

Compassionate nursing care: Effects on recovery and well-being of medical-surgical patients

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Abstract

Compassion is the heart and soul of genuine nursing care. The basis of caring with love and compassion is the nurse's affectionate and efficient nursing skills. The purpose of this study was to identify the elements of compassionate care in nursing students assigned in the medical and surgical wards of a community hospital in Bulacan Province. This descriptive-qualitative study conducted in the medical and surgical wards proved the positive correlation between competent nursing care and sincere compassion toward the patients to promote healing. There is an urgent need of revisiting the nursing curriculum for greater relevance and improvement by integrating positive core values of compassion, love, and technical proficiency to encourage an empathetic, dedicated nursing personnel capable of delivering high-quality, patient-centered care. Compassionate care requires responding to patient needs by understanding the physical, spiritual and emotional difficulties. Compassion is a very important component of the provision of high-quality nursing care.

Keywords: Compassion; Holistic nursing care; Community hospital; Elements of care; Patient satisfaction

1. Introduction

Research studies worldwide proved the positive influence of efficient care with love and compassion to promote speedy patient healing. Compassion is the essence and the core of nursing care. This holistic approach to care can minimize anxiety, promote adherence and collaboration of the patients with the health providers, and thus promote the maximum level of satisfaction as they are actively involved in their own modality of care. Furthermore, studies have proven that compassionate care contribute to positive clinical outcomes of fostering a solid, health giving and therapeutic relationships with health professionals and patients. Some research studies signified positive effects of compassionate care among the diabetics resulting to better blood glucose control due to low levels of anxiety, depression, and psychological distress, which eventually lead to physical healing and improved outcomes.

A research study participated by over 9,000 diabetics found that those who received compassionate care had better blood glucose control and fewer complications requiring hospitalization. (Babaei, Sima et. al, 2022)

2. Review of Related Literature

The critical care nurses who underwent semi-structured interviews found that patients who received empathetic care had higher satisfaction and shorter stays in the Intensive Care Unit.

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Therefore, compassion, to include empathy and a focus on the patient's emotional and psychological well-being, is both a critical and an essential element of effective healthcare that surpasses technical skills.

While the benefits of compassionate health care are clear, time pressures in giving care can hinder the consistent application of compassion in clinical practice.

Research indicates a positive and significant relationship between competent nursing skills and compassionate care, positively correlating with caring behaviors and the quality of nursing services. Nurses with strong compassion competence show improved ability to provide effective, human-centered care by understanding and addressing patient suffering. Studies suggest that fostering compassion in nursing education leads to better patient outcomes, improved patient experiences, and higher professional fulfillment for nurses.

The research conducted by Denat and Tanrikulu (2024) revealed that the compassion levels of the intensive care nurses were quite high associated with age. Likewise, gender and having chosen the profession willingly were determining factors to affect compassion.

The findings of a recent published research highlight the essential role of developing compassion within nursing education by strengthening students' compassion skills that can enhance patient care quality, professional commitment among future nurses.

Furthermore, the researchers concluded that by employing compassion focused strategies to nurture the value of compassion to the nursing students will result to a more empathetic and committed nursing workforce that will benefit both the health care providers and patients. Compassion has been associated with a positive impact on the patient experience and a variety of patient-reported outcomes – specifically, reduced patient symptom burden, improved quality of life Malenfant, et.al, (2022)

Compassionate care plays a crucial role in improving patient care and clinical outcomes while reducing caregiver burnout and the risk of malpractice litigation. However, a lack of compassion training and caregiver compassion fatigue may detract from the delivery of effective compassionate care. Watts et. al (2023).

The concept of compassion, which has recently gained importance in the nursing literature has been described as a basic value in caregiving. Compassion has significant effects on the quality of care and is an essential element of patient-centered care. Pehlivan & Guner (2020).

Even a nurse theorist like Patricia Benner emphasized in her work "From Novice to Expert" the value of compassionate care emerging from deep experience, intuition and holistic understanding of the patient's unique situation. Compassion is more than technical skills, but it embodies attentive, and person-centered care, where expert nurses perceive the patient as a whole being, not just a set of symptoms.

Research shows that compassionate care plays an important role in both the psychological and physiological healing of patients. This type of care is holistic and personal because it builds trust and supports a patient's overall well-being. When healthcare providers show compassion, they help promote hope and optimism, which allows patients to cope better with their health challenges. Compassionate nurses create a safe and supportive environment that reduces fear, anxiety, and emotional distress, especially for patients with life-threatening illnesses. When patients feel heard, understood, and accepted, they experience better emotional balance and a greater sense of comfort. This helps reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation that often come with illness.

