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THE EFFECT OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM ON NURSE INTERNS' SELF EFFICACY

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Abstract

Background: Communication is a basic function of human beings, and it could affect nurse interns' self-efficacy. The aim ***of the study was*** to assess the effect of a communication skills training program for nurse interns on their self-efficacy. ***Subjects and methods***: **Setting:** The study was conducted at Al-Azher University hospitals. **Design:** A one-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental study design was used to carry out the study. **Subjects:** 81 nurse interns. **Tools: Data** were collected using three tools: a self-administered questionnaire that included a knowledge questionnaire, a communication skill observation checklist, and a nursing self-efficacy scale. ***Results***: The studied nurse interns' ages ranged from 23 to 25 years, and all of them were female. Level of knowledge related to communication improved from 44.4% at pre to 91.4% post, and 87.7% at follow-up intervention phase ($p<0.001$). The level of nurse interns' communication skills with patients improved from 22.2% at pre to 81.5% at post and 74.1% at the at the follow-up intervention phase ($p<0.001$). The total level of nurse interns' communication skills with the health care team improved from 23.5% at pre-intervention to 84% at post-intervention and 77.8% at follow-up intervention ($p<0.001$). Level of nurse interns' self-efficacy improved from low level at pre to high level at post and follow-up intervention phase ($p<0.001$). In multivariate analysis, the intervention was a positive predictor of the knowledge score, and this was a positive predictor of the communication skills and nursing self-efficacy scores. ***Conclusion:*** The training program in communication skills is effective in improving nurse interns' knowledge, communication skills, and nursing self-efficacy. ***Recommendations:*** The study recommends the application of the developed program to all nurse interns in the study settings every internship year.

Keywords: Communication Skills, Self-Efficacy, Nurse Interns.

INTRODUCTION

Communication skills may take a lifetime to master, if indeed anyone can ever claim to have mastered them. However, there are numerous simple things you can do to improve your communication skills and ensure that nurse interns can effectively send and receive information. Communication skills are the most sought-after soft skills, facilitating the professional development of nurse interns [1].

Communication skills in nursing refer to a nurse intern's ability to write and communicate clearly and convincingly when dealing with patients, families, doctors, and clinical staff. Nurse interns communicate important and potentially life-saving information to doctors. And also tell patients about diagnostics, treatments, prevention, prognosis, and rehabilitation.

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Nurse interns also write accurate health records and descriptions of patients' conditions. Some nursing programs require aspiring nurse interns to take communication and interpersonal skills courses as part of their training and education [2].

A large portion of a nurse intern's workweek is spent in communication with physicians, patients, and other healthcare providers. Strong communication skills are required for precise and compassionate patient care. Understanding and developing written and verbal communication skills is essential for nurse interns who want to pursue a successful nursing profession [3]. Nurse interns are novice nurses who have passed or have not passed the nursing licensing exam. Final-year integrated education system nursing interns spend their year in clinical experience. Nurse interns are health care practitioners who participate in a learning experience under the supervision of a more experienced clinician [4].

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to generate that impact by executing a specific task or activity connected to that competency. Moreover, self-efficacy is linked to an individual's belief in their capacity to accomplish a task. It is the conviction that one is capable of functioning in a particular style in order to achieve specific goals. Furthermore, there is the belief that one can control a situation and achieve a beneficial outcome. Self-efficacy is an essential idea in the positive psychology of nursing interns. In addition, self-efficacy improves the role of the nurse. Positive conduct is more likely to be repeated when self-efficacy is high, as nursing interns prefer feeling successful and want to repeat the experience [5].

Increasing self-efficacy may lead to more independence and confidence. A strong sense of practice and self-efficacy has been shown in studies to increase job satisfaction and the intention to stay in a career. If nursing interns had confidence in their talents, they would put forth their best effort in various circumstances. Nursing students and clinical nurses require high levels of self-efficacy. A low level of self-efficacy would prevent nursing interns from doing what is necessary for their patients. Nurse interns may understandably be reluctant to take on jobs if they are unsure of their ability to avoid making mistakes, given the current circumstances where nursing blunders can have disastrous effects [6].

