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Poongodi Ramalingam^{1*}, Sumathi M¹, Sundareswari R¹, Porkodi Arjunan¹, Kavitha Ramanathan², Shenbaga Sundaram Subramanian³ and Fadwa Alhalaiqa⁴



¹Sri Ramachandra Faculty of Nursing, Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education & Research (DU), Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India; ²Nursing Department, College of Nursing, CON-A, King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS) and King Abdullah International Medical Research Center (KAIMRC), Ministry of the National Guard - Health Affairs, Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia; ³Saveetha College of Physiotherapy, Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences (SIMATS), Chennai, India, ⁴College of Nursing, Qatar University, Qatar

E-mail/Orcid Id:

PM,  poongodimohan@sriramachandra.edu.in,  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8876-7676>; SM,  sumathi@sriramachandra.edu.in,  <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-3514-4257>; SR,  aakashshumdari@gmail.com,  <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3350-1835>; PA,  porkodi@sriramachandra.edu.in,  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0589-8000>; KR,  ramanathank@ksau-hs.edu.sa,  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5437-605X>; SSS,  subramanian.scpt@saveetha.com,  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6150-0928>; FA,  f.alhalaiqa@qu.edu.qa,  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0899-7883>

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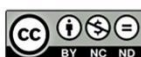
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Abstract: Soft skills are the habits and traits that determine how a person operates in the workplace like communicating with others. Students are in a position to prove themselves in different aspects, which is not possible by technology. The soft skills identified as important in the workplace include communication, teamwork, motivation, problem-solving, enthusiasm, and trust. A quantitative, descriptive cross-sectional approach was used to assess the knowledge and practice of soft skills among nursing students at selected nursing colleges in Chennai. The target population was B. Sc Nursing Basic students in Chennai. There was a total of 305 students in the study. Data was collected using my 3s 5 point rating scale questionnaire, which Data developed was analyzed using SPSS version 23. The highest mean score (20.47 with SD 4.38) was observed in the soft skill domain of management and the lowest score was in writing and communication skills (20.23 with SD4.38). There was a statistically significant association found in soft skill domains of writing skill and management skill with fathers' educational status and mothers' occupational status at $p < 0.05$ level. Soft skills are an internal part of the nursing profession. It reflects on approaches that would enable nursing students to grow in their profession.

Introduction

The healthcare industry has experienced significant transformations in recent years, primarily due to evolving trends in nursing education (Babiker, 2018), advancements in healthcare delivery systems (Jamaludin et al., 2022) and the widespread adoption of various software applications (Poreddi et al., 2021) These changes have led to a noticeable decrease in the demand for human labour in healthcare organizations (Widad and Abdellah., 2024) with approximately 50% of human

skill-based tasks being replaced by artificial intelligence and technology (Adams et al., 2012; Atreja and Verma, 2024; Ellis et al., 2014; Ismail et al., 2017). This shift has posed challenges for the younger generation (Widad and Abdellah., 2022), particularly healthcare professionals, in terms of securing and sustaining employment in the industry (Aba-alkhayl, 2014). Soft skills, which encompass abilities such as effective communication, problem-solving, self-motivation, decision-making, and time management, are considered essential qualities for



nurses to deliver high-quality nursing care (Heckman and Kautz, 2012; Majid et al., 2012; Lau, 2014; Shahida and Guggilla, 2021). However, it has come to light that around 50% of nursing students lack adequate knowledge of these soft skills, and they find it more challenging to acquire these skills compared to their professional knowledge and technical skills (Swaminathan et al., 2024). Furthermore, research has indicated that nursing students often encounter difficulties in essential areas such as communication, writing, leadership, and critical thinking (Atreja and Verma, 2024; Hartiti and Ernawati, 2016; Lamri and Lubart, 2023; McClendon-Payton, 2021). Studies have demonstrated a positive correlation (Majid et al., 2012) between a student's level of soft skills and their academic performance, underscoring the importance of these skills in nursing education (De Villiers et al., 2010; Sayed et al., 2020). Nursing students acknowledge the need for soft skills training programs to enhance the quality of nursing care and improve their professional performance (Hawks et al., 2016; Laari et al., 2021). Regrettably, many nursing curricula do not formally integrate soft skill components, highlighting the necessity for revisions in nursing education to bridge this gap (Staden et al., 2006). However, there have been limited studies examining the relationship between nursing students and the levels of soft skills and their clinical performance. The current study aims to assess the knowledge and application of soft skills among nursing students in selected Nursing Colleges in Chennai. This research will contribute valuable insights into the connection between soft skills and clinical competence in nursing students, offering guidance for future educational improvements in the field. (Wats and Wats, 2009)

