The Effect of Assertiveness Training Program on Psychiatric Nurses' Communication Skills and Self-Esteem

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Abstract

Background: Assertiveness is one of the essential skills in the modern working environment, there are many benefits of being assertive such as; better time management, increased self-esteem and the ability to negotiate more effectively. Psychiatric mental health nurses are confronted with the daily responsibility of assessing, intervening and evaluating client responses to stress and client interactions. They need to identify the meaning of their own stress and develop strategies that increase personal and professional growth. Some nurses may have learned to express their needs honestly, to use anger constructively, to improve personal and work relationships and to build self-confidence through assertive behavior. But others still struggle with being assertive, perhaps because they don’t believe they have the right to be assertive, they are anxious about asserting themselves or they don’t know how to be assertive. Learning assertive techniques are considered as tools for coping skills with a variety of life stressors. Increasing assertive behavior becomes an expression of person’s feelings. So the aim of this study was to assess the effect of assertiveness training program on psychiatric nurses’ communication skills and self-esteem.

Subjects and Methods: Setting: The study was conducted at the Psychiatric Mental Health Hospital in Assiut, Egypt. subject the study sample comprised 30 nurses (14 males and 16 females), three tools were used for data collection, namely: Sociodemographic data structured interview schedules, self-esteem inventory, assertive communication skills checklist (ACs-list).

Results: The study proved that, the highest percentage among nurses aged from or more than 30 years, females than males, and single, more than 3/4 (73.3%) of the studied group was lived in rural area. Highly statistical significant difference was noticed between before and after training program regarding practice about communication skills, and assertiveness the effect of training program on self-esteem a significant change was found after the training program.

Conclusion: Implementation of assertiveness training program with psychiatric nurses has a positive effect on improving their self-esteem.

Recommendation: The study recommended continuous education provided for all nursing personal working and make nurses updated of new knowledge and technology. Implementation of assertiveness training program for nurses and undergraduate nursing students.

Key Words: Assertive communication skills – Self-esteem – Training program.

Introduction

SELF-esteem reflects a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth. Individuals with high self-esteem feel they are worthwhile despite their errors and flows. Self-esteem is widely recognized as a central aspect of psychological functioning during adolescence. It plays a significant role in the development of a variety of mental disorders [1,2]. Self-esteem has been found to be the most dominant and powerful predictor of happiness and life satisfaction [3]. Self-esteem is an important factor in mental health that affects human functions, especially job performance. The number of nurses with low self-esteem is increasing and this is mostly due to role conflict. In addition, self-esteem has long been identified as an important predictor of adjustment to stress, high levels of self-esteem are considered important in terms of both managing the demands placed on nurses during their training and for developing a strong and therapeutic relationship with a patient [4]. Furthermore, self-esteem influences how nurses think, feel, and motivate themselves and act which undoubtedly impacts on 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 [5].

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Assertiveness is a substantial communication style that enhances successful relationships with patients, families, and colleagues [6]. Assertiveness is an expression of self-esteem. Studies have shown that individuals who have assertive behaviors generally have higher self-worth and are more successful in life. Assertive persons maintain self-respect and respect for others by assertive behavior which directly expresses one's true, basic feelings, needs, desires, opinions and personal rights in a positive, productive way without denying the rights of others. It enables one to act in her or his interests without undue anxiety. 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. All of these make individuals' lives easier and experience positive responses from others. This in turn can decrease anxiety and increase confidence in interpersonal relations [7,8]. Assertiveness is thought to be a healthy form of behavior. Becoming more assertive can lead to increased respect and recognition as a person and as a nurse. It can get individual more of what his/her want [9]. Assertiveness is considered to be an essential skill for nurses. It is a key attribute for nurses without it true autonomy and personal empowerment cannot be achieved [10]. Assertive behavior demands control over outbursts of anger, crying or other behavior patterns that exhibit lack of professionalism. Assertiveness skills can be seen as "valuable component" for successful professional nursing practice, with which many conflicts in a nursing situation can be successfully ruled out [11].

Psychiatric mental health nurses are confronted with the daily responsibilities of assessing, intervening and evaluating client responses to stress and client reactions (Sullivan, 1993) [12]. Assertive communication is an essential component of palliative care; communication difficulties are recognized stress factor among health professionals especially nurses (Katz, 2007) [13]. A communication skill is the ability to use language (receptive) and express (expressive) information, which is the set of skills that enables person to convey information so that it is received and understood.

Nurses interact with patients, colleagues and other health care professionals on a daily basis; such an interaction is improved when nurses have good communication skills. The potential benefits of assertive behavior to nurses are enormous where it enhanced self awareness, improved staff performance, improved patient care and interdisciplinary collaboration and cohesiveness [14].

