

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES OF NURSING STUDENTS ABOUT AGEING AND FRAIL-ELDERLY CARING AT COLLEGE OF NURSING IN UNIVERSITY OF BAGHDAD

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Abstract

Introduction: The issue of an ageing population is a significant one now confronting international healthcare systems. The aging population is associated with a higher probability of experiencing health issues, the aims of this study are to assess the knowledge and attitudes of nursing students about ageing and frail-elderly caring at college of nursing in university of Baghdad.

Methods: a cross-sectional descriptive investigation carried out among a cohort of nursing students, study sample included 154 nursing students and was distributed according to department. A researcher used a direct interview sheet to gather the data from January 2023 to March 2023, questionnaire consisted of three major parts, data analysis by utilization of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 26, Qualitative data was presented using frequency, percentage distribution and Chi-square test.

Results: Results study show knowledge nursing students about ageing and elderly caring all of their answer were know, attitude nursing students about ageing and elderly caring most of their answer were agree, positive significant relationship between nursing students' knowledge and attitude about ageing and frail-elderly caring.

Conclusion: The nursing student's assessment of knowledge about ageing and frail-elderly caring and is good in all items, good level of attitude about ageing and frail-elderly caring in all items,, age, department and participated in lectures on aging and frail-elderly care, and show high positive significant relationship between nursing students' attitude about ageing and frail-elderly caring and age, marital status, economic status, and participated in lectures on aging and frail-elderly care.

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitudes, Students, Ageing, Frail, Elderly

INTRODUCTION

The issue of an ageing population is a significant one now confronting international healthcare systems. The aging population is associated with a higher probability of experiencing health issues, leading to an increased need for healthcare resources [1]. The process of aging is an unavoidable phenomenon that will witness a significant increase in the elderly population globally in the coming years. This phenomenon is observed across all countries, indicating a widespread longevity revolution [2]. Ageing is a biological fact that has its own dynamics that are largely uncontrollable by humans [3]. The phenomenon of ageing, which tends to be more pronounced in industrialized nations, is a matter of significance that warrants attention from both developed and emerging countries [4].

The expansion of the elderly population is a significant global issue, particularly pronounced in nations with lower and moderate economic levels. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), those who are 60 years of age or more are classified as older persons. WHO further categorizes this age group into three sub-periods: young-old (60-74 years old), old (75-90 years old), and oldest (above 90 years old) [5]. Based on a research published by the United Nations, the global population of those aged 65 years or over was estimated to be 703 million in the year 2019. According to projections, the global population of older individuals is anticipated to undergo a twofold increase, reaching a total of 1.5 billion by the year 2050. On a global scale, there has been a notable growth in the proportion of individuals aged 65 years or older, rising from 6% in 1990 to 9% in 2019. The anticipated trend indicates that the aforementioned proportion is expected to increase to 16% by the year 2050, resulting in almost one out of every six individuals worldwide being aged 65 years or older [6]. Based on the data provided by the Central Statistics Bureau for the year 2018, it has been determined that the old population in Iraq constitutes approximately 3% of the total population. This finding indicates that Iraqi society can be characterized as predominantly youthful. In 2018, the population of older individuals amounted to 1.2 million, constituting approximately 3% of the total population. It is projected that by 2020, this percentage will increase to 3.5% due to advancements in healthcare, and further reach to 4.4% by 2030 [7].

The process of aging in older individuals is characterized by a progressive decline in physiological reserves, an elevated susceptibility to chronic diseases, and a general deterioration in overall functional capacity [8]. Typically, individuals aged 60 and above experience significant challenges connected to disability and mortality, primarily stemming from age-related declines in auditory, visual, and motor functions. Additionally, non-communicable sicknesses such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, chronic respiratory disorders, cancer, and dementia contribute significantly to these burdens [9]. Consequently, it is imperative for nurses to possess a comprehensive understanding and proficiency in their field, exhibit suitable attitudes towards the elderly population, and be adequately equipped to effectively address the demands associated with providing care for this continuously expanding demographic [1]. One of the most challenging issues in nursing education is the preparation of nurses to provide care for the elderly population [10].

Nursing students acquire comprehensive understanding of prevalent illnesses and nursing interventions for geriatric patients through their participation in the nursing curriculum. According to reports, there exists a positive correlation between knowledge and the inclination to engage in senior care as a preferred occupation. Nevertheless, it is well acknowledged that the inclination to provide care for elderly individuals is equally contingent upon one's attitude [11]. Attitude refers to an individual's emotional disposition or evaluative stance towards an object, concept, or individual. The inclination of an individual to engage in a particular conduct is contingent upon their attitude towards this behavior [12]. Research indicates that patients derive advantages from nurses that possess a greater depth of knowledge, sufficient experience, and a favorable disposition towards elderly individuals. These attributes have been found to result in reduced durations of hospitalization and diminished rates of patient readmission [5]. The aims of this study are to assess the knowledge and attitudes nursing students about ageing and frail-elderly caring at college of nursing in university of Baghdad.