Research Hypothesis:

Communication skills training program will affect staff nurses' self-efficacy.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

One group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental research design was conducted in Al-Hussein University Hospital and Sayed Galal University Hospital affiliated to Al-Azher University Hospitals in Cairo, Egypt, where the nurse interns were having their internship year. The study consisted of all nurse interns who will be enrolled in the internship year (2022-2023) at the aforementioned settings at the time of study. No inclusion or exclusion criteria were set, and no sampling was required since all of the nurse interns were included.

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Sample Size

The sample size is all the available nurse interns who were included, and the total number of (81) nurse interns was large enough to test the study hypothesis by demonstrating an expected improvement in nurse interns' knowledge and self-efficacy.

Tools

First tool: Communication Knowledge Questionnaire Sheet:

It was developed by the investigator based on an extensive review of relevant literature*.* This questionnaire consists of two parts:

Part (1) personal and job characteristics:

This sheet collects data about nurse interns' age, gender, residence, marital status, pre-university education, grade degree average, internship training setting, previous employment in health care, participation in the delivery of care in a health care setting, and previous attendance of training programs about communication and self-efficacy.

Part (2) Knowledge questionnaire sheet:

It was developed by the researcher based on an extensive review of relevant literature [7–8]. It assessed nurse interns' knowledge about basic communication skills. It consists of 52 questions in the form of multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and true or false questions. The questionnaire covered areas of nurse interns' knowledge through ten dimensions:

- ✓ The concept of communication
- ✓ The process of communication
- ✓ The forms of communication
- ✓ The communication styles
- ✓ The barriers of communication
- ✓ The concept of communication skills
- ✓ Effective communication strategies
- ✓ Documentation skills
- ✓ Presentation skill
- ✓ Effective communication skills in clinical area

The researchers then followed a scale that was suitable for the study and its population. For the knowledge items, a correct response was scored 1 and the incorrect one was zero. For each area of knowledge, the scores of the items were summed up and the total divided by the number of items, giving a mean score for the knowledge. These scores were converted into a percent score that was considered satisfactory if the percent scores were 60% or more and unsatisfactory if they were less than 60% [9].

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Second tool: Nurse Interns' Communication Skills Observation Checklist:

It was originally developed by [9] and was modified by the researcher. It consists of two types of observation checklists, which include:

- Assessment of communication with health team members.
- Assessment of communication with patients.

The scale is composed of 34 questions that closely depend on two responses: one response was done, scored 1, and another response was not done, scored zero. For each response of the nurse intern, the scores of the items were summed up and the total divided by the number of items, giving a mean score for the observation checklist. These scores were converted into a percent score that was considered competent if the percent scores were 60% or more and incompetent if they were less than 60%.

Third tool: Nursing Self -Efficacy Scale:

It was developed by [10] and modified by the investigator. It examines the level of confidence of nurse interns who take care of patients in a clinical setting through five domains, including:

- Attaining clinical skill
- Assessment of patients
- Planning a care plan
- Implementation of care plan
- Evaluation of care plan

The scale is composed of 37 questions on a five-point Likert scale (agree, not sure, and disagree). The scoring system is designed as follows: "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" were scored 5 to 1, respectively. The totals of each of the five dimensions were calculated, and the sums of scores were converted into percent scores. The subjects were considered to have a high level of self-efficacy if the total percent score was above 75%, a moderate level if the study subject's total score ranged from 60 to 75%, and a low level if the score was less than 60% [10].

Reliability:

The reliability of the tools was tested using the designed questionnaires, and the same participants were reassessed after seven days. The results were consistent across all assessments. Measuring internal consistency using the Cronbach alpha coefficient revealed that it was high, as indicated in the following: The reliability of knowledge was 0.87, the observation checklist of communication skills was 0.88, and the nursing self-efficacy scale was 0.83.