Methods and Materials

A quantitative, descriptive cross-sectional approach was used to assess the knowledge and practice of soft skills among nursing students at selected Nursing

colleges in Chennai. The target population was B. Sc Nursing Basic students. A convenient sampling technique was used to identify the sample. The calculated sample size was 225. With intensities to assess the level of knowledge among nursing students with their willingness, 305 samples were identified. The B.Sc Nursing (Basic) II, III & IV students studying in Sri Ramachandra Faculty of Nursing participated, excluding those with frequent network issues, to ensure the data integrity. Data were collected through a Google Form-based survey using the My 3s 5- 5-point rating scale questionnaire (Atreja and Verma, 2024; Heckman and Kautz, 2012). Results and Discussion Out of the Majority of 305 study participants, 119 (39.02%) of the study participants were in the age group of 19-20 years. 141 (46.20%) of them were residing in urban areas, (242) 79.3% of them had a nuclear family. 132 (79.30%) participants were graduates. 171 (56.1) students had siblings. These results are supported by the study conducted by (Pooja, 2016)

The study result revealed that 49(16.10%) of them have reading difficulties, 47(15.40%) participants mentioned that they have difficulty in writing, 2(13.80%) of them expressed that they were struggling in language processing skills and 64(21%) of them find difficulties while expressing their body language. The majority of them 103(33.80%) didn't have any learning difficulties.

This study's results are supported by the study conducted by (Kantrowitz, 2005; De Villiers, 2010; Haji Hamdan et al., 2022) in an attempt to assess nursing students' attitudes towards the development of nurses' communication skills. In this study among 130 participants, 108 subjects showed a positive attitude towards developing communication skills and almost all respondents agreed that their communication skills were medium (mean score: 3.72/5)

128(42%) students strongly agreed that they always show a positive personal image 137(44.9%) of them

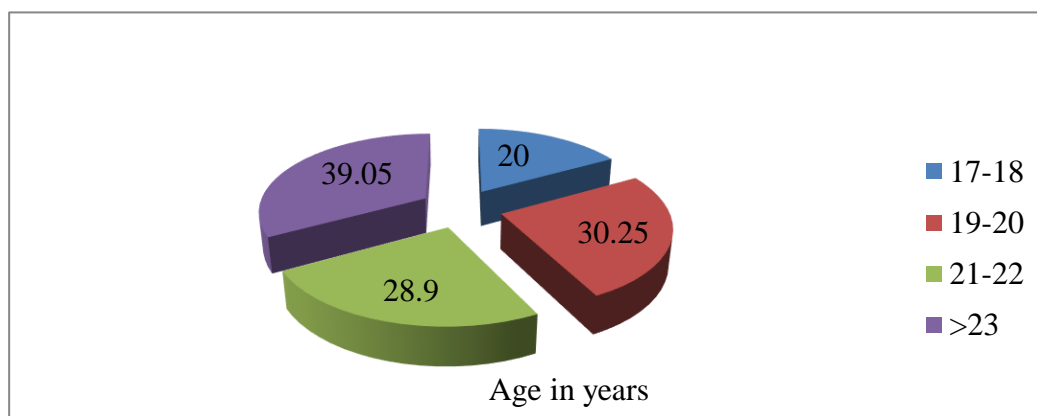


Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of Nursing Students According to their Age.

