

NURSING FACULTY' TRAITS AS PERCEIVED BY 04 YEAR GENERIC NURSING STUDENTS: A FOCUS GROUP STUDY.

Shahida Khan¹, Shazia Sultan², Rubina Praveen³, Muhammad Yousif Bhatti⁴, Ghulam Mustafa Rajput⁵, Pir Bux Jokhio⁶.

ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: Teaching is a professional activity and it is strengthened through experiences and efforts. One of observes and evaluators of the teaching techniques of their teachers are the students. Therefore, Student input is paramount, if a faculty wants to improve teaching abilities. This research is planned in this connection. **OBJECTIVE:** The goal of this research is 'to ascertain nursing students' views about the characteristics of a good nursing faculty.' **METHODS AND MATERIAL:** Two focus group discussions were arranged to collect the data through a -04-item open-ended questionnaire from female nursing BSN (G) students of a public sector university in Sindh, Pakistan. Ethical approval for the study was granted from the Ethical Review Committee, Peoples University of Medical & Health Sciences for Women, Nawabshah, SBA. The sampling technique was purposive. The method for data analysis was qualitative content analysis. **RESULTS:** The four major themes were identified as traits of the nursing faculty. Master of the teaching process, respecting students, autonomy, good communicator, physical and psychological traits. **CONCLUSION:** A good nursing faculty avoids oppressive and inflexible environment. S/he respects students' autonomy and creates a teaching and learning environment that is based on caring, trusting relationship. No student is threatened. Each student is given enough space to learn according to his/her learning needs. This is the best way to create an environment of empowerment and autonomous decision-making practice. The environment helps students to transfer their classroom learning into practice and become productive learners.

KEY WORDS: Nursing Faculty, Nursing Students', Traits.

1. Academic Director, Advance Health Sciences, Institute of Nursing, Karachi.
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Physiology Shaikh Zaid Hospital., Rahim Yar Khan.
3. Assistant Professor Nursing, Begum Bilques Sultana, Institute of Nursing, Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences for Women, Nawabshah, ShaheedBenazirabad.
4. BSN program coordinator, Indus College of Nursing & Midwifery, Indus Hospital, Karachi.
5. Associate Professor Nursing, Begum Bilquees Sultana, Institute of Nursing, Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences for Women, Nawabshah, ShaheedBenazirabad.
6. Assistant Professor Nursing, Begum Bilquees Sultana, Institute of Nursing, Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences for Women, Nawabshah, ShaheedBenazirabad.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR: Pir Bux Jokhio, Masters of Bioethics, Assistant Professor Nursing, Begum Bilquees Sultana, Institute of Nursing, Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences for Women, Nawabshah, ShaheedBenazirabadE-mail Address:- pjokhyo@pumhs.edu.pk
Cell #-: 0301-3803504

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a professional endeavor and it is polished through continuous professional development and experiences. The individuals who wish to join nursing as a teaching career might face several daunting challenges. One of the biggest challenges is to perform their role and responsibilities in line with students' diverse expectations. It could turn out to be overwhelming.¹if we look at a nursing faculty's worth and importance through the eyes of their students; they believed that a good faculty possessed the competence to teach subjects with improved communication skills. Those two important traits were more valued than a faculty's characteristics. Therefore, a good teacher is self-assured, knowledgeable, and a good communication skills container to better deliver distinctive education to his/her students.² Moreover, a good clinical teacher is one who

possessed effective clinical teaching skills and the ability to evaluate their students' class as well as clinical skills without any bias along with good competency over the class and clinical teaching and improved interpersonal skills. In short words, a good teacher is a role model for their institution whose obligation is never compromised over his/her gains.³

Students' perception regarding a good teacher is that of having an ability to develop a trusting relationship, be present whenever students need him/her as a coach and role model. Students voiced their support for the teachers, who were more experienced and could transfer their knowledge and experiences to their students through developing critical thinking skills.⁴A good nursing teacher is one who can create healthy learning

students' environments to enhance their students' learning opportunities. A healthy learning environment includes the physical and emotionally healthy environment. A healthy physical environment includes a neat and clean classroom, availability of audio-visual teaching resources, and comfort breaks to digest learning material easily. Whereas, the emotional environment included a teachers' ability to resolve conflict effectively, honesty, openness, transparency, mutual respect, and a space for expressing their (students) views.⁵