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Fieldwork

- Once permission to proceed with the study was granted, data collection began, and the study was conducted in the following five phases:.
- ***Phase I (preliminary):*** The researcher met with all nurse interns to explain the purpose and nature of the study and get their consent to participate. Then, they were given the data collection forms along with instructions on how to fill them out. The researcher was present during the form filling to respond to any queries. The filled-out forms were handed back to the researcher to check for completeness. The collected data was considered the pretest. This phase lasted from the first to 20th of April 2023.
- ***Phase II (program planning):*** During this planning phase, the content of the training program was developed based on a review of the current and past literature, using textbooks, scientific articles in magazines, and internet searches, in addition to the results of the pretest assessment. Different educational methods were selected to suit the participant's needs and achieve the objectives and contents of the training program. It was aimed at providing participants with as much experience as possible. The suitable place and time were prepared for conducting the sessions based on consultation with the nursing director and study subjects' agreement. The training program schedule was prepared accordingly. It covered theoretical and practical aspects of communication skills. This phase lasted from the first to 20th of May 2023.
- ***Phase III (program implementation)***: The training program was implemented for the nurse interns in small groups. The nurse interns were divided into two groups. The program was implemented in nine sessions; each session lasted for 3 hours, for a total of 27 hours. The sessions were conducted three days per week for three weeks. The training sessions were scheduled from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. This phase lasted from the first to the end of June 2023.
- ***Phase IV (post program evaluation):*** The effect of the training program on head nurses' knowledge of communications skills as well as on their self-efficacy was evaluated through a posttest immediately after the end of the program implementation (June 2023). This was done using the same data collection forms as in the pretest.
- ***Phase V (follow-up)***: A follow-up test was repeated three months after the post-test assessment in September *2023* using the same data collection forms.

Statistical Design

Using computerized data entry and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 for statistical analysis of data, using descriptive statistics design in the presentation of data, which shows in the form of frequencies, percentages, and mean SD, The Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized for the detection of correlations between communication skills and nursing self-efficacy. Chi-square to assess the relationships between variables and their characteristics.

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The degree of significant results was:

- P. Value>0.05(Not Significant)
- P. Value≤0.05(significant)
- P. Value≤0.001(Highly Significant)

RESULTS

Results

Personal and Job Characteristics of Nurse Interns:

Regarding personal and job characteristics, show that 100% of the studied nurse interns were females. The great majority of them were single (77.8%), and 65.4% live in rural areas. The majority of the participants haven't received previous training on communication skills and self-efficacy (74.1% and 86.4%), respectively.

Total Level of nurse interns' Knowledge Regarding Communication throughout Intervention Phases:

According to the result in Figure 1, only 44.4% of the studied nurse interns had satisfactory knowledge about communication before the intervention. This increased to 91.4% post-intervention and slightly declined to 87.7% at the follow-up phase.

Total level of nurse interns' communication skills with a patient throughout intervention phases:

Following the implementation of the training program in Figure 2, review that only 22.2% of the studied nurse interns had competent communication skills with a patient before the intervention. This increased to 81.5% post-intervention and slightly declined to 74.1% at the follow-up phase.

Total level of nurse interns' communication skills with heath care team throughout intervention phases:

According to the result in Figure 3, only 23.5% of the studied nurse interns had competent communication skills with the health care team before the intervention. This increased to 84% post-intervention and slightly declined to 77.8% at the follow-up phase.

Total level of nurse interns' self-efficacy throughout intervention phases:

Figure 4 demonstrated that more than half of nurse interns had a low level of self-efficacy (64.2%) following the implementation of the training program. The percentage of nurse interns who had high levels increased at the post-intervention phase, reaching 46.19%, and decreased throughout the follow-up phase, reaching 42%. Also, there were highly statistically significant improvements in the self-efficacy of the studied nurse interns throughout the intervention phases regarding all nursing self-efficacy scales in the follow-up phase as compared to the pre-intervention phase.

