

Soft Skills Qualities, Positive Outlook in a Challenging Workplace, and Emotional Intelligence as Predictors of Nurses' Collaboration with Healthcare Workers and Patients

Remy-vel S. Atienza¹, Mary Ann E. Lopez²

<https://orcid.or//0009-0006-6635-1219>¹, <https://orcid.org//0000-0001-7566-5152>²

St. Bernadette of Lourdes College^{1,2}

ratienza@sbllc.edu.ph¹ mlopez@sbllc.edu.ph²

ABSTRACT

Soft skills and a positive outlook are vital for nurses in providing high-quality, patient-centered care and effectively managing the demands of tertiary healthcare settings. This study examined nurses' soft skills, their positive outlook in challenging work environments, and the relationship of these variables with selected demographic characteristics. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed involving 51 nurses from a tertiary hospital. Data were gathered using a validated, researcher-developed questionnaire that assessed soft skills and positive outlook. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics and study variables, while Spearman rank correlation and Chi-square tests determined relationships between demographic variables and the study outcomes at a 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that respondents strongly agreed that their educational preparation, clinical exposure, and academic experiences contributed to the development of essential soft skills, with overall mean scores ranging from 4.66 to 4.90. They also demonstrated a highly positive outlook, characterized by resilience, motivation, optimism, and effective coping, with overall means ranging from 4.51 to 4.83. No significant relationship was found between soft skills and demographic characteristics. However, age was significantly and positively associated with a positive outlook ($r = 0.383$, $p = 0.006$), whereas educational attainment, years of service, gender, and area of assignment showed no significant relationship. Overall, nurses demonstrated excellent soft skills and maintained a positive outlook despite workplace challenges. These findings emphasize the importance of competency-based education, supportive organizational cultures, resilience-building programs, ongoing professional development, and workplace wellness initiatives in sustaining quality nursing practice.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Resilience, Empathy, Stress, Burnout, Positive outlook, motivation optimism

INTRODUCTION

The healthcare environment is increasingly characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, requiring nurses to adapt to rapid changes, workplace challenges, and evolving patient care demands. In today's educational and professional settings, success depends not only on academic achievement and technical competence but also on soft skills and a positive attitude. Soft skills, including communication, empathy, teamwork, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving, enable nurses to interact effectively, perform their roles, and respond to workplace challenges. Likewise, a positive attitude reflects an

individual's mindset, values, behavior, and willingness to learn, contributing to improved productivity, resilience, and professional relationships.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to promote awareness of the soft skills and attitude of a nurse in a tertiary hospital in dealing with stressors and challenges in the workplace. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, years in service, and their area of assignment?
2. What is the level of nurses' soft skills qualities in terms of communication skills, empathy and compassion, and teamwork and collaboration?
3. What is the level of nurses' positive outlook in a challenging workplace in terms of optimism, resilience, stress management, and adaptability?
4. What is the level of nurses' emotional intelligence in terms of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and empathy?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the level of nurses' soft skills quality and the degree of importance of a positive outlook when grouped according to profile?
6. Based on the findings, what is an awareness program that can be developed?

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused on nurses' awareness of soft skills and their relevance to professional nursing practice. It aims to determine nurses' level of awareness of communication, empathy, teamwork, leadership, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and professionalism, and examine how these influence communication, teamwork, professional attitude, and quality patient care. This study is limited to selected nurses in healthcare institutions and uses a structured questionnaire to assess soft skills awareness and its application in clinical practice. It excludes other factors, such as clinical competence, salary, workload, and hospital policies, unless directly related to soft skills awareness. The study is also limited to the designated data collection period and relies on self-reported responses, reflecting nurses' current awareness rather than long-term behavioral changes.

Review of Related Literature

According to Laari et al. (2024), these competencies encompass intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities, creativity, professionalism, and communication skills that enhance nursing care and patient satisfaction. While hard and soft skills complement each other, soft skills are considered essential because they strengthen the human aspect of nursing care. Awareness of soft skills has also become a priority in nursing education. Azzouzi and Gantare (2022) reported that nursing schools increasingly use simulation, case studies, role-playing, reflective learning, and group activities to develop communication, teamwork, decision-making, and confidence, with simulation identified as one of the most effective approaches. Studies further show that greater awareness of soft skills improves nursing performance and workplace outcomes. Atalla et al. (2024) found that communication, teamwork, and emotional intelligence promote motivation, adaptability, professional effectiveness, and positive workplace relationships. Likewise, Song et al. (2024) identified communication

professionalism, teamwork, critical thinking, and accountability as essential, recommending structured assessment tools and behavioral indicators to effectively evaluate these skills

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the theories of Hildegard Peplau, Jean Watson, and Patricia Benner, which emphasize the importance of interpersonal relationships, caring behaviors, and professional competence in nursing practice. Together, these theories support the idea that awareness of soft skills is essential for delivering effective, compassionate, and quality patient care.

