

Assessing Levels of Competences, Knowledge and Attitudes of Nursing Internship Students Regarding Elderly Care

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Abstract

Background: Nowadays, demographic shifting in the growth of elderly people becomes a challenge that faces the whole world, as it is associated with aging consequences, multiple comorbidities and cognitive impairment. Therefore, elderly needs comprehensive competent skilled nursing care. **Aim** of the study was to assess levels of competences, knowledge and attitudes of nursing internship students toward elderly care. **Design:** A descriptive study design. **Setting:** This study was conducted at Tanta University Hospitals through Internship Follow up Unit of Nursing Faculty. **Study subjects:** All nursing internship students (345) whom affiliated to Tanta Nursing Faculty in the internship year 2021/2022. **Tool :** A structured questionnaire tool including personal data, Nurse Competence in Care Home Scale (NCCHS), Knowledge about Older patients Quiz for nurses (KOP-Q) and Kogan's Attitude Towards Old People Scale (KAOP)KAOP was used. **Results:** Two thirds 66.7% of nursing internship students had un- satisfactory competences regarding nursing care of elders. 87.2% of them had negative attitude toward elderly care. However, more than half of them (60.6%) had good knowledge score. There were significant negative correlation between total attitude, competencies and knowledge scores. **Conclusion and recommendation:** Although more than half of nursing internship students had good knowledge score, about two thirds of them had unsatisfactory competence and the majority of them had negative attitude toward elderly care. **Therefore,** Competencies, should be incorporated into specific, stand-alone courses focusing on care of the older adult, as well as integrated throughout the curriculum with emphasize on building positive attitude towards caring and working with elders.

Keywords: Competencies, Elderly, Nursing internship students, Knowledge, Attitude

Introduction

Nowadays, the growth of elderly people becomes important and global issue that faces the whole world. The rate of increase of the proportion of the elderly is higher in low- and middle-income countries than in high income countries ^(1,2). According to WHO, the proportion of the world's population over 60 years will nearly double from 12% to 22% between 2015 and 2050, the number of people aged 60 years and older was outnumber children younger than 5 years at 2020. In

2050, 80% of older people will be living in low- and middle-income countries. The pace of population ageing is much faster than in the past. All countries face major challenges to ensure that their health and social systems are ready to make the most of this demographic shift ⁽³⁾.

With aging, there are significant declines in physical and mental capacity that limit elderly ability to care for themselves and to participate in society. Aging is characterized

by the presence of comorbidities, which means that the elderly experience of multiple (two or more) chronic conditions at the same time. Common conditions in older age include hearing loss, cataracts and refractive errors, diabetes, depression, back and neck pain and osteoarthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and dementia^(3,4).

Old age is also accompanied by the appearance of several complex health states commonly called geriatric syndromes. They are often the consequence of multiple underlying factors and include frailty, falls, urinary incontinence, delirium and pressure ulcers. As a result of that, the elderly administers more medication than clinically indicated or consume several medications this is called poly-pharmacy. This is a normal condition that increases among elder population⁽³⁻⁶⁾.

As a result of the aging consequences, the presence of comorbidities and cognitive impairment among elderly, the elder people need non-discriminatory access to high quality essential health services and nursing care that include promotion, prevention, curative, rehabilitative, palliative and end of life care. High quality of care requires the community health nurses to possess the competence needed to meet complex health care demands of the elderly. This will help elderly to experience health, well-being and to enjoy their human rights^(4,7).

Furthermore, nursing expertise and leaders in gerontology nursing see that the rapid growth of the aging population require a unique need to ensure that nurses have sufficient capabilities in geriatric care. Therefore,

specific core competencies are needed for gerontological nursing. As competence in elderly care doesn't mean providing ordinary care but it means functional adequacy and capacity to integrate skills, knowledge, attitudes and values into specific situation of practice during providing elderly care⁽⁸⁻¹⁰⁾. Therefore, attention was given to educate and train nursing students in elderly care competencies during their course of study and to evaluate nursing internship students and graduates for their competencies regarding elderly care. Also, there is a need for continuing education and training on elderly care competencies to ensure sustainability in providing elderly care⁽⁷⁻¹⁰⁾.

