Factors Influencing Professionalism: A Cross Sectional Study among Iranian Registered Nurses

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Abstract:
Background and Aim: *Professionalism is a fundamental and elementary concept in nursing. The demand for nursing professionalization has become greater than ever in recent years. The present study aimed to examine Iranian registered nurses level of professionalism and associated factors.*
Methods: *In this exploratory cross-sectional study, all qualified registered nurses working in two teaching hospitals (Imam Sajad and Rajaei hospitals) in North of Iran were invited to participate. The Hall's Professionalism Inventory (HPI) scale was used to assess the nurse's level of professionalism. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software (v17.0; PASW Statistics).*
Results: *Of the 133 nurses, 83.5% (n=111) were female and 16.5% (n=32) were male. The mean age of participants was 33.5±8.4 years and mean years of experience was 8.4±7.7 years. The mean score of nurse's professionalism in all domains were 68.5±6.8. With regards to HPI scale domains, higher and lower mean score were related to autonomy and sense of calling with 15.6±2.2 and 11.3±2.3 respectively. Among related factors, only nurses' age and their years of experience have significant coloration with their level of professionalism (p<0.05).*
Conclusion: *Iranian registered nurses in present study showed moderate level of professionalism. Factor such as age and year of nursing experience affect their level of professionalism. Further study recommended in this regards.*
Keywords: *Professionalism, nurses, Hall's Professionalism Inventory (HPI) scale, developing country.*

I. Introduction

According to the American Nurse Association (ANA) definition, "nursing is the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, communities, and populations" [1]. Professionalism in nursing is a fundamental and elementary concept that is beneficial to patient care, organizations and individuals [2,3]. For this reasons, demand for nursing professionalization has become greater than ever in recent years [2, 4, 5, 6]. ANA determined six essential features of professional nursing that includes: "provision of a caring relationship that facilitates health and healing, attention to the range of human experiences and responses to health and illness within the physical and social environments, integration of objective data with knowledge gained from an appreciation of the patient or group's subjective experience, application of scientific knowledge to the processes of diagnosis and treatment through the use of judgment and critical thinking, advancement of professional nursing knowledge through scholarly inquiry, and influence on social and public policy to promote social justice" [1]. With regards to priority of nursing professionalism, nursing researcher tried to investigate aspect of it in previous decade. However study in this regards in our country Iran is limited to few studies. Several factor affecting the development of the nursing profession. Recognizing and determining such factors can be the first step to move towards the professionalization of nursing. The present study aimed to examine Iranian registered nurses level of professionalism and associated factors.

II. Methods

This study employed a descriptive design and was conducted in two hospitals, Rajaei and Imam Sajad, in North of Iran. Using convenience sampling, all qualified registered nurses (n=133) were invited to participate in the study. Consent was implicit by respondent's decision to return the completed questionnaire. Participants were assured that all data would remain anonymous, kept confidential and be stored safely. Ethical approval was obtained from heads of the two hospitals prior to the collection of any data. In Iran, there are two different systems for nursing education. The first is through the state sector medical science universities, which are affiliated to and supervised by the government. The second system is offered through the non-government

nationwide Azad University. Unlike some western countries, Iran does not differentiate by ranking within licensed nursing personnel, and the registered nurse (RN) is the only professionally recognized ranking. On completion of nursing education programmes, graduates are automatically granted the status of RN, this being the minimum legal and educational requirement for professional nursing practice. RNs must complete a 4-year bachelor's degree at a nursing college [7, 8, 9].

Data were collected from March to Jul 2015. Questionnaire packages containing a covering letter describing the aims of the study, a demographic variables questionnaire, and the Hall's Professionalism Inventory (HPI) scale. Nurses answered the questionnaire and HPI scale individually during hours of work and returned the test to their head nurse. At the end of the shift work, the researcher collected the questionnaires. HPI scale was a 25-item scale used to measure a total score for professionalism and the five attributes of professionalism in five subscales (5 items for each subscale). Scores for the entire scale may range from 25 to 125, with higher scores indicative of professionalism [10]. The scale was translated from English to Farsi, with the use of a standard forward-backward procedure (then translated back into and compared to the original scale). To reassess the reliability of the translated questionnaire, the alpha coefficients of internal consistency as well as three weeks test-retest coefficients of stability were computed. The alpha coefficient for the questionnaire was 0.82. The three weeks test-retest coefficient of stability for questionnaire was 0.81.

Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient, independent sample T-test, one way ANOVA and logistic regression were used for data analysis. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software (v17.0; PASW Statistics) and a variable was considered to be statistically significant if $P < 0.05$.

III.   Results

Of the 133 nurses, 83.5% (n=111) were female and 16.5% (n=32) were male. The mean age of participants was 33.5±8.4 years and mean years of experience was 8.4±7.7 years. Some 72% of nurses were married and the rest were single. The mean score of nurses in all domains were 68.5±6.8. The mean score of membership in professional organizations, public service, self-regulation, sense of calling and autonomy were 14.3±3.1, 12.8±2.4, 14.2±2.9, 11.3±2.3 and 15.6±2.2 respectively. According to finding of present study, among nurses demographics characteristics, a positive and significant correlation exists between nurse's age and years of experience with mean score of nurses Professionalism ($p < 0.05$). But between, sex, marital status and employment situation were not any significant relationship ($p > 0.05$). Although mean score of professionalism obtained by female nurses were higher in compared to mean score of professionalism obtained by men nurses.

IV.   Discussion

In recent years, healthcare organizations in Iran have supported the professionalization of nursing in order to improve the quality of care delivered to patients in all health care setting [4]. According to finding of present study Iranian nurse's level of professionalism were moderate. Among surveyed factors only age and nurses years of experiences were associated with professionalism among Iranian nurses.

Previous studies in this regards showed different findings. In one study in this regards, Tanaka et al., examined nursing professionalism among Japanese nurses. They that surveyed 1501 nurses reported that Japanese nurses had low levels of professionalism. They also reported that factors such as nurses level of education, years of experience as a nurse, and current position as a nursing administrator or faculty affect nurses level of professionalism [11]. In another study in this regards in 2015, Solomon et al., examined the professionalism and its predictors among nurses in Ethiopia. From the 303 nurses who surveyed by Solomon et al., 97 (33.4%) of the respondents scored low level of professionalism; 105 (36.2%) of them scored moderate level of professionalism; and only 88 (30.3%) of the nurses scored high level of professionalism. Solomon et al., concluded that nurses in their country had low levels of professionalism [12]. Different between findings of present study and findings of two above mentioned studies could be related to different in instruments used in present studies and two mentioned studies. Solomon et al., and Tanaka et al., used a self-designed questioner and we used HPI scale. In another study in this regards in 2010, with using similar questioner, Kim et al., examined factors influencing professionalism in nursing among Korean American registered nurses. The mean score of professionalism reported by Kim et al., were 89.3 that is higher than mean score of Iranian nurses. Factors such as membership in professional organizations, current nursing employment positions, current employment status, work settings, total years of nursing experience, total years of nursing experience in the United States, location of final degree attainment, and duration of nursing education in the United States— were associated with professionalism among Korean American nurses who participate in Kim et al., study [13]. Higher score of Korean nurses in compared to Iranian nurses could be related to several factors. For example, all of the respondents in Kim et al., were women, except for one man and about 17% of nurses in our study were men (female nurses obtained more score in compared to men nurses in our study and other studies in this regards). The average total years in nursing experience in Kim et al., study were 23.5 years, with most nurses having greater than 20 years of nursing experience and in our study were average total years in nursing

experience was 8.4±7.7 (nurses with higher experience in nursing obtained more score in compared to nurses with lower level of experience in our study and other studies in this regards). Age also is a well-known factor in nursing professionalism that nurses in Kim et al., study were older than nurses in present study (54.9 vs 33.5±8.4 years).

V. Conclusion

Despite the changes in nursing education in recent years in our country, nursing in Iran is still striving to be accepted and recognized as a profession by the public [4]. However study about nursing professionalism in Iran is limited to few studies. In present study we examined the Iranian nurse's level of professionalism and related factors. In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that the professionalism levels of Iranian nurses are at a moderate level and factors associated with this were; age, sex and years of nursing experience. Further study in this regards in Iranian context and other developing countries recommended.

Limitation

The respondents were predominantly female, which limits the generalisability of the results. As this study was based on a convenient sample and the participation was voluntary, there might have been a selection bias which might affect the possibility to generalise the results to all nurses.

Acknowledgment

Conflict of interest: No

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