Compassionate care also provides physical benefits. Studies show that compassionate interactions can activate the parasympathetic nervous system, helping the body relax and lowering stress hormones such as cortisol. This response supports the immune system and helps the body heal faster. Gentle communication and kind actions from nurses can reduce a patient's perception of pain and promote quicker recovery, particularly after surgery. Patients who feel respected and understood are more likely to trust their healthcare providers and follow their treatment plans. As a result, compassionate care leads to better patient cooperation and improved health outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

The general objectives of the study were to analyze the compassionate and competent nursing care values as applied by the nursing students during their thirty- two hours clinical affiliation at Bustos Community Hospital with the medical-surgical patients. The following questions were addressed:

- How often patients felt treated with courtesy and respect by the nursing affiliates?
- How often patients perceived kindness and support from the nursing affiliates?
- How responsive are the nursing affiliates to the patients requesting for assistance?
- How diligently a nursing affiliate listened to doctor's instruction?
- How often possible side effects of new medicines are explained to the patients by the nursing affiliates?

3. Methods

This study utilized descriptive quantitative study and conducted in the medical wards of Bustos Community Hospital. The participants were selected; composed of 20 Level 2 and Level 4 nursing students using stratified sampling and 10 family members included in the purposive sampling. Data collection was conducted through questionnaire via Google Forms, focus group discussions, and the field notes. Data were collected using standardized scales measuring caregiving behavior, self-efficacy and compassion competence during the training from November 17-28, 2025.

4. Presentation of Data

The results of this study showed that two categories such as "using verbal and non-verbal language to express feelings of sympathy and empathy is highly critical for the clients to clearly experience compassion and efficient nursing care from the nursing affiliates during their confinement at the medical-surgical wards of the community hospital.

Table 1 Profile of Nursing Affiliates as Participants of the Study

AGE	MALE	FEMALE	PERCENTAGE
19	2	4	30.0%
20	1	0	5.0%
21	3	4	35.0%
22	3	2	25.0%
24	1	0	5.0%
TOTAL	10	10	100.0%

Table 1 shows the distribution of the nursing affiliates according to age. Thirty five percent (35.0% of the nursing students are 21 years old while both 20 years old and 24 years old constitute 5.0% of the total sample. This indicates that most of the respondents are within the age range of operational for nursing students and newly graduated nurses.

The literature consistently reports that age has no influence on the provision of compassionate nursing care, although there was slight variance in the age of our sample. It has been proposed that one's ability to be compassionate is better described as a professional skill, developed through education, reflection and therapeutic experience rather than age (Sinclair et al., 2018).

Additionally, Demographics have lesser influence on compassionate care than environmental factors, organizational factors, leadership support, workload and workplace culture (Bramley & Matiti, 2014; Dewar & Nolan, 2013).

These results suggest that the nursing affiliates' capacity to provide compassionate care is not affected by the small age disparities in the sample. Age does not present a complicating factor in this study's evaluation of compassionate care and its impact on patient recovery and well-being, as evidenced.

Table 2 Indicators of Compassionate Care to Patients

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation
Build a good connection with patients.	4.95	0.223607
Understand the feelings of patients during illness.	4.95	0.223607
Talk to patients in a caring and sincere way.	4.95	0.223607
Show patience and kindness when interacting with patients.	4.95	0.223607
Help patients find meaning in their health situation.	4.80	0.410391
Becoming kind with patients helps me provide more compassionate care.	5.00	0

Table 2 shows that various behaviors were found to have high indicators of compassionate nursing care, including building a good connection with patients, understanding the feelings of patients during illness, talking to patients in caring and sincere way, and showing patience and kindness when interacting with patients. Becoming kind with patients helps student nurses to provide more compassionate care shows highest indicator. These findings demonstrate the respondents' deep knowledge of the interpersonal and emotional components required for demonstrating compassion in clinical settings.

The high rating given to developing a good connection with patients underscores the importance of relational engagement in compassionate care. Establishing rapport is important to patient-centered practice, since it develops trust, comfort, and emotional safety. This aligns with Sinclair et al. (2018), who described compassionate care as essentially relational, highlighting the nurse's responsibility in connecting meaningfully with patients.

All things considered, the indicators shown in Table 2 indicate that nursing affiliates have a sophisticated comprehension of the behavioral, emotional, and relational aspects of compassionate care. Their answers closely match evidence-based frameworks that characterize compassion as a multifaceted process that includes kindness, patience, empathy, connection, and communication. These results corroborate the idea that respondents understand compassion as a set of deliberate behaviors that have a direct impact on patients' recovery and well-being, rather than just as an emotion.

Table 3 Indicators of Competent Nursing Care to Patients

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation
Confidence in performing the basic nursing skills required in my work.	4.8	0.410391
Follow correct procedures to ensure my patient's safety.	5.0	0
Explain nursing procedures clearly to my patients	4.8	0.410391
Check my work to make sure it is accurate and safe.	5.0	0
Ask for help when I am unsure about nursing skills.	5.0	0
Improve my nursing knowledge and skills regularly.	4.9	0.307794

The indicators of nursing students' proficiency, adherence to safety procedures, communication of procedures, and willingness to ask for help are shown in Table 3. According to the data, asking for assistance when unsure of one's nursing skills, checking one's work for accuracy, and adhering to the proper procedures to ensure patient's safety were all highly rated as indicators of compassionate care. Strong indicators of compassionate care were also found to include things like confidence in carrying out fundamental nursing tasks, clearly communicating procedures to patients, and consistently enhancing nursing knowledge and abilities.

