



The Effect of Assertiveness Training Program on Self-esteem and Communication Skills among Nursing Students of Helwan University

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Article History: Received: 10.05.2023

Revised: 15.06.2023

Accepted: 20.06.2023

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ABSTRACT

Background: Assertiveness is a significant communication style for nursing students-as future professionals. Assertiveness is a vital skill for nursing students to communicate professionally and have been associated with high self- esteem. **Aim:** The aim of study is to assess the effect of assertiveness training program on university nursing students' self-esteem and communication skills. **Research design:** A quasi - experimental research design was used. **Setting:** The study was carried out at the psychiatric and mental health nursing classes, Faculty of Nursing - Helwan University. **Sample:** A convenience sample of (104) university nursing students were included for the conduction of this study. **Tools of data collection:** The study tools divided into four tools. I: Socio-demographic Sheet. II: Rathus Assertiveness Scale. III: Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale and IV: Communication Skills Scale. **Results:** There was significant changes in total score of assertiveness skills, self-esteem and communication skill levels of the studied nursing student at $p \leq 0.05$. In addition, there was a highly statistically significant difference between total mean scores of self- esteem, assertiveness skills, and communication skills among the studied sample post- program implementation compared to pre-program implementation. **Conclusion:** Assertiveness training program have a positive effect on communication skills and self-esteem of nursing students. **Recommendation:** Incorporating assertiveness training as an eligible training course of the undergraduate nursing program.

Key words: Assertiveness training, Communication skills, Nursing students, Self-esteem

INTRODUCTION

Nursing as profession is complicated due to ongoing changes in health care system and nursing students face challenges to achieve competencies to meet their profession's clinical and academic requirements, which may have a negative effect on students' self-esteem (McCarthy, et al., 2018).

There are increasing number in nurses with low self-esteem although; self-esteem has long been identified as an important predictor of adjustment to stress. High levels of self-esteem are considered essential to manage the demands placed on nurses and nursing students during their training and for developing a strong and therapeutic relationship with a patient (Mohamed, Abd El-Hammed & Thabet, 2016).

For nurse's student, low self-esteem can affect the level and the quality of patient care in a negative direction, while high levels of self-esteem consider important for developing a strong and therapeutic relationship with patients, high levels of self-esteem will enable nurse students to be confident and demonstrate respect and concern for patient later on in practice (Kanade, 2018).

In addition, the most vital aspect of the nursing profession is communication .Nurses communicate with person from different educational, cultural and social backgrounds and must do so in an effective and professional manner, especially when

communicating with patients. For that, Communication skills are very important in the nursing practice, and have positive impacts on patient' outcomes (Nantsupawt et al., 2020).

Since nursing needs to communicate with an individual patient in particular, it is necessary for the students to have good communication skills before starting their career (Uluoglu et al., 2007), communication skills for nurses are crucial in nursing practice but may be difficult to master. Previous studies founded that most of nurses had no training courses about communication skills (Kanade, 2019 & Mostafa et al., 2022).

Assertiveness training has recently been drawing renewed interest in health care sector because assertiveness focuses on nurse ability to communicate their view and concerns as patient advocates, supports, and encourages successful communication skills. In addition, assertiveness have been associated with high self-esteem. Individuals who have assertive behaviors have higher self-worth and maintain self-respect (Omura et al., 2016).

University education is essential for students to develop high level of self-esteem. Learning assertiveness skills is essential because assertiveness has positive effect on self-confidence (Nakamura, et al., 2017).

Assertiveness also consider as form of communication style that is necessary for communicating effectively with people. Furthermore, forceful people are more likely to form greater bonds with others. Nurses who are assertive may find it easier to deal with challenging situations and increase their influence (**Azizi et al., 2020**).