It is essential for nurses caring for elderly to be knowledgeable about common physical, social and psychological problems among elderly and its management. As most of elderly health problems need long term care, psychosocial treatment and hospitalization. In addition to that, they should have willingness for caring of elderly, positive attitude toward elderly care and to their contribution in society. Therefore, nurses can provide care to elderly with high quality under sufficient level of competencies⁽¹¹⁻¹⁵⁾. Geriatric nurses should have different elderly care competencies including ethical practice, network and cooperation, observation, communication and interaction, clinical nursing, safety, health and holistic well-being, group guidance and activities and leadership and development competencies^(7,10,16,17). So, it is important to ensure that our nursing graduates have equipped with needed competences, knowledge and attitudes to provide high

quality optimal elderly care and if they need more training or if they need to learn more theoretical basis regarding elders' care.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to assess levels of competences, knowledge and attitudes of nursing internship students' regarding elderly care.

Research questions

What are the levels of competences, knowledge and attitudes, the nursing internship students' have regarding old people and elderly care?

Subjects and Methods

Study design

Descriptive study design was used in this study.

Setting of the study

This study was conducted at Tanta University Hospitals through the Internship Follow up Unit of Tanta Nursing Faculty.

Subjects

All Nursing internship students (345) whom affiliated to Tanta Nursing Faculty in the internship year 2021/2022 and agreed to participate were included in this study. Their age ranged from 23 year to 25 year. Of them 263 were females and 82 were males.

Tools of the study: Structured questionnaire tool was used in this study: it included four parts

Part 1: Personal data of students including age and sex.

Part2: Nursing internship students' competences regarding nursing care of elders.

In this part, the researchers adopted The Nurse Competence in Care Home Scale (NCCHS), which is an instrument that developed by Kiljunen Q in Finland 2018 ⁽¹⁸⁾, to measure elderly care nursing professionals' self-assessed competence. It is a comprehensive scale that covers mostly all competences that needed to acquire for elderly care.

The scale includes 81 items. A four-point Likert type scale was used to determine the level of agreement on the statements. Response of 'very competent' (3), 'competent' (2), 'slightly competent' (1) and 'not at all competent' (0).

The scale consists of seven subscales as follow: -

- **Ethical practice competences** (9 items) (score ranged from 0-27)

-**Observation, communication, interaction competences** (11 items) (score ranged from 0-33)

- **Networks and cooperation competences** (10 items) (score ranged from 0-30)

- **Clinical nursing competences** (18 items) (score ranged from 0-54)

- **Safety, health and holistic well-being competences** (19 items) (score ranged from 0-57)

- **Group guidance and activities competences** (4 items) (score ranged from 0-12)

-**Leadership and development competences** (10items) (score ranged from 0-30)

The total score of the overall competences ranged from 0 – 243

- Total competences score was classified as follows

- Satisfactory competences $\geq 75\%$ of the total competence score.
- Unsatisfactory competences $< 75\%$ of the total competence score.

Part 3: Nursing internship students' knowledge regarding elderly care

In this part, the researchers adopted The Knowledge about Older patients Quiz for nurses (KOP-Q) which developed and validated by Jeroen Dikken 2017⁽¹⁹⁾ to assess registered nurses in the hospital setting, first-, final years bachelor of nursing students and nursing specialists' knowledge levels regarding older patients. The reliability of the final set of knowledge items was excellent (Cronbach's alpha = 0.94).

It is composed of 30 statements such as 'For older people, bed rest is important to enhance recovery' and 'Older people need less fluid because they exercise less'. The subjects responded by stating whether a statement is true (T) or false (F). Correct answer (True) was taken (1) and incorrect answer (False) was taken (0). The total score ranged from 0 to 30.