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Correlations matrix between knowledge, communication skills, and nursing self-efficacy at post intervention phase:

In accordance with Table 2, there was a highly statistically significant positive correlation between nursing self-efficacy, knowledge, and nurse interns' communication skills with the health care team. Meanwhile, there are statistically significant strong positive correlations between nurse interns' communication skills with patients, knowledge, and nursing self-efficacy through the post-intervention phase.

Table 1: Personal and Job Characteristics of Nurse Interns in the study (n=81).

Personal and job data	No.	%
Age "years"		
19 < 23 years	13	16.0
23 < 25 years	68	84.0
Mean ±SD	23.44±1.24	
Gender		
Female	81	100.0
Male	0	0.0
Residence:		
Urban	28	34.6
Rural	53	65.4
Marital status:		
Single	63	77.8
Married	18	22.2
Pre university education:		
Secondary school	55	67.9
Nursing technical institute	26	32.1
Grade degree average		
Good	3	3.7
Very good	17	21.0
Excellent	61	75.3
Internship training setting:		
Al-Hussein University Hospital	40	49.4
Sayed Galal University Hospital	41	50.6
Pervious Employed in health care		
Yes	25	30.9
No	56	69.1
Participation in the delivery of care at a health care setting		
Yes	19	76.0
No	6	24.0
Attendance of training program about communication		
Yes	21	25.9
No	60	74.1
Attendance of training program about self-efficacy		
Yes	11	13.6
No	70	86.4

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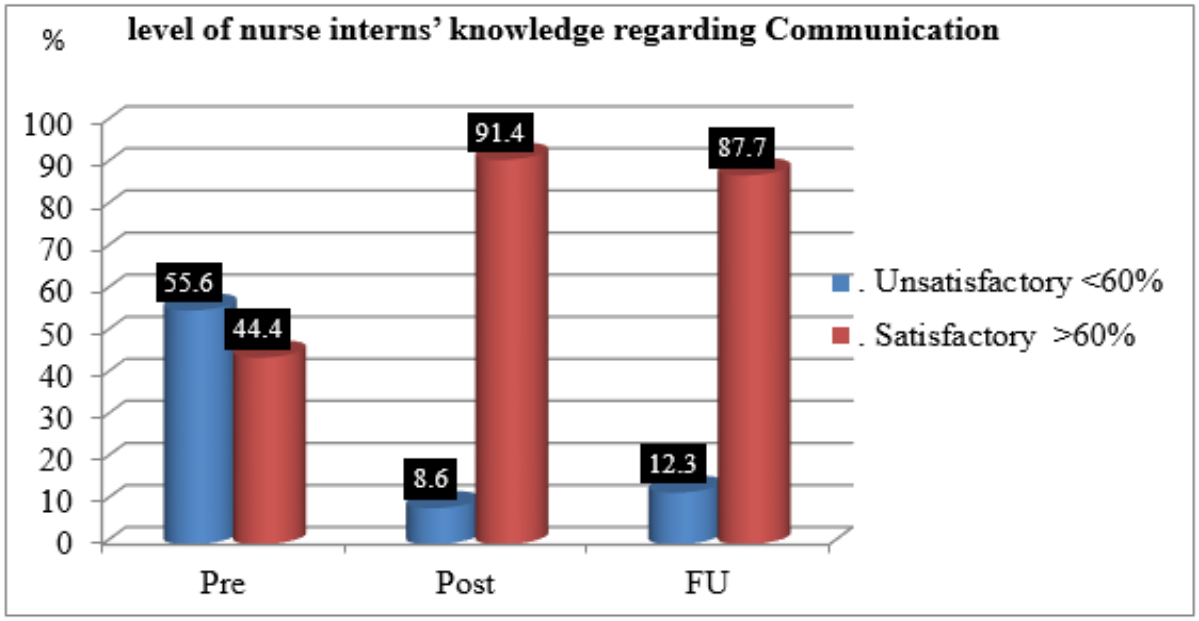

Figure 1: Total level of nurse interns' knowledge regarding communication throughout intervention phases (n=81)

