

EXPLORING THE NURSING STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19509392>

Received
12 February 2026

Accepted
23 March 2026

Published
10 April 2026

ABSTRACT

Background: Psychosocial care is a critical element of holistic nursing, addressing patients' emotional, psychological, and social needs. Nursing students' readiness to provide such care remains underexplored in Pakistan.

Objective: To examine BSN students' perspectives on psychosocial care, including knowledge, attitudes, and perceived challenges in clinical practice.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 174 BSN students at Ittefaq College of Nursing, Lahore, using a validated structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results: Most students recognized the importance of psychosocial care, particularly in listening to patients (79.8%), providing reassurance (77.5%), maintaining privacy (91.3%), and addressing spiritual needs (78%). Fewer students agreed on sitting with patients (59%) or maintaining contact post-discharge (21.3%), indicating gaps in applying psychosocial principles.

Conclusion: Nursing students value psychosocial care but require enhanced training, practical exposure, and mentorship to bridge theory-practice gaps and improve holistic patient care.

Keywords: Psychosocial care, nursing students, holistic nursing, clinical competence, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Background

Psychosocial care is a fundamental component of nursing practice, playing a critical role in promoting patients' overall well-being. It involves addressing patients' fears, anxieties, emotional needs, communication requirements, and fostering a therapeutic nurse-patient

relationship (Al-Nawafleh and Altarawneh 2023). The International Council of Nurses (ICN) recognizes psychosocial care as a key element of comprehensive nursing, emphasizing its significance for universal health coverage (Okereke and Ahonsi 2021). Similarly, the American Nurses Association (ANA) highlights

holistic care that integrates physical, psychological, and social dimensions to improve patient outcomes (Semenenko, Banerjee et al. 2023). In addition, understanding the broader mental health context is essential, as research has highlighted barriers to mental health awareness and service access among youth in Southern Punjab, underscoring the need for supportive psychosocial interventions in healthcare (Fatima et al., 2025)

Psychosocial care encompasses a wide range of domains, including self-esteem, coping with illness, social interaction, and effective communication (Chen 2024). It is essential not only for patient satisfaction but also for fostering adherence to treatment and recovery. Nursing students are vital in delivering this care, yet research indicates that they often face challenges such as limited knowledge, inadequate training, and lack of confidence in addressing patients' psychosocial needs (Renn and Reason 2023); (Siddiqua, Hussain et al.). Evaluating nursing students' understanding of psychosocial care can identify gaps and inform strategies to enhance their competence (Danish, Jaffer et al. 2025); (Mulazim, Bilal et al. 2025).

In Pakistan and the broader Middle East, there is a need to assess how prepared nursing students are to provide psychosocial care. Studies suggest that students' readiness varies across institutions and is influenced by curriculum design, clinical exposure, and mentorship opportunities (Khamaiseh and Altarawneh 2023); (James, Stromin et al. 2023). The theory-practice gap further complicates the situation, as students may understand psychosocial principles theoretically but struggle to apply them in clinical settings (Danish, Jaffer et al. 2025). Factors such as heavy workloads, nurse-to-patient ratios, and high-stress environments also impact students' ability to deliver effective psychosocial support (Danish, Jaffer et al. 2025); (Siddiqua, Hussain et al.).

Understanding nursing students' perspectives on psychosocial care is crucial for improving patient-centered practice and developing targeted educational interventions. This study aims to explore these perspectives, identify barriers, and highlight areas for improvement,

ultimately contributing to better holistic care in clinical practice.

Problem Statement

While psychosocial care is recognized as a critical component of nursing practice, there is limited understanding of how nursing students perceive, prioritize, and implement these practices. Additionally, factors influencing their attitudes and confidence such as curriculum design, clinical exposure, and mentorship remain underexplored. This study aims to investigate nursing students' perspectives on psychosocial care, highlighting areas for improvement in both education and clinical training.

Significance of the Study

Exploring nursing students' perspectives on psychosocial care provides valuable insights into the current state of nursing education and practice. The findings can guide curriculum development, enhance training strategies, and strengthen students' competencies in providing holistic, patient-centered care. Understanding these perspectives is crucial for addressing barriers such as limited knowledge, time constraints, and lack of confidence in delivering psychosocial interventions (Danish, Jaffer et al. 2025); (Mulazim, Bilal et al. 2025).

Objective

The primary objective of this study is to explore nursing students' perspectives regarding psychosocial care, identifying their understanding, attitudes, and perceived challenges in clinical practice.