Methods

The present study was a cross-sectional descriptive investigation carried out among a cohort of nursing students enrolled at the College of Nursing, University of Baghdad. The students are enrolled in the fourth grade for the academic year of 2022-2023. The technique used in the sample approach was a non-probability method, specifically convenience sampling, which encompassed all nursing students who willingly provided their agreement to partake in the study.

The study sample included 154 nursing students (70 male and 84 female) and was distributed according to department (64 Community health nursing and 90 Psychiatric Health). A researcher used a direct interview sheet to gather the data over the course of three months, from January 2023 to March 2023, from each nursing student participant.

A Constructional questionnaire was used to assess nursing students' knowledge and attitudes about ageing and frail-elderly care. A questionnaire format was used for data collection, which consisted of three major parts: **the first part** is concerned with socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, department, residence, marital status, economic status, having participated in lectures on aging and frail-elderly care, having older people in the family, and have willing to work with the elderly after graduation). **The second part** is concerned with the knowledge of nursing students about ageing and frail-elderly care (20 items). **The third part** is concerned with the attitude of nursing students about ageing and frail-elderly care (21) items.

The college of nursing at the University of Baghdad provided their ethical approval. In addition, each student was verbally asked if they would be willing to participate in the study before any information from nursing students was collected. It was made clear that the student had the right to decline or end the interview.

Statistical Analysis: Once the data had been collected, it underwent coding and was subsequently converted into specifically designed formats that were suited for computer input. The data analysis and tabulation process involved the utilization of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Prior to analysis, a thorough verification

of all entered data was conducted to identify and rectify any potential error. Qualitative data was presented using frequency and percentage distribution. A Chi-square test was used to compare categorical variables. The concept of statistical significance was operationalized as a P-value below the threshold of 0.05.

Results:

Table (1) show of (154) students from socio-demographic characteristics; (57.1%) of them were (20-24) years old, (54.5%) of them were female, (58.4%) were psychiatric health department, (79.9%) were residence are urban, (64.9%) of them were single, (48.7%) of them economic status are moderate, (50.6%) answer no participated in lectures on aging and frail-elderly care, (74%) answer yes have older people in the family, and (55.8%) answer no have willing to work with elderly after graduation.

Table (1): Distribution of the study sample according to Socio-Demographic characteristics of nursing students

Age	F	%	Gander	F	%
20-24	88	57.1%	Male	70	45.5%
25- and more	66	42.9%	Female	84	54.5%
Total	154	100%	Total	154	100%
Department	F	%	Residence	F	%
Community health nursing	64	41.6%	Urban	123	79.9%
Psychiatric Health	90	58.4%	Rural	31	20.1%
Total	154	100%	Total	154	100%
Marital status	F	%	Economic status	F	%
Single	100	64.9%	Good	73	47.4%
Married	46	29.9%	Moderate	75	48.7%
Divorced	5	3.2%	Low	6	3.9%
Widow	3	1.9%	Total	154	100%
Total	154	100%			
Have participated in lectures on aging and frail-elderly care	F	%	Have older people in the family	F	%
Yes	76	49.4%	Yes	114	74%
No	78	50.6%	No	40	26%
Total	154	100%	Total	154	100%
Have willing to work with elderly after graduation			F	%	
Yes			68	44.2%	
No			86	55.8%	
Total			154	100%	

F = Frequency, % = Percentage.

Table (2) reveal that all of the items related to knowledge nursing students about ageing and frail-elderly caring all of their answer were know.

