

ASSESSMENT OF NURSES' ATTITUDE TOWARDS GERIATRIC PATIENTS IN A TERTIARY CARE HOSPITAL OF RAWALPINDI, PAKISTAN

Raima Asif¹, Nasir Javed¹, Uzma Hassan¹, Tamkeen Jaffry¹, Rubab Zulfiqar¹, Fatima Ali Raza²

¹ Public Health Department, National University of Medical Sciences, Rawalpindi Pakistan

² Research Officer Pakistan Armed Forces Medical Journal, Army Medical College Rawalpindi, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Nurses engage with elderly individuals across various levels of care, yet observations indicate the presence of relational gaps that contribute to adverse outcomes for elderly patients.

Objective: This study aimed to assess the factors shaping nurses' attitudes towards the care of elderly patients.

Study Design: A descriptive cross-sectional study.

Place and Duration of Study: This study was conducted in Benazir Bhutto Hospital Rawalpindi comprising of registered nurses, from August 2023 to October 2023.

Methods: A self-administered questionnaire was used as data collection tool using convenient sampling. The sample size of this study was 140. Both male and female nurses having work experience of more than 2 years were included in the study. The nurses who were not residents of Rawalpindi were excluded as they may have different working conditions, patient demographics and healthcare protocols which could skew the results and reduce the study's internal validity. Statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS version 23. Frequencies and percentages were computed, descriptive statistical analysis was done.

Results: A total of one hundred and forty nurses were included. About 89(64.0%) were aged between 15-25 years, 45(32.0%) aged between 26-35 years, 6(4.0%) aged between 36-45 years. Regarding attitudes, the majority agreed to have felt good caring for elderly patients except thirty six percent of the participants who felt it was a tedious job. The majority of the participants i.e. one hundred and fourteen individuals (81%) disagreed with the notion that caring for geriatric patients would hinder their ability to attend to other patients. About 80% nurses stated that the mental status and diverse behavioral exhibitions were major hindrances towards effective care of them.

Conclusion: The study's findings indicate that the majority of nurses exhibit a positive attitude toward elderly care and demonstrate a solid understanding of geriatric care principles.

Keywords: Attitudes, Geriatric patients, Nurses

INTRODUCTION

The number of elderly persons is growing in almost every country in the world. It is now regarded as one of the humanity's greatest achievements. The paramedical staff especially nurses meet elderly patients at different levels of care.¹ However, the analysis shows that there is a different kind of relationship which is causing a negative impact on the elderly.² The purpose of this study was to evaluate nurses' perceptions toward geriatric care. To date, there has been a dearth of research addressing ageism in healthcare in this country.

Leaders and managers involved in geriatric care should extend their roles in welfare service as well. This is because the decisions and reforms made at this level have a direct impact on the services provided in modern healthcare systems.³ Despite ongoing inquiries into this matter, concerns about the quality of care persist.⁴ A crucial determinant affecting the care provided to geriatric patients is the continued presence and reinforcement of ageist attitudes within the society and among those working in health and social care across various levels.⁵ Understanding all aspects of the aging process is crucial along with principles like respect and dignity in addressing the needs of older adults.⁶

Proficient and specialized nurses have a pivotal part in the development of health care systems for the elderly in residential and nursing homes.⁷ The establishment of

Correspondence:

Dr. Raima Asif

National University of Medical Sciences, Rawalpindi

Email: raimairfan@gmail.com

Received: 22 Apr 2024; revision received: 04 Jun 2024; accepted: 11 Jun 2024

nursing facilities is frequently guided by the expertise of senior nurses which is influenced by factors like financial resources, the influence of the local nursing community and metrics such as complaint rates. Once these establishments are in place, they tend to undergo infrequent reviews, making it challenging to offer assurances regarding the safety and quality of the nursing care provided.⁸

Nurse administrators cannot effectively articulate nursing demands or allocate nursing resources in the absence of evidence regarding the relationship between patient acuity and reliance and nurse establishments.⁹ Nurses who had unfavorable opinions about elderly patients said they would rather work with younger patients.¹⁰ These nurses were more likely to discriminate against elderly patients, employ physical restraints and disregard the patients' autonomy and dignity when providing care.¹¹

This study on nurses' attitudes toward elderly patients aimed to identify elements that contribute to discriminatory behavior. This study would assist in improving the quality of nursing care provided to elderly patients. The aim of this study was to explore nurses' knowledge regarding the aging process and identify those aspects which could lead to discriminatory behavior among patients with different age groups.

