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A Descriptive study to assess the Perceived Barriers towards Palliative Care among B.Sc., Nursing students at selected College, Chennai.

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Abstract:

Background: Palliative care aims at enhancing the quality of life of both critically and life-threatening sick patients and treating their physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs. Nursing students are thought to be significant in giving palliative care, but they might encounter various obstacles in giving quality care.

Methods: Quantitative descriptive research design was taken to evaluate the perceived obstacles on palliative care among B.Sc. Nursing students at the Faculty of Nursing, Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute, Chennai. Simple random sampling was adopted to select the total 80 students in 3rd and 4th year. A structured rating scale was used to obtain the data. There was analysis of data in descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (chi-square test).

Results: The results showed that 1.25 percent of students possessed low perceived barriers, 80 percent perceived barriers were moderate and 18.75 percent were high in respect to palliative care. The mean value was 60.67 and the standard deviation was 10.97. The perceived barriers were statistically significantly associated with the demographic variable type of family ($p \leq 0.05$) and the rest did not exhibit any significant association. **Conclusion:** The researchers also found out that the perceived barrier to palliative care was moderate among the majority of nursing students. These barriers can be mitigated by strengthening education and training on palliative care which would lead to better quality care offered to patients with serious illnesses.

Keywords: Palliative care, quality of life, nursing students

INTRODUCTION

Palliative care is a holistic nature of care that is aimed at enhancing the quality of life of patients who have severe or life-threatening illness and also attending to their families. It supports physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs of patients and relieves pain, symptoms, stress related to sickness. Palliative care commences with the diagnosis and proceeds with the disease regardless of the treatment success. It is offered

by an interdisciplinary team that can consist of physicians, nurses, therapists, psychologists, social workers and other healthcare professionals and is offered either in hospitals, outpatient facilities, nursing homes or even at home. World Health Organization states that the purpose of palliative care is to prevent and relieve suffering by means of early identification, evaluation, and management of pain and other issues.

Nevertheless, palliative care services are not used due to the lack of awareness, misunderstanding of their mission, losing hope of a chance to recover and fear of the high cost of treatment despite its significance. The medical caregivers might also find it challenging to communicate end-of-life concerns with the patient and their relatives. Over the world, over 40 million individuals need palliative care annually, but very few of them get these services. In India, palliative care started emerging in the early 1990 and efforts were made in places like the hospice in Shanti Avedna in Mumbai and the Pain and Palliative Care Society in Kerala. Nevertheless, palliative care is inaccessible to a vast number of areas of the country. Nurses and nursing students are very vital in providing palliative care due to the long time they have to spend with the patients and families. However, lack of knowledge, insufficient training, and perceived barriers among nursing students show the necessity to evaluate and mitigate them to enhance the quality of palliative care services.

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research design using descriptive research approach was embraced to determine the perceived barriers to palliative care among students enrolled in B.Sc. Nursing. The research was done in Faculty of Nursing at Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute. The target population was made up of B.Sc. Nursing students, whereas the accessible population was 3rd and 4th year students. The sample used was 80 students who were picked by simple random sampling involving the lottery technique. Participants were B.Sc. Nursing students in the 3rd and 4th year willing to participate and those students who were not present during the data collection were excluded. The data collection instrument was divided into two parts, first part was the demographic variables including age, sex, area of residence, type of family, religion, year of study, parental educational status and prior understanding of palliative care. Section B was composed of a 5-point Likert scale containing 20 questions to determine perceived barriers to palliative care. The scores were divided into low (0-35), moderate (36-70) and high (71-100) perceived barriers. Nursing experts would give the content validity. Informed consent was sought and all participants gave an ethical approval of the study to the Institutional Ethics Committee. The study upheld confidentiality, voluntary participation and the rights of the participants during the study. The split-half method was used to test reliability of the tool. The pilot study conducted on 8 participants proved the usability of the tool. The rating scale was used to collect data upon receiving permission of the institution. Data were analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation and chi-square test was conducted to ascertain the relationship between perceived barriers and the chosen demographic variables.