Research Question

What are the perspectives of nursing students regarding psychosocial care, and how prepared are they to provide such care in clinical settings?

Operational Definition

Nursing students' perspectives on psychosocial care are defined as their understanding, attitudes, and self-reported practices related to providing emotional, social, and psychological support to patients. These perspectives were

assessed using an adapted, validated psychosocial care questionnaire (Smith 2024), scored on a 20-item Likert scale, where higher scores indicate more positive attitudes and awareness.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

From January 2025 to June 2025, this descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at Ittefaq College of Nursing, Lahore, to explore nursing students' perspectives on psychosocial care. A cross-sectional design was chosen to provide an updated overview of students' understanding, attitudes, and perceptions regarding psychosocial care, thereby identifying areas for improvement in nursing education and practice.

The study targeted BSN Generic students currently enrolled at Ittefaq College of Nursing. A total of 174 participants were selected using Slovin's formula, ensuring a representative proportion of the total student population (308) with a 5% margin of error. A convenient sampling technique was employed for data collection. The inclusion criteria consisted of all BSN Generic students, while Post-RN students were excluded from the study. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and assured of their voluntary participation and confidentiality before data collection.

Data were collected using a validated, structured questionnaire adapted from previously published studies (Smith 2024). The tool consisted of two sections: demographic information, which in this study included only the age of the participants, and items related to psychosocial care, designed to assess students' perceptions, understanding, and attitudes toward psychosocial support in nursing practice. Each psychosocial care item was evaluated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with higher scores reflecting a more positive attitude and greater awareness of psychosocial care.

Before data collection, formal permission was obtained from the college administration. The

objectives and significance of the study were clearly explained to both the administration and participants. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to data collection. The questionnaires were distributed and collected within the premises of Ittefaq College of Nursing between January 2025 and March 2025. Participants were provided sufficient time to complete the questionnaires in a comfortable setting. Completed questionnaires were checked for missing responses, and participants were given an opportunity to fill in any unmarked items before submission.

Data were coded and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 for analysis. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics only. Categorical variables such as age and responses related to psychosocial care were summarized using frequencies and percentages to describe the distribution of participants' demographic characteristics and their perspectives on psychosocial care. The results were presented in the form of tables and charts for clear interpretation and understanding.

The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the Ethical Review Committee of Ittefaq College of Nursing, Lahore, following the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Participation was voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. All collected data were kept confidential and securely stored with restricted access. Identifiable information was not collected, and anonymized codes were used to ensure participant privacy and data integrity.

RESULTS

Data collected from 174 BSN Generic students at Ittefaq College of Nursing, Lahore, were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. The results are displayed in tables with accompanying interpretations.

Demographic Data

Table 1: Age Distribution of Participants

Age (Years)	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
16-19	35	20.1
20-23	99	56.9
24-26	39	22.4
27-28	1	0.6
Total	174	100

The results indicate that the majority of participants were between 20-23 years of age (56.9%), followed by 22.4% who were between 24-26 years. A smaller proportion (20.1%) were aged between 16-19 years, and only 0.6% were

in the 27-28 years category. This shows that the sample primarily consisted of young adults, which reflects the typical age range of BSN students.

Psychosocial Care Practices

Table 2: Listening to the Patient

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	68	39.0
Agree	71	40.8
Neutral	1	0.6
Disagree	30	17.2
Strongly Disagree	4	2.2
Total	174	100.0

A majority of students (79.8%) either agreed or strongly agreed that listening to patients is an essential component of psychosocial care,

indicating strong awareness of this fundamental nursing responsibility.

Table 3: Providing Reassurance About a Clinical Procedure

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	57	32.7
Agree	78	44.8
Neutral	34	19.5
Disagree	3	1.7
Strongly Disagree	2	1.1
Total	174	100.0

Most respondents (77.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that providing reassurance about clinical procedures is an important psychosocial care behavior. Only a small fraction (2.8%) disagreed,

suggesting that nursing students generally recognize the importance of emotional support during patient care.

Table 4: Providing Privacy to the Patient

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	69	39.6
Agree	90	51.7
Neutral	9	5.1
Disagree	4	2.2
Strongly Disagree	2	1.1
Total	174	100.0

The majority (91.3%) of participants agreed or strongly agreed that maintaining patient privacy

is a vital part of psychosocial care, showing a high level of ethical awareness among students.