The Total score of knowledge was classified as

- Good→ $>75\%$ of the total score
- Fair→65-75% of the total score
- Poor→ $<65\%$ of the total score

Part 4: Nursing internship students' attitudes toward older people

The Chinese version of Kogan's Attitude Towards Old People Scale (KAOP)KAOP, which was developed by Kogan in 1961,⁽²⁰⁾

was adopted by the researchers to measure subjects' attitude towards the older people. This scale used and validated in many studies. The Cronbach's α is 0.82 for the total scale, indicating that it is a fully reliable instrument⁽²¹⁾. It contains 24 items, with 12 negative and 12 positive statements. The total scores for KAOP ranged from 0 to 48.

The subjects gave their answer in three -point Likert-type scale, ranging between "agree", "unsure", "disagree". Nurse who was responded by " Agree answer " was given a score (Two) " Unsure answer" was given a score (one) and the nurse who was responded" Disagree answer " was given a score (zero). The scores on the statement presented negatively were reversed to estimate the total score. The high score refers to the best attitude.

The Total score of nurses' attitudes was classified as follow

- Positive attitude was $\geq 60\%$ of the total score.
- Negative attitude was $< 60\%$ of total score.

Method

- Administrative process

An official permission to carry out the study was obtained from the Dean of the faculty of nursing, Tanta University and the coordinators of the internship students in the faculty and hospital.

- Ethical consideration

Respondents' anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. On the first page of the online questionnaire, respondents were clearly informed about the background and objectives of the study. The submission of the answered

survey was considered as consent to participate in the study.

-Validity and reliability

The translated tools was submitted to five experts in the field of nursing and medicine for testing the face and content validity. The experts' questionnaires sheet used four points Likert scale ranging from strongly relevant score (4) to strongly not relevant score (1). Validity of the questionnaires based on experts' opinions were calculated and found to be= (97.9%). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the knowledge, competences and attitude questionnaire after translating to Arabic language were (0.96, 0.85 and 0.72) in our sample, indicating acceptable internal consistency

- Data collection

- The items of the study questionnaire were prepared on Google form as two parts; part one for competences and the other part for knowledge and attitudes.
- The researchers meet with internship students through their group on WhatsApp which developed by internship follow up unit in the faculty. The studied subjects were asked to participate in the study after establishing trusting relationship and explaining the aim of the study.
- The links of the questionnaire were raised on the group to be answered by the subjects
- Data was collected during January and February 2022.

- Statistical analysis

The collected data was organized, tabulated and statistically analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 25. Frequencies of correct

knowledge answers and various attitudes and competencies were described. Correlation between variables was evaluated using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Significance was adopted at $P < 0.05$ for interpretation of results of tests of significance.

Results

Table (1) illustrates the distribution of the studied Nursing internship students according to their mean and standard deviation of the total competences regarding nursing care of elders. It is observed that nursing internship students had the highest mean (39.94 ± 8.920 and 38.88 ± 8.911) in relation to safety, health and holistic well-being competencies and clinical nursing competencies respectively. On the other hand, the smallest mean (8.46 ± 2.435) was observed in relation to group guidance and activities competencies. Meanwhile observation, communication and interaction competencies and networks and cooperation competencies means were (24.45 ± 5.047 and 22.06 ± 4.581) respectively.

Table (2) reveals the distribution of the studied Nursing internship students according to their total scores of competences regarding nursing care of elders. It illustrates that about half and more than half (45.5 & 55.1) of the studied nursing internship students had satisfactory competence regarding nursing care of the elder in relation to 'ethical practice' and 'observation, communication, and interaction' competence respectively. On opposite, about two thirds of them (61.7%, 65.5%, 66.7%, 62.6% and 67.8%) had un satisfactory competences in relation to networks and

cooperation competence', 'clinical nursing competence', 'safety, health and holistic well-being competence', Group guidance and activities competence, and in the 'leadership and development' competence respectively. Regarding total competence score of the studied nursing internship students, two thirds (66.7%) of them had unsatisfactory competence.