PATIENTS & METHODS

It was a descriptive cross-sectional study, done on registered nurses in Rawalpindi's tertiary care hospital from August 2023 to October 2023. The study population included nurses which were registered in the tertiary care hospital. The sample size was estimated using WHO calculator. Subjects were chosen using non-probability convenience sampling. The minimum sample size of 140 nurses was based on the prevalence of 61%¹² with required precision of 5%, and 95% confidence interval. A self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. It had thirty items which included behavioral and attitude aspects as well as sociodemographic characteristics found in other studies. The questionnaires had five sections.

Part A focused on data related to sociodemographic characteristics. Sections B, C, and D examined respondents' attitudes toward nursing care, the nurse-patient ratio, and elderly care as well as factors that affect elderly care. Section E is devoted to the comprehension of the aging process.

The questionnaire was modified based on research studies conducted in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Following a thorough assessment of the literature on the

local environment and culture a few changes were made to the questionnaire. The supervisor and experts in the field of public health reviewed it. Pilot testing was done on 10% of sample in another tertiary care hospital in Islamabad.

Both male & female nurses with more than 2 years of experience of working in a hospital were included and those which were not residents of Rawalpindi were excluded as they may have different working conditions, patient demographics, and healthcare protocols which could skew the results and reduce the study's internal validity. Statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS version 23. For descriptive statistics, frequency tables, percentage and summary statistics were used.

After taking approval from Ethical Review Committee of National University of Medical Sciences, Islamabad and taking consent by the respondents, the questionnaire was distributed among the registered nurses of a tertiary care hospital. The recommendations of the Ethical Review Committee were adhered to, including informed consent for voluntary participation while maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of the respondent's response.

RESULT

The frequency distribution of the respondents' sociodemographic traits is displayed in Table I. Of the 140 participants in the study, more than half 89 (64.0%) were of age less than 25 years, 43 (32.0%) were between 26 and 35 years of age, 2 (2.0%) were between 36 and 45 years of age, and 5 (4.0%) were older than 45 years.

