with the proper and positive attitudes, knowledge, and skill (Faronbi et al., 2017b).

Elderly patients often require specialized care, which can differ significantly from the care provided to younger patients. As a result, nurses who work with elderly patients need to have specific knowledge and skills to ensure that they can provide effective care. In terms of knowledge, nurses need to have a good understanding of the physiological changes and health conditions that commonly affect the elderly, as well as the appropriate interventions and treatments for these conditions. And the potential side effects of medication commonly used by elderly patients. They also need to have knowledge of the social and psychological factors that can impact the health and wellbeing of the elderly, such as loneliness, isolation, and depression. (Rababa, Hammouri, Hweidi, & Ellis, 2020)

Nurses who work with elderly patients have a positive attitude towards caring for them. They view the elderly as unique individuals who deserve respect, dignity, and quality care. Many nurses also value the opportunity to form relationships with their elderly patients and their families (Dikken, 2017). However, some studies have also highlighted certain challenges that nurses may face when caring for elderly patients. These challenges may include physical and cognitive limitations, communication barriers, and social isolation (Ashiq & Asad, 2017). The increased mortality in elderly patients have many reason, one such reason is communication barriers and improper quality care. In order to provide comprehensive and high-quality care and treatment, nurses must be knowledgeable about geriatrics and have a favorable attitude towards them. These all factors are preventable if the attention would be given to the nurse's better knowledge and positive attitude, so the study is amiable to be conducted to assess the knowledge and attitude of nurses towards elderly care.

Methods

The study design adopted for the assessment of the nurses' knowledge and attitude on the care of elderly patients is descriptive cross-sectional. The study was carried out in Jinnah Hospital Lahore, medical and surgical ward. This study was conducted with the target population being

registered staff nurses who work in clinical areas and provide direct care to elderly patients (aged 60 years and above). The study lasted for a total of nine months. Participants were selected using a convenient sampling technique who met the inclusion criteria. The sample size determination was based on Slovin's formula, which yielded a sample size of 221 nurses for a 5% margin of error. With this calculation, the final sample size was 142 nurses. The study included registered nurses from a tertiary care hospital who have been working in patient care areas (medical, surgical, intensive care, emergency) for at least six months with a minimum of 12 months experience in care of elderly patients. Students and interns, trainee nurses and administrative nurses, nurses not in service for less than six months, data collection period nursing students who were on leave, not on the elderly care staff and who refused were omitted.

Data Collection Procedure

An adapted structured questionnaire was used to collect data which focused on nurses' knowledge and attitude toward the care of elderly patients. Formal permission was taken from the related authorities of Jinnah hospital Lahore before data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and informed consent was obtained from each nurse prior to participation. Participants were given the assurance that their information will be treated confidentially and for academic and research purposes only. The questionnaire was sent to eligible nurses at the time of their duty without disturbing the activities of patient care. The nurses were asked to answer the questionnaire in an honest and independent way. Once filled out, the questionnaires were retrieved and verified for completion.

Data Analysis Procedure

Once completed, all questionnaires were screened for completeness, coded and entered in SPSS

version 27 for analysis. The demographic data of participants and responses to the questions on knowledge and attitude towards care of elderly patients were analysed using descriptive statistics. Categorical data (age group, gender, qualification, clinical area, experience level) were summarised as frequencies and percentages. Where applicable, the mean and standard deviation were calculated for continuous variables. The knowledge and attitude scores were grouped based on the criteria for the modified questionnaire. The results obtained from the analysis of data were displayed in tables and figures for easy interpretation. The collected data was organized, analyzed and summarized correctly using SPSS version 27.