Nursing education can help students develop assertiveness skills. Learning assertiveness skills is essential because assertiveness has a positive effect on self-confidence, problem-solving, and decision-making processes, as well as effective communication (**Nakamura, et al., 2017**). In addition, assertiveness emphasizes nurses' ability to communicate their views and concerns as patient advocates, supports, and encourages successful communication skills. A positive self-esteem has also been linked to assertiveness.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Student nurses today are the nucleus of professional nurses of tomorrow, so it is essential for student nurses to have high self-esteem and assertive communication skills in order to ensure competent, safe practice and therapeutic relationship with patient.

Unfortunately, evidence reported that that only 3.3% of nursing students had a high level of self-esteem. (**Hanafi, et al., 2016**). Furthermore, Communication failure remains a key source for unsafe practice among health care professional, but not all nurses have the sufficient level of confidence to exercise this important

communication skills (**Mansour et al., 2020**).

University nursing student who have poor self-esteem and poor communication skill without doubt exhibit negative professional attitudes and behavior when they graduate, for that, it is significantly important to improve communication skills and self-esteem of nurses student through implementing an assertiveness skills training.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of study is to assess the effect of assertiveness training program on university nursing students' self-esteem and communication skills.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research design:

The current research design is a quasi-experimental design.

Setting of the study:

The study was conducted at the psychiatric and mental health nursing classes, Faculty of Nursing - Helwan University. It is governmental educational institution, which offer bachelor degree in nursing science.

Subjects:

The subject of this study was composed of nursing students who had studied psychiatric and mental health curriculum in the first semester of academic year 2022-2023, the total coverage number of students was (104) university nursing students.

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Psychiatric and mental health nursing students.
2. Lack of participation in any assertiveness training classes.
3. Willingness to continue the study.

Tools of Data Collection:

The data were collected by:

I. Socio-demographic Sheet:

The researcher designed this sheet to record of socio-demographic data of the nursing students. This tool had two parts.

Part A: It has total six items related to socio-demographic information of the nursing students that were include age, gender, marital status, residence, pre-university education, previous attendance to assertive training courses.

Part B: It has total six items related to nursing student' families which includes type of family, size of family, residence, father and mother education, father and mother occupation, family income.

2. Rathus Assertiveness Scale (RAS)

It was developed by (*Rathus, 1973*) to measure a student's level of assertiveness. It is a standardized, short structured, self-administered Six points Likert scale range from very uncharacteristic of me (-3) to (+3) very characteristic of me. It contains 30 items out of which 17 are described as

negative and 13 of them as positive (*Rathus, 1973*).

Scores range between - 90 to +90. Those who receive below +10 as a total score are considered to be shy or non-assertive and those with a total score above +10 are considered to be assertive (Morsi, & Prince, 2021).

According to validity of this tool, the test's Internal consistency (Cronbach alpha was 0. 86) and split-half reliability was found to be = 0.77 (*Rathus, 1973*).

3. Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

That was developed by (*Rosenberg, 1965*) to measure student's self-esteem and self-worth. The scale is an attempt to achieve a one-dimensional measure of global self-esteem. It is a standardized, short structured, self-report 10 items Likert scale. Items were answered on a 4-point scale from strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Items 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 are negative items and 1, 3, 4, 7 and 10 are positive items. Scoring for negative items was reversed, i.e., (0) for strongly agree and three for strongly disagree, and so on.

Scores range from zero to 30. The higher the score indicates the high self-esteem (Above 15 indicate high level of self-esteem – from 0: 15 indicate low level of self – esteem).

According to validity of this tool, the test's internal consistency (Cronbach alpha was 0. 82) and test retest reliability ranges from 0.82 to 0.85.

4.Communication Skills Scale

This scale has been originally developed by (*Alhmaidat, 2007*) to assess communication skills among

university students. The scale consists of (32) items measuring four communication skills: listening, speaking, understanding others and emotional management.

Each statement was answered on a likert scale that ranges from (1) very low extent, (2) to small extent, (3) moderately, (4) to large extent, and (5) very large extent. Higher scores are indicator of higher communication skills (above 65 indicate high level of communication skills, from 45 to 64 indicate moderate level of communication skills, and less than 45 indicate low level of communication skills).