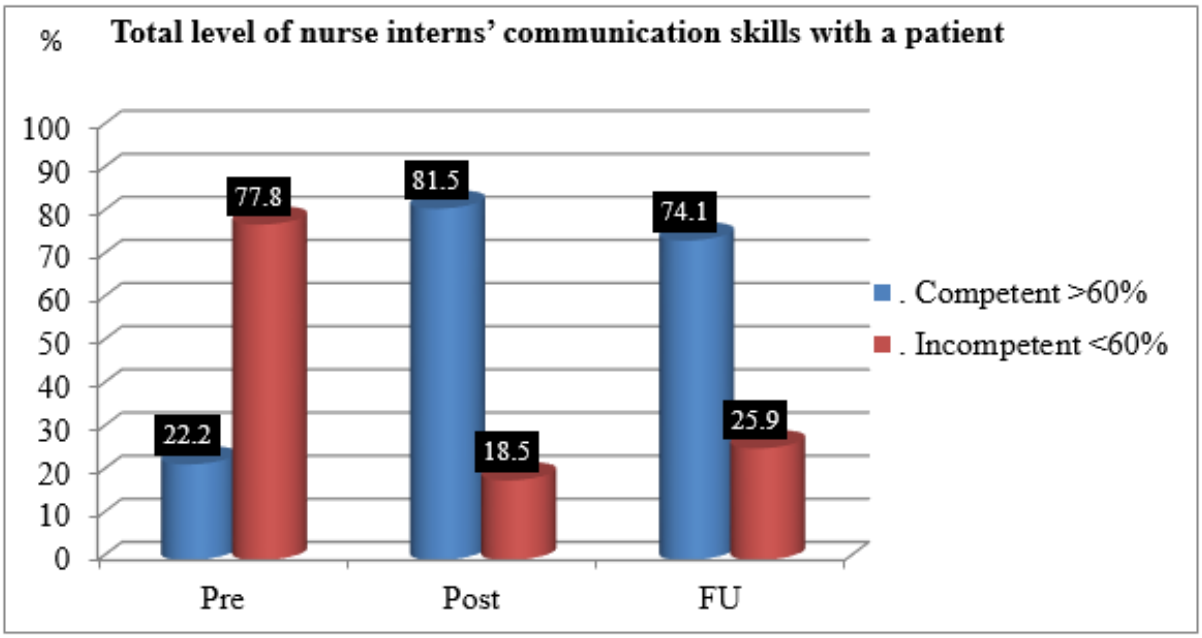

Figure 2: Total level of nurse interns' communication skills with a patient throughout intervention phases (n=81)

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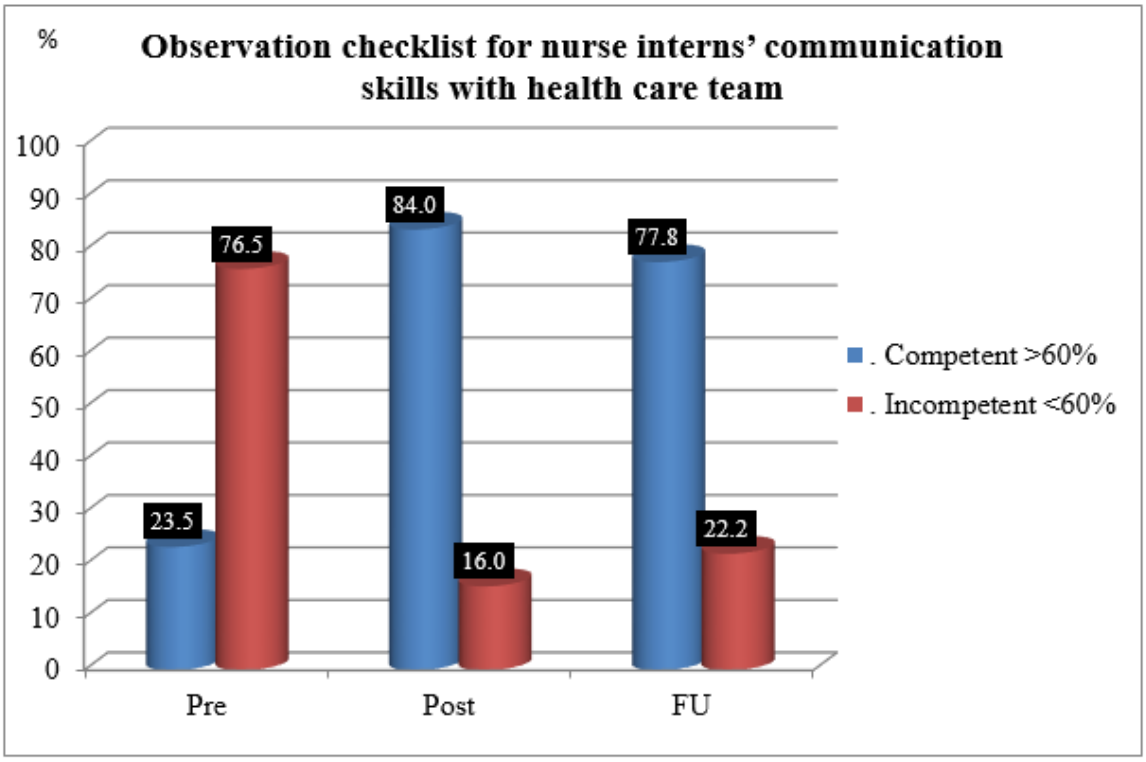

