

Original Research Article

Perceptions and perceived challenges of nursing students in maintaining interpersonal relationship with the healthcare team: a cross-sectional study

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Received: 03 March 2025

Revised: 20 April 2025

Accepted: 21 April 2025

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ABSTRACT

Background: Interpersonal skills help student nurses enhance their teamwork quality, positive attitude, mutual effort in taking care of patients with other team members, and having gratitude for others help them learn how to work as a team. The study assesses the nursing student's perceptions of their interpersonal relationship (IPR) with the healthcare team (HCT) and the challenges faced by them in maintaining IPR in hospital settings.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 202 BSc (Hons) nursing students. The data was collected with a socio-demographic proforma, rating scale and a checklist using a purposive sampling technique.

Results: The median age of the participants was 21 (20 and 22) years. Among 202 participants; 74, 72 and 56 participants belong to 2nd, 3rd and 4th year BSc (Hons) nursing respectively. The 20.29% had very good IPR, 43.56% had good, 24.25% had moderate, and 11.88% had low IPR with the HCT. Most of the students perceive that good IPR with HCT helped them to reduce gap between their theoretical knowledge and practical skills (Relative importance index, RII=0.8) There is an association between the level of IPR with seniority of nursing students ($\chi^2=21.523$, df=6, p=0.001). The most common challenges faced by student nurses include language differences (84.7%) and lack of respect shown by HCT towards student nurses (80.7%).

Conclusions: These findings provide valuable insights for the nursing community, with ultimate goal of improving patient care, promoting teamwork, and cultivating a positive learning environment for nursing students in hospital settings.

Keywords: Inter-personal relationship, Health care team, Nursing students

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal relationship (IPR) in nursing care is the interaction between two or more people who communicate, and transfer values and energy from their roles in society.¹ An individual having strong interpersonal skills is more likely to be successful in their professional and personal life.

Among the various HCT members, nurses represent the larger workforce and act as a link between various healthcare professionals. So, nursing students, who are the future of nursing, should develop and possess interpersonal skills characterized by knowledge, attitudes, and values expressed in their relationships with colleagues, other members of HCT, patients, and their families.²

The learning process of nursing students can also be affected by deficiencies in IPRs, such as a lack of preparation and receptivity of HCT within the institutions where they undergo clinical experience. Doubts related to either theoretical knowledge or practical skills can be cleared by communicating with the members of HCT. Effective communication, confidence, and knowledge are required both while dealing with patients, as well as with the other members of the HCT.² Strong Interpersonal skills help student nurses in enhancing their leadership and teamwork quality. A student nurse needs to have a sense of cooperation and tolerance for others which moulds them into a better individual. This boosts their self-confidence and self-esteem which in turn helps in shaping their personality.

The study aimed to investigate the perception of IPRs by student nurses with the members of the HCT and the barriers they faced in maintaining IPR with them in the clinical setting from the point of view of student nurses.

METHODS

Study design

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among the participants.

Materials and subjects

The study was conducted among 202 BSc (Hons) nursing students studying in 2nd, 3rd and 4th year of the college of nursing, All India institute of medical sciences, Bhubaneswar. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the samples. All B. Sc. (Hons) nursing students who were exposed to clinical area were the part of the study. The data was collected between December 12, 2022, to December 22, 2022.

Data collection was done using socio-demographic proforma, a Likert scale to assess nursing student's perception of IPR with HCT, and a checklist to assess the challenges faced by nursing students in maintaining IPR with the health care team. The Likert scale to assess nursing students' perception of IPR with HCT included 27 items consisting of a five-point Likert rating scale asking respondents to indicate their responses from the following five choices: "strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree" that are scored one to five or five to one for negatively scored items with a maximum score of 125. The scoring category has been done as per pilot study findings and is as follows. For low IPR the score is <78, for moderate IPR the score lies between 79-87, a good IPR score is 88-102 and for very good IPR the score is >102. The checklist to assess the challenges faced by nursing students consists of 13 items which the participants responded to and marked. The content validity of the tool was done by experts. The instrument takes an average of 20-25 minutes to complete data.