Conceptual Framework

The study is anchored on the Input–Process–Output (IPO) Model. The input consists of nurses' awareness of essential soft skills, including communication, empathy, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, and professionalism. The process involves recognizing and applying these skills in clinical practice through effective communication, teamwork, decision-making, and professional attitude. The output is improved communication, collaboration, professional attitude, quality patient care, enhanced nursing performance, and better patient outcomes. The framework emphasizes that greater awareness and application of soft skills lead to more effective nursing practice.

METHODOLOGY

This study will use a purposive sampling design to select the respondents. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are chosen based on specific characteristics relevant to the objectives of the study. The respondents will be staff nurses currently employed in the selected institution and directly involved in clinical and healthcare-related activities.

Research Design

This study uses a descriptive quantitative correlational research design. The descriptive method determines nurses' level of awareness of soft skills, including communication, empathy, teamwork, adaptability, and professionalism. A structured questionnaire collects quantitative data, which are analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. The correlational design examines the relationship between respondents' demographic characteristics and their awareness of soft skills without manipulating the variables.

Research Steps

The study was conducted in a tertiary hospital, which is considered an appropriate setting because it has an accessible population of nurses with healthcare education and clinical experience. The site provides a suitable environment for efficient data collection and the assessment of nurses' awareness of soft skills.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The researcher-developed questionnaire was content-validated by senior nurses, clinical instructors, and research specialists to ensure its relevance, clarity, and alignment with

the study objectives. After revisions, it was pilot-tested among respondents with similar characteristics to assess item effectiveness and completion time. The sample size was determined as 10% of the total population using the selected sampling technique to ensure adequate representation.

Data Analysis Methods

The reliability of the questionnaire will be assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable. Items with low reliability may be revised or removed. If applicable, construct validity will be established by organizing questionnaire items according to soft-skills dimensions, such as communication, teamwork, empathy, leadership, and professionalism, to ensure alignment with the study's theoretical framework.

Research Hypotheses and Validation

The questionnaire underwent content validation by a panel of experts composed of a senior nurse, clinical instructor or nursing educator, research methodologist, and grammar expert. They evaluated the questionnaire for relevance, clarity, comprehensiveness, structure, and language, and their recommendations were incorporated into the final version. The instrument also underwent face validation by selected nurses to assess readability and comprehensibility. After revisions, it was pilot-tested among respondents similar to the target participants to identify weaknesses, estimate completion time, and evaluate item performance.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This study focused on nurses' awareness of soft skills and their relevance to professional nursing practice. Specifically, it aims to determine nurses' level of awareness of communication, empathy, teamwork, leadership, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and professionalism, and examine how this awareness influences communication effectiveness, teamwork and collaboration, professional attitude, and quality of patient care. The researcher will ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. All responses will remain confidential and will be used solely for academic and research purposes. Collected data will be stored securely and accessed only by the researcher and authorized personnel. No participant will be subjected to coercion, discrimination, or undue pressure. The questionnaire will also contain respectful, non-offensive, and appropriate items

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings showed that nursing education and clinical exposure significantly developed essential soft skills. No significant relationship was found between soft skills and demographic characteristics, while age was significantly associated with a positive outlook. A significant positive relationship between soft skills and positive outlook indicated that stronger soft skills were associated with greater resilience, optimism, and effectiveness in challenging healthcare environments.

SUMMARY

Findings showed that respondents strongly agreed that academic preparation and clinical exposure developed essential soft skills. Nurses also demonstrated a highly positive

outlook. No significant relationship was found between soft skills and demographic characteristics, while age was significantly related to positive outlook. A significant positive relationship between soft skills and positive outlook indicated that stronger soft skills promote resilience, motivation, and optimism in challenging healthcare environments.

CONCLUSIONS

Respondents demonstrated advanced soft skills and a highly positive outlook. No significant relationship was found between soft skills and demographic characteristics, while age was significantly associated with a positive outlook. A significant positive relationship was identified between nurses' soft skills and positive outlook, highlighting the importance of strengthening interpersonal competencies to enhance resilience, adaptability, and effective nursing practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nurses should continue developing their soft skills, resilience, emotional intelligence, and positive outlook through lifelong learning and professional development. Nurse managers and hospital administrators should promote supportive work environments, wellness programs, and competency-based training. Nursing educators and clinical instructors should strengthen the integration of soft skills into the curriculum through simulation, reflective learning, and mentoring. Academic institutions and professional organizations should support continuous competency development, while future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies using larger and more diverse samples.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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