

Social Skills in Nursing Students

Research Article

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Abstract

Introduction: Social skills are a set of learned behaviors essential for effective integration into diverse social contexts. They are fundamental in personal, emotional and professional development, especially in the university environment and in careers such as nursing, where effective communication with patients and work teams is required. These skills are acquired from childhood and can be strengthened throughout life through education and in practice.

Objective: To evaluate the social skills of 200 nursing students from the autonomous university of the state of Morelos.

Methodology: Quantitative cross-sectional and observational study. The CHASO social skills questionnaire was applied, which measures 10 specific dimensions. The information was analyzed with the Stata 11 program, considering differences by sex and place of residence.

Results: Most of the students have a medium level of social skills with a general average of 128 42 points. 64.83% of the men showed a high level of social skills compared to 44.17% of the women. They had more than twice as low a level as their male peers. Students from urban areas showed higher levels of social skills than those from rural areas.

Conclusion: Women and rural students are underdeveloped in some key dimensions of social skills, which can be attributed to socio-cultural, structural and educational factors such as gender stereotypes, academic pressure or limited exposure to interaction environments. It is proposed that educational institutions include pedagogical strategies with a gender approach and attention to the sociocultural context to strengthen the equitable development of these fundamental competencies in nursing education.

Keywords: Nursing Students, Social Skills, Higher Education, Vocational Training

Introduction

Social skills are a set of learned behaviors that allow individuals to interact effectively and appropriately in diverse social contexts [1]. These skills include the ability to communicate, express emotions, resolve conflicts, and establish satisfying interpersonal relationships [2]. From psychology, adaptive behaviors that facilitate social interaction

and emotional well-being are considered fundamental for personal and social development [3]. They develop from childhood and can be improved throughout life through practice and education in the family and school environment [4].

In the university environment, social skills are essential to establish and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships, adapt to different



academic, social and cultural contexts, improve self-esteem and emotional well-being and facilitate academic and professional success. In the training of nursing students, they facilitate effective interactions in clinical and educational contexts. Evidence suggests a positive relationship between social skills and life satisfaction in nursing students. Aguirre Bances found a positive correlation between positive mental health and social skills in nursing students [5]. García Núñez and Mata Solís [6] highlighted the need to strengthen these competencies to improve the quality of life and personal satisfaction of students. Barraza and Ortiz Moreira [7] identified that factors such as academic success, social relationships, and family support are significantly related to quality of life and satisfaction in nursing students.

Fostering the development of social skills can contribute significantly to students' psychological well-being and academic success. Educational institutions should consider the implementation of programs and strategies that strengthen social skills as an integral part of nursing education to achieve quality care and an effective relationship with patients. This article explores the social skills of nursing students, highlighting the importance of fostering social competencies to improve their professional and personal satisfaction.

Methodology

This was a quantitative, cross-sectional, observational study in 200 university nursing students. The "Social Skills Questionnaire" (CHA-SO) was applied. It consists of 40 items and 10 dimensions that are: 1) Interacting with people I am attracted to, 2) Defending one's rights, 3) Speaking in public/Interacting with people of authority, 4) Staying calm in embarrassing situations, 5) Apologizing, 6) Interacting with strangers, 7) Expressing positive feelings, 8) Facing situations of making a fool of yourself, 9) Refusing requests, and 10) Face criticism. The answer to each item is made on a Likert-type scale, scoring from 1 ("Very uncharacteristic of me") to 5 ("Very characteristic of me"). The score was obtained by directly adding the values of all the items of the total questionnaire and the level of skills for each of them was obtained, considering three levels of skills: low, medium and high according to the 25th, 50th and 75th percentiles of the total questionnaire and of each of the skills. It was considered that the higher the score, the greater the social ability.

Using the Stata11 program, stratified analyses were carried out by sex and semester, obtaining measures of simple and relative frequency and central tendency and dispersion (Table 1).