Figure 3: Total level of nurse interns' communication skills with heath care team throughout intervention phases (n=81).

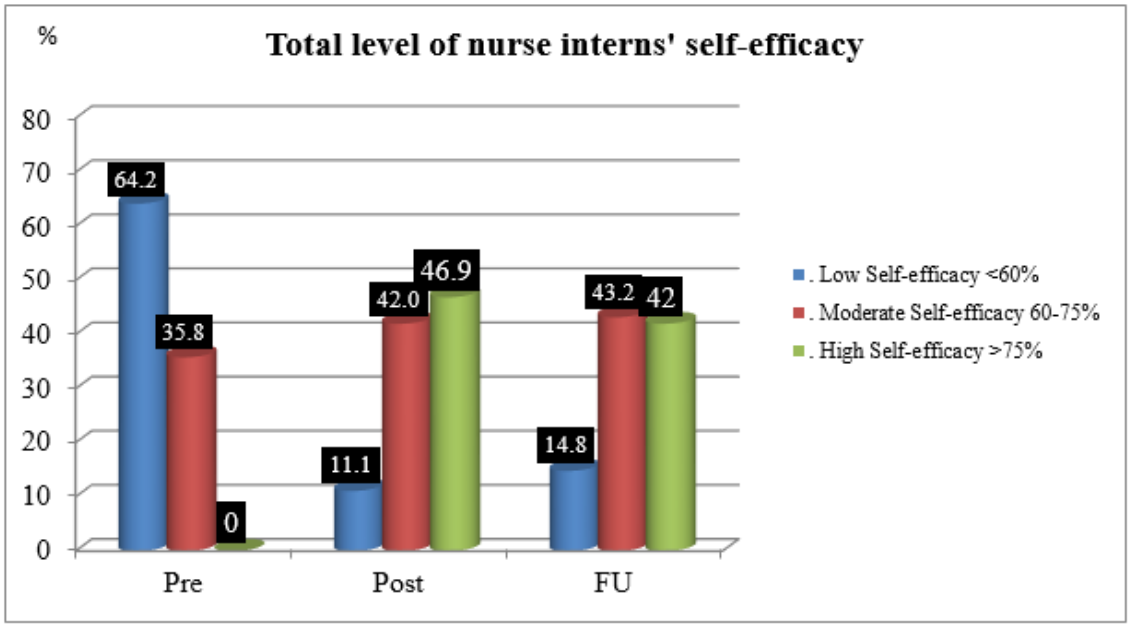

Figure 4: Total level of nurse interns' self-efficacy throughout intervention phases (n=81)