Results

Demographic Analysis

The table shows the sociodemographic and professional characteristics of 142 participants. Most participants were between 26–30 years of age, 52 (36.6%), followed by 31–35 years, 37 (26.1%), while the lowest proportion was in the age group of 36–40 years, 19 (13.4%). The majority of participants were female, 111 (78.2%), whereas male participants were 31 (21.8%). Regarding marital status, slightly more than half of the participants were single, 73 (51.4%), while 69 (48.6%) were married. In terms of qualification, most nurses had Post RN qualification, 64 (45.1%), followed by BSN Generic, 40 (28.2%), and General Nursing Diploma, 38 (26.8%). Concerning clinical experience, most participants had 1–5 years of experience, 66 (46.5%), followed closely by 6–10 years, 64 (45.1%), while only 1 (0.7%) participant had above 15 years of experience. Department-wise, the majority of participants were working in surgical wards, 65 (45.8%), followed by other departments, 44 (31.0%), and medical wards, 33 (23.2%). Overall, the sample was mainly composed of young female nurses with Post RN qualification and relatively early clinical experience.

Table 1
Sociodemographic and Professional Characteristics of Participants (n = 142)

Variables	Categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	21-25 years	34	23.9
	26-30 years	52	36.6
	31-35 years	37	26.1
	36-40 years	19	13.4
Gender	Male	31	21.8
	Female	111	78.2
Marital Status	Single	73	51.4
	Married	69	48.6
Qualification	General Nursing Diploma	38	26.8
	Post RN	64	45.1
	BSN Generic	40	28.2
Clinical Experience	1-5 years	66	46.5
	6-10 years	64	45.1
	11-15 years	11	7.7
	Above 15 years	1	0.7
Department	Medical Ward	33	23.2
	Surgical Ward	65	45.8
	Others	44	31.0

The table presents the level of nurses' knowledge regarding the care of elderly patients among 142 participants. The results show that 68 (47.9%) nurses had poor knowledge, which represents the highest proportion of participants. Furthermore, 39 (27.5%) nurses had moderate knowledge, while only 35 (24.6%) nurses demonstrated good knowledge regarding elderly patient care. These

findings indicate that nearly half of the nurses had inadequate knowledge about the care of elderly patients, despite being involved in clinical practice. Overall, the results suggest a need for educational programs, training sessions, and continuous professional development to improve nurses' knowledge and enhance the quality of care provided to elderly patients.

Table 2
Nurses' Knowledge Regarding Care of Elderly Patients (n = 142)

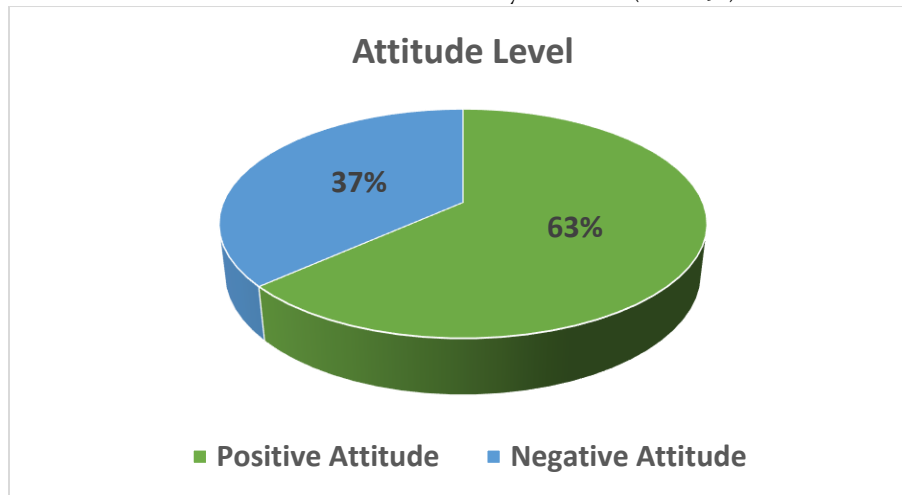
Knowledge Level	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Poor Knowledge	68	47.9
Moderate Knowledge	39	27.5
Good Knowledge	35	24.6
Total	142	100.0

The below Figure presents the level of nurses' attitude towards the care of elderly patients among 142 participants. The results show that the majority of nurses, 90 (63.4%), had a positive attitude towards caring for elderly patients, while 52 (36.6%) nurses had a negative attitude. These findings indicate that most nurses showed willingness, acceptance, and a favorable approach

toward elderly patient care. However, the presence of negative attitude among more than one-third of participants highlights the need for continuous professional training, awareness programs, and supportive clinical supervision to further improve nurses' attitudes and promote compassionate, respectful, and patient-centered care for elderly patients.

