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Evaluating the Impact of Nurses' Multilingual Competence on Patient Satisfaction in Selected Clinics in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Effective communication is essential in delivering quality nursing care, particularly in multicultural healthcare environments where language differences may affect patients' understanding and satisfaction. This study examined the relationship between nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction among patients attending selected outpatient clinics in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was employed involving 133 adult patients selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-developed bilingual questionnaire based on an extensive review of the literature on multilingual competence, nurse–patient communication, cultural competence, and patient satisfaction. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic, validated by experts, and pilot-tested, demonstrating excellent internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's α = 0.905). Descriptive statistics, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, independent-samples t-test, and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that respondents were predominantly 26–35 years old, female, non-Saudi nationals, and preferred English for healthcare communication. Nurses' multilingual competence (M = 4.43) and patient satisfaction (M = 4.45) were both rated very high. A very strong positive and statistically significant relationship was found between nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction (r = 0.965, p < .001). No significant differences were observed by age, gender, or preferred language, whereas nationality significantly influenced perceptions of nurses' multilingual competence but not patient satisfaction. The findings indicate that enhancing nurses' multilingual communication skills through language development and culturally responsive practice can improve patient-centered care and healthcare experiences in linguistically diverse outpatient settings.

Keywords: *Multilingual competence, patient satisfaction, nurse–patient communication, outpatient clinics, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*

INTRODUCTION

Effective nurse–patient communication is fundamental to safe, high-quality, and patient-centered healthcare. In multicultural healthcare settings such as Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, nurses frequently care for patients from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, making multilingual competence an important professional skill. Language barriers may hinder patients' understanding of medical information, reduce participation in healthcare decisions, and negatively influence satisfaction with nursing care. Although previous studies have examined communication barriers in healthcare, limited quantitative research has specifically investigated the relationship between nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction in outpatient clinics in Riyadh.

This study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between patients' perceptions of nurses' multilingual competence and their satisfaction with nursing care. The findings are expected to provide evidence to guide healthcare administrators, nurse managers, and educators in developing communication strategies, promoting culturally responsive nursing practice, and enhancing patient-centered care in multicultural healthcare environments.

Statement of the Problem

This study determined the relationship between nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction among patients attending selected outpatient clinics in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Specifically, it sought to:

1. describe the respondents' demographic profile in terms of age, gender, nationality, and preferred language;
2. determine the level of nurses' multilingual competence as perceived by patients;
3. determine the level of patient satisfaction with nursing care;
4. examine the relationship between nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction; and
5. determine whether there are significant differences in nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction when respondents are grouped according to their demographic characteristics.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study examined the relationship between nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction among 133 adult patients in selected outpatient clinics in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It assessed patients' perceptions of nurses' communication competence and satisfaction with nursing care. Findings are based solely on patients' self-reported perceptions obtained during outpatient clinic visits and may not be generalized to other healthcare settings.

Review of Related Literature

Effective communication is fundamental to quality nursing care, particularly in multicultural healthcare settings where linguistic diversity influences patient understanding and healthcare experiences. Multilingual competence enables nurses to communicate effectively across language and cultural differences, promoting therapeutic relationships, patient-centered care, and improved health literacy (Krystallidou et al., 2021). Studies have shown that language-concordant communication, culturally responsive care, and appropriate use of interpreters enhance communication effectiveness and patient participation (Horváth & Molnár, 2021). In Saudi Arabia's multicultural healthcare system, multilingual competence is essential for effective nurse–patient communication. However, limited quantitative research has examined its relationship with patient satisfaction in outpatient clinics in Riyadh, providing the rationale for the present study.

Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in Peplau's Interpersonal Relations Theory (Peplau, 2022), Leininger's Transcultural Nursing Theory (Leininger, 2022), Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 2023), and King's Theory of Goal Attainment (King, 2022). Collectively, these theories emphasize that effective, culturally responsive communication, mutual understanding, and collaborative nurse–patient interactions enhance patient understanding, strengthen therapeutic relationships, support the achievement of shared healthcare goals, and improve patient satisfaction.

Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by the Input–Process–Output (IPO) Model. The input consisted of respondents' demographic characteristics, nurses' multilingual competence, and patient satisfaction. The process involved questionnaire validation, pilot testing, data collection, and statistical analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics. The output was the development of evidence-based recommendations to strengthen multilingual communication, promote

culturally responsive nursing practice, and improve patient satisfaction in multicultural outpatient healthcare settings.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to determine the relationship between nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction in selected outpatient clinics in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The descriptive component was used to describe the respondents' demographic characteristics and determine the levels of nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction, while the correlational component examined the association between these variables without manipulating the study environment.

