Professionalism in Practice Between Diploma and B.Sc Nursing (4 year) Graduates in Hospital Settings

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Abstract

Purpose: Professionalism construct on encompassing the commonly accepted attributes of altruism, respect, honesty, integrity, dutifulness, honor, excellence and accountability. The objective of this study was to compare the professional values orientation among the graduates of Diploma and Baccalaureate degree Nursing (BSN) program in hospital settings.

Design and Methods: A cross sectional study was conducted from October -December 2011 in four Hospitals of Punjab. Data was collected from a total of 300 nurses, one fifty each from BSN and Diploma graduates. Selection of hospital as well as nurses was done by convenient sample design. Mean and frequencies were reported for demographic and professional attributes while two sample Independent T- test and ANOVA were used to compare the means of groups under study.

Results: The study showed that diploma graduate nurses had higher level of values of professionalism than BSN graduate nurses in all four subscales including Professional self-concept (4.38 ± 0.73 and 3.80 ±0.83, P= 0. 000), social awareness (4.14±0.68 and 3.46 ± 0.84, P= 0. 000), nursing professionalism (4.58±0.54 and 4.10±0.81, P= 0. 000), and nursing services role (4.46±0.60 and 3.78±0.93, P= 0. 000). But in fifth subscale, nursing originality, BSN graduates had higher mean score than diploma graduates (2.47 ± 0.98 and 2.36 ± 1.03, P= 0. 361). They are not significantly different.

Conclusion: The diploma graduates exhibit better professional values as compared to BSN graduates in these hospital settings. The identified gaps need to be bridged and stepped on to move forward to improve professional nursing values with more training and through mentoring program.

Keywords: Professionalism, Self- concept, Social awareness, Professional Values, Values

Introduction

In Pakistan, Baccalaureate Nursing Degree (BSN) is basic program and a large number of new graduates are now entering into nursing profession through BNS program and diploma in general nursing program. The aim of nursing education programs is to prepare nursing graduates to function autonomously, interdependently and to equip new graduates with sound knowledge, skills and set of professional values by either diploma or bachelor degree [1, 2]. These professional values of nurses are generated on entry level of nursing profession as students which depict their personal and social backgrounds [3].

Nursing profession is grounded in an ethical model. According to a study by Martin, nurses' attitudes are guided by principles, beliefs and values that are found in the nurse's professional codes of ethics [4]. The basic elements of professionalism are trust, belief, attitudes, values and thinking toward profession [5, 6]. Nurses required applied knowledge of nursing professional values to work through ethical

dilemmas and to help in decision making that are in line with the Code of Ethics for Nurses [7-9].

Values in nursing care provide a framework for evaluation of beliefs and attitudes of nurses which transform nursing practice and encourage social and professional behavior [1, 10, 11]. In a study be Leners et al., professional values measured by Nursing Professional Value Scale (NPVS) proved that act of valuing is adherent to set of principles [12]. Similarly, objective evaluation of professional values can be a tool for redirection of behavior and changing health care environment for employed nurses [3, 12]. As per professional and social expectations, the newly graduate nurses need to be equipped with strong professional values and socialization skills to deal with upcoming challenges of rapidly growing technology [13]. Research showed that nurses who are unable to determine and understand their own values find it difficult to understand their professional role and are lacking in ability to prioritize and decision making [14, 15].

Several studies have been conducted on the value orientation of baccalaureate nurses, but sparse number of studies is available for diploma nurses. In practice and in our context very few or no

research studies are conducted so far on this issue. Therefore, this cross sectional analytical study was designed to identify and compare the professional values of nurses in practice among graduates of diploma versus baccalaureate degree nursing program.

Methods
Study Design and sample
It was a cross sectional analytical study which was conducted at the Institute of Nursing, University of Health Sciences Lahore, Pakistan. The data was collected from four public and private hospitals of Lahore and Rawalpindi. A sample of nurses n=300 in which one fifty diploma nurses and one fifty BSN nurses were enrolled. The nurses were included in the study on the basis of BSN (4 year) graduates of University of Health Sciences, Lahore, with at least one year of clinical experience and Diploma Nursing graduates of Nurses Examination Board Punjab, Lahore with same experience. The Nurses with Post RN BSN and Diploma Nurses along with any Post Basic qualification were excluded from the study. Data was collected by using purposive sampling technique from October-December 2011.