The data was collected and entered in Microsoft excel. Descriptive analysis was done to assess socio-demographic profile, perception of nursing students' IPR with members of HCT, and challenges faced by nursing students in maintaining IPR with HCT. The Chi-square test was used to find out the association among levels of IPR with seniority of nursing students. A p value less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

RII was assessed to find out the most to the least perception about IPR with HCT regarding nursing students' experience of interaction with them. Each of the twenty-seven items in this section was graded on a five-point rating scale. A maximum score of five for each of the items, if the participants were very satisfied with the IPR with HCT. A score of one was assigned, if the participant was very dissatisfied with their IPR with HCT. RII was calculated using the formula $[RII = \sum W / (A * n)]$, wherein W=weighting for each item, A=highest weight, and n=number of participants. The item with the highest RII would be interpreted as the item with the most importance in IPR with HCT and vice versa.

Ethical statement

The study was approved by the institutional ethical committee (IEC/AIIMS BBSR/Nursing/2022-23/25) and informed consent was taken from each participant before conducting the study.

RESULTS

The median age of the subjects was 21 (20-22) years. Of these 202 participants, 36.6% were from the 3rd year, 35.6% were from the 2nd year and 27.7% were from the 4th year. The majority of the students (63.4%) belong to the Eastern states of India. The most common mother tongue was Bengali, spoken by 43.6% of students. The 56.4% of students have been schooled in English medium in higher secondary classes, which happens to be the majority. Of the total subjects, 82.2% belong to the nuclear family and 83.7 have siblings. The most prevalent schooling type among subjects was co-educational, with 66.3% of students (Table 1).

About 30% of participants identified themselves as extroverted personality, 35.6% as introverted and 34.2% identified themselves as ambivert personality among 202 participants.

Out of 202 participants, 43.56% perceived they had good IPR with the HCT, 24.25% had moderate IPR with HCT, 20.29% perceived they had very good IPR with HCT and 11.88% perceived low IPR with HCT (Table 2).

In the 2nd year batch, 24 students perceived they had very good IPR and 8 students perceived low IPR. In 3rd year batch 6 students reported a perception of very good IPR and 12 students had low IPR. In 4th year batch, 11 students had very good IPR and 10 students had low IPR.

Most of the students perceived that their IPR with HCT enabled the ward to be regarded as a good learning environment (RII: 0.8) and that good IPR with HCT helped them to reduce the gap between their theoretical knowledge and practical skills (RII: 0.8) (Table 3).

There is a significant association between the level of IPR and with seniority of nursing students ($\chi^2=21.523$, $p=0.001$) at 0.05 level of significance (Table 4).

No significant association was found between the levels of IPR with domicile state, mother tongue, medium of higher secondary education, siblings, family type, family

value and belief, type of personality, schooling type, ($p>0.05$).

Out of 202 students, 84.7% admitted language difference as a barrier while communicating with HCT. The 80.7% of students feel that the lack of respect shown towards them by the members of HCT proves to be a barrier for maintaining IPR. 69.8% of students believed that inadequate professional knowledge of nurses was a barrier. Inferiority complex faced by students and inability to accept criticism turned out to be other barriers that were faced by 42.6% and 49% of students respectively (Table 5).

Table 1: Description of socio demographic data of participants (n=202).

Item	N	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)	21 (20 and 22)#	
Nursing batch		
2 nd year	72	35.6
3 rd year	74	36.6
4 th year	56	27.7
Domicile state[^]		
North	12	6
East	128	63.4
West	25	12.4
South	20	9.9
Central	17	7.9
Mother tongue^{\$}		
Bengali	88	43.6
Hindi	53	26.2
Odia	18	8.39
Malayalam	20	9.9
Others	23	25
Medium of higher secondary education		
English	114	56.4
Hindi	19	9.4
Bengali	59	29.2
Odia	10	5.0
Family type		
Nuclear	166	82.2
Joint	33	16.3
3 generation	3	1.5
Family values and beliefs		
Liberal	63	31.2
Conservative	38	18.8
Mixed	101	50.0
Presence of siblings		
Present	169	83.7
Absent	33	16.3
Schooling type		
Co-educational school	134	66.3
Girls only school	57	28.2
Residential school	11	5.4

#Median age (Q1, Q3), [^]-Domicile state-East (West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam, Jharkhand), West (Rajasthan), North (Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab), South (Kerala), Central (Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh).^{\$}Mother tongue-Others (Rajasthani, Manipuri, Haryanvi, Punjabi, Assamese, Urdu, Bhoti).

