

STUDY OF NURSES' ATTITUDES TOWARD OLDER ADULTS AT THE MAIN ASSIUT UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL; SUGGESTED INTERVENTION GUIDELINES

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ABSTRACT

Background: Nurses have one of the professions that assume a leading role as providers of care for older adults and can influence the quality of their care that is dependent on their attitudes toward older adults (Nevill, 2015). **Aim:** to identify the nurses' attitudes toward the older adults as well as to suggest nursing intervention guidelines according to the study results. **Subjects:** the subjects were 120 nurses at the main Assiut university hospital departments who had work experience more than two years in the area. **Results:** majority of the studied sample (93.3%) showed negative attitudes regarding older adults, (86.6%) of them that had negative attitudes toward older adults were female and more than half of them (53.6%) addressed teaching course regarding gerontological nursing. **Conclusion:** there were not significantly statistical difference concerning relation between nurses' attitudes and their demographic data and obtaining gerontological nursing course. **Recommendation:** Promote the positive nursing students' views of aging in curriculum development as addressing the positive aspects of aging, learn how to communicate successfully with the older adults with heighten their awareness about the complexity of care with these populations, understanding the realities of aging and get rid of the common misconceptions.

Key words: Older adults, attitudes, nurses, guidelines.

INTRODUCTION

Advanced age is a progressive process that characterized by irreversible changes in the physiological, chronological, spiritual, psychological and social status and losses of the roles and decreases the adaptation of the body to the environment. Older adults have more than one health problem and visit the health centers repeatedly (Turgay, et al., 2015).

Aging itself is not a disease, the increased rates and severity of health problems and impaired functional abilities are some of the potential life changing problems of aging. These issues increase the older adults' health care needs. The attitudes of health care professionals directly influence the quality of health care services provided to older people (Sahin, et al., 2012) and (Liu, et al., 2013).

The phenomenon of the ageing population accounts as one of the big economic, social, and health challenges in the 21st century (Habibi, et al., 2008). The World Health Organization (2012) predicted that the proportion of citizens aged over 60 years will increase from (11%) to (22%) between 2000 and 2050. Aligned with this increase in the ageing population will be increased the demand for nursing care. So the older adults have more hospitalization days and consume the largest portion of health services (Neville and Dickie, 2014).

Elderly population growth rate is higher in developing countries than in developed countries. Currently, more than half of the world's elderly populations live in developing countries (Alavian, 2006).

The social relations, culture and customs of society play a role in the formation of

the attitudes and behavior towards the older adults, especially the changes of economic and social role, having an effect on the communication between the youth and the older adults and their attitudes towards old age (**Kavlak, et al., 2015**).

Negative attitudes toward the older adults is not only limited to the public; health care providers are vulnerable to developing such attitudes as well. Previous studies have shown that awareness and effort to change negative attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes toward the elderly have significantly improved the quality of elderly care (**Karlin, et al., 2006**), (**Dadkhah, 2007**) and (**Mellor, et al., 2007**).

Nurses are the key health professional individuals who involved in the first line of care for older patients (**Nivell and Dickie, 2014**). Nurses provide face to face services for older adults in different setting, from health promotion services to palliation. In addition, they offer full time service working with the shift. Long and tiring working hours, insufficient number of staff that required to special attention will develop negative attitudes towards older groups (**Ozer and Terkes, 2014**).

Many studies showed that the negative attitudes of the health care workers regarding the older adults affected by their own values, beliefs, culture or experience. Further, it is appeared that age, gender, level of education, living/spending time with an older person and areas of practice could have a direct effect on improving attitudes towards the older adults (**Koh, 2012**) and (**Kavlak, et al., 2015**).

Other factors that have the greatest influence on the nurses' overall satisfaction with their practice area include inability of the nurses to communicate with older adults,

association of ageing with disability and a perception that the work is depressing and boring (**Berntsen and Bjørk, 2009**)

(**Marshall, 2015**) has published the conclusion that a reduction in older adults' discrimination may reduce the frequency and severity of many negative health-related incidents, such as myocardial infarction, and increase human life by an average of 7.5 years.