Significance of the study:

The current trend in health care settings is inclined towards team working with a multidisciplinary approach. The nurse within a multidisciplinary team can play a pivotal role in providing quality care to the patients under his/her care. There are several misconceptions about assertiveness but nurses need to be assertive in order to be an effective patients' advocate and empower them. Non assertiveness can lead to stress, low self esteem, helplessness and poor job satisfaction leading to poor job retention and high staff turnover. It is therefore very crucial that nurses are taught and encouraged to be assertive in their practice [15] nurses who have poor self-esteem and poor interpersonal skills without a doubt exhibit negative professional attitudes and behaviors. In order for nurses to become more influential in the improvement of health care delivery system, more competent in the provision of quality patient care, more comfortable in their communication within society and more effective in using their professional knowledge and skills, it is necessary for them to be more assertive and have high self-esteem [16]. Accordingly, it is significantly important to enhance assertiveness and self-esteem of nurses through implementing an assertiveness skills training.

Aim of the study: To assess the effect of assertiveness training program on psychiatric nurses' communication skills and self-esteem.

Research hypothesis:

- Self-esteem of psychiatric nurses will be improved by the effect of assertiveness training program.
- Communication skills of psychiatric nurses will be improved by the effect of assertiveness training program.

Research design:

Quasi-experimental research design (one group pre test-post test design) was used to achieve the aim of the study.

Subjects and Methods

Research setting:

The study was conducted on nurses at Assiut Psychiatric Mental Health Hospital, Ministry of Health. The hospital is serving Assiut City and all Upper Egypt Governorates.

Subjects:

The subjects of the study include all available nurses at the beginning of the study which consisted...
of 30 nurses (14 males and 16 females). Had a diploma of nursing within a period of six months from December 2014 to May 2015.

Three tools were used for data collection:
1- Tool no. (1) sociodemographic data structured interview schedules: This interview schedule developed by the researchers included the sociodemographic data of the study subjects such as nurse's age, occupation, marital status, education and years of experiences in psychiatric nursing field.

2- Tool no. (2) self-esteem inventory: It was developed by Yusuf Sayed (2001) [17]. This tool consisted of 14 items. The rate of points in each question ranged from yes (2) or no (0). This scale was valid and reliable according to culture.

The degree of self-esteem categorized into:
• High self-esteem ranges from 22 to 30.
• Moderate self-esteem ranges from 19 to 21.
• Low self-esteem ranges from 15 to 18.

3- Tool no. (3) assertive communication skills checklist (ACS-list): It was developed by Bowling, A (1997) [18]. The scale was translated by Abd et al. & 2015 [19]; this scale was valid and reliable according to culture ($r=0.8222$).

This scale consisted of fifteen items deemed necessary for communication skill. The answer for each item on the assertive CS-list ranged from 1 "unable to do at all" to 6 "able to do completely". The higher scores of the assertive CS-list indicate higher communication skills.

Levels of communication categorized into:
• <50% indicates low level of communication.
• 50-70% indicate middle level of communication.
• >70% indicates high level of communication.

Data collection:
• An official letter from the dean of the Faculty of Nursing-Assiut University directed to the head of psychiatric mental health hospital at Assiut Governorate, Ministry of Health in order to get permission to conduct the study.
• Collect data about all nurses through three tools prepared for the study.
• The purpose, aim and nature of the study were explained to the nurses to participate in the study.

The study was carried out in "5" sessions. All sessions were divided into:
• Pre and post assessment of all nurses about self-esteem and communications as well as their knowledge of different communication skills were conducted before and after implementation of program.
• The nurse was oral informed consent about the aim of the study and ensured about the confidentiality of the obtained information to avoid misunderstanding and providing privacy for them.
• Implementation of the educational training program took fifteen weeks; the program was applied for all nurses working in Assiut Psychiatric Mental Health Hospital, Ministry of Health, it was impossible for all nurses to attend an educational session simultaneously. So, they were divided into 5 groups, average number of attendance in each session about 6 nurses according to their work schedule. The duration of an educational session ranged from one to 2 hours, the whole educational content in each group were covered within three weeks.
• Pre-test should be applied to all nurses to test their knowledge about communication skills firstly; post-program implementation.
• Data were collected in the period from December 2014 to May 2015.

Statistical analysis:
The data were computerized and verified using the SPSS (statistical package for social science) version 16.0 to perform tabulation and statistical analysis. Qualitative variables were described in frequency and percentages, while quantitative variables were described by mean and standard deviation.

