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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION ON EMPOWERMENT OF SOFT SKILLS AMONG NURSING STUDENTS

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#### Abstract

**Aim:** Today, employers prefer to hire, retain, and promote those who are resourceful, ethical, and self-directed with good "soft skills." The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of educational intervention on the empowerment of soft skills among nursing students.

**Materials and Methods:** The quasi-experimental one-group (pre-test-post-test) design was adopted, and 49 nursing students were chosen by using convenience sampling. The pre-test and post-test were assessed and provided educational intervention regarding soft skills.

**Results:** The pre-test mean score of knowledge was (10.92), the post-test mean score of knowledge was (19.92), as well as the 't' value of knowledge was (8.173), which indicates that there were significant changes in knowledge, but there was no association between knowledge and demographic variables like age, family income, and sources of knowledge ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** The results showed that the educational intervention improved the knowledge of soft skills among nursing students, which will empower them in a clinical setting.

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#### Introduction:-

Nurses have a difficult task because they must simultaneously apply their knowledge, motor skills, and compassion. Nursing students are taught nursing skills in those three skills to become nurses.<sup>1</sup> According to studies, the burden of nursing work puts them at risk for stress.<sup>2</sup> Because of their heavy workload, time, and lack of knowledge about their professional roles, nurses have no compassion.<sup>3</sup> Foster et al. (2015) noted that a person with a strong sense of softness can demonstrate emotional self-control, flexibility and change, optimism, and ingenuity.<sup>4</sup>

There is a need to improve diversity management in the nursing profession in order to better address the needs of our changing society due to rising immigration, globalization, and population growth.<sup>5</sup> Despite the fact that strong skills and experience are requirements for accessing or entering and improving personal strengths in the organization, it has been noted that employers today prefer to hire, retain, and develop those who are skilled, ethical, and self-employed guided by good "soft skills". However, colleges are reluctant to incorporate soft skills training into the curriculum. According to Murray (2011), a lack of soft skills, such as leadership, communication, and organizational structure, is a major factor in the changes in hospital staffing.<sup>6</sup>

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According to a study from Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Stanford Research Center, only 15% of job success is based on technical knowledge and skills, and 85% of job success is due to soft skills and well-developed people (strong skills).<sup>7</sup> Employers lack the time, resources, and resources needed to provide training in participatory work, communication and collaboration, teamwork, smart decision-making, and critical thinking to solve problems. Before a person can apply for his first job, these skills need to be established.<sup>8</sup>

Soft skills are those skills, attitudes, and traits that help people interact with their environment, interact effectively with others, perform well, and achieve their goals.<sup>9</sup> Soft skills, as opposed to hard skills are internal and personal, emotional, and social abilities that are crucial for participation, planning, and personal development.<sup>10</sup> Soft skills can be divided into fourteen levels under four groups. The first set of soft skills is true. The second is emotional (love, human relationships, humility, and control of emotions); thirdly personal power, including (integrity, character, and maturity); and finally, the fourth group was management skills, which included (self-assessment, team work, communication, management, innovation and research , and ultimately leadership.<sup>11</sup> The ten soft skills listed below are important for nurses: communication, attitude and confidence; collaboration; network; critical thinking and problem solving by innovation; professionalism; empathy; conflict resolution; flexibility; initiative; and a strong work ethic.<sup>12</sup>

By incorporating technology into soft skill development and employability training, Balachandar, R. Jayam, and Jawaharrani (2016) suggested approaches to shift the employability equation for the better.<sup>6</sup> The academic teaching staff at nursing faculties was urged to enhance the development of soft skills and assess students' soft skill levels during interviews before hiring them to the faculty.<sup>13</sup>

