Correlation between communication ability and humanistic care ability in nursing undergraduates: a cross-sectional study

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Highlights

This study aims to understand the situation of humanistic care ability of undergraduate nursing students in traditional Chinese medicine universities, and to explore the correlation between their communication ability and humanistic care ability through the investigation, which in order to provide reference for nursing educators in humanistic care.
Abstract

**Background:** To investigate the level of humanistic caring ability of nursing baccalaureate students, and explore the relationship between the humanistic caring ability and communication ability. **Methods:** A total of 280 undergraduate nursing students were investigated with the humanistic care ability questionnaire and communication ability questionnaire. **Results:** The average scores of communication ability and humanistic care ability of nursing undergraduates were (69.27 ± 9.020) and (122.43 ± 21.14), which were positively correlated ($r = 0.517, P < 0.01$). **Conclusion:** Nursing educators should formulate targeted strategies to strengthen the education and cultivation of their humanistic care ability, pay attention to the improvement of nursing students’ communication ability and cultivate high-quality and high-level nursing talents.

**Key words:** Undergraduate nursing students, Humanistic care ability, Communication ability, Nursing education

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Abbreviations:

CAS, communication ability scale; NHCS, nursing humanistic care scale.

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Background

The researches on nursing humanistic care have been widely concerned and become a hot spot of current research. The concept of humanistic care in nursing was formally put forward in the highly developed period of Western material civilization in the 1970s-1980s [1], which means maintaining and building on a culture of respect and dignity in patients or patients’ family interactions [2], and the humanistic care ability of nurses directly affects the development of nurse-patient relationship. We should pay attention to cultivation of humanistic care ability [3]. Clinical communication ability refers to the ability of nurses to effectively listen and respond to patients’ expressions, and clearly convey medical information to patients and their families [4]. Good communication is the basis of building trust between medical staff, patients and their families, and is the basis of good medical care.

At present, there are many studies on the influencing factors of nursing humanistic care, but there are limited studies on the influence of undergraduate nursing students’ communication ability on their humanistic care. This paper aims to explore the correlation between communication ability and humanistic care, and provide reference for teaching reform of higher nursing education.

Methods

Participants and procedures

This cross-sectional study was carried out in Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine from March 2017 to May 2017. A convenience sample of 280 undergraduate nursing students (242 female and 39 male) was recruited from Nursing College. The inclusion criteria were as follows: full-time undergraduate nursing students and willing to participate in this study.

Instruments

Demographic questionnaire. The demographic characteristics of the participants included gender, age, residence, whether they were an only child, whether to serve on the class committee or student union and plan to work in nursing or not and professional preference.

Communication ability scale. The Communication ability scale (CAS) [5, 6] compiled by Whetten & Cameron and translated and revised by Yuan Qiuhuan is adopted, which basically maintains the structure and content of the original scale, conforms to the cultural habits of our country, and has good reliability and validity. There are 20 items in total. The scale is divided into three dimensions: counseling and consultation, providing effective negative feedback and supportive communication. These items were scored through a Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree). The higher score of the scale indicates the stronger interpersonal communication ability of the subjects.

Nursing humanistic care scale. The nursing humanistic care scale (NHCS) [7] compiled by Huang Yibing’s research contains 45 items in 8 dimensions, 11 of which are reverse scoring items. Its Cronbach’s alpha coefficient is 0.904, and its content validity is 0.960, which indicates that the scale has high reliability and validity. The 45 items were responded through a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely consistent) to 5 (completely inconsistent), with the scores reversed for negative items.

Data analyses

Statistical description, Pearson correlation analysis, t-test, and multiple linear regression analysis were conducted using SPSS 17.0. P < 0.05 was considered as statistical significance.

Results

A total of 280 questionnaires were sent out, 271 of which were valid, with an effective recovery rate of 96.8%. The overall score of communication ability and humanistic care of undergraduate nursing students was graded as the middle or lower level, with an average score of (69.270 ± 9.020). The average score of humanistic care of the subjects was (122.43 ± 21.14). The score of instilling educational belief and hope in humanistic care of undergraduate nursing students was (106.06 ± 19.34), the score of instilling educational belief and hope in humanistic care of undergraduate nursing students was (106.06 ± 19.34), and the score of providing a good environment for humanistic care was (96.8%). The overall score of communication ability and humanistic care of undergraduate nursing students is shown in Table 1. The correlation analysis of communication ability and humanistic care of undergraduate nursing students is shown in Table 2. Pearson correlation analysis showed that the correlation coefficient was 0.517 (P < 0.01), and communication ability was positively correlated with humanistic care.

