

Attitudes towards Older Patients among Nurses Working In Hospital

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Abstract: Older patients are an integral part of population of any country who deserve equal respect and attention. The population of older people is rapidly increasing throughout the world which leads increase in health needs and problems. Therefore, it is very important that nurses need to be well equipped with the knowledge, skills as well as right attitude towards the older persons to deliver high quality care. The aim of this study was to identify the attitudes towards older patients among nurses working in health care setting.

A descriptive cross sectional study design was conducted among 143 nurses by using consecutive non-probability sampling technique. Data was collected through self administered questionnaire method using Standard tool Kogan's Attitude towards Old People Scale.

Data was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics like frequency, percentage, mean, median, standard deviation & chi-square. The findings revealed that 50.3% nurses had positive attitudes whereas 49.7% of the nurses had negative attitudes regarding elderly patients.

Keywords: Attitudes, Older patients, Nurses

Date of Submission: 09-09-2019

Date of Acceptance: 25-09-2019

I. Introduction

Ageing is a natural and inevitable process in which physiological and psychological changes happen in the body which is experienced by all human beings¹. Most developed countries have accepted the chronological age of 65 years as a definition of 'elderly' or older person. In Nepal, individuals who have over 60 years of age are considered as older adult².

Life expectancy becomes longer and older population is in increasing trend worldwide due to the improvement in health care technologies and socio economic conditions. By 2050, the population aged 60 years and above is expected to total 2 billion, up from 900 million in 2015 in the world. Today, 125 million people are aged 80 years or older. By 2050, it is expected that 80% of all older people will live in low- and middle-income countries. One third of countries in Asia Pacific Region are now occupied with older population from 8%, including Myanmar, to 26.4% of total population in Japan³. According to the 2011 census of Nepal, there were 2.1 million older, which constituted 8.1% of the country's total population, increasing faster than population growth rate⁴.

With increasing age, there are so many health problems, often chronic, which older person have to cope with and often require hospitalization, where they are cared by nurses and other health care providers to meet older adult healthcare needs. The care of older people as a specialty in nursing is growing and caring for the older people demands specific knowledge and abilities⁵.

Different researches showed that there is a lack of educational training for nurses who provide care for older people. Moreover, the healthcare provided for the older people has been severely threatened by the negative stereotypic attitudes and misconceptions by nurses with 63% of older people expressing an unmet health need^{5,6}. This can lead to situation where older people developing a negative view of nurses and nursing services in health care settings. Attitudes toward aging may be serious for alteration and survival for older people. Attitudes may subsidize to perceived maladaptive performances among the aged, some of which may lead to premature death. Negative views of aging may result in an older people's reluctance or failure to seek required services, health care, or other types of assistance. Negative attitudes of elderly people may affect others in their surroundings, who in turn may feel free to respond negatively to or ignore older people⁷. The attitudes towards older people is different than the other patients because older people often suffer from chronic and multiple illnesses, older individuals require more professional or institutional care, and with age they become dependent on others to carry out their daily life activities⁸.

As the life expectancy is increasing and it leads to high demands for health care service. Success of health care service can be delivered by different health profession group should have adequate knowledge, skill and attitudes about health of older adult⁹. So, there is a growing need for qualified nurses to provide care for

older people. Nurses have a crucial role as care providers to the older people and are in a unique position to influence the quality of care. Various functions of nurses such as supportive, restorative, educative, life-enhancing and managerial that can contribute to the optimum health and overall wellbeing of the older people¹⁰. The nurses will spend most of their career caring for older adults in a variety of settings and will face a personal experience with aging in a family member or with their own development. Older person may be discriminated against because of the way they look, speak, or function in a society that values productivity, economic wealth, speed, youth, and beauty¹¹.

Several studies have been done regarding the nurses' knowledge and attitudes towards care of older people. The majority of these studies have identified that nurses have a negative attitude towards the care of the older people even though they displayed a fairly good knowledge of geriatric care^{12,13,14}. The nurses' knowledge and attitudes of aging can influence their prediction about the ways of care to older people. With the increasing ageing population, and associated chronic illness as well decline in physical functional abilities and increase in dependency, the need for nurses with right attitude, adequate knowledge and skill will also be on the increase^{7,15}. But there is few data regarding the topic under study in Nepal. So, nurses have a crucial role in combating ageism and continue to be in a key position to minimize ageist attitudes in the future. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the attitudes towards older patients among nurses working in Chitwan Medical College, Bharatpur.