Therefore, a good teacher is one who can adapt student-centered strategies to enhance their learning outcomes. This is not beneficial for students' learning outcomes only, but it goes in the positive direction of a teacher's own personal and professional growth. This is helpful in a teacher's professional development as a teacher is continuously engaged in polishing him/herself by reflecting on his/her practice, critically analyzing the strengths and weaknesses, and improving on by developing critical skills and reasoning. A good teacher allows their students to search for various topics of interest to better understand the themes of learning. In this way, a teacher permits his/her student to develop competencies in communication, building trusting relationships, and collaborative learning.⁶ Collaborative learning is a two-way process between a teacher-student(s) and Student(s)-student(s). It is based on three important factors of interaction that is healthy, positive, and constructive; an interaction that acknowledges mutual respect and human rights, and interaction that makes an appropriate non-verbal communication.⁵

The above-discussed literature emphasizes that the characteristics of a good teacher are diverse. They can't be counted as "one fits all". They came through lifelong learning. Those studies focused mainly on identifying characteristics of a good teacher. Such studies are warranted here in the Pakistani context also as this area has not received any attention till now. To the best of our knowledge, there are a few original studies about the topic. A recent study⁷ conducted in a private nursing institute of Karachi is about student nursing perception about their academic environment in which one portion of a structured questionnaire is dedicated to students' perception towards teachers. It contains eleven (statements). The student revealed that junior nursing students' perception of their academic environment was positive as compared to their seniors.⁷ In another study⁸ characteristics of a clinical faculty as perceived by nursing students were documented. According to the study⁸, good teachers were perceived as having competent teaching ability and masters of interpersonal relationships. Those both studies were conducted in a Private Nursing School; therefore, public sector nursing institutes remained unrepresented. Therefore, nursing students enrolled in the public sector university need to be researched for their perception of the qualities of a good teacher. Keeping in mind this, we have conceptualized this research. The research aims to explore and describe nursing students' views about the characteristics of a good

nursing faculty. The study will bridge the gap of knowledge in this precise zone and will benefit policymakers and Institutions to marshal faculty members of their particular Institution to develop and mature such distinctive traits. This will advantage in endorsing a gullible affiliation between teachers and their students and by generating a conducive learning environment, students learning outcomes can be amended in a positive direction.

METHODOLOGY:

Study Design: This study was followed by an explorative and descriptive qualitative study among nursing students of a public sector university in Sindh, Pakistan. The purpose of this research was 'to explore and describe nursing students' views about the characteristics of a good nursing faculty.' The study was conducted at Begum Bilqees Sultana, Institute of Nursing, Peoples University of Medical & Health Sciences for Women, Nawabshah, Shaheed Benazirabad (PUMJHSW-NH, SBA). Ethical approval for the study was requested from the Ethical Review Committee, PUMJHSW-NH, SBA. Student nurses enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing: Generic-04 year degree program (BSN-G) was the population of this study. The sampling technique for this study was purposive. This is a non-probability sampling technique. The purposive sampling method aims to choose a sample that meets the purpose of the research under consideration. Although non-probability samplings have limitations as they don't allow an equal chance for research participants, important subjective feelings and views can be extracted.⁹ First of all, written permission was sought from Director/ In-charge BBS-ION, PUMHSW, SBA to access the population of the study (Appendix A). A cover letter was given to the participant for information about the research (Appendix A). The participants were allowed to ask questions related to the research problem and research purpose. After they agreed to be part of the research as participants, written informed consent were presented to the participant (Appendix B). The sample for this study was 20-25 student nurses. The inclusion criterion was 'student nurses enrolled in BSN-G program with more than 70% attendance in the current semester' and the exclusion criterion was set as 'student nurses who remained absent for more than one month in the class as well as in clinical during the current semester.'