According to validity of this tool, the correlation coefficient with the communication skills scale were (.68 & .71), while reliability has been estimated by two methods: stability method which value was (.78), and the internal consistency method which was (.72).

Ethical considerations:

Verbal approval was obtained from each participant before collection of any data and after explanation of the study aim in simple and clear manner. Before taking the consent, the subjects were assured about the study confidentiality and anonymity. They informed about their right to withdraw from the study when they like this without giving causes.

The preparatory phase:

A review of related literature and theoretical knowledge of various aspects of the study using available

books, articles, periodicals, websites and other available resources was done to get an acquainted with the various aspect of the research problem.

Pilot study:

A pilot study was conducted before starting data collection on 10% of psychiatric mental health nurses (5 nurses) to test the clarity and applicability of the study tools, and identify the time required to fill each tool. This phase aims at planning for training program through setting educational objectives, preparing the training program and designing the methodology and media.

Fieldwork:

The actual fieldwork for the process of the data collection has consumed three-months started on beginning of September 2022 and was completed by the end December 2022.

The fieldwork was beginning by distribution of data collection tool (pre-test) then implementation of the assertiveness training program for nursing students. Data collection of this study was carried out at psychiatric and mental health nursing classes, Faculty of Nursing - Helwan University. Assertiveness training program sessions were implemented on fourteen sessions, The sessions were implemented approximately twice/week on Sundays and Tuesday for 60 minutes.

In the first session, the researcher welcomed the participants and provided detailed information about the number of group members, duration of the program and length of

each session, general and specific goals of the program, summary about the content of the program and rules of the group e.g. confidentiality and honesty.

Each session was started with a summary about what was given through the previous session to ensure that nursing students understands the program content and the objectives of the new session were mentioned.

Sessions of the assertiveness training program focused on: Introduction about aim, objectives and content of the sessions, obtain overview about assertiveness, Assertive communication skills, saying "No" assertively, making and responding to request assertively, responding and giving Criticism Assertively, expressing pleasant feelings as compliment, and Self-esteem Improvement.

Several teaching methods were used such as lectures, group discussion, brainstorming, role-playing / behavioral rehearsal, getting participants' feedback, providing feedback, providing corrective feedback.

Upon the completion of program, the post-test was done for nursing students to evaluate the effectiveness of assertiveness training program using post-test tool that contain the same items as in the pre -test.

As regards to training courses attended in assertiveness and leadership before assertiveness training program, Students how had participate in any assertiveness training class before assertiveness training program were excluded because they do not

meet the inclusion criteria of this study; only 6 students were excluded from total of (104) psychiatric nursing students.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The collected data were organized, computerized, tabulated and analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. Data were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages for categorical data. Continuous variables were summarized as means and standard deviations (SD), and paired sample t. test was used to identify the significance in-group before and after psycho-educational nursing intervention implementation, significant level value was set at ≤ 0.05 .

RESULTS:

Table (1): Distribution Socio-demographic characteristics of nursing students' under study:

shows that, more than half (51. %) of nursing students were in the age group 20-21 years with a mean age of 21.50 ± 0.630 , and more than two thirds (%78.00) were female, while most of nursing students (78.85 %) were single.

As regards to their residence, the majority of studied nurse students (74.00 %) lived in urban areas. According to their pre-university education, the majority of them (71.15 %) were in general secondary schools. As regards to training courses attended in assertiveness and

leadership before assertiveness training program, only (5.80%) of them attended leadership and assertiveness training courses.

Table (2): Distribution of Socio-demographic characteristics of families of nursing students' under study: this table reveals that, more than half of the studied nursing students (53.80%) were live in nuclear families, and (89.40%) of them lived with both parent. According to parental education, nearly half of nursing students (46.7%) their fathers had university education, while (31.70%) of student' mothers had university education.

According to family income, slightly less than three quarters of nursing students (72.10 %) had just sufficient income and More than three quarters of students (77.88 %) their family included 5-7 members.