strongly agree that they always practice the appropriate dress code while attending official ceremony.158(51.8%) of them strongly agreed that they were always practice hygiene and personal health in their daily life.134(43.9%) of them were agreed that they were looking themselves in various situation. 141(46.7%) of them agreed that they always practice creative and innovative thinking skills 122(40%) of them agreed that they were able to control emotion in social interaction. 136(44.6%) of them agreed that they often practice positive values in their daily

life.163(53.4%) of them strongly agreed that they were sensitive to gender details. 73(23.9%) of them agreed that they always care about sexual harassment at work 111(36.4%) of them always practised religion in everyday life 126(41.3%) of them strongly agreed that they always respect the diversity of multiracial communities.

The highest men's percentage score (81%) observed in management skills was as 45.4% in professional skills. 134(43.9%) of them manage their time very effectively in

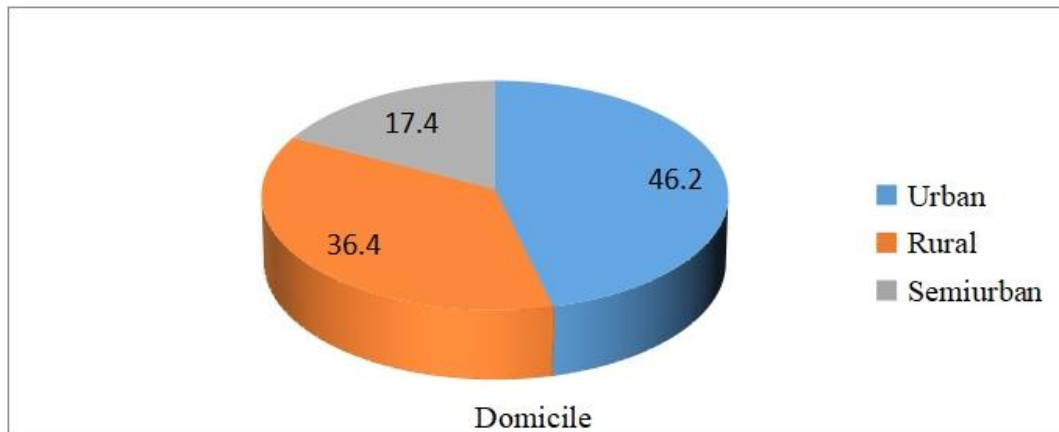


Figure 2. Percentage distribution of nursing students according to their domicile

Table 1. Distribution of level of personality development practices among nursing students.

Personality development	S.DA		DA		NU		AG		SAG	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I always display a positive personal image	18	5.9	0	0	48	15.7	111	36.4	128	42
I practice the appropriate dress code while attending an official ceremony	18	5.9	1	0.3	33	10.8	116	38	137	44.9
I always practice hygiene and personal health in my daily life	19	6.2	0	0	20	6.6	108	35.4	158	51.8
I always look after myself in various situations	15	4.9	0	0	36	11.8	134	43.9	120	39.3
I practice creative and innovative thinking skills	16	5.2	3	1	41	13.4	141	46.2	104	34.1
I am able to control emotion in social interaction	19	6.2	4	1.3	41	13.4	122	40	119	39
I often practice positive values in my daily life	16	5.2	0	0	34	11.1	136	44.6	119	39
I can distinguish in details gender sensitivity	17	5.6	9	3	103	33.8	13	4.3	163	53.4
I always care about sexual harassment at work	19	6.2	81	26.6	94	30.8	73	23.9	38	12.5
I have always practised religion in everyday life	17	5.6	14	4.6	62	20.3	111	36.4	101	33.1
I always respect the diversity of multiracial communities	14	4.6	0	0	49	16.1	126	41.3	116	38

S.DA-Strongly Disagree, DA-DisAgree, Nu-Neutral, Ag-Agree & S.Ag-Strongly Agree

both personal and professional activities. Regarding management skill practice, 141(46.2%) of them were capable of completing their on a given time and less than fifty percent of the sample, 134(43.9%) of them, find it difficult to manage their time both professionally and personally.