Table (3) and Figure (1) shows the distribution of the studied Nursing internship students according to their total knowledge score regarding elderly care. It illustrates that more than half (60.6%) of them had good knowledge score about elderly care while slightly less than one quarter (24.3%) of them had fair knowledge score and only (15.1%) had poor knowledge score with a mean of 22.55 ± 3.269 .

Table (4) illustrates the distribution of the studied Nursing internship students according to their attitude toward older people. It reveals that about two thirds of them (64.1%, 65.5% and 64.9 %) agreed that, it would probably be better if most people lived in residential units with younger people, most old people bore others by their insistence on talking "about the good old days", one of the most interesting and entertaining qualities of most old people is their accounts of their past experiences and most old people make excessive demands for love and reassurance than anyone else respectively.

Also, more than half (55.4%, 51.0%, 52.2%, 55.4%, 57.1%, 53% and 59.1%) of nursing internship students agreed that most old people can generally be counted on to maintain a clean, attractive home, people

grown wiser with the coming of old age, you can count on finding a nice residential neighborhood when there is a sizeable number of old people living in it, there are a few exceptions, but in general most old people are pretty much alike, it is evident that most old people are very different from one another, Most old people seem quite clean and neat in their personal appearance and most old people are constantly complaining about the behavior of the younger generation respectively.

In the contrary, less than half (42.9%, 47.5% and 40.6%) of the studied Nursing internship students didn't agree that most old people are as easy to understand as younger people; they're really not different from anybody else, most old people get set in their ways and most old people tend to let their homes become shabby and unattractive and are unable to change and respectively.

Table (5) and figure (2) show the distribution of the studied nursing internship students according to their total attitude score toward elderly care. It is observed that, the highest percentage (87.2%) of the studied nursing internship students have negative attitude toward elderly care while only (12.8%) have positive attitude with a mean of 24.78 ± 3.586 .

Table (6) shows the correlation between total scores of different competencies among nursing internship students regarding elderly care. It illustrates that there was a significant positive correlation between all different competencies of elderly care with each other as ($p= 0.000$).

Table (7) represents the correlation between total competencies, knowledge and attitude scores among nursing internship students regarding elderly care. It was observed that, total attitude score was significantly negatively correlated with total

competencies score and total knowledge score as ($p= 0.000$ and 0.033 respectively). While total competencies score was significantly positively correlated with total knowledge score.

Table (1) Mean and standard deviation of the total competences regarding nursing care of elders of the studied Nursing internship students

Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
	M	SD
- Total of ethical practice competencies	21.06	3.955
- Total of networks and cooperation competencies	22.06	4.581
- Total of observation, communication and interaction competencies	24.45	5.047
- Total clinical nursing competencies	38.88	8.911
- Total of safety, health and holistic well-being competencies	39.94	8.920
- Total group guidance and activities competencies	8.46	2.435
- Total leadership and development competencies score	20.92	4.742
total competence score	176.19	34.190

Table (2) Distribution of the studied Nursing internship students according to their total scores of competences regarding nursing care of elders.

Competences	Studied Nursing internship students (n=345)			
	satisfactory competence		unsatisfactory competence	
	N	%	N	%
1- Competence in the ‘ethical practice’	190	55.1	155	44.9
2- Competence in the ‘networks and cooperation’	132	38.3	213	61.7
3-Competence in the ‘observation, communication, and interaction’	157	45.5	188	54.5
4- Competence in the ‘clinical nursing’	119	34.5	226	65.5
5- Competence in the ‘safety, health and holistic well-being’	115	33.3	230	66.7

6- Competence in Group guidance and activities	129	37.4	216	62.6
7- Competence in the 'leadership and development'	111	32.2	234	67.8
8- Total competence score	115	33.3	230	66.7

Table (3) Distribution of the studied Nursing internship students according to their total knowledge score regarding elderly care.