Figure (1): reveals that there was an improvement in the studied nursing students` assertiveness levels post assertiveness training program implementation as (68.37%) of them reported high level of assertiveness skills post-assertiveness training program implementation, whereas (21.43%) of them reported high level of assertiveness skills pre-assertiveness training program implementation.

Table (3): Comparison between total mean score change of assertiveness skills level among nursing students before and after assertiveness training program (n=98): show that, there is a highly statistically significant different between total mean scores

changes of assertiveness skills among studied nursing students before and after program implementation at ($p=0.000$).

Figure (2): illustrates that, there was an improvement in the studied nursing students` levels of self-esteem post-assertiveness training program implementation, as (68.37%) of studied nursing students reported high level of self-esteem post- assertiveness training program implementation in compare to (12.24%) pre implementation of program.

Table (4): Comparison between total mean score change of self-esteem level among nursing students before and after assertiveness training program (n=98): this table reveals that, there is a highly statistically significant different between total mean scores changes of self-esteem level among studied nursing students before and after program implementation at ($p=0.000$).

Figure (3): reveals that there was an improvement in the studied nursing students` communication skills post assertiveness training program implementation as (63.2%) of students reported high level of communication skills post-assertiveness training program implementation, whereas none of studied nursing students reported high level of communication skills pre-

assertiveness training program implementation.

between total mean scores changes of communication skills among studied nursing students before and after program implementation at (p= 0.000).

Table (5): Comparison between total mean score change of communication skills among nursing students before and after assertiveness training program (n=98): this table show that, there is a highly statistically significant different

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of nursing students under study (n=104)

Items	N	%
Age (in years):		
20 – 21	53	51.00
22 – 23	51	49.00
Mean ± SD = 21.50 ± 0.630		
Sex:		
Male	26	25.00
Female	78	78.00
Marital status:		
Single	82	78.85
Engaged	17	16.35
Married	5	4.80
Divorced/widow	0	-
Residence:		
Urban	77	74.00
Rural	27	26.00
Pre-university education:		
General secondary school	74	71.15
Nursing school diploma	27	25.97
Technical institute diploma	3	2.88
Have you attended any training courses in?		
Leadership:	6	5.80
Assertiveness:	6	5.80

Table (2) Socio-demographic characteristics of families of nursing students (n=104)

Items	N	%
Family type:		
Nuclear	56	53.80
Extended	48	46.20
Parents live together:		
Yes	93	89.40
No	11	10.60
Father education:		
Illiterate	3	2.90
Read/write	10	9.60
Basic	15	14.40
Secondary	31	29.80
University	45	43.30
Mother education:		
Illiterate	13	12.50

Read/write	11	10.60
Basic	10	9.60
Secondary	37	35.60
University	33	31.70
Family income:		
Insufficient	11	10.60
Just Insufficient	75	72.10
sufficient and saving	18	17.30
No. of family members:		
2 – 4	14	13.46
5 – 7	81	77.88
8 – 10	9	8.66

Table 3: Comparison between total mean score change of assertiveness skills level among nursing students before and after assertiveness training program (n=98)

Variable	Study group pre-intervention(98)	Study group post-intervention(98)	Paired Difference	Paired Sample	
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	Mean Difference	T-test	p-value
Assertiveness skills	35.37±4.306	66.85± 4.332	19.64	17.080	0.000

Table 4: Comparison between total mean score change of self-esteem level among nursing students before and after assertiveness training program (n=98)

Variable	Study group pre-intervention(98)	Study group post-intervention(98)	Paired Difference	Paired Sample	
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	Mean Difference	T-test	p-value
Self-esteem level	16.56±2.091	9.03± 3.902	7.531	32.062	0.000

Table 5: Comparison between total mean score change of communication skills among nursing students before and after assertiveness training program (n=98)

Variable	Study group pre-intervention(98)	Study group post-intervention(98)	Paired Difference	Paired Sample	
	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	Mean Difference	T-test	p-value
Communication Skills	-2.29 ±20.753	9.03± 3.902	31.480	93.547	0.000