About solving the problem and completing various assignments on a given topic, 141(46.2%) of them strongly agreed. 139(45.6%) of them strongly agreed that they always solve problems based on the requirements 134(43.9%) of them were always managing their time effectively inside and outside the campus. 135(44.3%) of

Table 2. Distribution of Level of Management Skill Practices among Nursing students (N=305).

Management skills	S.DA		DA		NU		AG		SAG	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I always solved the problem in completing the various assignments given	10	3.3	5	1.6	36	11.8	141	46.2	113	37
I can always solve the problem based on the requirements	15	4.9	4	1.3	32	10.5	139	45.6	115	37.7
I always manage my time effectively inside and outside of the campus	15	4.9	1	0.3	43	14.1	134	43.9	112	38.7
I can meet client requirements during professional training	15	4.9	3	1	37	12.1	135	44.3	115	37.7
I can apply the procedure learned in the management for official	14	4.6	2	0.7	35	11.5	144	47.2	110	36.1
S.DA-Strongly DisAgree, DA-DisAgree, Nu-Neutral, Ag-Agree & S.Ag-Strongly Agree										

Table 3. Distribution of Level of practice of professional ethics among Nursing students (N=305).

Items	Level of perception									
	S.DA		DA		NU		AG		S.AG	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I always obey the protocol while attending an official ceremony	10	3.3	1	0.3	20	6.6	122	40	152	49.8
I am always responsible for completing the assignments	11	3.6	2	0.7	33	10.8	128	42	131	43
I always practice the concept of integrity in the work	12	3.9	2	0.7	33	10.8	136	44.6	122	40
I always practice a culture of abuse of power and corruption in the assignment	13	4.3	18	5.9	49	16.1	115	37.7	110	36.1
I always keep the environment everywhere I am	12	3.9	4	1.3	30	9.8	130	42.6	129	42.3
I always adhere to safety and health regulations at work	9	3	4	1.3	33	10.8	130	42.6	129	42.3
DA-Strongly DisAgree, DA-DisAgree, Nu-Neutral, Ag-Agree & S.Ag-Strongly Agree										

them strongly agreed that they met their client requirements during professional training. 144(47.2%) of them agreed that they can apply the procedure learned in the management for official.

This result is supported by a cross-sectional study done by Umar et al. (2021), Haji Hamdan et al. (2022), A and A (2023), De Villiers (2010), Jurevičienė et al. (2012) and Lau et al. (2024) on the development and evaluation of a learner-centered educational summer camp programme on soft skills for baccalaureate nursing students. They found high scores in problem-solving (R-0.86) and cooperation (R-0.80) in Canonical correlation analysis (Jurevičienė et al., 2012; Sharma and Dayanand, 2023; Ismail et al., 2017).

152(49.8%) students strongly agreed that they were obeying protocol while attending professional ceremony. 131(43%) of them strongly agreed that they were responsible for completing their given assignment. Concerning integrity in the work 136(44.6%) members agreed. 115(37.7%) of them agreed that they were doing the practice of abuse of power and corruption in the assignment. 129(42.3%) of them strongly agreed that they keep their environment neat and 130(42.6%) of them always adhere to safety and regulations at work. This result is consistent with the findings of (Trotter and Dunnivan-Mitchell., 2019; Laari et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2024) on professional and ethical values in Nursing Practice (Widad and Abdellah, 2022; Heckman and Kautz, 2012; Liebrecht and Montenery, 2016). Novices in the profession show higher professionalism than those experienced in the profession ($p < 0.01$).

Conclusion and Limitations and Recommendations

This study was limited to nursing students. However, the same study could be replicated as a comparative study between urban and rural nursing colleges. It would be great if other disciplines that utilises soft skills in their profession determined the association of soft skills and the attitude of the students.

Soft skills are an internal part of the nursing profession. It reflects on approaches that would enable nursing students to grow in their profession. This current study results found that nursing students have to undergo additional courses to improve their communication skills. Hence nursing curricula should take initiatives to inculcate the soft skill capabilities among nursing students to achieve the professional nurses.

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