RESULTS**Table 1: Distribution of Demographic Variables of B.Sc. Nursing Students.**

S.No	Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age (years)	20–21	66	82.5%
		21–22	13	16.25%
		>22	1	1.25%
2	Sex	Female	60	75%
		Male	20	25%
3	Area of Residence	Urban	62	77.5%
		Rural	12	15%
		Sub-urban	6	7.5%
4	Type of Family	Nuclear	68	85%
		Joint Family	12	15%
5	Religion	Hindu	59	73.75%
		Muslim	5	6.25%
		Christian	16	20%
		Others	0	0%
6	Year of Study	3rd Year	44	55%
		4th Year	36	45%
7	Educational Status of Father	Graduate	17	21.25%
		High School	38	47.5%
		Primary Education	19	23.75%
		Illiterate	6	7.5%
8	Educational Status of Mother	Graduate	18	22.5%
		High School	30	37.5%
		Primary Education	26	32.5%
		Illiterate	6	7.5%
9	Course related to Palliative Care	Yes	0	0%
		No	80	100%

Table 1 provides the distribution of demographic variables in terms of frequency and percentage of the B.Sc. Nursing students. Most of the students were aged between 20 and 21 years (82.5%), of female gender (75%), and in urban regions (77.5%). The majority of students were a nuclear family (85 percent) and used the Hindu religion (73.75 percent). With reference to the year of study 55 percent of them were in 3rd year

and 45 percent in 4 th year. Majority of the fathers were of high school (47.5%), and most of the mothers were of high school (37.5%). All the students (100%), said that they had not taken any course that was related to palliative care.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Perceived Barriers towards Palliative care among B.Sc. Nursing Students

Variables	Low Perceived Barriers		Moderate Perceived Barriers		High Perceived Barriers		Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Perceived barriers towards palliative care	1	1.25	64	80	15	18.75	60.67	10.97

Table 2 presents the average and standard deviation of the perceived barriers to palliative care of B.Sc. Nursing students. Out of the 80 respondents, 1 student (1.25) respondent had low perceived barriers, 64 students (80) respondents had moderate perceived barriers, and 15 students (18.75) had high perceived barriers. The average score was 60.67 with standard deviation of 10.97 meaning that a majority of the students have got moderate level of perceived barriers to palliative care.

Table 3: Association between Perceived Barriers towards Palliative Care with Selected Demographic Variables (N = 80)

S.No	Demographic Variable	χ^2 value	df	p value	Significance
1	Age	7.9	4	0.09	NS
2	Sex	0.77	3	0.67	NS
3	Area of Residence	6.93	4	0.13	NS
4	Type of Family	5.74	2	0.05	S
5	Religion	2.64	4	0.61	NS
6	Year of Study	2.14	2	0.61	NS
7	Educational Status of Father	1.61	6	0.95	NS
8	Educational Status of Mother	5.03	6	0.53	NS

Table 3 presents the correlation between the perceived barriers to palliative care and the chosen demographic variables in the group of B. Sc. Nursing students. The findings show that type of family ($2 = 5.74, p = 0.05$) was statistically significantly related with perceived barriers. The other factors like the age, sex, the area of residence, religion, the year of study, and the educational status of parents were however not found to be significantly related to the factors perceived to influence the barriers to palliative care.

DISCUSSION

The following chapter summarizes the results of the study according to the objectives and the literature backing. The research was supposed to determine the perceived barriers to palliative care among students of B.Sc. Nursing in Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute. Simple random sampling was done by choosing 80 students and a rating scale was used to gather the data. Descriptive statistics and chi-square test were used to analyze the data. Majority of the students were aged between 20-21 years (82.5) and women (75) and urban (77.5) and nuclear families (85). Most of them were Hindu (73.75%), were in 3rd year (55%), and none had taken a course in palliative care. The findings indicated that one point two five per cent of the students were perceived to have low perceived barriers, eighty per cent had moderate barriers, and eighteen point seven five per cent had high barriers to palliative care. Phinar Z. Bahceli and Ayse A. Donmez reported similar results. It was also established in the study that there was a statistically significant correlation between perceived barriers and type of family ($p \leq 0.05$). Thus, the hypothesis of the research was accepted.

CONCLUSION

The nurses are very important in the palliative care because they spend the greatest amount of time with the patient and also help a great deal in enhancing the quality of care. Palliative care is a significant part of healthcare both at family and community levels. As the number of people requiring palliative care services increases, nurses should have sufficient training on pain management, symptom control, and effective communication. The results of the study show that the short-term palliative care education contributed to the knowledge of nurses to a large extent. As such, palliative care education is a viable intervention that can improve the competence of nurses to treat patients with chronic and serious illnesses.

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