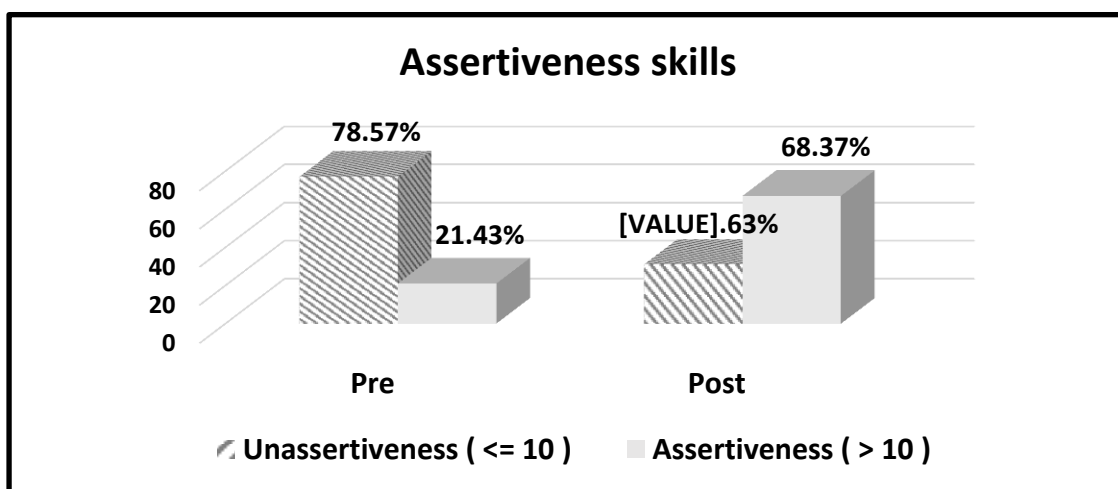


Figure 1: Comparison between pre and post-intervention of total score of nursing students' assertiveness skills.

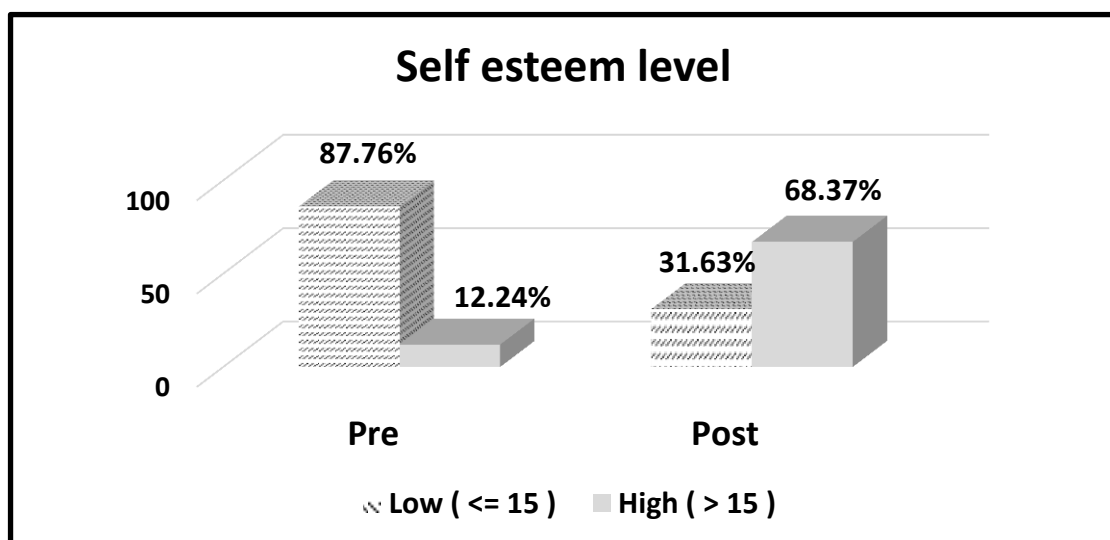


Figure 2: Comparison between pre and post-intervention of total score of nursing students' self-esteem under study.