Total knowledge score	N= 345	%
Poor	52	15.1
Fair	84	24.3
Good	209	60.6
Range	12-27	
Mean \pm SD	22.55 \pm 3.269	

Table (4) Distribution of the studied Nursing internship students according to their attitude toward older people

Attitude toward older people	Studied Nursing internship students (n=345)					
	Agree		Neutral		Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1) It would probably be better if most people lived in residential units with younger people.	221	64.1	92	26.6	32	9.3
2) There is something different about most people; it's hard to find out what makes them tick.	172	49.9	149	43.2	24	7.0
3) Most old people are really no different from anybody else; they're as easy to understand as younger people.	121	35.1	76	22.0	148	42.9
4) Most old people get set in their ways and are unable to change.	71	20.6	110	31.9	164	47.5
5) Most old people are capable of new adjustments when the situation demands it.	152	44.1	129	37.4	64	18.6
6) Most old people tend to let their homes become shabby and unattractive.	98	28.4	107	31.0	140	40.6
7) Most old people can generally be counted on to maintain a clean, attractive home.	191	55.4	120	34.8	34	9.9
8) It is foolish to claim that wisdom comes with age.	150	43.5	135	39.1	60	17.4
9) People grown wiser with the coming of old age.	176	51.0	123	35.7	46	13.3
10) Most old people make one feel ill at ease.	167	48.4	118	34.2	60	17.4
11) Most old people are very relaxing to be with.	166	48.1	139	40.3	40	11.6

12) Most old people bore others by their insistence on talking “about the good old days”.	226	65.5	90	26.1	29	8.4
13) One of the most interesting and entertaining qualities of most old people is their accounts of their past experiences.	224	64.9	92	26.7	29	8.4
14) In order to maintain a nice residential neighborhood, it would be best if too many old people did not live in it.	140	40.6	86	24.9	119	34.5
15) You can count on finding a nice residential neighborhood when there is a sizeable number of old people living in it.	180	52.2	131	38.0	34	9.9
16) There are a few exceptions, but in general most old people are pretty much alike.	191	55.4	106	30.7	48	13.9
17) It is evident that most old people are very different from one another.	197	57.1	114	33.0	34	9.9
18) Most old people should be more concerned with their personal appearance; they’re too untidy.	161	46.7	126	36.5	58	16.8
19) Most old people seem quite clean and neat in their personal appearance.	183	53.0	120	34.8	42	12.2
20) Most old people are irritable, grouchy, and unpleasant.	141	40.9	120	34.8	84	24.3
21) Most old people are cheerful, agreeable, and good humored.	150	43.5	131	38.0	64	18.6
22) Most old people are constantly complaining about the behavior of the `younger generation.	204	59.1	111	32.2	30	8.7
23) One seldom hears old people complaining about the behavior of the younger generation.	168	48.7	113	32.8	64	18.6
24) Most old people make excessive demands for love and reassurance than anyone else.	224	64.9	82	23.8	39	11.3

Table (5) Distribution of the studied Nursing internship students according to their total attitude score toward elderly care.

Total attitude score	N= 345	%
Negative attitude	301	87.2
Positive attitude	44	12.8
Range	17-35	
Mean \pm SD	24.78 \pm 3.586	

Table (6) Correlation between total scores of different competencies among Nursing internship students regarding elderly care.

Variables	Total of ethical practice competencies	Total of networks and cooperation competencies	Total of observation, communication and interaction competencies	Total clinical nursing competencies	Total of safety, health and holistic well-being competencies	Total group guidance and activities competencies
	R p	r P	r p	r p	r p	r p
Total of ethical practice competencies	- .000	.731** .000	.698** .000	.603** .000	.656** .000	.512** .000
Total of networks and cooperation competencies	.731** .000	-	.735** .000	.675** .000	.676** .000	.599** .000
Total of observation, communication and interaction competencies	.698** .000	.735** .000	-	.866** .000	.846** .000	.652** .000
Total clinical nursing competencies	.603** .000	.675** .000	.866** .000	-	.890** .000	.722** .000
Total of safety, health and holistic well-being competencies	.656** .000	.676** .000	.846** .000	.890** .000	-	.766** .000
Total group guidance and activities competencies	.512** .000	.599** .000	.652** .000	.722** .000	.766** .000	-

Total leadership and development competencies score	.616** .000	.679** .000	.799** .000	.751** .000	.797** .000	.717** .000
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Table (7) Correlation between total competences, knowledge and attitude scores among Nursing internship students regarding elderly care.