Attitude is defined as the personal opinion or way of thinking and behavior that the individual follow, and the perception as an interpretation or impression based on understands of something. A fundamental part of nursing practice is the development of a relationship with the care recipient that is built on trust, strong communication, common goals and collaboration. All of this can be influenced in either a positive or negative way by one's attitude (**Matarese et al., 2013**) and (**Neville, 2015**).

(**Coffey, et al., 2015**) defined attitudes as either a positive or negative appraisal of a person, place, thing and event, attitudes can be formed based on a person's past and present experiences and can often be changeable, attitudes contain cognitive, behavioral and affective components and are based on the beliefs and values of the individual. This, however, can change over time and is affected by both social influence and emotional appeal.

SIGNIFICANCE

Many different international nursing studies revealed that nurses and nursing students often had unfavourable attitudes towards older adults, and in the United Kingdom, the ageist attitudes held by nurses were found to affect the dignity and autonomy of older patients. Evidence also showed that when older patients are perceived as being a burden and complained by nurses, the quality of care delivered and the recovery of patients are

affected. If these negative beliefs are held by nursing personnel, it might have a serious effect on delivery and provision of elder care (Gallagher, et al., 2006) and (Oyetunde, et al., 2013). So it is vitally important to identify the nurses' attitudes toward older adults to prepare them for competent and professional nursing practice (Neville, 2015).

AIM

To identify the nurses' attitudes toward the older adults as well as to suggest nursing intervention guidelines according to the study results.

Research question;

-What are the nurses' attitudes toward older adults?

SUBJECTS AND METHOD

Study design: descriptive research design was used in the present study.

Setting:

The current study carried out at the departments of the main Assiut University hospital that have the highest number of nurses who deal with the older adults that included (internal medicine department, chest department, neurological department and urological department).

Sample:

Representative number of the nursing personnel based on the formula (Schleselman, 2012) to calculate sample size, the number was 120 nurses, and they randomly selected and recruited from the previous setting.

$$(2n^2)^2 p (1-p)$$

$$N = \frac{\text{-----}}{D^2}$$

Where: N=sample size P= 0.50

D= 0.50x10% =0.005

Inclusion criteria: Nurses who had work experience more than two years in the area.

Tool of the study:

Part (1):

It included the demographic data as age, sex, level of education, years of experience, obtained course about gerontological nursing, attended workshops on care of older adults.

Part (2):

The Kogan's Attitudes toward Old People (KAOP) Scale (Kogan, 1961) is a 34 item tool with a 6 point Likert-like scale format. The point descriptors range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). The tool contains 17 positively rated and 17 negatively rated statements about older adults. To obtain a score, the value of the negative responses are reversed and tallied in with the positive responses. The range of scores for the KAOP is 34 to 204 with the higher scores representing a more positive attitude. In this study was scored on a 6-point Likert scale: 6: highly positive, 5: positive, 4: slightly positive, 3: slightly negative, 2: negative and 1: highly negative.

Items in the instrument were developed to learn how respondents feel about older adults on such issues as personality, intelligence, dependence, living arrangements, personal appearance, and so on. The scale was designed to measure stereotypes associated with aging. The scale is very specific to the older age group, is easy to score, and takes little time in administration and analysis, the scale has been shown to be reliable when used with health care professional (Coffey, et al., 2015).

Method: Administrative phase:

An official approval obtained from the directors of the previous mentioned departments at the main Assiut University hospital to complete the study. The approval included a permission to carry out the study, explained the purpose and nature of the study and oral permission

from the nurses was obtained for their vital assistance to conduct the study.

Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient method to ensure internal consistency that showed α was ≥ 0.85 .

Pilot study:

A pilot study was conducted before data collection to determine the time needed to fill the sheet. It was carried out on 10% from nurses in the previous settings and no modifications needed, it was included in the studied sample.