Table 1 The evaluation of each skill was obtained by grouping the items by skill as follows

Ability	Items	Low	Score by level	
			Middle	High
Questionnaire total	1-40	76-113	114-130	131-200
Interact with strangers	18, 22, 27 and 35	4-8	9-13	14-20
Express positive feelings	21, 30, 31 and 33	4-10	11-13	14-20
Dealing with criticism	25, 26, 28 and 29	4-9	10-11	12-20
Interact with the people I'm attracted to	5, 9, 13 and 16	4-6	7-10	11-20
Staying Calm in the Face of Criticism	3, 10, 15 and 23	4-11	12-14	15-20
Public Speaking/ Interacting with Superiors	12, 14, 17 and 24	4-10	11-13	14-20
Facing situations of making a fool of yourself	20, 32, 37 and 40	4-6	7-9	10-20
Defending one's rights	2, 4, 6 and 11	4-10	11-13	14-20
Apologize	1, 7, 19 and 39	4-13	14-16	17-20
Reject requests	8, 34, 36 and 38	4-10	10-14	15-20

Results

A total of 200 students of both sexes (81.5% female, 18.5% male), with a mean age of 21.3 years, standard deviation of 3.39, participated in the study, from the first to the eighth semester of the bachelor's degree in nursing at the Autonomous University of the State of Morelos, Mexico (UAEM). 97.5% are single. 72% live in urban areas (Table 2).

The total score obtained had a mean of 128.42, SD=20.81. Corresponding to a medium level of social skills.

Level of skills by sex showed differences between sexes, observing that a higher proportion of male students have a high level of social skills (64.86%), while in female students this proportion is lower

(44.17%), likewise, the proportion of women with a low level of social skills is more than double that of men (Table 3).

The mean was higher in men, but no statistical significance was found ($p=0.4647$) (Table 4).

Stratified analysis by place of residence showed that a higher proportion of students living in urban areas had a high level, in those living in rural areas the low level had a higher proportion (Table 5).

The mean skills of students living in urban areas were higher than those living in rural areas, however, it did not show a significant difference (Table 6).



Table 2 Sociodemographic characteristics.

Feature	N	%
Sex		
Female	163	81.5
Male	37	18.5
Age		
18-20	94	47
21-23	78	39
24-26	17	8.5
27-mas	11	5.5
Semester		
1	54	27
2	26	13
3	1	0.5
4	41	20.5
5	13	6.5
6	41	20.5
7	11	5.5
8	13	6.5
Marital status		
Bachelor	195	97.5
Married/common-law union	5	2.5
Place of residence		
Urban	144	72
Rural	56	28

Table 3 Level of social skills by sex.

Level	Men		Women		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Low	4	10.81	44	26.99	48	24
Middle	9	24.32	47	28.83	56	28
High	24	64.86	72	44.17	96	48
Total	37	100	163	100	200	100

Table 4 Mean and mean difference in social skills score between sexes.

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	p
Total	200	128.42	20.81	76	200	
Men	37	137.7	18.67	98	180	0.4647
Women	163	126.31	20.74	76	200	

Table 5 Skill level by place of residence.

Level	Urban		Rural		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Low	31	21.53	17	30.36	48	24
Middle	38	26.39	18	32.14	56	28
High	75	52.08	21	37.5	96	48
Total	144	100	56	100	200	100

Table 6 Difference in social skills means by place of residence.

Residence	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	p
Total	200	128.42	20.81	76	200	
Urban	144	130.13	21.37	76	200	0.0619
Rural	56	124.01	18.76	79	165	

The level of each of the skills was mostly high, with the proportion of high level being lower in the ability to interact with strangers (27%) and remain calm in the face of criticism (35.5%). The skills in which students have a high level are apologizing and rejecting requests (48.5%) (Table 7).

Differences are observed in skill levels according to sex, in women, the high level is lower than in men in most skills, highlighting the difference in the skills of "Dealing with criticism", "Interacting with

people I am attracted to", "Refusing requests" and "Refusing requests". The high level was slightly higher in women in three skills: "Expressing positive feelings", "Dealing with situations that make a fool of yourself" and "Apologizing" (Table 8).

In relation to place of residence, high levels are observed in a lower proportion among those who live in rural areas than in those who live in urban areas, especially in the ability to "Interact with strangers", "Defend one's rights" and "Reject requests" (Table 9).