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Table 2: Correlations matrix between knowledge, communication skills, and nursing self-efficacy at post intervention phase:

		Spearman's rank correlation coefficient			
		Total Knowledge	nurse interns' communication skills with patients	nurse interns' communication skills with health care team	Nursing self-efficacy
Total Knowledge	p-value				
	r-value				
nurse interns' communication skills with patients	p-value	0.415			
	r-value	0.031*			
nurse interns' communication skills with health care team	p-value	0.454	0.429		
	r-value	0.019*	0.027*		
Nursing self-efficacy	p-value	0.531	0.367	0.530	
	r-value	<0.001**	0.039*	<0.001**	

(**) Statistically significant at p<0.01. r Pearson correlation

DISCUSSION

Communication skills are an instrument that can enable the understanding and processing of information by the patient during the health care process through empathy, informed collaborative choice, and patient involvement. When communication skills are centered on the patient, it leads health professionals to identify demands and plan treatment through knowledge and the provision of a therapeutic and supportive environment for shared decision-making, which enables greater adherence to treatment and changes in behavior [1].

Concerning the total level of nurse interns' knowledge regarding communication throughout the intervention phases, the current study result demonstrates that, at the post-intervention phase, highly statistically significant satisfaction levels were noticed in total knowledge about communication among the studied nurse interns. Furthermore, at the follow-up phase, the level of satisfaction remained statistically significantly higher in comparison to the pre-intervention phase. This result may be due to a lack of nurse interns' knowledge and experience regarding communication competence, but this level improved at the post-intervention phase and slightly declined at the follow-up phase due to the effect of the training program, which improved their communication skills and nurse interns' needs to communicate appropriately and give clear information to the patient.

This result was in the same line with [11] **Abo-Elyzeed et al. (2020)**, who conducted a study entitled "Effect of Educational Program on Nursing Communication Skills Used with Hospitalized Patients" and showed that there were statistically significant differences between before and after the training program regarding all items of students' knowledge about communication skills.

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Concerning the total level of nurse interns' communication skills with a patient throughout the intervention phases, the current study result showed that more than two-thirds of the studied nurse interns had incompetent communication skills with a patient before the intervention. This increased to the majority of them post-intervention and slightly declined to less than three-quarters of them at the follow-up phase. This result may be due to the positive effects of the program, such as the knowledge gained from the program and the observation of nurse interns' practice of effective communication skills.

This result was supported by [12] in a study entitled "Effect of a reflective training program on nurse interns' critical thinking disposition and communication competency" and reported that there was a statistically significant improvement in the total score of communication competence after the program application.

As regard the total level of nurse interns' communication skills with the health care team throughout the intervention phases, the current study result showed that less than one-quarter of the studied nurse interns had competent communication skills with the health care team at pre-intervention. While the total level increased to most of them post-intervention and slightly declined to more than three-quarters of them at the follow-up phase, This result may be due to the effective communication strategies with which nurse interns are trained during intervention phases to deal with workload and stress among the health care team due to their responsibility toward patient care.

As regard the total level of nurse interns' communication skills with the health care team throughout the intervention phases, the current study result showed that less than one quarter of the studied nurse interns had competent communication skills with the health care team at pre-intervention. While the total level increased to the majority of them post-intervention and slightly declined to more than three-quarters of them at the follow-up phase, This result may be due to the effective communication strategies with which nurse interns are trained during intervention phases to deal with workload and stress among the health care team due to their responsibility toward patient care.

This result was supported by [13], who applied a study entitled "Effectiveness of handoff educational program on nurses interns' knowledge and communication competence" and reported that there were statistically significant differences in nurses interns mean scores regarding most of the dimensions of handoff communication competencies at follow-up intervention, and the majority of nurse interns had a high level of communication competence relative to post-intervention, while at pre-intervention the communication competence level was low.