Data Collection Methods: Data was collected through focus group discussion method. Two different *focus group discussion* sessions were arranged. The principal investigator moderated the focus group sessions. One of the researchers took notes of the session. Each session lasted for 45-60 minutes. The data was collected

by a -04-item semi-structured open-ended questionnaire. The questions included (1) How do you assume about the teaching methods of the nursing faculties; 2) Is there anything about the teaching methods (qualities) by which you are impressed the most; 3) Is there anything associated to nursing faculties' attitudes/behaviors, you are worried/ not satisfied? And How do you think faculties' teaching abilities can be improved/. Open-ended questions will follow probing questions. Open-ended questions with probing techniques help generate ideas and comments about a particular topic.¹⁰ The focus group discussions were arranged in a classroom of the institute. All the participants involved in the focus group discussions have stated the aims and objectives of the study before the start of the sessions. Written informed consent was also implemented individually for each participant.

Data analysis: The *qualitative content analysis* method was used for data analysis. After completing both sessions, the researcher went through the whole transcripts word by word and line by line to achieve the coding process. The second aim of extensive reading was to search for significant statements. The first step of the data reading concluded with making sense of the data. At the second step of data analysis, the main points of the data were identified to cognize and detect the leading plugs inquisitively. All the main points were red marked to make them clearer and highlighted. The second imperative objective of this activity was to stare at resemblances and variances between and within diverse transcripts of the data. It helped in making a general sense of the raw data. The main themes related to the characteristics of a good nursing faculty were extracted from the transcripts and placed in a separate place. For each theme; different words, sentences, and contents were merged with suitable characteristics of a good faculty and coded. In this way, a final picture of the data was systematically organized coherently as codes and categories of words and sentences support their relevant theme.¹¹

RESULTS

All the participants of the study were females and age ranged between 20-24 years. The first focus group participants belonged to 04th year BSN :(G) Students and their total number were 12. The second focus group participants belonged to 03rd year BSN :(G) Students and their total number were 10. The qualitative content data analysis yielded four themes. From the participants' point of view, the traits of a quality teacher included "Master of the teaching process", "respecting the autonomy of the student", "Faithful and honest", and "Physically and psychologically healthy".

1. *Masters of the teaching process*

The first theme '*Masters of teaching process*' emerged during both focus group discussions. The good traits of nursing faculty were described as having control over his/her teaching abilities, punctual, guide, possessing the power of knowledge and skills over his/her subject matter, and able to integrate different subjects related

knowledge to enhance students' learning. One student described her feelings for a quality nursing faculty as under.....

"A quality nursing faculty is a master of his/her subject matter. Although, he uses slides (PowerPoint presentation/ ppts) to deliver his/her lectures, but, doesn't depend on the readings of the slides. S/he knows the context behind lines written in the slides because s/he has composed the ppts after extensive reading and critically examinations of original material."

Another student discussed her views of a quality teacher as follows.....

"A good nursing faculty is a composite, a complex tapestry of a lot of things such as caring, satisfying, and having a sense of well-being."

When the investigators asked to further explore the concept of caring, satisfying and having a sense of wellbeing, the participants verbalized that

"The satisfying faculty means that at the end of the lecture, students believe that they have learned something new and unique. The take-home message of the faculty was clear and related to particular objects of that lecture"

"Caring faculty is one who knows his/her students and their learning difficulties. A good nursing faculty accrues his/her students, therefore s/he takes decisions after critical evaluation and consciously because s/he knows that his/her decisions affect students' growth."

"Sense of well-being is explained as a faculty who can isolate his/her personal life matters from that of professional role and responsibilities. Therefore, a quality faculty is always away from his/her thwarted will."

2. *Respects the students' autonomy*

The second theme of 'respecting students' autonomy' revolved around multiple angles of participants' views. Students termed them learners in initial stages and may not respond to the faculty's assignments as desired. Therefore, a good nursing faculty must be open and consider various constraints, student face while teaching and learning process. One student expressed her feelings as under.....