Research Site

The study was conducted in selected outpatient clinics in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The names of the participating clinics were withheld to maintain confidentiality. Riyadh was selected because of its multicultural healthcare environment, where nurses and patients come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, making multilingual communication an essential aspect of nursing practice.

Participants and Sampling

The respondents consisted of 133 adult patients who received nursing care in the selected outpatient clinics. Participants were selected using convenience sampling based on the following criteria: they were at least 18 years old, had interacted with a nurse during their clinic visit, and voluntarily agreed to participate. Patients who were critically ill, unable to communicate, or unwilling to participate were excluded from the study.

Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed structured questionnaire prepared in English and translated into Arabic. The instrument consisted of three sections: the respondents' demographic profile, nurses' multilingual competence, and patient satisfaction. The questionnaire was developed based on an extensive review of the literature on multilingual competence, nurse–patient communication, cultural competence, and patient satisfaction. Content validity was established through evaluation by three expert validators, followed by language validation, pilot testing, and reliability analysis. The pilot test yielded an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.905, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Data Collection

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Graduate School, Ethics Review Board, and the participating outpatient clinics before data collection. Eligible patients were informed of the study's purpose and provided written informed consent before completing the bilingual questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately, checked for completeness, and kept confidential throughout the study.

Data Analysis

Data were encoded and analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency and percentage described the respondents' demographic profile, while weighted mean and standard deviation determined the levels of nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to examine the relationship between the two variables. Independent-samples t-test and one-way Analysis of Variance

(ANOVA) determined differences according to respondents' demographic characteristics. Statistical significance was set at 0.05.

Ethical Considerations

The study complied with the fundamental ethical principles of research involving human participants. Ethical approval was secured before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. No personal identifiers or medical record numbers were collected from participants. Confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy were maintained throughout the research process. All collected data were used exclusively for research purposes and stored securely to protect participants' identities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile. The majority of the 133 respondents were 26–35 years old, female, non-Saudi nationals, and preferred English as their primary language for healthcare communication.

Level of Nurses' Multilingual Competence. Nurses' multilingual competence was rated **very high** (M = 4.43), indicating that respondents perceived nurses as effective in communicating clearly, understanding patients' concerns, providing treatment instructions, and adapting communication to patients' linguistic needs.

Level of Patient Satisfaction. Patient satisfaction was also rated **very high** (M = 4.45), reflecting respondents' satisfaction with nurses' communication, responsiveness, respect, empathy, clarity of explanations, and overall nursing care.

Relationship Between Nurses' Multilingual Competence and Patient Satisfaction. A **very strong positive and statistically significant relationship** was found between nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction ($r = 0.965$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher perceived multilingual competence was associated with higher patient satisfaction.

Differences According to Demographic Variables. No statistically significant differences were found in the perceived levels of nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction according to age, gender, and preferred language ($p > .05$). However, nationality showed a statistically significant difference in the perceived level of nurses' multilingual competence ($p < .05$), while no significant difference was found in patient satisfaction according to nationality.

SUMMARY

This study demonstrated that nurses' multilingual competence and patient satisfaction were both perceived at very high levels among patients attending selected outpatient clinics in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. A very strong positive relationship was identified between multilingual competence and patient satisfaction, indicating that higher perceived multilingual competence was associated with higher patient satisfaction. Although nationality influenced perceptions of nurses' multilingual competence, patient satisfaction remained consistently high regardless of respondents' demographic characteristics.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings demonstrate that nurses' multilingual competence is an important factor associated with patient satisfaction in multicultural outpatient healthcare settings. The findings suggest that effective multilingual communication is associated with better patient understanding, stronger therapeutic relationships, and patient-centered care. Developing

multilingual communication skills should therefore remain a priority for healthcare organizations serving culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, healthcare institutions should strengthen language enhancement programs and provide continuing education on multilingual and culturally responsive communication. Nurse managers should encourage communication skills development through regular training and professional development activities. Nursing educators may integrate multilingual communication strategies into nursing curricula to prepare future nurses for multicultural clinical practice. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies in other healthcare settings using larger and more diverse populations to further validate the findings.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

Artificial intelligence (AI)-supported tools were used solely to assist with language enhancement, grammar checking, organization, and manuscript refinement. No AI tools were used in the collection, analysis, or interpretation of research data. All research concepts, findings, analyses, conclusions, and final content remain the original work and sole responsibility of the authors.

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