The respondents' strong emphasis on adhering to the right protocols to guarantee patient's safety indicates that they view compassion as encompassing more than just providing emotional support; it also entails keeping patients safe. According to research, safe and competent clinical practice is inextricably linked to compassionate care. Sinclair et al. (2016) define compassion as "appropriate action to alleviate suffering," which includes avoiding harm by following

evidence-based protocols. Similarly, Curtin (2018) contends that because patient's safety shows respect for the patient's dignity and well-being, it is a moral and compassionate obligation.

In addition, evidence relating clinical vigilance to compassionate intent is consistent with the strong indication for reviewing one's work to ensure accuracy and safety. Research indicates that nurses who double-check prescriptions, procedures, and paperwork exhibit compassionate practice because they shield patients from avoidable mistakes (Bramley & Matiti, 2014). Such attention to detail demonstrates a dedication to both technical excellence and patient's safety, which is a crucial manifestation of compassion.

The students' recognition that humility and seeking guidance are essential to safe and compassionate practice was demonstrated by the high rating given to asking for help when unsure of nursing skills. Research demonstrates that asking for help lowers risks, promotes team-based care, and guarantees that patients receive skilled interventions (Benner et al., 2010). Because it puts patient's safety ahead of self-esteem, this behavior is an ethical manifestation of compassion.

Overall, Table 3's indicators show that respondents view compassionate care as multifaceted, encompassing patient safety, competence, communication, humility, and ongoing improvement. These results are consistent with evidence-based frameworks that present compassion as a dedication to clinical excellence, patient empowerment, and ethical practice in addition to being an emotional reaction.

5. Conclusion

The study *Compassionate Nursing Care: Effects on Recovery and Well-Being of Medical-Surgical Patients*, revealed that compassionate care is a multifaceted professional practice that is more influenced by clinical behaviors and learned competencies rather than its demographic traits like age or gender. The findings confirmed that age had no discernible impact on the capacity to deliver compassionate care, despite the sample showing minor age differences across nursing affiliations. This adds credence to the body of research that suggests compassion is not innate but rather developed via education, introspective practice, and significant clinical encounters.

Respondents demonstrated a thorough comprehension of the relational, emotional, and behavioral aspects of compassionate nursing across all research parameters. Nursing affiliates see compassion as essential to patient-centered care, as evidenced by their high scores for developing therapeutic relationships, exhibiting empathy, communicating with sincerity, and being compassionate. Their answers are consistent with recognized frameworks that characterize compassion as a relational process that promotes emotional safety, comfort, and trust. These elements are proven to have a good impact on patient recovery and general well-being.

The results show that nursing affiliates see professional accountability, patient safety, and competence as essential manifestations of compassion in addition to emotional and relational behaviors. Compassion goes beyond empathy. It also entails responsible conduct that keeps patients safe, as demonstrated by indicators like adherence to safety procedures, precision in clinical activities, humility in asking for assistance, and ongoing progress. This is in line with recent research showing that ethical behavior and clinical alertness are inextricably linked to compassionate treatment.

Overall, the findings confirm that the study's nursing affiliates have a thorough grasp of compassionate care, which combines clinical competence, empathy, communication, and moral obligation. Their viewpoints are consistent with modern models that characterize compassion as a deliberate, skill-driven practice that directly affects medical-surgical patients' recuperation, dignity, and well-being. Therefore, to promote the best possible patient outcomes and create a healing atmosphere in clinical settings, compassionate nursing care is still essential.

Recommendations

Several suggestions are made to improve the practice of compassionate nursing care in the light of the study's results and conclusions. It is advised that structured modules on empathy, therapeutic communication, and compassionate practice be completely incorporated into the curriculum for nursing education. To improve self-awareness and enhance students' comprehension of compassion, nursing schools should also incorporate reflective journaling and debriefing activities along with simulation situations that highlight relational care, emotional intelligence, and successful patient communication. Healthcare organizations are urged to foster settings in clinical practice that promote patient-centered, compassionate care by guaranteeing sufficient staffing levels that enable nurses to spend significant time with patients and by emphasizing rigorous adherence to safety procedures and clinical accuracy as essential manifestations of compassion.

To foster safe and ethical practices, it is crucial for healthcare leadership and organizations to create a supportive culture that encourages asking for assistance as a strength rather than a weakness. Leaders should establish recognition programs that acknowledge and reward acts of compassion in the workplace, as well as mentorship programs that set an example of compassionate behavior for new nurses. For the improvement of clinical training and hospital operations, institutions should incorporate feedback tools that evaluate relational care and compassionate behaviors into their patient care systems. These tools can be used to gather insights from patient satisfaction surveys.

Lastly, it is advised that future study investigate the association between organizational atmosphere and compassion fatigue, as well as longitudinal studies that look at how compassion changes over time among nursing students. Additional research on patients' opinions of compassionate care in various clinical settings might also yield insightful information about how to enhance clinical procedures and teaching methods.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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