Data collection:

After obtaining the official approval, data collected by using the previous tool through the January month 2015, the researcher collected data four days per week at the formal work days in the afternoon shift, and the average number that interviewed was from 6-8 nurses per day. The researcher was clear up the purpose and nature of the study to each nurse who agreed to share in the study prior to answer the questions, the approximate time spent was around from 15 to 20 minutes to fill the assessment sheet,

Ethical considerations:

- Research suggestion was agreed from ethical committee in the Faculty of Nursing, Assiut University.
- There is no risk for study subjects during application of the research.
- The study followed common ethical principles in clinical research.
- Oral permission was obtained from nurses that are ready to join in the study after explaining the nature and purpose of the study.
- Confidentiality and anonymity was assured.
- Study subjects have the right to refuse to contribute or withdraw from the study without any rational at any time.

- Study subjects privacy was considered during collection of the data.

Statistical analysis:

The obtained data were reviewed, computerized and verified using the SPSS version 23 to perform tabulation and statistical analysis. Qualitative variables were described in frequency and percentages, statistical analysis of variance done by using chi-square test; significant was considered at P- value ≤ 0.05 , Independent T- test and one way Anova were used

RESULTS

Table 1: Showed the distribution of the studied sample regarding their demographic data, it was observed that (20%) of them had a bachelor degree of nursing, more than half of them (55%) had a teaching course about gerontological nursing, only (10%) of them attended workshops about health issues of older adults.

Table 2: Illustrated the distribution of the attitudes level of the studied sample, (93.3%) of them showed negative attitudes regarding older adults, in between them (85.8%) of them had slightly negative attitudes toward older adults.

Table 3: Revealed the relation between the KAOP mean scores of studied sample attitudes and their demographic data, the higher KAOP mean scores among the nurses with university education, those who addressed a course about gerontological nursing and those who attended workshops about older adults care.

Table 4: Clarified the relation between attitudes level of the studied sample and their demographic data, (86.6%) of them that had negative attitudes toward older adults were female, more than half of them (53.6%) addressed teaching course regarding gerontological nursing,

there were not significantly statistical difference concerning relation between nurses' attitudes level and their demographic data.

Table (1):- Distribution of demographic data of the studied sample (n=120)

Variable	No=120	%
Age group		
From 20 > 25 years	40	33.3
From 25-30 years	31	25.8
More than 30 years	49	40.8
Mean ± SD 32.15±10.01(20-60)		
Sex		
Male	16	13.3
Female	104	86.7
Educational level		
Secondary school of nursing	48	40.0
Technical institute of nursing	48	40.0
Bachelor degree of nursing	24	20.0
Years of experience		
From 2 > 5 years	38	31.7
From 5 -10 years	36	30.0
More than 10 years	46	38.3
Mean ± SD 11.77±9.88(1-35)		
Obtained course about gerontological nursing		
Yes	66	55.0
No	54	45.0
Attended workshops or seminars regarding older adults care		
Yes	12	10.0
No	108	90.0

Table (2): Distribution of the studied sample regarding their attitudes level (n=120)

Variable	Range of KAOP scores	No (%)
Attitude Level:		
Very negative	34-68.1	3(2.5)
Negative	68.1-102.1	6(5.0)
Slightly negative	102.1-136.1	103(85.8)
Slightly Positive	136.1-170.1	8(6.7)
Positive	170.1-203.9	0(0.0)
Very Positive	204	0(0.0)
Total Attitude Level:		
Negative	34-135.9	112(93.3)
Positive	136-204	8(6.7)

Table (3):- Relationship between the KAOP mean scores of the studied sample attitudes and their demographic data (n=120)