Table 5: Sitting with the Patient

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	12	6.8
Agree	91	52.2
Neutral	10	5.7
Disagree	49	28.1
Strongly Disagree	12	6.9
Total	174	100.0

Over half of the respondents (59%) agreed or strongly agreed that sitting with patients demonstrates psychosocial support, while 35%

disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating variation in perception about the importance of physical presence in patient comfort.

Table 6: Exploring a Patient's Lifestyle

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	30	17.2
Agree	97	55.7
Neutral	7	4.0
Disagree	23	13.2
Strongly Disagree	17	9.8
Total	174	100.0

A large proportion (72.9%) of participants acknowledged the importance of exploring a patient's lifestyle in understanding their

psychosocial needs, though a minority (23%) disagreed, highlighting the need for further education on holistic care.

Table 7: Paying Attention to the Spiritual Needs of the Patient

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	28	16.0
Agree	108	62.0
Neutral	13	7.4
Disagree	20	11.5
Strongly Disagree	5	2.9
Total	174	100.0

Most students (78%) recognized the importance of addressing the patient’s spiritual needs as part

of psychosocial care, indicating awareness of the holistic dimensions of patient well-being.

Table 8: Appearing Too Busy to Attend to the Patient

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	5	2.8
Agree	30	17.2
Neutral	7	4.0
Disagree	75	43.1
Strongly Disagree	57	32.8
Total	174	100.0

A combined 75.9% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “seems too busy all the time,” suggesting that most students

consider being available and attentive as essential elements of psychosocial care.

Table 9: Staying in Contact with the Patient After Discharge

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	7	4.0
Agree	15	8.6
Neutral	15	8.6
Disagree	47	27.0
Strongly Disagree	90	51.7
Total	174	100.0

A significant majority (78.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with maintaining contact with patients after discharge, indicating that most students perceive their professional psychosocial role as limited to the hospital setting.

providing privacy, reassurance, and spiritual support. However, lower agreement levels were observed in items related to sitting with patients and maintaining post-discharge contact, indicating areas that may benefit from further emphasis in nursing training and clinical practice.

Summary of Findings

The analysis reveals that nursing students at Ittefaq College of Nursing generally exhibit positive attitudes toward psychosocial care, especially in areas such as listening to patients,

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to explore nursing students' understanding and perceptions of

psychosocial care in clinical practice. Results indicate that while nursing students are aware of the significance of psychosocial care, they face multiple challenges in implementing it effectively within their clinical rotations. These challenges stem from various factors such as inadequate training, lack of role models, and a curriculum that prioritizes technical skills over emotional and social care. The findings are consistent with previous studies that have identified similar gaps in nursing education related to psychosocial care (Nawaz, Hasan et al. 2025).

The demographic information collected from the participants in this study shows the age distribution of the nursing students. Most students were between 20 and 22 years old, with 21.8% of students being 21 years old and 21.3% being 20 years old. Fewer students were in the older age groups, with only a small percentage of students being 25 years or older. The data indicates that the majority of the nursing students were in the early stages of their nursing education, which reflects the typical age range for students in this program (Lillekroken, Kvalvaag et al. 2024).

The results of the study show that 40.8% of nursing students agreed and 39% strongly agreed that listening to the patient is an important aspect of psychosocial care. This reflects a positive attitude toward patient communication, with only a small percentage (17.2%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This result aligns with the findings who reported that 65% of nursing students in Jordan recognized the significance of listening to patients, although they often felt more confident in technical tasks. This alignment indicates that, while nursing students generally value communication, there is still a notable gap in the application of psychosocial care within clinical settings, possibly due to the curriculum's emphasis on technical skills over emotional engagement (Alsarairih, Al-Sarairhe et al. 2025).

Additionally, similar findings were observed, who found that 59% of nursing students in Turkey acknowledged the importance of listening to patients, but again highlighted a tendency to prioritize physical assessments over

psychosocial interventions. Despite these commonalities, our study reflects a slightly more positive outlook on the role of listening to patients in psychosocial care, suggesting that students in this study may have had more exposure to communication-focused training or more supportive clinical environments. These comparisons with previous studies underscore a universal recognition of the value of listening to patients, but also reveal a consistent trend where students feel more comfortable with physical care tasks and require further training and support in psychosocial aspects. This emphasizes the need for nursing curricula to integrate both technical and psychosocial competencies equally, ensuring that students are not only able to perform clinical tasks but also develop the communication skills necessary for comprehensive patient care (Davis, Eche-Ugwu et al. 2024).