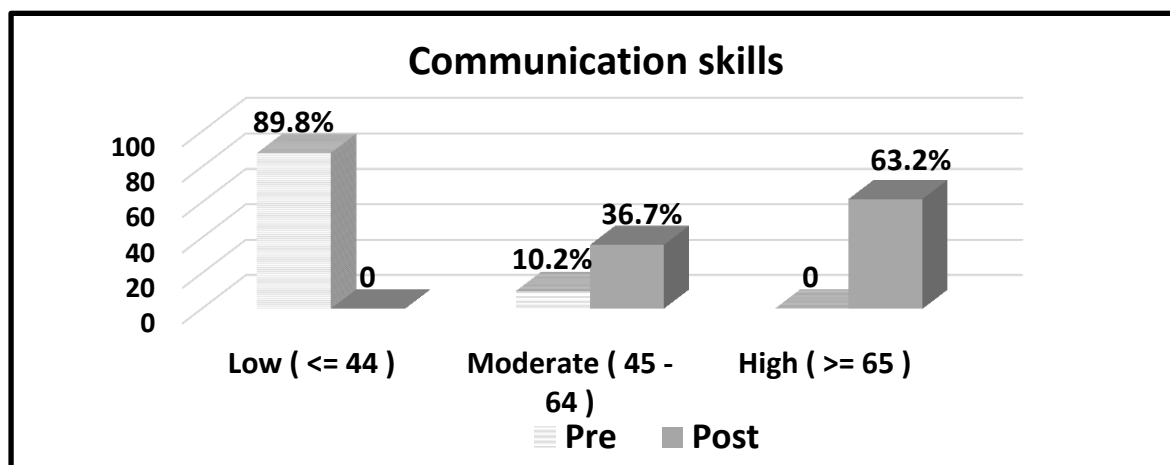
Figure 3: Comparison between pre and post-intervention of total score of nursing students' communication skills under study

DISCUSSION

Assertiveness is an important for today's professional nurse. Important of assertive skills for nurse students and nurse cannot be overemphasized. Assertiveness focuses on nurse ability to communicate their view and concerns as patient advocates,

group between 20-21 years old, this range of age most of individual are unmarried. The result of the current study also, showed that the majority of studied nursing students lived in urban areas and had general secondary school education pre-university.

The findings of the current study revealed that as regards training



supports, and encourages successful communication skills. In addition, assertiveness have been associated with high self-esteem.

Results of the current study showed that more than two thirds of participants were female. This may be due to the fact that female are the prominent gender in nursing practice. Similarly, **Ahmed, Desouki, Mourad, & Mohamed Barakat, (2022)** who found that the majority of nursing students were females.

Concerning the marital status, the present study found that most nursing students were single. This result may due to most of student nurse at age

courses attended in assertiveness and leadership before assertiveness training program. Only one fifth of nursing students attended leadership and assertiveness training courses. This result is in agreement with **Kanade, (2019)** who found that most of the study sample had no training courses about communication skills; only less than one fifth of them attended training courses about communication skills.

According to Socio-demographic characteristics of families of nursing students, the finding of the present study reveals that, more than half of the studied nursing students were in

nuclear families, and the majority of them lived with both parent.

According to parental education, nearly half of nursing student's fathers had university education while one third of student's mothers had university education. Concerning the income of the studied group, the present study show that slightly less than three quarters of them had just sufficient income.

Regarding students' self-esteem levels pre- assertiveness training program implementation, data analysis revealed that, the majority of students under study were low in score concerning their level of self-esteem. These findings also supported with the study carried out by **Mahmoud, Al Kalalkeh, & El-Rahman (2013)**, who investigated the effect of assertiveness training on assertiveness and self-esteem, and stated that the student's score were not high in concern to self-esteem level.

Regarding total mean scores, changes of self-esteem scale among studied nursing students pre and post implementation of intervention, the current study indicated that there was a highly statistically significant differences between total mean scores of self-esteem among the studied sample pre and post implementation of intervention.