A few of the main benefits of soft skills training include enhanced problem solving, better customer service, better teamwork and rapport, compassionate leadership, happier employees, and higher staff retention. There are five ways to teach soft skills to employees: hire wisely to provide training; evaluate training needs (select the best method to assess, such as questionnaires, observation, interviews, examining work, assessments, and competitive analysis); and provide opportunities for practice, reflection, and improvement by utilizing any of the following strategies: Videos, info-graphics, static resources, simulations, branching scenarios, podcasts, and gamification are a few examples of interactive parallax-based scrolling.<sup>14</sup>

The soft skills in the curriculum will have a significant positive impact on people's professional careers. The lack of self-confidence, language problems, a discouraging atmosphere, shyness and anxiousness as the top impediments preventing the students from advancing in their academic and personal goals as the challenges that inhibit students from learning and practicing communication skills. Additionally, they think that by adding more soft skills development activities to the curriculum, holding more seminars, and setting up more internship programmes, soft skills can be strengthened.<sup>15</sup>

As per research report Laari, L. & Dube, B.M (2017) 76 students (69%) agreed that it was inappropriate to use offensive language and to refer to patients by their beds; and (58%) nurses needed to be trained in soft skills because doing so would raise the quality of care they offer and improve professional performance. The study's conclusions also imply that nursing students should be given soft skills training because doing so will increase their efficiency at work and their capacity for client interaction.<sup>16</sup>

The study's objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of educational intervention on nursing students' empowerment of soft skills. By providing effective soft skills training programme concepts for the workforce of the medical business in the twenty-first century, the study may result in social revolution. By recognizing the hospital's successful soft skills training projects, leaders can learn how to teach staff members who lack soft skills to offer them a competitive edge in the workplace. As a result, it's crucial to carefully evaluate nursing students' understanding of soft skills and provide them with the knowledge and tools they need to improve their soft skills.

## **Materials and Methods:-**

### **Setting of the study and sampling technique**

At the Savitri Jindal Institute of Nursing in Haryana. The quasi-experimental (one-group pre-test-post-test) design and a convenience sample of 49 nursing students were chosen as part of the study's. The level of soft skills knowledge was the dependent variable, whereas the educational intervention on soft skills was the independent variable. The demographic profile included age, family income, and source of knowledge. The first-year students

from General Nursing & Midwifery (G.N.M.) who were willing to participate in the study were included, and those unavailable for data collection were excluded.

### **Description of the tool**

Based on the literature review, a self-structured questionnaire was developed in English, consisting of the following: Part I consist of demographic characteristics age, family income and sources of knowledge and Part II consist of 25 (Multiple Choice Questions) self-structured knowledge questionnaires. The questionnaire consists of the following aspects: definition of soft skills, benefits, and ten nursing soft skills, which are like communication, attitude, and self-assurance, teamwork, networking, critical thinking and creative problem solving, professionalism, empathy, conflict resolution, flexibility, initiative, and strong work ethic. The correct response score (01) and the incorrect response score (00). The level of knowledge score is converted to a percentage and then separated into three groups: inadequate (50%), moderately adequate (51-75%) and adequate (> 76%).

### **Validity and reliability**

Experts assessed the tool's content validity and evaluated it in light of the revisions and suggestions. Five nursing students who completed the inclusion requirements participated in the pilot study to evaluate the feasibility and reliability of the instruments. Additionally, the Split-Half approach was used to analyse the knowledge tool's reliability. Excellent findings were obtained ( $r = 0.92$ ). The main study sample did not include nursing students who had taken part in the pilot trial.

### **Ethical consideration**

The researcher received formal approval from the institutional ethical committee before starting data collection. All nursing students were given an explanation of the study's purpose and methodology by the researcher, who also got their informed consent. They agreed to join voluntarily, with the knowledge that leaving at any point would have no legal repercussions.