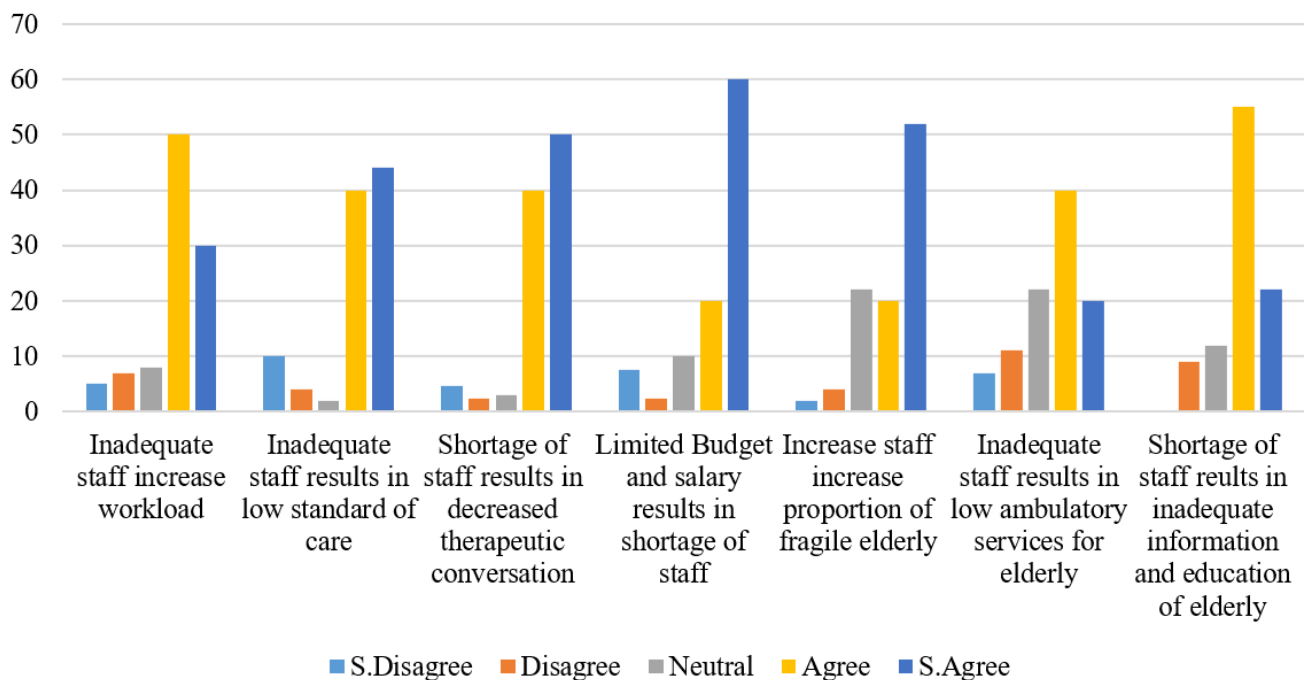
Table I: Sociodemographic Profile of The Respondents

Demographic Factors	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	60	43
Female	80	57
Age		
< 25	89	64
26-35	43	32
36-45	3	2
45-55	5	4
Professional Experience		
1-5 years	100	72
6-10 years	26	18
11-15 years	5	4
16-20 years	9	6
Religion		
Islam	110	78
Christianity	30	22
Marital Status		
Married	40	28
Unmarried	100	72

Table II : Nurse's Attitude Towards Care of The Elderly

Variables	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
I feel good taking care of the elderly	4	20	10	30	36
I see the care of elderly patients as being time consuming	5	40	25	20	10
I like tending to younger patients more than I do to elder ones.	10	20	25	25	20
The elderly grow increasingly demanding as they age.	5	17	20	38	20
The elderly are difficult to care for	20	20	10	30	20
Other clients cannot be accommodated while taking care of the elderly.	10	30	30	16	14
It is not worth wasting time on older individuals who have fatal conditions.	46	15	4	9	26
Nurses should not be providing care for the elderly.	30	44	4	12	10

Low Nurse-Patient Ratio's Impact on Elderly Care

**Figure 1: Effect of low nurse-patient ratio on the elderly care**

In Table II, results demonstrate the nurses' attitude toward caring for elderly patients. Although nearly 36.0% felt that caring for elderly patients made them feel good, 20.0% disagreed, and 4.0% strongly disagreed.

Over 50 percent of the nurses said that limited staffing could lead to an unbearable workload and stress, which in turn can result in poor care. More than half of the respondents said that a lack of nurses would negatively affect the care provided to the elderly because there

Table III : Factors Affecting the Attitude of Nurses Towards Elderly Care

Variables	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Specialized training is necessary for providing good care for the elderly	12	8	20	20	40
Hospitals should establish geriatric wards or other dedicated areas for this purpose.	3	13	14	60	10
The elderly patients' mental health has an impact on their decision-making and level of care.	5	10	5	40	40
Different habits in elderly people have an impact on their treatment.	15	18	11	44	12
Convincing reticent patients about their care in the hospital is a challenging task.	13	16	18	42	11
Lack of social support leads to the abandonment of some elderly people.	5	5	10	60	20