"A good faculty is a good listener. I feel that homework and assignments are an essential part of the teaching and learning process. Strict time restrictions for submitting assignments are not a good indicator of the teaching-learning process. If a student fails to submit the assignments on time, the teacher must not punish the student by submitting lower grade marks. It negatively impacts students' growth; therefore, a good nursing faculty must realize that failure to submit assignments on time doesn't mean students' irresponsibility. But, this teacher must look for reasons behind that failure."

Another student expressed her views as under.....

“A good nursing faculty should be flexible while examining and evaluating students' performances in the class. A good teacher looks equity among all his/her students. If a student is not performing well consistently in the class, a teacher must avoid labeling him/her as a duffer. Rather than, a quality faculty will try to search the ways by which student's progress can be monitored and improved. A good faculty avoids criticizing his/her student before other students. This is a bad way. Students lose confidence whenever they are criticized in front of their mates and avoid improving in the future.”

A third student articulated that.....” *A student is always a learner. One of the best ways to learn is to put questions before the faculty. A good faculty must not discourage students from putting their concerns related to lecture contents. We have experienced several times that in response to our questions, a teacher answers in a speckled way. Such as the teacher's remarks were, (Is this a question? this question doesn't relate to your level, you must have a pre-readings to avoid such questions). Teachers, such kinds of remarks are unprofessional. A good teacher must provide space to his/her students as students can easily put their confusion before the faculty to overcome the doubt.”*

Another student remarked.....” *a good teacher is easily available to his/her students. If a student is not easy with the lecture and needs more clarification, a teacher must provide some time (maybe in the office) as a student can make clarifications easily.*

3. **A good faculty is also a good communicator**

The third theme of teaching as good communication skills was elaborated in both sessions. A faculty's good communication skills were counted as the backbone of a successful teaching-learning process. Participants of the study endorsed that a quality nursing faculty manifests his/her sense of caring as a fundamental human trait by the words and deeds throughout his/her teaching-learning process. This was illustrated in a student's words as.....

“I am of the view that the teacher holds a responsibility by contributing to impart a positive change in the student's personality. This happens whenever a teacher demonstrates his/her positive attributes not only in the teaching ability but also as a caring and responsible person and professional. My teacher passes the message of the quality teacher as that teaching is inherently good because a good teacher aims at doing good for his/her students, sounds me as a proud movement.”

Another student added her opinion as” *For a quality faculty, indeed, it is his/her responsibility to identify the good in his teaching and avoid the bad. That is all about communication. A quality trait of a responsible and accountable teacher is the way s/he builds communication skills with his/her students. That is the type of communication, where a teacher is respected among all the students equally. The*

students become comfortable and share his/her confusion, problems, fears, and doubts without any hesitation. A quality teacher also supports them in those difficult situations.

4. **Physical and psychological traits of a quality teacher**

Those qualities were commonly found in the quality teacher such as well dressed, fresh, speak softly, don't criticize, able to differentiate between personal and professional life commitments'

One participant said..... *“A good teacher is a good listener”*

Another student expressed..... *“a good faculty is trustworthy”*

The third student spoke *“A good faculty seeks to conserve that which is of value to every student as an integrated unit”.*

There was another valuable remark from a participant. *“My teacher avoids imposing his/her wishes/choices on the students”*

The final comment came as” *Caring is the natural gift of Allah and He bestows the traits to teachers after [parents as a teacher can handle the stress of their students succeed. Caring is the response to stress and it makes a relationship more productive.”*

DISCUSSION

Nursing faculties must endeavor to advance their expert knowledge and proficient skills to deliver better nursing education to their students. This has a pivotal role in the accomplishment of nursing students' learning finishes¹².