Variables	Total attitude score	Total competences score
	R P	r p
Total competences score	-.207-** .000	-
Total score of knowledge	-.115- .033	.805** .000

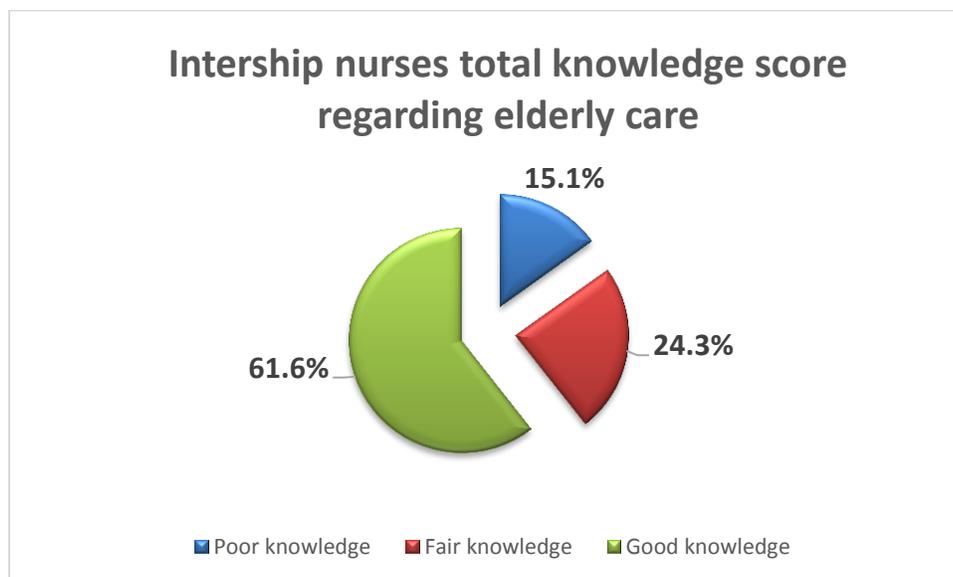


Figure (1) Distribution of the studied Nursing internship students according to their total knowledge score regarding elderly care.

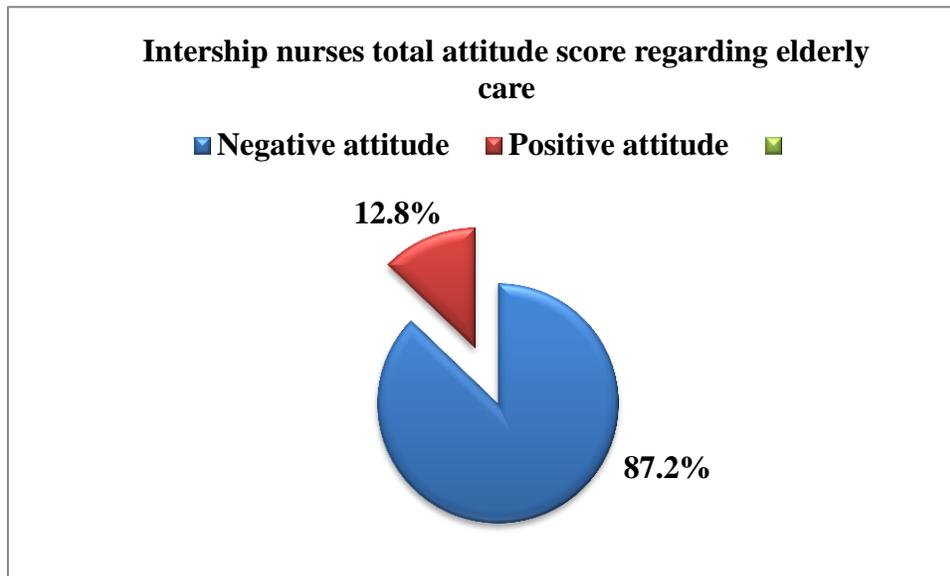


Figure (2) Distribution of the studied Nursing internship students according to their total attitude score toward older people