Table (2): Knowledge of nursing students about ageing and frail-elderly caring

No.	Items	Know		Not sure		Don't know	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Majority of elderly (65 years and more) have Alzheimer's disease	96	62.3%	36	23.4%	22	14.3%
2	The sensory modalities of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste commonly exhibit a decline in older individuals	145	94.2%	9	5.8%	0	0%
3	The majority of aged individuals exhibit a lack of interest in, as well as a diminished capacity for engaging in sexual encounters	80	52%	61	39.6%	13	8.4%
4	The act of retiring is usually associated with negative health outcomes, as individuals often experience a decline in well-being and an increased likelihood of illness or mortality in the period after retirement.	87	56.5%	54	35.1	13	8.4%
5	Majority of elderly are bored	124	80.5%	22	14.3%	8	5.2%
6	Physical strength tends to decline in elderly	134	87%	14	9.1%	6	3.9%
7	Most of elderly are living in nursing homes	56	36.4%	43	27.9%	55	35.7%
8	There is a disparity in the effectiveness of older workers compared to their younger counterparts	116	75.3%	32	20.8%	6	3.9%
9	Memory impairment is a commonly observed phenomenon that occurs as a natural consequence of the aging process	92	59.7%	54	35.1%	8	5.2%
10	The older population has a lower level of adaptability compared to younger individuals when they undergo a relocation to a novel area	92	59.7%	51	33.1%	11	7.1%
11	Older people find learning new things to be very challenging	100	64.9%	37	24%	17	11%

12	The capacity of the bladder diminishes with advancing age, resulting in increased frequency of urine	100	64.9%	44	28.6%	10	6.5%
13	Older individuals have lower levels of anxiety towards mortality compared to younger and middle-aged persons	57	37%	48	31.2%	49	31.8%
14	The contemporary family has shifted away from assuming responsibility for the well-being of its older members	66	42.9%	48	31.2%	40	26%
15	The stature of an individual has a tendency to diminish during advanced stages of life	94	61%	37	24%	23	14.9%
16	Personality changes with age and reaching aging	104	67.5%	34	22.1%	16	10.6%
17	As individuals advance in age, there is a tendency for them to have a heightened sense of spirituality	96	62.3%	43	27.9%	15	9.7%
18	Older individuals experience greater difficulty with sleep compared to younger folks	100	64.9%	45	29.2%	9	5.8%
19	The aged population has a prolonged recovery period in response to both physical and psychological stressors	133	86.4%	20	13%	1	0.6%
20	As individuals advance in age, there is a reduction in cognitive abilities	91	59.1%	49	31.8%	14	9.1%

F = Frequency, % = Percentage.

Table (3) reveal that items related to attitude nursing students about ageing and frail-elderly caring most of their answer were agree.

Table (3): Attitude of nursing students about ageing and frail-elderly caring

No.	Items	Agree		Not sure		Disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	The majority of elderly persons living in housing with individuals their own age would likely be preferable	91	59.1%	39	25.3%	24	15.6%
2	Most elderly are hard to understand	77	50%	48	31.2%	29	18.8%
3	Most older people develop habits and are unwilling to alter	97	63%	42	27.3%	15	9.7%
4	Most elderly are capable of new adjustments in their behaviors daily and healthy	60	39%	61	39.1%	33	21.4%
5	Elderly people wish to retire from work as soon as possible	79	51.3%	54	35.1%	21	13.6%
6	The elderly prefer to work as long as they can	49	31.8%	49	31.8%	56	36.4%
7	The majority of elderly people often keep their homes tidy and appealing	65	42.2%	52	33.8%	37	24%
8	Individuals experience more wisdom as they progress towards old age	119	77.3%	29	18.8%	6	3.9%
9	Elderly people enjoy appreciation and respect in society	121	78.6%	20	13%	13	8.4%
10	Most elderly like interfering into the affairs of others and make them angry	80	51.9%	45	29.2%	29	18.8%
11	Most elderly respect others' privacy	73	47.4%	44	28.6%	37	24%
12	Elderly make mistakes like anyone else	129	83.8%	19	12.3%	6	3.9%
13	Most elderly are very different from one another	106	68.8%	39	25.3%	9	5.8%
14	The majority of elderly people look to be quite tidy and presentable	60	39%	75	48.7%	19	12.3%
15	Elderly are irritable, nervous, and not happy	85	55.2%	54	35.1%	15	9.7%
16	Most elderly are cheerful, agreeable, and good humored	53	34.4%	78	50.6%	23	14.9%
17	A large proportion of elderly people frequently criticize how the younger generation behaves	110	71.4%	32	20.8%	12	7.8%
18	The majority of elders don't require any more affection and assurance than anyone else	45	29.2%	37	24%	72	46.8%
19	The presence of most older individuals tends to evoke a sense of discomfort	117	76%	26	16.9%	11	7.1%
20	One notable and captivating attribute commonly observed among the older population is their ability to recount and share their personal experiences from the past	126	81.8%	23	14.9%	5	3.2%
21	Spiritual and religious care is important for the comfort of the elderly.	118	76.6%	27	17.5%	9	5.8%

F = Frequency, % = Percentage.

Table (4) show positive significant relationship between nursing students' knowledge about ageing and frail-elderly caring and age, department and participated in lectures on aging and elderly care, and show high positive significant relationship between nursing students' attitude about ageing and frail-elderly caring and age, marital status, economic status, and participated in lectures on aging and elderly care.