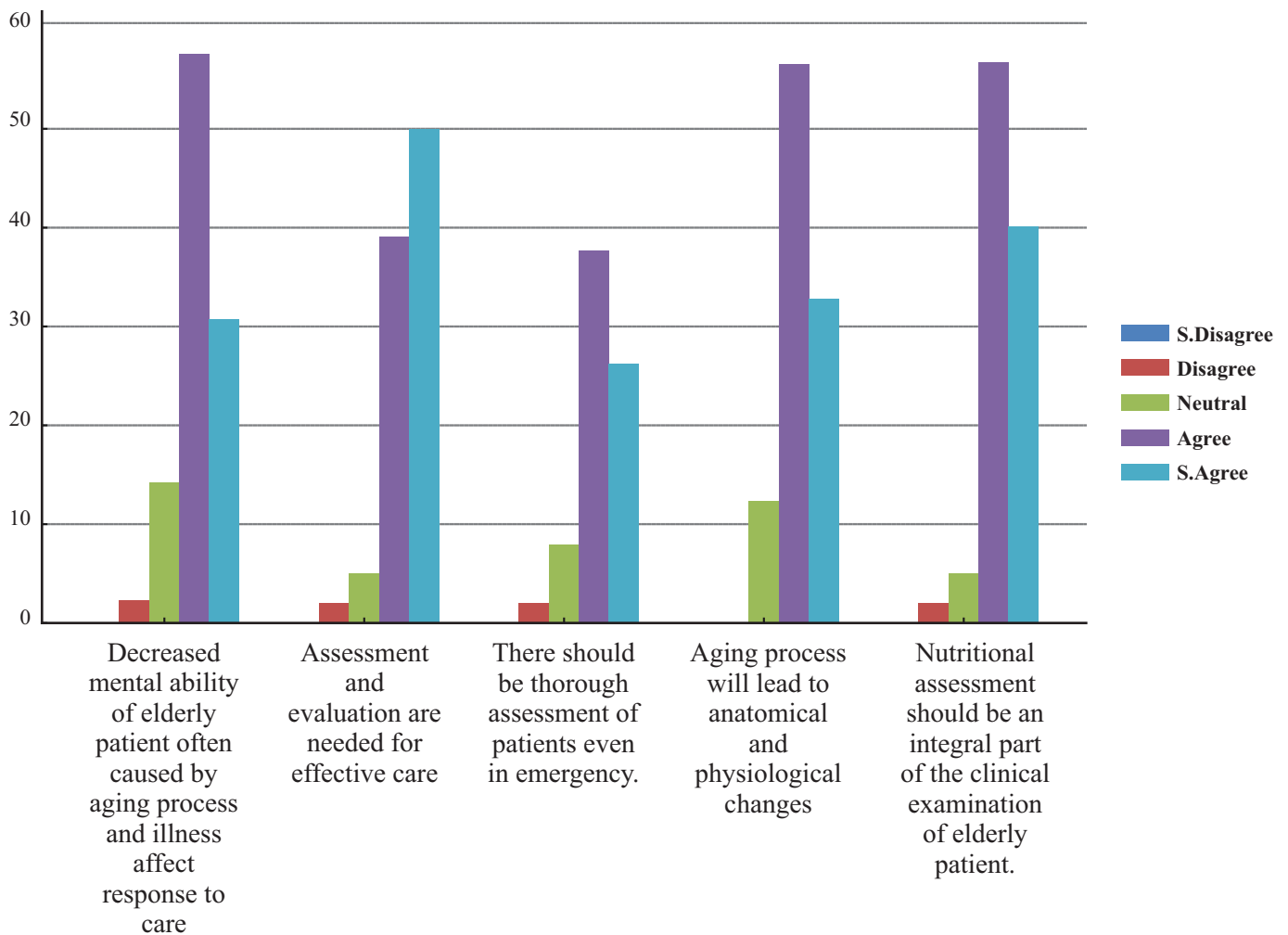


Figure II : Knowledge of the Respondents Regarding Aging Process

would be insufficient knowledge as well as guidance regarding the geriatric health status.