Results
In the present study, 60% of the studied group was in the age group <30 years, while 40% of them were less than or equal thirty ($\geq$ 30 years). As regard sex, more than half of the studied group was women. 80% of the studied group was single, while 20% of them were married. According to residence, more than $2/3$ (73.3%) of the studied group was lived in rural area, while 26.7% of them lived in urban area. Concerning staff nurses years of experience; more than half of the nurses (60%) had or more than ten years of experience, compared to only (40%) were had less than ten years of experience. As regard place of work about two thirty (70%) of the studied group was work at general
ward, while 30% of them were at private ward. According to attending training courses about communication skills, the most (83.3%) of the studied group was no attending training courses about communication skills, while only of them were attending training courses about communication skills 16.7% (Table 1).

Table (2) shows the comparison of mean score related to assertive communication skills before and after educational training program. Highly statistical significant difference was noticed between before and after training program regarding practice about communication skills ($p=0.000^*\)).

Table (3) shows that the total score of assertive communication skills level of the studied group were a significant changes was found in the level of communication skills at $p=0.000$ as 100% after training program.

Table (4) illustrates the effect of training program on self-esteem. A significant change was found after the training program at ($p=0.000^*\).

 Assertiveness training programs help the individual to self-actualize without abusing the rights of others. Therefore, it is more appropriate to assist Psychiatric nurses to learn assertion skills through assertive training program. Previous researches on assertiveness training have supported that attainment of assertiveness skills has been linked to increased assertiveness, and self-esteem. Psychiatric nurses who have poor self-esteem and poor interpersonal skills without a doubt exhibit negative professional attitudes and behaviors. In order for nurses to become more influential in the improve-

### Table (1): Socio-demographic characteristics of the studied group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>No. (n=30)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;10 y</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 y</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of work:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending training courses about communication skills:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (2): Comparison of mean score related assertive communication skills before and after educational training program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assertive communication skills training program</th>
<th>Before training</th>
<th>After training</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean ± SD</td>
<td>5.63±2.62</td>
<td>7.50±1.64</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>0-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paired samples $t$-test.

*: Statistical significant difference ($p<0.05$).

Table (3): Scores of assertive communication skills before and after implementation of training program among nurses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assertive communication skills</th>
<th>Before training</th>
<th>After training</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.005*1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean ± SD</td>
<td>68.30±14.84</td>
<td>84.10±7.44</td>
<td>0.000*2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1: Chi-square test.
2: Paired samples $t$-test.
*: Statistical significant difference ($p<0.05$).

Total score: 90.

Table (4): Distribution of the studied group in relation to their level of self-esteem before and after implementation of training program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-esteem</th>
<th>Before training</th>
<th>After training</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.001 +1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean ± SD</td>
<td>21.50±4.51</td>
<td>25.40±2.58</td>
<td>0.000 +2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1: Chi-square test.
2: Paired samples $t$-test.
*: Statistical significant difference ($p<0.05$).

Total score: 28.

### Discussion

Assertiveness training programs help the individual to self-actualize without abusing the rights of others. Therefore, it is more appropriate to assist Psychiatric nurses to learn assertion skills through assertive training program. Previous researches on assertiveness training have supported that attainment of assertiveness skills has been linked to increased assertiveness, and self-esteem. Psychiatric nurses who have poor self-esteem and poor interpersonal skills without a doubt exhibit negative professional attitudes and behaviors. In order for nurses to become more influential in the improve-
ment of health care delivery system, more competent in the provision of quality patient care, more comfortable in their communication within society and more effective in using their professional knowledge and skills, it is necessary for them to be more assertive and have high self-esteem. Accordingly, it is significantly important to enhance assertiveness and self-esteem of psychiatric nurses through implementing an assertiveness skills training program [20].

The present study aimed to assess the effect of assertiveness training program on psychiatric nurses’ communication skills and self-esteem. The highest percentage of the studied group aged from to more than 30 years old, more than half of them were women, and lived in rural areas. This finding disagrees with the study of [21] who revealed that the male nurses had high degree of assertiveness compared to female nurses. Also [22] concluded that in general girls were found to be skilled in expressing and dealing with personal limitation and more assertive than boy.

As regards staff nurses years of experience, more than half of them had or more than ten years of experience. These results agree with the result of [23] who stated that the majority of the nurses attended in the study were females with an average age of 41 years, also these finding was supported by [24] who found that oldest and most experienced nurses were had the highest assertive level. Additionally, the current result was in line with [25] who added that, age maturity and increase numbers of years of experience are important in development of assertiveness, because the old nurses had ability to solve problem and negotiate work situations. On the contrary [26] who reported that the oldest and most experiences nurses are least assertive, because the old nurses continue to practice nursing in most dependent roles and least influenced by present change in women roles in general, and mentioned that supportive working condition help young nurses to established assertive behaviors. While other studies do not go with these results, [27] who stated that the effects of gender, ethnicity and race differences were not significant among nurses. Also, [28] found that there were no significant differences between the mean of age and working years of the intervention.