II. Materials And Methods

The Descriptive cross sectional study was conducted at Chitwan Medical College Teaching Hospital, Bharathpur, Chitwan. Total 143 nurses (Licensing nurses (PCL, BN, B Sc) were selected by consecutive non-probability sampling method who were working in medical ward, surgical ward, orthopedic ward, Intensive Care Unit, Coronary Care Unit, ENT ward, Emergency and Gynae ward.

The data collection instrument was divided into 2 sections: Section 1 contains demographic information and section 2 contains attitudes towards older patients among nurses. Structured questions made by researcher through literature review to collect the socio demographic information. Valid and reliable Kogan's Attitude towards Old People Scale, developed by Kogan¹⁶ in 1961, was used to measure attitudes towards older patients after granted permission from author. The scale comprises of 34 items with a six point likert scale, ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 6= strongly agree; it contains 17 positive and 17 negative statements. Odd numbered items contain a negative statement, while even numbered items contain a positive statement. In accordance with the structure of the scale, negative statements are marked as 6 5 4 3 2 1, from right to left, while positive statements are marked as 1 2 3 4 5 6, from left to right. The scores for every item are added together to give a total score; 34 is the lowest score, and 204 is the highest score obtained from the scale. A high score obtained from the scale indicates a positive attitude towards older people.

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was taken from Chitwan Medical College-Institutional Review Committee (CMC-IRC). All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and written informed consent was obtained from each respondents and data was collected using a structured self administered questionnaire. The respondents' dignity was maintained by giving right to reject or discontinue from the research study at any time. Data for this study was collected from April 28th to May 30th, 2019.

All collected data was reviewed and checked daily for its completeness, consistency and accuracy. The collected data was coded and entered in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for windows version 23.0. Data were analyzed by using the descriptive statistics for socio demographic variables, (i.e., mean, median, standard deviation, frequency) and inferential statistics such as chi-square test was used to find the association between variables.

III. Results

Table no1: Respondent's Socio-demographic Characteristics

n= 143

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age in years		
<22	88	61.5
≥22	55	38.5
Professional Qualification		
PCL	111	77.6
BN/B Sc	32	22.4
Religion		
Hindu	134	93.7
Non Hindu	9	6.3
Marital status		
Married	32	22.4
Unmarried	111	77.6

Working area		
Emergency	25	17.5
Critical ward	42	29.4
General ward	76	53.1
Total working experience		
<11 month	75	52.4
≥ 11 month	68	47.6
Type of Family		
Nuclear family	90	62.9
Joint family	53	37.1
Elderly adult in family		
Yes	79	55.2
No	64	44.8
Experience of caring elderly		
Yes	104	72.7
No	39	27.3
Duration of experience in elderly care		
<12 month	43	30.1
≥ 12 month	100	69.9
Training regarding elderly care		
Yes	16	11.2
No	127	88.8

The data was analyzed for the socio-demographic data profiles of 143 participants of the study, explored the distribution of participants according to their attitude toward elderly people. Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the studied participants, the findings revealed that the mean age and SD was 22.36 ± 2.825 years and minimum age was 19 years whereas maximum age was 35 years. Majority of the respondents (77.6%) were completed proficiency certificate level of nursing, most of the respondents (93.7%) were belonged to Hindu religion, and 77.6% were unmarried. Concerning working area, 53.1% respondents were working in general ward and 17.5% were working in Emergency ward and 47.6 % of the respondents had more than 11 month total working experience in nursing field. More than one fourth (37.1%) of the respondents were lived in joint family. As regard the elderly adult in family, 55.2% of the respondents had elderly in their family. Majority of the respondents (72.7%) had experience in taking care for elderly and 69.9% of the respondents had more than 12 month of experience in elderly care. Regarding the respondents place of caring elderly, 49% of them were involved in elderly care in hospital setting. Majority of the respondents (88.8%) didn't get any training regarding elderly care; only 11.2% received training in their job period. As regard the respondents' sources of information regarding elderly patient, 54.5% of them studied in their geriatric course and 67.1 % get information from their seniors, friends and relatives.

Table no 2: Respondents Level of Attitudes regarding Older Patients

n= 143

Level of Attitude	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Negative (mean ≥ 119)	71	49.7
Positive (mean < 119)	72	50.3
Total	143	100.0

Median Score=119, IQR=Q1-Q3=126-113, Minimum Score= 100, Maximum Score=137

The result showed that among 143 respondents, 49.7% of the respondents had negative attitudes whereas 50.3% had positive attitudes regarding older patients as shown (table 2).