The multiple linear regression analysis of the corresponding relationship between communication ability and humanistic care is shown in Table 3. Taking humanistic care as the dependent variable, we divided gender, family origin, whether it is an only child, whether to hold a post in the class committee or student union, professional preference, nursing work and communication ability into independent variables, conducted multiple linear regression analysis, and further analyzed the corresponding relationship between communication ability and humanistic care. After analyzing the influence of controlling gender, family origin, only child and other factors on the results, we found that communication ability was positively correlated with humanistic care.
The score of undergraduate nursing students’ humanistic care ability is generally not high, which is consistent with the results from studies conducted by Yang Zhilan et al. [12]. The main manifestations are insufficient patience, lack of understanding of humanistic care, too much concern about their self-esteem and neglect of patients’ feelings. The reason for the lower score may be the lack of nursing humanistic education. Huang Wanqi et al. [13] showed in earlier studies that the number of humanistic courses offered by nursing colleges and departments in China only accounted for 8%–13% of the total courses.

Nursing humanism is the core content of nursing. Humanistic caring ability is gradually formed through learning and continuous practice under the influence of environment and education [12]. Therefore, undergraduate education should pay more attention to the cultivation of nursing humanistic care ability. Nursing educators should formulate targeted strategies and training to improve nursing students' perception ability, emotional quotient and communication ability [14, 15].

Nursing students with high professional liking level have higher level of humanistic care ability than nursing students with low professional liking level. Students involving a large number of nurses may devote themselves to learning and activities with a more positive attitude, actively learn professional knowledge and apply it to daily practice, so as to improve their ability of humanistic care. Therefore, we can guide the freshmen to understand the professional characteristics, cultivate their professional interests, and increase their love of the profession to improve their ability of humanistic care.
The total score of humanistic care ability of male nursing students was significantly lower than that of female nursing students, but the difference was not statistically significant. This is the same as Huang Yibing et al. [7]. Due to the influence of traditional social concepts, many male nursing students have low professional identity, and believe that nursing work is a female occupation [16]. This psychological pressure affects the male nursing students’ recognition of nursing profession. In addition, women are better at observing things and expressing feelings. Therefore, it is suggested that the school should set up career planning courses for undergraduate male nursing students to enhance their belief in the profession; increase the time for internship in departments and position them in rotation; consider the interests and feelings of male nursing students, increase their knowledge reserves and opportunities to participate in the profession, and improve themselves[17].

Communication ability is one of the core abilities that nursing talents should possess. The communication ability of nursing students investigated in this study is positively correlated with their humanistic care ability, which indicates that students with good communication ability have high humanistic care ability in nursing. Therefore, cultivating the strong communication ability of nursing students will help to improve their ability of humanistic care and dealing with complex problems.

Limitations
Firstly, the results got are affected by response bias. The students participated the study are willing to do the survey, so they may have more positive responses. Second, the low scores of communication skill or humanistic care may indicate that the items used in CAS or NHCS did not adequately measure the nursing undergraduates’ knowledge for communication skill and humanistic care.

Conclusion
The score of humanistic care ability of nursing undergraduates is graded the middle level and the communication ability of nursing students is positively related to the level of humanistic care ability. At present, the communication ability and humanistic care ability of nursing undergraduates are not ideal. In view of this, the cultivation of humanistic care ability of nursing students should be paid attention to university undergraduate education. In addition to basic course education, humanistic care ability of nursing students can be cultivated through the second classroom which includes following ways: carrying out a series of lectures on humanistic care knowledge, reasonably planning activities related to the cultivation and improvement of humanistic care ability, organizing offline competitions and online evaluation and inspection to carry out the effect, encouraging students to combine the characteristics of nursing specialty, and applying the knowledge and ability of humanistic care to practice, so as to truly and effectively improve the humanistic care ability of nursing students, and cultivate more comprehensive and high-quality talents for nursing career.

References

Table 3 Multiple linear regression analysis of humanistic care of undergraduate nursing students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Regression coefficient</th>
<th>Standard error of regression coefficient</th>
<th>Standard regression coefficient</th>
<th>T-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>4.268</td>
<td>3.277</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>1.302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>−0.180</td>
<td>2.717</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>−0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only child</td>
<td>3.099</td>
<td>2.712</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>1.413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class committee</td>
<td>−3.184</td>
<td>2.588</td>
<td>−0.065</td>
<td>−1.230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional preference</td>
<td>−5.146</td>
<td>2.549</td>
<td>−0.113</td>
<td>−2.019*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in nursing work</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>2.753</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score of communication ability</td>
<td>1.181</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>0.506</td>
<td>9.628**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asterisk * indicated significance set at 0.05; asterisk ** indicated significance set at 0.01.