Table (4): Association between nursing student’s knowledge and Attitude with regard to their socio-demographic characteristics

Socio-demographic characteristics	Knowledge of nursing students		Attitude of nursing students	
	P	Sig.	P	Sig.
Age	0.03	S	0.04	S
Gender	0.17	N.S	0.56	N.S
Department	0.05	S	0.35	N.S
Residence	0.87	N.S	0.32	N.S
Marital status	0.62	N.S	0.005	H.S
Economic status	0.34	N.S	0.007	H.S
participated in lectures on aging and frail-elderly care	0.000	H.S	0.01	H.S
Have older people in the family	0.84	N.S	0.55	N.S
willing to work with elderly after graduation	0.64	N.S	0.35	N.S

P: P. Value, Sig.: Significant, N.S: No significant, S: significant, H.S: high significant

Discussion:

According to knowledge of nursing students about ageing and frail-elderly caring most of their answer were know. This result reflect the good knowledge about aging and care provide about frail older persons, which comes from lectures and seminars about how to deal with normal aging and how provide care to frail older persons. These findings are consistent with research' findings 13, It has been demonstrated that a significant proportion of participants had favorable perceptions and attitudes towards older individuals, while also exhibiting a commendable understanding of crucial clinical practice matters pertaining to the aging process. In order to maintain these favorable qualities, it is imperative to prioritize matters pertaining to the welfare of our growing elderly demographic. This intervention is expected to enhance the proficiency of healthcare professionals in providing care for elderly individuals across diverse healthcare environments [Table 2].

The current study indicate that the items related to nursing students attitude about ageing and frail-elderly caring most of their answer were agree. This result reflect the nursing students have a positive attitude toward ageing and frail-elderly caring, because the global trend towards caring for the frail elderly and providing the best care for this age group. The study 14, The nursing students consistently exhibited a good attitude towards older persons across their training, with a notable improvement in positive attitudes observed as they progressed in their studies, particularly following the incorporation of clinical practice involving older adults in both hospital and nursing home settings. Enhancing one's attitude may prove effective in augmenting positive attitudes, although the alteration of unfavorable attitudes may present a more formidable challenge [Table 3].

The results of present study that statistical significant association between the items related to the knowledge of nursing student’s age and department, and present highly statistical significant association between knowledge of nursing student’s and participated in lectures on aging and frail elderly care. These results reflect the nursing student put their attention on increase awareness about chronological aging and provide appropriate care to frail elderly people, the nursing college focusing about lectures and training student to ageing and frail elderly caring. Findings of 15 support these, the findings of this study indicate that nursing students have a greater inclination to engage with elderly individuals when equipped with enhanced knowledge and cultivating good attitudes. The nursing curriculum has the capacity to provide knowledge and information, whereas nursing educators and clinical mentors possess the ability to cultivate positive attitudes through the demonstration of empathy and care. Therefore, it is imperative that nursing educators and clinical mentors assume a crucial role in cultivating a cadre of nurses who are prepared and motivated to provide care for the continuously expanding population of frail elderly individuals.

Furthermore, the results of study that statistical significant association between the attitude of nursing student and age, and show highly statistical significant association between the items related to the attitude of nursing student and marital status, economic status and participated in lectures on aging and frail-elderly care. These results reflect according to the many courses that the nursing student take to learn the importance on aging and frail-elderly care and direction to increase thinking about care of older persons. The study 16, the outcomes of this study indicate that a significant proportion of the student population exhibited favorable sentiments regarding the provision of care for the frail-elderly. The discovery is quite encouraging, as the attitude of nursing staff plays a critical role in influencing their willingness to work with people who are older. [Table 4].

Conclusion

In light of the above findings, it can be concluded that nursing students have good knowledge and positive attitude regarding ageing and frail-elderly caring. There was a high positive significant between knowledge and attitude of nursing students regarding ageing and frail-elderly caring the current study. As knowledge increases, the attitude became more positive. This study may help the nursing educator to plan for increasing interest of nursing students by

encouraging discussion related to the elderly, present their problems and emphasize the positive aspects of aging and right way to provide care for frail-elderly people.

Recommendations

The study recommends these findings have significant implications for both nursing education and clinical practice. It is imperative to enhance the preparedness of nursing students in addressing the healthcare needs of the ageing and frail-elderly population within the context of their nursing education. Furthermore, it is imperative to engage in ongoing professional development in the field of gerontology throughout one's educational journey. The resulting findings suggest that the fluctuations observed in these areas could potentially enhance the quality of care provided to ageing and frail-older individuals.

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