Discussion:

New health care utilization trends and current demographic strongly indicate a rapidly increasing demand for nurses who are well qualified to care for older adults. Advanced practice nurses are prepared to assume basic role in geriatric nursing care; however, they must first acquire adequate preparatory education. The aim of this study was to evaluate levels of competences, knowledge and attitudes of nursing internship students' students toward elderly care in Tanta Faculty of Nursing. This helps in identifying their ability to offer equitable and balanced health care to older persons with acute and/or complex health care needs.

The present study reported that, about two thirds of studied nursing internship students reported un- satisfactory total competence score. Also,

about two thirds of them had un satisfactory competence in relation to 'networks and cooperation competence', 'clinical nursing competence', 'safety, health and holistic well-being competence', 'Group guidance and activities competence', and in the 'leadership and development' competence. About half of the studied Nursing internship students had satisfactory competence regarding nursing care of the elder in relation to 'ethical practice' and 'observation, communication, and interaction' competence (**Table 2**).

These results may be due to that, the internship students study the overall information and practice related to elderly care in the faculty without exposing to different specific competences needed to provide efficient geriatric care. Also, those studied students of

Tanta Nursing Faculty did not study the curriculums of competence-based baccalaureate program yet. Moreover, the competency information in our study was self-reported in which the participant bias may play a role. Besides, the studied subjects may have adjusted their ratings to what they thought the researcher wanted to hear. Moreover, they may have believed incorrectly that the study results would change or create more development concerning nursing geriatric care.

This result is in accordance with the result of **Fang-Wen et al. (2021)** ⁽²²⁾ who found that the average self-evaluation score for geriatric care competency among registered nurses in hospitals was a medium–high level. However, the average percentage of correct answers given on the geriatric care competency test was much lower (17.6%). The self-evaluation score was found to be significantly associated with having received continuing education in geriatric care.

On the other hand, the result of the present study is contradicting with **Hovland G et al. (2018)** ⁽²³⁾ who found that nurses working in three municipal health-care services in Norway perceive their competence as being satisfactory overall, but there are areas that would benefit from improvement: providing patients' family members with education and guidance, quality assurance, and using research to evaluate and develop services. These competencies could be the focus of departments' future competence plans.

Also, **Bing-Jonsson et al (2016)** ⁽⁵⁾ found that, nursing staff in community elderly care including nursing homes and home care services have competence in all areas measured, but that the level of competence was insufficient in the

areas nursing measures, advanced procedures, and nursing documentation.

These results may be due to the working experience that their samples gain from the working field as their samples include registered working nurses and some of them received continuing education in geriatric care. This emphasizes on the importance of educational preparation in building skilled nurses for the field of practice. This supported by **Mahmud MS et al. (2020)** ⁽¹³⁾ who reported that more than half of their studied nurses agree for need to highly skilled nursing and that most of them requires special training for providing effective care in geriatric wards.

The care of older people as a specialty in nursing field demands specific knowledge and abilities. Nurses need to be well equipped with knowledge and should also have a positive attitude regarding geriatric care in order to provide skilled care. The present study reveals that more than half of the studied internship students had total good knowledge score about elderly care, one quarter of them had fair score and less than one quarter of them had total poor knowledge score (**Table 3, Figure 1**).

However, surprisingly the majority of them have total negative attitude toward elderly care while only minority of them had positive attitude (**Table 5, figure 2**). Meanwhile, more than half of them have some positive attitudes like people grown wiser with the coming of old age, most old people make excessive demands for love and reassurance than anyone else, one of the most interesting and entertaining qualities of most old people is their accounts of their past, there are a few exceptions, but in general most old people are pretty much alike, and it is

evident that most old people are very different from one another (**Table 4**).

