

Cultural competence in nursing education: examining the nexus of cultural sensitivity and effectiveness among nursing students

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Implications for practice and research

- ▶ Nurse educators and policymakers can draw valuable insights from these findings to shape evidence-based strategies for enhancing cultural competence in nursing education, ultimately contributing to the provision of culturally sensitive and effective healthcare services.
- ▶ The unexpected decline in cultural sensitivity and effectiveness levels as students approach graduation raises intriguing questions about the factors influencing these dynamics. Longitudinal studies are recommended to provide a comprehensive understanding of how cultural competence evolves over the course of nursing education.

Context

When intercultural competence is comprehensively addressed in providing healthcare services, it positively influences patients' satisfaction levels, participation in care and safety.¹ To achieve this, cultural sensitivity and cultural effectiveness, crucial topics in the nursing profession, should be instilled in nursing students during their undergraduate education. Undergraduate nursing education includes clinical practice courses, where students are expected to develop cultural sensitivity and cultural effectiveness through interactions with patients during the course of clinical practice.¹ Kardas and Sahin's study shed light on cultural sensitivity and effectiveness levels of nursing students. Notably, the research highlights gender disparities and emphasises the potential benefits of language-focused initiatives and student exchange programmes. The unexpected decline in cultural sensitivity and effectiveness levels as students approach graduation prompts further investigation. These insights provide valuable guidance for educators and policymakers aiming to enhance cultural competence in nursing education.²

Methods

This prospective descriptive study was conducted in the nursing faculty of a university in Turkey, aiming to determine the levels of cultural sensitivity and effectiveness among nursing students, investigate the relationship between these levels and assess potential differences based on sociodemographic characteristics. The data collection took place online and a total of 284 participating students filled out a demographic characteristics form and scales measuring cultural sensitivity and effectiveness. Students were informed through social media groups and voluntarily participated by completing the online data collection form.²

Findings

This study investigated the correlation between cultural sensitivity and effectiveness levels among nursing students, with 284 participants. Results revealed a high cultural sensitivity level and moderate cultural effectiveness level. Female students, first-grade students and those proficient in English exhibited significantly higher cultural effectiveness scores. Socio-demographic factors influenced specific subdimensions of sensitivity and effectiveness. Positive correlations were found between sensitivity and effectiveness. Despite a majority expressing a willingness to participate in exchange programmes, only a small percentage did so. The study emphasises the need for targeted interventions in nursing education to enhance cultural competence among students.

Commentary

This study identifies that nursing students exhibit a high level of cultural sensitivity with a moderate level of cultural effectiveness. A positive correlation is observed between increased cultural sensitivity and enhanced cultural effectiveness. Gender and English proficiency are identified as influencing factors on both sensitivity and effectiveness levels, whereas the academic year specifically impacts cultural effectiveness.²

These findings underscore the importance for nurses to develop cultural communication skills during their academic journey to meet the demands of our globalised world.^{3,4} Despite participants demonstrating commendable cultural sensitivity, the study highlights the need to further emphasise the translation of this sensitivity into behavioural dimensions.¹⁻³ Such measures not only contribute to the personal and professional development of nursing students but also equip them to deliver culturally sensitive care in an increasingly interconnected healthcare landscape.^{1,2,5}

In this context, it is recommended to review educational curricula to enhance intercultural competence (ICC). Providing increased opportunities for students to engage in international exchange programmes, organising activities that bring together individuals from diverse cultures and fostering English language proficiency are crucial steps towards improving ICC. These measures not only contribute to the personal and professional development of nursing students but also equip them to deliver culturally sensitive care in an increasingly interconnected healthcare landscape.^{1,3,6}

Competing interests None declared.

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