The results of this study show that 44.8% of nursing students agreed, and 32.7% strongly agreed, on providing reassurance during clinical procedures. However, 19.5% remained neutral, and 2.8% disagreed, with a small percentage (1.1%) strongly disagreeing. This suggests a generally positive view on the importance of reassurance in clinical settings. When compared to the findings of (Öksüz, Mersin et al. 2024), who found that 50% of Turkish nursing students emphasized the need for reassurance during procedures, our study's results show a similar trend of agreement. However, our study shows a slightly higher percentage of students strongly agreeing (32.7% vs. 20%), indicating a stronger recognition of the importance of reassurance among students in this study. This comparison reinforces the value placed on emotional support during clinical procedures across different student populations, despite minor variations in specific responses (Masso, Sim et al. 2022).

The results of this study show that 51.7% of nursing students agreed, and 39.6% strongly agreed, about providing privacy to patients. A small percentage (5.1%) remained neutral, while 2.2% disagreed, and 1.1% strongly disagreed. These results highlight a strong agreement among students on the importance of

maintaining patient privacy in clinical settings. When compared to a study which found that 45% of nursing students in their study prioritized patient privacy, our results indicate a slightly higher agreement (51.7%). This difference may reflect growing awareness or improved education on the importance of privacy in patient care. Overall, both studies align in emphasizing the significance of patient privacy, but the variation may be attributed to differences in regional or educational contexts (Cole, Boss et al. 2024).

The results show that 52.2% of nursing students agreed, and 6.8% strongly agreed, about the importance of sitting with the patient. A smaller percentage (5.7%) remained neutral, while 28.1% disagreed, and 6.9% strongly disagreed. Comparing this to a study where 45% of nursing students agreed on the importance of sitting with patients to build rapport, our results indicate a higher percentage (52.2%) of students recognizing its importance. The difference might be attributed to cultural or educational factors that emphasize interpersonal aspects of patient care (Xie and Kang 2025).

The results show that 17.2% of students agreed, and 2.8% strongly agreed, with the statement that they seemed to be busy all the time. A small percentage (4.0%) were neutral, while the majority (43.1%) disagreed, and 32.8% strongly disagreed. In comparison with a study which found that 38% of students agreed with the perception of being constantly busy, our study shows a higher percentage (43.1%) disagreeing with the idea of being busy all the time. This may suggest that students in our study felt less overwhelmed by their workload compared to the participants in Stevens et al.'s study (Rykkje, Søvik et al. 2022).

The results show that 17.2% of students agreed, and 2.8% strongly agreed, with the statement that they seemed to be busy all the time. A small percentage (4.0%) were neutral, while the majority (43.1%) disagreed, and 32.8% strongly disagreed. In comparison with other study which found that 38% of students agreed with the perception of being constantly busy, our study shows a higher percentage (43.1%) disagreeing with the idea of being busy all the time. This

may suggest that students in our study felt less overwhelmed by their workload compared to the participants in Stevens et al.'s study (Peddie, Hoegh et al. 2025).

Conclusion

This study highlighted that nursing students recognize the importance of psychosocial care but often feel unprepared to provide it effectively. The main challenges include limited real-world exposure, a focus on technical skills in the curriculum, and personal resilience issues. While students agreed on the importance of privacy, reassurance, and spiritual care, they were less confident in actions like sitting with patients or maintaining contact after discharge. To improve, nursing education should emphasize psychosocial care more, with hands-on training and support to build students' confidence and skills in addressing patients' emotional and social needs.

Limitations

The study focused only on nursing students from a single college, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other institutions or regions.

The use of convenience sampling may result in a biased sample, as it does not represent the entire population of nursing students.

The reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires may lead to response bias, as students may provide socially desirable answers.

The study did not deeply explore personal factors, such as mental health or personal experiences, that may influence students' perceptions of psychosocial care.

Recommendations

Nursing curriculum should be revised to include a stronger emphasis on psychosocial care, ensuring it is integrated as a core component of nursing education.

More hands-on learning opportunities, such as role-playing and patient-centred simulations, should be introduced to help students gain practical experience in providing psychosocial support.

Nursing programs should incorporate training in communication skills, empathy, and

emotional support to boost students' confidence and competence in addressing patients' emotional and social needs.

Mentorship programs could be developed to provide students with guidance from experienced nurses who demonstrate effective psychosocial care practices.

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