### **Description of the intervention**

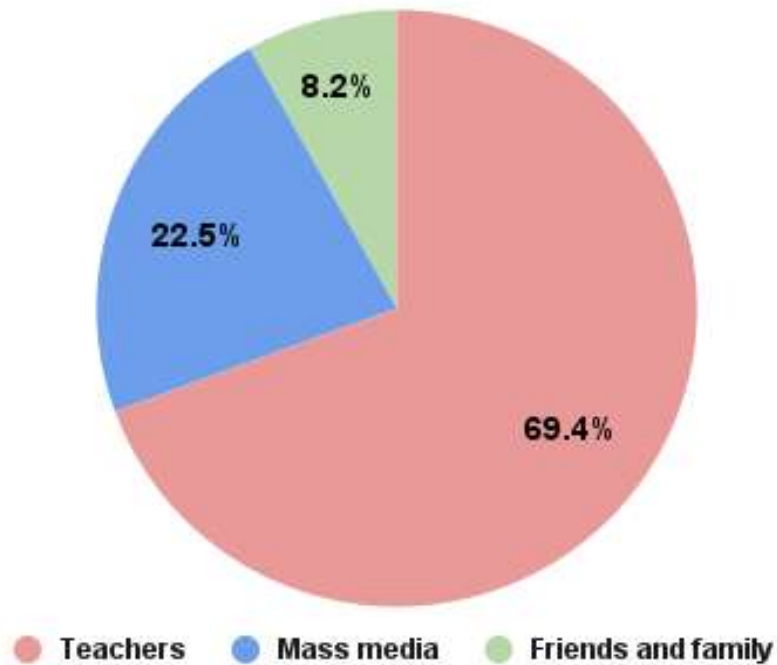
Between June 13 and June 27, 2022, data was gathered. On the first day, the researcher gave out a self-structured questionnaire, prompted the nursing students to fill out the demographic profile, and then tested the pre-test level of knowledge in the online questionnaire for 30 minutes with 25 multiple-choice questions. They were reminded by the researcher that their responses would be kept private. The Power Point presentation was done with the following aspects: definition of soft skills, benefits, and ten nursing soft skills, which are like communication, attitude, and self-assurance; teamwork; networking; critical thinking and creative problem solving; professionalism; empathy; conflict resolution; flexibility; initiative; and strong work ethic. The post-test was collected on the seventh day.

### **Data analysis**

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows, Version 21 from International Business Machines (IBM), was used to analyse the data. Demographic factors include frequency and percentage. The mean and standard deviation (SD) were computed to describe the level of knowledge. The effectiveness of knowledge on soft skills was determined using the "t" value, and the association between pre-test knowledge and their chosen demographic variables was determined using Chi-square analysis at ( $p < 0.05$ ).

### **Results:-**

Regarding the frequency and distribution of demographic variables by age, the majority of them, 35 (71.4%), belonged to the age group of 18–20 years, eight (16.3%) were in the 21–23 age range, three (6.1%) were in the 24–26 age range, and three (6.1%) were in > 26 years. In regards to family income, the majority of them were in 16 (32.7%) in > 20000 and 15 (30.6%) in 5001-10000 and 10 (20.4%) were 10001-15000, and 08 (16.3%) were 15001-20000. When it comes to the sources of knowledge received, the majority of them 34 (69.4%) were from teachers; 4 (8.2%) were from mass media; and 11 (22.5%) were from family and friends. (Figure 1)

