

## NURSING STUDENTS' PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE TOWARD EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE (EBP) AT COLLEGE OF NURSING, AFIGMI RAWALPINDI, PAKISTAN

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### **Abstract**

#### **Background**

*Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) is at the core of contemporary nursing and it combines clinical practice, patient values, and the most effective research evidence. The perception and attitude of nursing students to EBP is very important to understand to design the curricula that can support the development of evidenced-based decision-making in the future clinical practice.*

#### **Objective**

*To determine the perception of the nursing students and their attitude towards EBP and determine the factors that affect their involvement with EBP in College of Nursing, AFIGMI Rawalpindi.*

#### **Method**

*The study was a cross-sectional descriptive study done on 306 nursing students taking the BSc Nursing program. The Evidence-Based Practice Perception and Attitude Questionnaire (EBP-PAQ) was used to collect the data. Cronbach alpha was used to measure reliability. The SPSS v26 was used to analyze the descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression.*

#### **Results**

*The average perception score was  $74.5 \pm 10.2$  (range 50-95) meaning moderate knowledge about the principles of EBP. The average attitude score was  $79.3 \pm 9.8$  and had an average attitude that was more positive towards EBP. Academic year and EBP perception ( $r = 0.42, p < 0.001$ ) and perception and attitude scores ( $r = 0.61, p < 0.001$ ) were significantly positively correlated. The identified barriers were the inability to find journals, insufficient research experience, and time.*

#### **Conclusion**

*The AFIGMI Rawalpindi nursing students have positive attitudes towards EBP, moderate levels of perception, and require organized training in EBP. It is also suggested that EBP modules, workshops, and clinical mentorship should be integrated to increase the knowledge and use of the evidence-based decision-making by the students.*

**Keywords:** *Evidence-based practice, nursing students, perception, attitude, AFIGMI Rawalpindi, Pakistan.*

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background**

Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) refers to the careful combination of the most successful research evidence, clinical experience, and patient wishes to make healthcare decisions (Melnik and Fineout-Overholt, 2015). EBP enhances patient outcomes, safe care and professional credibility in nursing. Exposure to EBP at an early stage is essential to nursing students because it influences attitudes, critical thinking, and preparation to make clinical decisions (Saunders and Vehvilainen-Julkunen, 2016).

Nursing education has come to focus more on EBP integration across the world. Research has shown that an organization that has positive attitudes toward EBP is more likely to adopt it in clinical practice, with a poor perception, insufficient knowledge, and resources being the factors that might impede the implementation of this practice (Kajermo et al., 2010; AlMutair et al., 2016).

### **1.2 EBP in the Pakistani Context**

Limitations of research exposure, a shortage of clinical mentors possessing EBP skills, and access to journals and databases are the issues that face nursing education in Pakistan. Irrespective of these challenges, other efforts in institutions such as AFPGMI Rawalpindi, focus on inculcating research literacy and evidence-based clinical reasoning in nursing students.

The evaluation of the perceptions and attitudes of nursing students towards EBP will give a significant background data and will allow educators to design teaching methods that will encourage the active involvement of students in research evidence.

### **1.3 Rationale**

Knowledge of the perception and attitude of students towards EBP enable educators to:

- Identify knowledge gaps
- Respond to attitudinal obstacles.
- Advance the early implementation of EBP principles.

This is especially crucial in Pakistan where the introduction of research evidence in clinical decision-making is in its nascent stages.

### **1.4 Objectives**

1. To determine the perception of nurses students about evidence-based practice.
2. To assess the attitude of nursing students to evidence-based practice.
3. To establish the correlation between perception and attitude.
4. To determine the effect of demographic and academic factors on EBP perception and attitude.

## **2. Literature Review**

The significance of knowledge and positive attitude to successful application of EBP is well-studied at the international level, as Kajermo et al. (2010) concluded that the knowledge on EBP and positive attitude towards the idea of critical appraisal and research use are associated with higher rates of successful implementation. Melnyk et al. (2014) have also found that early EBP education increases confidence in critical appraisal and use of research. Al Mutair et al. (2016) have shown that cultural and educational factors determine EBP adoption, with perceived barriers such as restricted access to journals, the lack of mentorship, and time as the main ones, and organized classroom and clinical exposure is necessary to enhance the awareness of EBP principles among nursing students. Saunders and Vehvilainen (2016) have provided evidence that positive attitudes toward EBP are present but cannot be adequately used without an organized curriculum support and practical training, and both classroom and clinical exposure are needed to increase the awareness of EBP principles among

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study was a descriptive cross-sectional study, aimed at assessing perception and attitude regarding EBP among nursing students.