Figure 1

Distribution of Nurses' Attitude Towards Care of Elderly Patients (n = 142)

**Discussion**

The present study evaluated the knowledge and attitude of the nurses towards the care of the elderly patients from the sample of 142 nurses working at Jinnah Hospital Lahore. The results indicated that 68 (47.9%) nurses were found to have poor knowledge, 39 (27.5%) had moderate knowledge and 35 (24.6%) had good knowledge about care of elderly patients. It has been found that nearly half of the nurses lack knowledge, which could impact care that is provided for elderly patients. This study is in line with Ali et al. (2020) who found that Nurses in Peshawar lack knowledge about geriatric patient care. The similarity could be attributed to the inadequate training, continuing education, and clinical experience that nursing staff have in geriatric care. The discovery further underpins the argument that geriatric care is emerging as a challenge in Pakistan since the proportion of elderly population is increasing and the healthcare system needs to be better prepared to address the needs of its elderly population (Ashiq & Asad, 2017).

The low level of knowledge among the nurses in the present study is inconsistent with the findings of certain international studies reported better understanding of older people care among nurses. Attafuah et al. (2022) carried out a cross sectional study on nurses' knowledge and attitude towards the care of older patients and pointed out the need for professional training in bettering geriatric

nursing care. They studied nurses' knowledge and attitude towards older patients, finding their research in the International Journal of Africa Nursing Sciences (Attafuah et al., 2022). The variations of the present study from Attafuah et al., (2022) might be attributed to the differences in the nursing education systems, opportunities for clinical practice, and policies for geriatric care in institutions. Structured gerontological education may result in greater knowledge of the problems associated with aging, the sensitivity of medications, nutrition, delirium, dementia, falls, and prevention of pressure ulcers among nurses.

The present study also revealed that most of the participants were young nurses, and the maximum age group of the participants was 26-30 year age group (52, 36.6%), while the maximum clinical experience was 1-5 years (66, 46.5%). This could account for the lack of knowledge about the subject because younger nurses and those with limited clinical experience might not have had as much exposure to complicated situations related to elderly care. The same study was conducted by Argaw et al. 2019 to determine nurses' knowledge and attitude towards the care of elderly patients in government hospitals in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which showed the importance of the role of professional factors and institutional factors in elderly care. The present finding further confirms that academic qualifications are not the only factors affecting knowledge but also clinical

exposure, work experience, availability for training. Limited experience nurses may be able to give routine care but may not have much knowledge of the physiological, psychological and social changes that occur in the elderly.

The findings revealed that attitude of the nurses towards the care of elderly patients was more positive than their level of knowledge. 90 (63.4%) of the nurses were positive attainers towards the elderly care while 52 (36.6%) were negative attainers. This finding indicates that despite a lack of complete knowledge, many nurses were prepared to care for elderly persons. The results are comparable to those of Faronbi et al. (2017b), who found nursing students to have positive attitudes towards older patient care. Faronbi et al. (2017b) also reported that 71.8% of the respondents were positive about caring for older people, which is higher than the present study but still indicates that older people care populations also hold positive attitudes. This difference could be attributed to the variation in characteristics of the samples as Faronbi et al. focused on nursing students and this study focused on practicing nurses.