Variable	N=120	Mean ± SD	Range	P. value
Age group				
From 20 > 25 years	40	118.48±10.81	102-143	0.698
From 25-30 years	31	119.03±10.79	106-151	
More than 30 years	49	116.67±16.16	64-147	
Gender				
Female	104	117.61±13.51	64-151	0.559
Male	16	119.69±11.13	102-143	
Educational Level				
Secondary school of nursing	48	116.69±16.43	64-147	0.706
Technical institute of nursing	48	118.44±11.7	102-151	
Bachelor degree of nursing	24	119.17±7.98	107-134	
Years of experience				
From 2 > 5 years	38	121.11±8.93	107-143	0.191
From 5 -10 years	36	116.25±11.85	102-151	
More than 10 years	46	116.5±16.51	64-147	
Obtained course about gerontological nursing				
Yes	66	119.36±10.53	102-151	0.175
No	54	116.07±15.76	64-147	
Attended workshops or seminars regarding older adults care				
Yes	12	119.67±12.39	102-143	0.624
No	108	117.69±13.32	64-151	

Independent T- test *Statistically Significant difference At P.value<0.05
One way Anova **Statistically Significant difference At P.value<0.01

Table (4): Relationship between studied sample attitudes level with their demographic data (n=120)

Variable	Negative(n=112)		Positive(n=8)		P.value
	No	%	No	%	
Age group					
From 20 > 25 years	37	33.0	3	37.5	0.965
From 25-30 years	29	25.9	2	25.0	
More than 30 years	46	41.1	3	37.5	
Sex					
Female	97	86.6	7	87.5	0.943
Male	15	13.4	1	12.5	
Educational Level					
Secondary school of nursing	44	39.3	4	50.0	0.343
Technical institute of nursing	44	39.3	4	50.0	
Bachelor degree of nursing	24	21.4	0	0.0	
Years of experience					
From 2 > 5 years	35	31.3	3	37.5	0.722
From 5 -10 years	33	29.5	3	37.5	
More than 10 years	44	39.3	2	25.0	
Obtained course about gerontological nursing					
Yes	60	53.6	6	75.0	0.239
No	52	46.4	2	25.0	
Attended workshops or seminars regarding older adults care					
Yes	11	9.8	1	12.5	0.807
No	101	90.2	7	87.5	

Chi – square test**DISCUSSION**

The belief about the older adults that they consume most of the health care services, as the position of being ill and a dependent individual more than that of the general population, is shown among the reasons for the development of negative attitudes against old age by those providing health care services, so, it is necessary to identify how the nurses view the older adults to facilitate providing effective health care services and organizational services which aimed to protect and improve the health of the older adults (**Kavlak, et al., 2015**). As concern to the KAOP attitudes level of the studied sample in this study, the majority of the sample (93.3%) had

negative attitudes toward older adults, in between them (85.8%) had slightly negative attitudes, (5%) showed negative attitudes and (2.5%) of them revealed very negative attitudes toward the older adults, while in (**Doherty, et al., 2011**) showed that (97.3%) of the health care workers had positive attitudes toward older adults which included ward manager, registered nurse, public health nurse, student nurse and health care assistance, among them (50.8%) had slightly positive attitudes, (44.4%) of them had positive attitudes and (2.1%) had very positive attitudes, in previous study of Iranian nurses by (**Artishehdar, et al., 2012**) revealed that a majority had positive attitudes toward the elderly. (**Hweidi and Al-Obeisat, 2006**) assessed Jordanian nursing students' attitudes toward the elderly and found marginally positive attitudes.

In this study it may be due to the effect of the changes that occur in traditions of the multi-generational families, moving away from the extended families and more independent lifestyles of youth were viewed as having an impact on the values toward older persons. It is important to include learning activities in relation to the students' culture and traditions.

Regarding the KAOP mean scores of nurses' attitudes toward older adults, in this study appeared that the nurses with bachelor degree and whose attained gerontological nursing course and those who attended workshops on elderly care had the higher mean scores of KAOP, the difference was not significant, it may be due to the minimal effect of education.