Concerning the total level of nurse interns' self-efficacy throughout the intervention phases, the current study result revealed that more than half of nurse interns had a low level of self-efficacy. The percentage of nurse interns who had high levels increased at the post-intervention phase, reaching less than half throughout the follow-up phase. Also, there were highly statistically significant improvements in the self-efficacy of the the self-efficacy of the studied nurse interns throughout the intervention phases regarding all

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nursing self-efficacy scales in the follow-up phase as compared to the pre-intervention phase.

This result may be due to the implementation of a communication skills training program that increases empathy and simplicity when nurse interns communicate with patients and family members, gain confidence in the recognized and managed psychological status of patients and their families, and have motivation to achieve competent nursing care. In addition, nurse interns work as liaisons with patients and the medical team, providing accurate information about patient conditions and complaints. So that conflict and stressors decrease among them and establish therapeutic relations between patients and medical team.

This result was in line with [14], who conducted a study entitled "Communication and self-efficacy competency of Nurses in Emergency Departments: A Multicenter Study" and reported that levels of communication competencies and communication self-efficacies of the nurses in the emergency departments were approximately high. Due to their activity and their role in the front line of the organization, higher levels of communication competency and self-efficacy are expected.

Concerning the correlation matrix between knowledge, communication skills, and nursing self-efficacy at the post-intervention phase, the current study result showed that there was a highly statistically significant positive correlation between nursing self-efficacy, knowledge, and nurse interns' communication skills with the health care team ($r = 0.531$). Meanwhile, there are statistically significant strong positive correlations between nurse interns' communication skills with patients, knowledge, and nursing self-efficacy through the post-intervention phase.

The significant positive impact of the present study training intervention could be attributed to two reasons related to this intervention. The first reason is the program content, which was mainly guided by the data collected during the assessment phase and tended to fill the knowledge gaps identified among the nurse interns. The second reason is the process of training, which was based on adult learning educational approaches, allowing for more interactive and participative learning.

This result was supported by [15], who conducted a study entitled "Effect of Training Program on Self-Efficacy on Nurses' Innovative Work Behaviors" and reported that there was a highly statistically significant difference among pre-, immediate post-program, and follow-up of the knowledge test and skills of nurses, and there was a general improvement in nurses' knowledge and skills about self-efficacy as compared to pre-course knowledge and skills.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Gathering groups of nurse interns for the intervention sessions and making the necessary preparations for time and location might be challenging at El Hussien University Hospital. Additionally, the culture and education of nurse interns in an Azhari environment involve dealing only with females throughout their school and academic years, which makes them

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shy about dealing with male patients, their families, and also male members of the health care team in the training setting.

CONCLUSION

Most of the nurse interns in the study setting have satisfactory knowledge of communication skills, and there is improvement in the total communication skills of the nurse interns, who are competent in communication skills with patients and the health care team and also have a high level of self-efficacy in the post-intervention phase. The research findings concluded that there was a highly statistically positive effect of the communication skill training program on nurse interns' self-efficacy. These findings support the research hypothesis that a communication skills training program will improve nurse interns' self-efficacy.

Based on the results of our study, which propose the following recommendations: the continuity of the training program must be an element of the internship year to be considered for good results in the long term. Integrate communication skills courses into the nursing curriculum to increase nurse interns' development. And also, educational workshops and seminars should be conducted regularly for nurse interns on how to develop and improve their communication skills and self-efficacy. Besides that, motivate nurse interns to gain new skills and stay updated by providing opportunities for them.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

The official letter was signed by the dean of nursing faculty and contains the title and goal of the study. This letter was directed to the manager of the faculty of nursing affiliated with Al Azher University. The researcher interviewed the manager of the administration department to discuss the study's aim and procedures and asked for their cooperation. The date of the ethical approval was 7.3.2023, and the number was 24.05.297.

Consent to Participate

Before including the nurse interns in the study, their consent was requested. They received assurance that all information collected would be kept private and used only for study**.**

Authorship

Conceptualizing, protocol and tool preparation, implementation of the intervention, data collection and analysis, and paper writing were all helped with by SA-E. The tool and protocol were designed in part by HA-A and SA, who also refined and revised the original draft, edited the manuscript, and supervised the project.

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