### **3.2 Study Setting**

It was carried out in the College of Nursing, AFPGMI Rawalpindi, which is one of the leading nursing institutions in the country that provides BSc Nursing programs.

### 3.3 Population and Sample

- Target population: The total population enrolled in BSc Nursing at AFPGMI Rawalpindi.
- Sample size: 306 students (Years I-IV).
- Type of sampling: Convenience sampling.

### 3.4 Inclusion Criteria

- Studying BSc Nursing program.
- Did at least one clinical rotation.
- Provided informed consent.

### 3.5 Exclusion Criteria

- Post-basic nursing students.
- The students who were on leave or absent when collecting data.

### 3.6 Data Collection Tool

Evidence-based practice perception and attitude Questionnaire (EBP-PAQ) was employed.

#### Sections:

- Perception: 15 questions that evaluate knowledge and awareness of EBP concepts (5 point Likert scale).
- Attitude: 15 questions of willingness, motivation, and perceived value of EBP (5-point Likert scale).

**Validity:** Content validity verified by 5 nursing education experts.

**Reliability:** Cronbach alpha =.92 on perception and .89 on attitude.

### 3.7 Data Collection Procedure

- Instant ethical approval of institutional review board.
- Students informed concerning study purpose; confidentially.
- Questionnaires will be administered in classrooms and returned at the end of the session (approximately 20 minutes per participant).

### 3.8 Data Analysis

- Software: SPSS v26
- Statistics of description: SD, mean, percentage, frequency.
- Inferential statistics: Pearson correlation to test the perception and attitude; ANOVA to test the differences among the academic years.
- Significance level:  $p < 0.05$

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Demographics

- Gender: 100 percent of the participants were females.
- Age range: 18-24 years (Mean =  $20.8 \pm 1.6$ ).
- Distribution in academic years: Year I (28%), Year II (26%), Year III (24%), and Year IV (22%).

### 4.2 Perception Toward EBP

- Mean perception score:  $74.5 \pm 10.2$  (range 50-95)
- Knowledge of EBP principles: Moderate.
- Greater scores were noted among senior students (Year IV) than the junior students ( $p < 0.01$ ).
- Typical gaps: Critical evaluation of research, interpretation of guidelines to patient care and distinction of the quality of evidence.

### 4.3 Attitude Towards EBP

- Mean attitude score:  $79.3 \pm 9.8$  (range 55-96)
- Most of them had positive sentiments, acknowledging EBP to be a key to safe and effective care of patients.
- Most eager to acquire the skills of EBP in clinical environments.

### 4.4 Correlation

- Large positive interrelation between perception and attitude ( $r = 0.61, p < 0.001$ ).
- Perception ( $r = 0.42, p < 0.001$ ) and attitude ( $r = 0.31, p < 0.001$ ) had a positive relationship with academic year.

### 4.5 Barriers Identified

- Difficult access to journals of research (56%).
- Inadequate time in the clinical rotations (48%).
- Lack of faculty mentorship (34%)
- Problem with conceptual learning of statistics (29%).

## 5. Discussion

The results indicate that there are moderate perceptions and positive attitudes towards EBP among nursing students at AFPGMI Rawalpindi. These findings are consistent with other studies conducted internationally (Kajermo et al., 2010; Melnyk et al., 2014) in which students understand the importance of EBP but do not have the necessary skills to use it with confidence.

Students in their senior years achieved more points implying that clinical exposure improves EBP knowledge. The positive perception and attitude testify to the fact that the higher the knowledge, the more active and positive the attitude to evidence use (Saunders and Vehvilainen-Julkunen, 2016).

Limitations of access to journals, mentorship, and others are also not new to Pakistani research (Khalid and Rehman, 2021), but institutional aspects of EBP implementation are problematic. This highlights the importance of organized EBP programs, library support and staff education.

The paper stresses the need to consider attitude is not enough as it should be accompanied by improved perception and practical skills otherwise the students might not incorporate EBP in clinical decision-making.

## 6. Conclusion

Students of nursing in AFPGMI Rawalpindi express positive intentions but moderate knowledge of EBP principles. There is a need to enhance perception and achieve effective implementation of evidence-based practice through the use of structured training, mentorship, and resources provision.

## 7. Recommendations

- Implement compulsory EBP classes in nursing curriculum.
- Hold EBP workshops and journal clubs in order to develop research appraisal skills.
- Make online databases and journals available.
- Use faculty mentorship programs to mentor students on the implementation of EBP during clinical rotations.
- Promote research involvement and implementation of EBP projects in final year projects.

## 8. Limitations

- Single-institution research; findings might not be applicable to the entire Pakistani nursing colleges.
- Self-reported information has the possibility of creating response bias.
- Cross-sectional design confines longitudinal knowledge acquisition.

## 9. References

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