As regard to KAOP mean scores of the studied sample by the gender and the years of experience in the field, KAOP mean scores between these groups were not significantly different, it is in line with (**Doherty, et al., 2011**).

Regarding relation between KAOP mean scores of the attitudes and educational level, in this study it was not significantly different $P=0.706$ while in **(Doherty, et al., 2011)** revealed a significant difference in scores for university graduates compared to those who had not attained university qualification, in this study, there are indications for in service symposiums and training for nurses in different areas.

Many studies have identified the factors that affecting the nurses' attitudes such as area of practice, age, gender and years in clinical practice and showed that the younger and male nurses had more negative attitudes in comparison with older and female nurses. The higher education, gerontology courses and increase years of clinical experience were found to be associated with more positive attitudes toward older adults **(Gallagher, et al., 2006)**.

As regard to the relation between nurses' attitudes level and their demographic data, it was observed that (53.6%) of nurses whose had negative attitudes toward older adults took a course about gerontological nursing, this point must be put in the consideration, the presence of the negative attitudes toward older adults confirmed that the education not eradicated the negative attitudes completely, in addition, it was may be related to the absence of specialized services in the health institutions regarding older adults whatever hospital departments, health centers, health units or outpatients clinics in both governmental and nongovernmental health institutions, in which the nurse deal with all patients with the same manner without attention to older adults special needs or special conditions that require effective communication skills.

This study showed no statistically significant relationship between age group and attitudes level $P= 0.965$, it is agreed with **(Coffey, et al., 2015)** who revealed no statistically significant relationship between age group and attitudes $P=0.257$, While this relation inconsistent with **(Hamedanizadeh, et al., 2008)** and **(Koushali, et al., 2012)** who reported a significant and direct association between attitudes toward the older adults and age as well as work experience

Regarding gender, most of the female studied sample had negative attitudes toward older adults than males, it also may be due to the changes occurring in traditional multi-generational families, moving away from extended families and changing care giver role of the female. In addition, it may be that the aging of the female body increases their level of anxiety, leading to acquisition of negative attitudes towards aging process or they had the feeling that care giver role for older adults interrupt the general physical appearance that is very important for them. In contrast, **(Kavlak, et al., 2015)** and **(Coffey, et al., 2015)** who they stated that female students possess a more positive attitude towards elderly individuals than males.

(Oyetunde, et al., 2013) revealed that the majority of the respondents stated that hospitals should have special wards i.e. geriatric ward for effective care of older adults

Regarding the relationship between Nurses' attitudes level with their work experience, there was no statistical difference $p=0.722$, in **(Nivelle, 2014)** found that work experience with the older persons seemed to be a positive influence and target educational activities will improve the attitudes toward older adults with the positive socialization

experienced with them, it refers to the importance of presence of specialized department for older adults as mentioned before that and the nurses have the access to older people that promote satisfaction and interests in the field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is important to identify and eliminate negative nursing students' attitudes toward older adults.
- Promote the positive nursing students' views of aging in curriculum development as addressing the positive aspects of aging and cultural values, understanding the realities of aging and get rid of the common misconceptions.
- Clinical experiences of the students with healthy elders as well as older adults with acute and chronic conditions, learn how to communicate successfully with the older adults and to maintain trustful nurse patient relationship with heighten their awareness about the complexity of care with these populations.
- Formulation of a competency framework for nurses to develop their skills, knowledge and expertise that necessary to deliver nursing care for older adults.
- Identification of innovative methods of education and training in gerontology to develop students' interest in the field.
- Provide in service training, symposiums and workshops regarding care of older adults.

NURSING IMPLICATIONS

The nurses' attitudes has an implication in health promotion of the older adults, therefore the finding of this study and nurses follow the guidelines are going to help the positive view of nurses regarding older adults. Regarding research, the study finding also may provide basis for

other researchers who would want to carry out further research in the field.

THE LIMITATIONS

- The majority of the studied sample was females, which could be considered a limitation.
- These results are a unique representation of the nurses' attitudes in this hospital only.

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