Related to assertive communication skills training program, the present study showed that there were a highly significant difference were noticed after implementation of training program. This result goes with the findings of [29] who stated that an overall statistically significant improvement in assessment skills between pre-test and post-test scores of communication skills program, which allows nurses to explore their attitudes, raise self-awareness and develop knowledge and skills, is most effective in preparing them to communicate with patients. Also, in the study of [30] when using methods for communication training program as role playing exercise, group discussion, videotapes demonstrations of key communication skills, exchange of experiences among nurses, case study discussion, found that during combination of practical and theoretical communication training for nurses promote nurse’s post-training communication skills.

Concerning communication skills levels of the studied group, the present study revealed that the total score of communication skills level were significantly higher after training program. This finding consistent with [31] who stated that communication skills level were improved significantly after the training program.

As regards the effect of training program on nurse’s self-esteem, the present study showed that there were significant changes of nurse’s self-esteem after implementation of training program. This results accordance with [32] found that the nurse’s self-esteem had improved at six months after the assertiveness training. This corresponded also, with the previous studies which indicated that assertiveness contributed to self-esteem among American firefighters [33], and that assertiveness training reduced stress reaction among Taiwanese Hospital Nurses [34].

**Conclusion:**

Based upon the study results, it is concluded that implementation of assertiveness training program with psychiatric nurses has a positive effect on improving their self-esteem and communication skills.

**Recommendations:**

From the forgoing conclusion, the following recommendations are suggested: That assertiveness is an important behavior for today's professional nurse. So we recommend use of assertiveness training program for all nurses to improve and enhance their self-esteem and assertiveness. Also the concepts of assertiveness, assertiveness technique should be included in basic undergraduate nursing curriculum. Nurse educators have an important role in the development and implementation of assertiveness training/education program for undergraduate nursing students.
The Effect of Assertiveness Training Program on Psychiatric Nurses' Self-esteem

References


الملخص العربي

الحملة هي واحدة من المهارات الأساسية في بيئة العمل الحديثة، هناك العديد من القواعد، لكنها حزمة مثل إدارة وقت أفضل، زيادة الثقة بالنفس والقدرة على التفاوض بفعالية أكبر، وتواجد الممارسين النفسية مسؤولة يومية للتفهم والتدخل وتقييم استجابات المريض للإجابة وتفاعلها. إنهم يحاجون إلى تحديد مدى الضغوط الخاصة بهم ووضع استراتيجيات التي تزيد من نمو شخصي والمهني، ربما تستطيع بعض الممارسات التعبير عن احتياجات بصورة، استخدام الغضب بطريقة بناءة، من أجل تحسين العلاقات الشخصية والمهنية، وبناء الثقة بالنفس من خلال السلوك الحازم. ولكن البعض الآخر لا ييمنوا حازمين، ربما لأنهم لا يعتقدون أن لديهم الحق في أن تكون المرض حزمة. تعتبر تقنيات التعلم حزمة أداة للممارسات التفاعل مع مجموعة من ضغوطات الحياة، زيادة السلوك حزمة تصبح تعريبًا عن مشاعر الشخص.

لذلك كان الهدف من هذه الدراسة: تقييم أثر برنامج تدريبي للحملة على تأكيد الذات للمرضى النفسية ومهارات الاتصال.

المواثيق والأساليب: أجريت الدراسة في مستشفى الطب النفسي والصحة النفسية في أسبوع/مصر. وقد شملت عينة الدراسة 30 مريضة (14 ذكر و16 أنثى)، واستخدمت ثلاث أدوات لجمع البيانات، وهي: البيانات الاجتماعية، الذات-مقياس تقدير الذات، ومقياس مهارات السلوك الحازم للاتصال الفعال.

النتائج الرئيسية: حققت من خلال الدراسة أثبت أن، أعلى نسبة بين الممارسات تتراوح أعمارهم بين 20 عامًا، وإليات أخرى من الذكور، أكثر من 2/3 من العينة كان يعيش في منطقة ريفية. وقد لوحظ فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية عالية بين قبل وبعد برنامج تدريبي حول مهارات الاتصال، وكان ذلك تغيير كبير لتقدير الذات بعد البرنامج التدريبي.

الخلاصة: تنفيذ برنامج التدريب على تأكيد الذات مع ممارسات الطب النفسي له تأثير إيجابي على تحسين الذات ومهارات الاتصال.

التوصيات: أوصت الدراسة على التعليم المستمر لجميع فريق التمريض مما يجعل الممارسات أكثر العامًا بنوعية والتكنولوجيا الجديدة وتنفيذ برنامج التدريب على تأكيد الذات للمرضى والممرضين وخطر التمريض الجامعي.