The positive attitude observed in the current study is in contrast to Khagi et al. (2020) who found both negative (55.3%) and positive (44.7%) attitude of nurses towards care of elderly people in teaching hospitals in Kathmandu Valley. The present study revealed that the positive attitude was higher, as 63.4% of the nurses had a positive attitude. This difference can be attributed to culture, institutional, educational and work environment differences. The nurses in this study could be exposed to more elderly patients in the medical and surgical wards, thus helping patients accept and agree to accept care. Based on the results of the study, Khagi et al. (2020) stated that gerontological nursing education has a significant role in shaping the attitudes of nurses, which is why geriatric content should be given a role in the nursing education and clinical training process.

This is an important finding in the present study as it deals with knowledge and attitude. Most nurses had a positive attitude towards care of the elderly, although the knowledge of the nurses was

not good. This implies that attitude is not enough to guarantee good geriatric nursing care. Dikken (2017) highlighted that it is crucial to measure the knowledge and attitude of nurses towards older patients as both will influence care quality. Cheng et al (2022) also emphasized the role of knowledge and attitudes in the health-related decisions and care planning of older people. The current results suggest that despite having compassion, willingness, and respect for the elderly patients, nurses need to build their knowledge base with evidence-based information on dealing with common geriatric issues like cognitive impairment, sensitivity to medication, fall risk, nutrition, and hydration, as well as prevention of pressure ulcers.

It is recommended that, based on the research results, the hospital and nursing institution should increase the quality of geriatric nursing education by holding workshops, seminars, bedside teaching and continuous professional improvement courses. The poor level of knowledge observed in this study corroborates the concerns expressed by Ali et al. (2020); Argaw et al. (2019) while positive attitude is supported by the study that conducted by Faronbi et al. (2017b) and contradicted by the study conducted by Khagi et al. (2020). This comparison indicates that although nurses may be willing to care for elderly patients, there are certain gaps in their knowledge that hinder the provision of high-quality elderly care. With the growing elderly population in Pakistan, the demand for clinically competent and emotionally supportive nurses with geriatric care knowledge is growing rapidly (Ashiq & Asad, 2017). The study recommends that there needs to be a training program for geriatric patients for nurses so that they can have a better understanding of geriatric patients while keeping their positive attitude.

Conclusion

The present study concluded that nurses working at Jinnah Hospital Lahore had a generally positive attitude but inadequate knowledge regarding the care of elderly patients. The findings revealed that nearly half of the participants had poor knowledge, while only a small proportion demonstrated good knowledge about elderly care.

This indicates that nurses may have limited understanding of important geriatric care aspects, including age-related health problems, medication sensitivity, nutrition, hydration, fall prevention, cognitive changes, delirium, dementia, and pressure ulcer prevention. Although most nurses showed a positive attitude and willingness to care for elderly patients, positive attitude alone is not sufficient without adequate knowledge and clinical skills. Therefore, continuous professional development, geriatric nursing workshops, in-service training, and educational programs are strongly recommended to improve nurses' knowledge and strengthen the quality of elderly patient care. Improving nurses' knowledge while maintaining their positive attitude can enhance patient safety, comfort, and overall health outcomes among elderly patients.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that regular in-service training programs, workshops, and seminars should be arranged for nurses to improve their knowledge regarding the care of elderly patients. Hospital administration should provide continuous professional development opportunities focused on geriatric nursing care, including dementia care, delirium prevention, medication safety, nutrition, hydration, fall prevention, and pressure ulcer prevention. Geriatric nursing should be given more importance in nursing education and clinical practice to prepare nurses for the increasing elderly population. Nurses should be encouraged to develop positive, respectful, and patient-centered attitudes toward elderly patients through supportive supervision and clinical mentoring. Hospital policies should also promote quality elderly care by ensuring adequate staffing, proper resources, and elderly-friendly clinical environments. Further research should be conducted with a larger sample size in different hospitals and regions to compare nurses' knowledge and attitudes toward elderly patient care and to identify factors affecting geriatric nursing practices.

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