The result of current study is in agreement with **Ayhan & Seki Öz, (2021)**, who found that self-esteem of the experimental group of the study were significantly improved in nursing students after assertiveness training implementation. Corresponding, this

finding is in congruent with a previous study conducted by **Ahmed et al., (2022)**, who investigate the effect of an assertiveness training program on self-esteem, a convenience sample of (50) nurses was included for the conduction of this study. The result revealed that there was a highly statistically significant differences between total mean scores of self- esteem, assertiveness skills among the studied sample post program.

Regarding students' assertiveness level pre-implementation of assertiveness training program, data analysis revealed that only less than one quarter of studied nursing students were assertive before implementation of training program.

This result was similar to those of **Morsi, &Prince, (2021)**, who stated that only one third of nursing students reported assertive behaviors pre-program implementation. This may be due to that the students in the current study were in the late adolescence and assertive skills are still developing.

Likewise, a study by **Chakraborty, Ray, & Mani, (2020)**, who assessed assertiveness of nursing students, and stated that about, half of nursing college students were 'Somewhat Assertive' and only 14% of nursing college students were assertive. Similarly, **Azb Ahmed,Faisal Fakhry,& Fathy Saad, (2019)**, who demonstrated that nursing students had low levels of assertiveness before implementation of the assertiveness program.

The result of the present study showed that there was an improvement in assertiveness skills after implementation of assertiveness training program. As they exhibited, a statistically significant increase in score of assertiveness in compare to pre implementation of training program.

Regarding total mean score changes related to assertive skills among studied nursing students before and after assertiveness training program implementation, the present study revealed that, there was a highly statistically significant different between total mean score changes of assertiveness skills among studied nursing students before and after assertiveness training program implementation.

This may be due to the implementation of assertiveness program, which include different methods that used with nursing students through expression of opinion and saying no assertively, confronting criticism, know how to make request assertively.

Assertiveness training assist the nursing students to express their thoughts and feelings, as well as assertiveness training provided opportunities for students to interact with each other, providing chance for nursing student to express healthy relationships with others, and provided positive feedback.

Regarding students' communication skills levels pre- assertiveness training program implementation, data analysis

revealed that, the majority of students under study were low in score concerning their level of communication skills before implementation of training program.

Regarding total mean scores changes of communication skills scores among studied nursing students group pre and post program implementation, the study revealed that there was a highly statistically significant differences between total mean scores of communication skills among study group pre and post program implementation.

This result may be due to the fact, that attended the assertiveness training program was useful for nurse students to understand and differentiate the concept of assertiveness behavior from passive and aggressive behaviors and practice the different skills of assertiveness which reflected in their communications with others.

In addition using different methods of communication during assertiveness training program such as role playing exercise, group discussion, exchange of experiences among nurses students, discussion, may promote nurse's post-training communication skills.

This is come in accordance with the findings of **Gultekin, Ozdemir, & Budak, (2018)**, who conducted study to determine the effect of assertiveness training on communication skills among nursing students. The study revealed that the assertiveness training increase the communication skills among nursing students; a statistically

significant different was found between control and experimental group in communication skills means after training program implementation.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the present study findings, it can be concluded that:

Assertiveness training program have a positive effect on self-esteem and communication skills of nursing students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Assertiveness training program have a positive effect on communication skills and self-esteem of nursing students. Accordingly, the following are the main recommendations deduced by this research

Education:

- Incorporating assertiveness training as an eligible training course of the undergraduate nursing program.
- Regular in-service training programs to be developed for nursing students' to consider assertiveness skills in their performance.
- Assertiveness training is needed for faculties' members, nurses' educators and qualified nurses to support nursing students and play as role model.

Community :

- Continuous training program include students' parents and educators. This may render them to be more readiness to accept and support the students' assertion.

Research :

- Further study with multistage follow up after the program implementations

to ensure that the acquired assertiveness skills change the students' attitude positively and enhance their self-esteem and communication skills.

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