Table 7 Level of each of the social skills.

Ability	LEVEL					
	Low	Middle	High			
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Interact with strangers	61	30.5	85	42.5	54	27
Express positive feelings	59	29.5	53	26.5	88	44
Dealing with criticism	59	29.5	54	27	87	43.5
Interact with the people I'm attracted to	55	27.5	59	29.5	86	43
Staying Calm in the Face of Criticism	52	26	77	38.5	71	35.5
Public Speaking/Interacting with Superiors	55	27.5	62	31	83	41.5
Facing situations of making a fool of yourself	55	27.5	55	27.5	90	45
Defending one's rights	55	27.5	64	32	81	40.5
Apologize	45	22.5	58	29	97	48.5
Reject requests	38	19	65	32.5	97	48.5

Table 8 Level of each of the social skills by sex.

Ability	Level					
	Low %		Medium %		High %	
	Man	Woman	Man	Woman	Man	Woman
Interact with strangers	10.81	34.97	56.76	39.26	32.76	25.77
Express positive feelings	27.03	30.06	32.43	25.15	40.54	44.79
Dealing with criticism	13.51	33.13	27.03	26.99	59.03	39.88
Interact with the people I'm attracted to	5.41	32.52	24.32	30.67	70.27	36.81



Staying Calm in the Face of Criticism	10.81	29.45	43.24	37.42	45.95	33.13
Public Speaking/ Interacting with Superiors	21.62	28.83	29.73	31.29	48.65	39.88
Facing situations of making a fool of yourself	37.84	25.15	18.92	29.45	43.24	45.4
Defending one's rights	13.51	30.67	32.43	31.9	54.05	37.42
Apologize	32.43	20.25	21.62	30.67	45.95	49.08
Reject re-quests	8.11	21.47	27.03	33.74	64.86	44.79

Table 9 level of each of the social skills by place of residence.

Ability residence	Level					
	Low %		Medium %		High %	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Interact with strangers	23.61	48.21	46.53	32.14	29.86	19.64
Express positive feelings	27.08	35.71	28.47	21.43	44.44	42.86
Dealing with criticism	27.08	35.71	31.25	16.07	41.67	48.21
Interact with the people I'm attracted to	25.69	32.14	31.25	25	43.06	42.86
Staying Calm in the Face of Criticism	23.61	32.14	41.67	30.36	34.72	37.5
Public Speaking/ Interacting with Superiors	25.69	32.14	32.64	26.79	41.67	41.07
Facing situations of making a fool of yourself	28.47	25	25	33.93	46.53	41.07
Defending one's rights	25	33.93	31.25	33.93	43.75	32.14
Apologize	22.22	23.21	26.39	35.71	51.39	41.07
Reject requests	15.97	26.79	29.17	41.07	54.86	32.14

Conclusion and Discussion

The social skills of the students included in the study are of medium level, observing differences between sexes and place of residence.

Nursing is a discipline that requires a high level of social skills, recent studies have reported that female nursing students have lower levels of development of these competencies compared to men [8]. This difference is a multifactorial phenomenon influenced by patterns of socialization, gender, male, perception of self-efficacy, academic pressure, and emotional state [9]. These differences should not be interpreted as individual deficiency but as the result of a network of cultural and psychological structural factors. The results reinforce the need to include gender approaches in nursing training programs, promoting environments that stimulate the equitable development of social com-

petencies in all students, regardless of their identity and gender.

The deficit in social skills among rural students compared to their urban peers has multiple and deep roots. The lack of social diversity, the scarcity of spaces for interaction, technological and educational limitations, as well as restrictive cultural norms, make up an environment that is less conducive to interpersonal development [10]. The interaction between these factors creates a less favorable environment for the development of social skills in rural students, which can be explained as a structural and contextual disadvantage.

The development of social skills among nursing students is a multifactorial phenomenon, so it is necessary to address differences through institutional interventions that integrate emotional support strategies, training in social skills and a critical review of gender stereotypes in



educational practice. It is necessary for educational institutions to promote inclusion, diversity and the strategic use of technologies for social interaction [11].

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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