Table no 3: Association between Respondent's Level of Attitudes regarding Older Patients and Selected Variables

n =143

Variables	Level of Attitude		X ²	p value
	Negative No (%)	Positive No (%)		
Age in years			0.762	0.383
<22	43 (45.5)	45 (42.5)		
≥22	31(28.5)	24 (26.5)		
Professional qualification			1.560	0.212
PCL	52 (46.8)	59 (53.2)		
Bachelor	19 (59.4)	13 (40.6)		
Religion			1.023	0.505
Hindu	68 (50.7)	66 (49.3)		

Non Hindu	3 (33.3)	6 (66.7)		
Marital status				
Married	17 (53.1)	15 (46.9)	0.199	0.655
Unmarried	54 (48.6)	57 (51.4)		
Working area				
General ward	55 (54.5)	46 (45.5)	3.176	0.075
Critical ward	16 (38.1)	26 (61.9)		
Total working experience				
<11 month	39 (52.0)	36 (48.0)	0.348	0.555
≥ 11 month	32 (47.1)	36 (52.9)		
Type of family				
Nuclear family	49 (54.4)	41 (45.6)	2.233	0.135
Joint family	22 (41.5)	31 (58.5)		
Elderly adult in family				
Yes	38 (48.1)	41 (51.9)	0.169	0.681
No	33 (51.6)	31 (48.4)		
Experience of caring elderly				
Yes	51 (49.0)	53 (51.0)	0.057	0.811
No	20 (51.3)	19 (48.7)		
Training regarding elderly care				
Yes	6 (37.5)	10 (62.5)	1.064	0.302
No	65 (51.2)	62 (48.8)		

Level of significance at < 0.05

The result showed that there is no significant association between nurse's level of attitudes regarding older patients and selected demographic variables as shown (table 3).

IV. Discussion

In regards to the socio-demographic characteristics, study findings revealed that the nurses mean age was 22.36 years; minimum age was 19 years whereas maximum age was 35 years. Majority of the nurses (77.6%) were unmarried, 47.6 % had more than 11 month total working experience in nursing field and 37.1% lived in joint family. Majority of the nurses (72.7%) had experience in taking care for elderly. This finding is inconsistent with a study where nurses mean age was 32.65 years old, 25.2 % nurses were unmarried¹⁸. There were 40.4% nurses who had experience in taking care for elderly. As regard the sources of information regarding elderly patient, 54.5% of them studied in their geriatric course. The finding of the study is inconsistent with the study done by Arani et al. showed that 26.5% nurses get information from their course regarding elderly¹⁸.

The present study revealed that 50.3% nurses had positive attitudes whereas 49.7% had negative attitudes regarding elderly patients. The finding is inconsistent with study done in city of Ilam revealed that majority of nurses (54.3%) had negative attitudes toward the elderly¹⁷. The findings of other studies revealed that the attitudes of acute care nurses in Western Europe¹⁸ and Arab countries¹⁹ were found to be more negative. However, previous study done in Iran which showed that a majority nurses had positive attitudes towards the elderly²⁰, similarly Saudi Arabian nurses had positive attitudes among nurses towards elderly people²¹. Under the study done by Oyetunde et al, it was found that although nurses had fairly good knowledge of geriatric care they had negative attitudes towards the care of the older persons. It has been suggested that effective care of the elderly requires special training, provision of geriatric ward, adequate staffing to reduce stress and improve quality of care¹⁵.

This study showed that there is no significant difference between nurse's level of attitudes regarding older patient and their religion, level of education, marital status, age, type of family, working experience, working area. This is inconsistent with findings study done by Sanagoo et al.²² showed a significant difference between the level of education and attitudes toward the elderly. Similarly, other study finding revealed that there is a significant difference between nurses attitudes and their age, studied geriatric course, & take care for elderly at home with $p=0.000, 0.017, 0.020$ respectively²¹.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the findings of this study, we found that nurses have marginally positive attitudes toward the older patients. Therefore, there is need to provide training for nurses regarding gerontological nursing to promote nurses' attitudes toward the older adult which improve quality nursing practice in the care of the elderly.

Acknowledgments

Researchers are very grateful to Chitwan Medical College-Institutional Research Committee for providing opportunity to conduct the research. We owe our sincere gratitude to dear friend Ms. Sara Thapa for her immense support throughout the study and Mr. Jaya Prasad Singh for his statistical support to complete our study.

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Ms Hem Kumari Subba. " Attitudes towards Older Patients among Nurses Working In Hospital" .IOSR Journal of Nursing and Health Science (IOSR-JNHS), vol. 8, no.05 , 2019, pp. 31-35.