The first theme '*master of teaching process*' is supported by four subthemes of 'having command on the subject matter'; 'brings a change in the students' learning outcomes'; 'knows the uniqueness of their students'; and 'isolates personal and professional life'. This theme is in line with the findings of an integrative review article¹². Nursing students admire and appreciate a faculty's competence and professional intrapersonal skills. 'Professional competence' is defined as a faculty's command over his/her '*theoretical knowledge and clinical skills*'. It is further elaborated that teachers must possess excellent decision-making skills during class as well as in the clinical area to augment students' learning without any conflict. Excellent communication skills help in resolving impending conflict creating situations¹². Moreover, a faculty's pains to capacitate themselves to retort students' assorted needs to augment their learning were also valued the most¹³. Moreover, a good nursing faculty must see his/her students based on equity. It means every student is unique and has diverse learning abilities and needs. Therefore, a trait of quality faculty is his/her ability to know his/her students individually and focus on the diverse needs¹². A good

nursing faculty must be able to segregate his/her personal and professional life. The subtheme is supported by a study¹³. According to the findings of this study, it was revealed that a faculty's interaction with their students affects students learning. A faculty's inability to prepare him/herself for the teaching process due to emotional reactions or imbalance between work and home demands negatively influences students learning outcomes and self confidence¹⁴.

The second theme of 'respecting students' autonomy' was sustained through 04 sub-themes of 'good listener and having temperament'; 'flexible while evaluating formative and summative grading'; 'responding students' quires with patience', and 'easily available'. The findings of the study are well supported by a study¹⁵. The participants of the study¹⁵ tendered that students' autonomy perseverance as a positive component and linked it with the arrogance of the professional practice. When a faculty respects students' autonomy, it increases students' satisfaction and confidence¹⁵. Respecting students' autonomy is indispensable because students sense freedom of thoughts and actions. They are enthused to learn and absorb more. Moreover, it is unswervingly allied to evolving the qualities of inquisitiveness and critical thinking abilities among students. Autonomous students acquire the authority to learn more and appreciate their faculties. This improves the teaching and learning process by creating a productive learning environment¹⁶.

The third theme 'a good communicator' is strengthened by the subthemes of 'bring positive change in students' personality' and 'having the ability to communicate positively'. This is well supported by a study on communication skills¹⁸. Good communication is termed as the basis for developing a trusting relationship between nursing faculty and students. It was further elaborated that good communication is built on four characteristics of a nursing faculty. *Approachability* and *availability* mean that teacher is easily available for their students' questions, concerns, and doubts. Moreover, a teacher doesn't say their students about his/her unavailability and is easily available after class times. Good communication is also endorsed as a teacher's ability to present *clear expectations* and *readiness to teach*. Students believed that such kind of responses increases their satisfaction and experience of better learning environment¹⁷. The good nursing faculties are acceptable to their students along with possessing a sense of humor¹⁸.

The fourth and last theme 'physical and psychological traits' were enhanced through the subthemes of 'good listener'; 'trustworthy'; 'appreciating values'; '*self-determining*' and 'caring'. The '*good listener*' faculties believe in nursing students' empowerment. And 'empowerment' of nursing students enhance among them the desire to be autonomous learners¹⁵. A '*trustworthy*' faculty is a catalyst in students' learning progress by the proper guidance and facilitation. If a nursing faculty wishes to guide his/her students in an organized

way then s/he must be *caring* and possessing a hunger to teach students through his/her physical and psychological presence¹⁷. Lastly, a good nursing faculty must demonstrate that students learn most in a flexible and supportive environment. Therefore, a faculty must not miss a little effort of his/her students towards learning and should appreciate it. In this way, an autonomous and empowered learning atmosphere is easy to be established¹⁸.

CONCLUSION

Teaching and learning are multidimensional and complex phenomena. Traits of good nursing faculty are wide-ranging. From physical attributes of a good nursing faculty to psychological and socially appreciable dimensions must be considered. A quality nursing faculty is master of his/her subject matter as goes beyond contexts towards developing critical thinkers. This critical thinking ability and curiosity don't grow in the oppressive and inflexible environment. To make it feasible, a faculty must cultivate a caring and autonomous practice environment. S/he should avoid imposing his ideas but allow a space as students can achieve their targets through their thirst. For this, a faculty must devote him/her to the needs of students.

ETHICS APPROVAL: The ERC gave ethical review approval.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE: written and verbal consent was taken from subjects and next of kin.

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