These results may be due to the learning of geriatric nursing course by studied internship students in the last academic year which helps them to acquire knowledge related to elders care recently. However, the teaching hours that given to geriatric nursing course in Tanta Nursing Faculty is not enough to build positive attitude toward elders and elderly care or to change misconceptions that they may have toward elder people. As, it is the lowest nursing branch in its teaching hours compared to other branches in the academic regulations of the faculty. This emphasizes a role that nursing curriculums may influence how students perceive caring of elders and working with older adults. This may be changed when the Unified regulations for the Nursing Sector in Arab Republic of Egypt applied, in which the teaching hours of geriatric nursing course will increase; besides the application of competence-based teaching programs.

Results of the present study is in accordance with **Mahmud MS et al. (2020)**⁽¹³⁾ who found that, more than one third of respondents were average knowledge; followed by one third of respondents were good knowledge. According to Kogan attitudes scale, one third of nurses had negative attitudes and two thirds had positive attitudes regarding geriatric health care.

Results of **Faronbi JO et al. (2017)**⁽²⁴⁾ showed also that, 60% of their subjects demonstrated good knowledge of essential clinical practice in the care of older patients. Furthermore, two thirds of their subjects had a positive attitudes regarding the care of older people. Also, the most of their subjects agreed that nurses should

be sensitive cheerful, patient, and empathetic when providing care for the older patients. Two thirds of the subjects also expressed that essential older patients care goes beyond the basic nursing care. The positive attitude that the subjects of other studies had may be due to the period that they spend in caring for elders and this opinion is supported by a statistically significant relationship that they found between job experience and attitude.

Other students studies displayed also the positive attitude towards the care of the older adults (**Cybulski E et al., 2015**⁽²⁵⁾ **King et al. (2013)**⁽²⁶⁾ and **Eltantawy, S H 2013**⁽²⁷⁾). This might have been due to the effect of professional development. Also, the way that students perceiving and preferring to work with older adults affected greatly by the schools of nursing. Besides, the crucial role that attitude plays in influencing nursing professionals to work with older people.

Moreover, **McClearyb L et al. (2019)**⁽¹⁾ who conduct a scoping review on Preparing nurses and nursing students to care for older adults in lower and middle-income countries reported having moderate to insufficient knowledge in the care of older adults in the majority of the studies. However, both nurses and nursing students reported positive attitudes towards the care of older adults but held misconceptions about caring for older adults. Nursing students also reported a low preference for working with older adults.

It is obvious that, having good knowledge toward elderly care is not enough to build positive attitude. More efforts should be directed toward changing misconceptions the nursing students have toward elders during their

academic years of education as this will influence their practice and competences. This is supported by the results of the present study that revealed no significant correlation between the total attitude score of the studied subjects and their total knowledge score (**Table 7**). This result goes with **Faronbi JO et al. (2017)** ⁽²⁴⁾ results that there was no significant association between the attitude of the respondents and their knowledge level.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of our study, it can be concluded that two thirds of the studied nursing internship students had un- satisfactory level of competencies regarding nursing care of elders. The majority of them had negative attitude toward elderly care. Meanwhile, slightly more than three fifths of them had good knowledge score about elderly care. Also, there was a significant positive correlation between all different competencies of elderly care with each other. There was a significant negative correlation between total attitude score with total competencies scores and total knowledge scores. While there was a significant positive correlation between total competencies score and total knowledge score.

Recommendations

- 1- Competencies, should be incorporated into specific, stand-alone courses focusing on care of the older adult, as well as integrated throughout the curriculum.
- 2- Conduct special in-service trainings for nursing internship students to enhance their competencies and attitude on the care of and dealing with elder patients.
- 3- Develop and implement geriatric care training formal curriculum.
- 4- Develop and implement standard guideline in order to improve the nursing care of elder patients.

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