DISCUSSION

In Pakistan gerontological nursing is not yet a well-liked specialization. The majority of nurses included in this research were of the opinion that a specific training was necessary for providing appropriate care for the elderly. Majority of the respondents in this study were females and this result is in line with a study held in Egypt where majority of the participants (62.5%) were female.¹⁶ More than half (78%) of the respondents in our study were Muslims and this is in line to a study in which almost majority of the participants were Muslim.

Majority of the respondents stated they felt good while taking care of the elderly. This contradicts with the study conducted in Ibadan in which 73% of the respondents agreed that elderly patients were difficult to care for.¹ A few respondents also mentioned that caring for the elderly requires more time, effort, and attention than caring for younger patients. This is in line with the study in which majority of the nurses' shows positive attitudes towards older people¹⁴ Some of the factors that make caring for the elderly difficult are having too much work to do and inadequate staffing. Overall, the data suggests that most nurses had a favorable attitude on providing care for the elderly. The outcome is consistent with a study conducted in Turkey, where nurses encounter comparable challenges when providing assistance for elderly patients.¹⁵

The majority of nurses showed adequate awareness of the aging process including the accompanying changes in structure and physiology. Additionally, the respondents were able to recognize the necessity of properly assessing older patients in all aspects in which they seek care. This is in line with the study held in Turkey where most of the nurses had shown adequate awareness about elderly patient care.¹⁷ Another study held in Egypt showed that majority of nursing staff had a very negative attitude towards elderly care.¹⁶

Although, we can infer attitudes from behavior, they may appear elusive, but attitudes are still crucial in nursing care. In order to practice in a patient-centered and collaborative manner, nurses should collaborate with others and work on their own attitudes. If we don't comprehend and interpret attitude, our beliefs and values, it becomes quite easy to misinterpret. In this study majority of the nurses stated that specialized training sessions, education and awareness is required to

improve geriatric care. This result is in agreement with a study in which more than 80% of the respondents stated that effective care of the elderly needs specialized training.¹ Almost half of the nurses in this study agreed that geriatric patients were more demanding and this finding is in line with other studies in which most of the nurses showed undesirable attitude towards older adults and they considered it to be very boring.^{18,19}

Over 80% of the nurses said that a lack of staffing leads to stress and burnout at work which could ultimately lead to poor patient care. This finding is in agreement to a study in which job stress and shortage of staff had an undesirable effect on the quality of life of nurses.²⁰ In order to establish successful patient care without exhausting the caregivers it is important to address all the factors that could lead to stress and burnout at work place. Another research conducted showed job stressors have a detrimental impact on various areas of respondents' quality of life.^{21,22}

It may be possible to design modifications to counteract the negative effects that deplete resources by having a better understanding of the negative implications that caring for difficult older patients has on nurses' energy, capability, confidence, and self-esteem. Earlier research indicated that effective changes and implementing those changes required nurses' participation and peer discussions.^{23,24}

Changes designed and implemented by doctors and nurses might prove to be more fruitful than those implemented by the management. Future work would emphasize in evaluating the effectiveness of team work and its impact on patient care.

Due to the small sample size the research findings cannot be generalized to the entire population. The use of convenience sampling may have introduced bias, potentially affecting the results. Additionally, self-reporting questionnaires carry a risk of social desirability bias, where respondents may tailor their answers to align with socially acceptable norms. Furthermore, attitudes toward old age might have been influenced by the participants' level of religiosity.

CONCLUSION

The majority of nurses had a good attitude towards caring for the elderly patients and had a basic knowledge of geriatric care. Limited staffing, difficulties in providing care and addressing the behavioral changes in the elderly are some factors which lead to the unfavorable attitude.

This highlights the necessity for gerontological nursing education in order to provide older patients with high-quality care. Resources and creativity are required to handle this emerging dilemma.

Conflict of interest: The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions:

Raima Asif: Manuscript Writing, Critical Review

Nasir Javed: Conception of study / Designing , Study Conduction

Uzma Hassan: Critical Review

Tamkeen Jaffry: Critical Review

Rubab Zulfiqar: Experimentation / Study Conduction

Fatima Ali Raza: Analysis / Interpretation

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