Table 2: Perception of nursing students' IPR with members of HCT (n=202).

Level of IPR	N	Percentage (%)
Low IPR	24	11.88
Moderate IPR	49	24.25
Good IPR	88	43.56
Very good IPR	41	20.29

Table 3: Perception of nursing students' IPR with members of HCT based on each item (n=202).

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	RII
I feel that good IPR is important in nursing.	140	45	10	0	7	0.29
I find it easy to approach members of HCT during clinical practice	40	77	57	25	3	0.48
I can easily approach and converse with nursing officers in ward	37	94	37	28	6	0.47
I find it easy to initiate conversation with doctors in ward.	12	46	80	44	20	0.61
I find it easy to initiate conversation with paramedical staff in ward	8	28	86	58	22	0.66
In my experience, members of HCT expressed kindness during interaction with me.	4	16	70	87	25	0.71
In my experience, members of the HCT showed respect for my clinical abilities.	3	22	74	74	29	0.70
I feel my IPR with HCT enabled the ward to be regarded as a good learning environment.	2	8	45	84	63	0.80
I feel that good IPR with HCT helped me to reduce the gap between my theoretical knowledge and practical skills.	4	17	29	79	73	0.80
I feel free to discuss my patient care concerns with members of HCT.	7	26	48	83	38	0.72
In my experience, members of the HCT made themselves available to me to clarify my doubts or concerns.	23	80	64	26	9	0.52
In my experience, the members of the HCT displayed a sincere interest in me as an individual.	26	59	75	31	11	0.54
In my experience, members of the HCT were impatient or lost their temper with me during interaction.	30	60	54	43	15	0.65
In my experience, members of HCT criticized me in the presence of other members of HCT.	32	51	60	49	10	0.65
I feel that members of HCT were overly rigid and inflexible	22	55	76	36	13	0.64
In my opinion, there is partiality shown by members of HCT towards students belonging to their native state/ speaking in the same language.	15	35	46	56	50	0.51
I feel the members of HCT could not maintain rapport with me due to the excessive workload.	13	49	63	59	18	0.58
I feel members of the HCT were not able to answer my queries satisfactorily.	18	61	57	50	16	0.62
I feel, nursing officers gave genuine feedback for giving quality nursing care.	30	85	54	23	10	0.50
I feel, doctors gave me genuine feedback for giving quality nursing care.	19	61	75	36	11	0.56
I feel that when someone is giving me negative feedback, I find it difficult to communicate.	17	35	60	66	24	0.56

Continued.

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	RII
I find it easy to wish and give proper salutations to the members of the HCT in the ward.	52	70	54	19	7	0.74
I always inform the nursing officers in my ward about the initiation and termination of my posting.	67	64	48	18	5	0.77
In the relationship with the members of HCT, I put in a lot of emotional support but do not get the same from them.	14	37	81	42	28	0.57
My motivation and dedication to the nursing profession have had an impact on my IPR.	41	65	72	21	3	0.48
In my experience members of HCT valued my clinical practice	34	76	68	17	7	0.49
I find it easy to sustain the relationship developed in clinical settings with the HCT.	34	74	63	25	6	0.50

Table 4: Association of level of IPR with seniority of nursing students (n=202).

Seniority	Level of IPR, N (%)				Total	Chi Square value	Df	P value
	Low IPR	Moderate IPR	Good IPR	Very good IPR				
2 nd year	8 (11.1)	10 (13.9)	30 (41.7)	24 (33.3)	72 (100)	21.523	6	0.001
3 rd year	12 (16.2)	25 (33.8)	31 (41.9)	6 (8.1)	74 (100)			
4 th year	10 (17.9)	8 (14.3)	27 (48.2)	11 (19.6)	56 (100)			
Total	30 (14.9)	43 (21.3)	88 (43.6)	41 (20.3)	202 (100)			

Table 5: Challenges faced by nursing students in maintaining IPR with HCT (n=202).

Probable challenges	Yes	
	N	%
Language difference	171	84.7
Lack of respect	163	80.7
Blaming culture	152	75.2
Inadequate professional knowledge	141	69.8
Gadget use by students	122	60.4
Gadget use by HCT	119	58.9
Partiality (domicile state)	117	57.9
Previous bad experience	108	53.5
Lack of knowledge	108	53.5
Lack of clinical skills	101	50.0
Shy nature	99	49.0
Inability to accept criticism	99	49.0
Inferiority complex	86	42.6

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted among 202 nursing students to assess the nursing students' perception of their IPR with the members of HCT. The median age of the participants was 21 (20 and 22) years. The majority of the students are from Eastern states of India (63.4%). The 56.4% of students have been schooled in English medium in higher secondary classes, which happens to be the majority.