**Fig. 1: Diagram showing percentage distribution of source of knowledge**

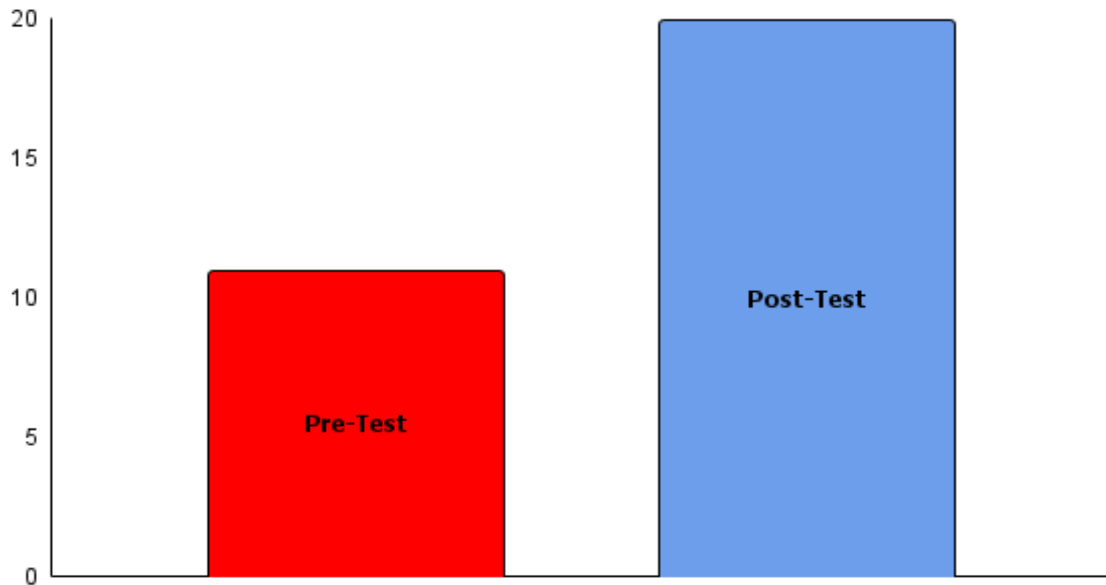
With regards to the level of knowledge, the majority of them, 38 (77.55%), had inadequate knowledge, 11 (22.45%) had moderately adequate knowledge, and none of them had adequate knowledge in the pre-test. However, after the educational intervention, the majority of them, 37 (75.51%), had adequate knowledge; 12 (24.49%) had moderately adequate knowledge; and none of them had inadequate knowledge as assessed by the post-test.

The pre-test mean score of knowledge was (10.92), the post-test mean score of knowledge was (19.92) (figure 2), and the 't' value of pre-test and post-test knowledge (8.173) indicates that there were significant changes in the knowledge ( $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, the researcher concluded that nursing students gained the effectiveness of educational intervention on the empowerment of soft skills among nursing students. (Table 1)

**Table 1:-** Indicates the mean, SD, and "t" value of knowledge regarding soft skills among nursing students (n= 49).

Knowledge	Mean	SD	't' value
Pre-Test	10.92	2.2	8.173*
Post-Test	19.92	1.9	

\* $p < 0.05$  (significant); SD-standard deviation

**Fig. 2: Diagram showing Pre & post test mean score on empowerment of soft skills**

The obtained chi-square value for the age (0.168), family income (0.138) and sources of knowledge (0.256) indicate that there was no association between the above variables with soft skills.

### **Discussion:-**

The study's objectives were to evaluate nursing students' pre-test and post-test knowledge of soft skills; the effectiveness of educational interventions on the empowerment of soft skills; and the significance of associations between pre-test knowledge and specific demographic variables like age, family income, and sources of knowledge.

A similar study on knowledge, self-efficacy, and communication skills among 121 nursing students was conducted. At the pre-test, post-test, and 6-week follow-up, they were evaluated using a simulated situation and showed considerable gains.<sup>17</sup>

The performance of 50 head nurses was evaluated and found statistically significant variations in the head nurses' knowledge, work performance, and soft skills before and after the intervention. The study brought to the conclusion that regular training sessions on soft skills are essential for fostering positive nursing practices and sustaining high-quality medical treatment.<sup>18</sup>

### **Conclusion:-**

In addition to possessing a degree, qualifications, and hard clinical abilities, a successful nursing profession also requires the ability to utilise soft skills to promote outstanding patient outcomes and have a positive impact on the future of the healthcare organisation. Nursing curriculums and nurse leaders are expected to instruct, role-model, and support current and prospective nurses in developing the soft skills that will lead to the development of emotional intelligence.

### **Acknowledgement:-**

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### **Conflicts of interest**

There is nothing to disclose regarding conflicts of interest.

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