Most of the participants were educated in co-educational type (66.3%, 134 participants) schools. Peers in the school play an important role in building confidence and

career intentions among adolescent girls and boys. Previous studies have reported that girls leaving single-gender schools tend to be on average more confident than those leaving co-ed schools, but in our study, we found no relation between schooling type and level of IPR.³

Of the total subjects, 88.2% belonged to nuclear families. The 31.2% (63 students) reported being from liberal families, 18.8% (38 students) belonged to conservative families and 50% (101 students) belonged to families having mixed values and beliefs. A study conducted in the United States showed that profiles of liberals are relatively high on openness and low on conscientiousness

and conservatives are relatively high on conscientiousness and low on openness.⁴ But in our study, we did not find any significant relation between family type and values with the level of IPR.

The 83.7% of the participants had siblings in our study. A study was conducted in Cape Town, South Africa to explore the IPRs among young adults.⁵ The participants all stated that being an only child did not affect their ability to make friends. However, in our study, there is no relation between the number of siblings and the level of IPR.

In our study, 43.56% of the nursing students perceived their IPR with the HCT as 'good', 24.25% reported 'moderate' IPR, 20.29% with 'very good IPR' and 11.88% had 'low IPR'. The present study showed that there is an association between the level of IPR and the seniority of nursing students. The level of IPR of the nursing students with the members of the HCT can have a direct impact on the learning outcomes of students. A correlational study conducted on the effect of IPRs between nursing students and lecturers noted an association between the students' ratings of IPRs with lecturers and their reported use of critical thinking skills.⁶

The challenges revealed by the nursing students in maintaining IPR with HCT in our study include language difference (84.7%), lack of respect (80.7%), blaming culture of HCT towards students (75.2%), inadequate professional knowledge of nurses (69.8%), gadgets use by HCT (58.9%), partiality shown by HCT towards students from their domicile state (57.9%), previous bad experiences (53.5%), lack of knowledge of student nurses (53.5%), lack of clinical skills (50.0%), shy nature of students (49.0%), inability to accept criticism (49.0%) and inferiority complex of students (42.6%). A descriptive study conducted on communication problems experienced by nursing students with nurses, physicians, patients, instructors, and fellows in clinical settings at a state hospital in Turkey revealed that students were having communication problems with clinical nurses (68%), patients (66%), instructors (59%) and physicians (44%).⁷

Most of the students in our study perceived that good IPR with HCT helped them to reduce the gap between their theoretical knowledge and practical skills (RII: 0.8) which is supported by other studies which revealed the importance of proper communication among the health care team.^{8,9,11}

A qualitative study done to assess challenges faced by nursing students to work with nursing personnel revealed a lack of support for each other, student humiliation by nurses, putting your own mistakes on students, low literacy of nurses, lack of work ethics, low staffing in nursing and lack of training facilities as challenges.¹⁰

Limitations

The study was done among three batches of BSc (Hons) nursing students in a single nursing college. This restricts the variety of data. Multiple colleges with a larger number of students may be done for more generalization. The perceptions of only BSc (Hons) nursing students were assessed in the current study. The view of health care team members towards nursing students in maintaining IPR may vary and can be assessed in further studies.

CONCLUSION

IPR with HCT affects the anxiety, self-confidence, learning outcomes of the students, and their performance in the clinical environment. In this study on the perception of nursing students' IPR with members of HCT, even though the majority reported good IPR, low IPR is also reported by some student nurses. They also revealed many challenges in maintaining IPR with HCT which need to be addressed properly. Good IPR in the clinical setting is very important for student nurses to get clinical experience as well as to improve patient care.

Funding: No funding sources

Conflict of interest: None declared

Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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Cite this article as: Krishnan N, Azhar SM, Biswas A, Bhandari A, Aiswarya A, Akansha, et al. Perceptions and perceived challenges of nursing students in maintaining interpersonal relationship with the healthcare team: a cross-sectional study. *Int J Community Med Public Health* 2025;12:2316-22.