Ethical Consideration
Ethical approval was obtained from Ethical Review Committee of University of Health Sciences, Lahore and other hospitals involved in this study. The participants were recruited on voluntary basis. The purpose of the study was explained to all participants, including anonymity and confidentiality of data. They were also informed about their voluntary participation and right to withdraw from the study at any time without any hesitation.

Instrument / Tool
The Nursing Professional Value Scale (NPVS), a self-administered 29 - item 5- point Likert Scale Structured Performa (questionnaire) developed by Darlene Weis was used. The NPVS consisted of section A which contained demographical data such as age, gender, marital status and qualification including academic and professional background of participants. Section B contained 29 - item statements with 05 subscales/subcategories on a 5 - Likert-scale responses which ranged from strongly agreed to strongly disagree (5 to 1). Pilot testing of the tool was done over fifty nurses (n=50) with twenty five nurses each from B.Sc. nursing and diploma nursing. Cronbach's alpha was applied to check internal validity and reliability of the tool. Results showed as internal consistency of α =0.935 (Cronbach's Alpha) for given responses.

Data Collection process
The participants were briefed about the nature of the study and expected outcomes. The research tool was distributed among the selected participants and a brief explanation was given about different questions mentioned in NPVS and responses given in Likert-format. The participants were encouraged to provide the required demographic information and to select one best option from given responses in the questionnaire.

Data analysis
Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version, 17. 0. The NPV score were computed using descriptive statistics for categorical variables and inferential statistics for continuous variables. Comparison were made between observe mean scores of the two groups using two sample independent T-test. A p-value

of < 0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

Results
A total sample size three hundred (n=300) were collected from the specified target population on pre-established selection criteria. The mean age of the participants was 22.89+1.61 years and it ranged from 19 to 28 years. Demographic characteristic of the participants have been shown in (Table.1)

Table 1: Demographic characteristics & professional attributes of BSN (4 year) and diploma Graduates

Characteristic	Diploma n=150 (%)		B.Sc. N (4 year) n=150 (%)	
Sex				
Male	02	(1.3)	13	(8.6)
Female:	148	(98.6)	137	(91.3)
Marital Status				
Single	146	(97. 4)	138	(92.0)
Married	04	(2.6 0)	12	(8.0)
Academic Qualification				
Matric	74	(49.4)	--	
Intermediate	68	(45. 4)	104	(69.4)
Bachelor degree	07	(4.6)	46	(30.6)
Master degree	01	(0.6)	-	-
Nature of Hospital				
Public	31	(20.6)	15	(10.0)
Private	17	(11.4)	32	(21.4)
Army	38	(25.4)	70	(46.6)
Trustee	64	(42.6)	33	(22.0)
Experience				
1 year	65	(43.4)	89	(59.4)
2 year	33	(22.0)	28	(18.6)
>2 year	52	(34.6)	33	(22.0)
Work setting				
Medicine	45	(30. 0)	53	(35.3)
Surgical	27	(18. 0)	29	(19.3)
Pediatrics	35	(23. 4)	21	(14. 0)
Emergency	29	(19. 3)	24	(16.0)
ICU	14	(9. 3)	23	(15.4)
Professional Registration				
PNC(Pakistan Nursing Council)	142	(94.7)	93	(62.0)
PNF (Pakistan Nursing Federation)	01	(0 .6)	-	-
NO	07	(4.7)	57	(38.0)

Values are expressed in numbers (%)

Mean score difference was calculated between BSN & Diploma graduate nurses. The significant difference were found in professional self-concept, social awareness, nursing professionalism and nursing services-role with a P value < 0.05. Diploma graduates had lower

mean score in nursing originality as compared to BSN graduates however the difference was not statistically significant (Table.2)

Table 2: Comparison of BSN (4 year) degree and diploma graduate nurses scores on NPVS subscales

Parameter	BSNs Nurses (Mean±S.D) n =150	Diploma Nurses (Mean ± S.D) n=150	t- value	p- value
Professional self-concept	3.80 + 0.83	4.38 + 0.73	-6.520	0.000*
Social awareness	3.46 + 0.84	4.14+ 0.68	-7.688	0.000*
Nursing professionalism	4.10 + 0.81	4.58 + 0.54	-6.078	0.000*
Nursing service roles	3.78 + 0.93	4.46 + 0.60	-7.489	0.000*
Nursing originality	2.47 + 0.98	2.36 +1.03	0.916	0.361

*p-value<0.05 was considered significant

To compare the mean scores of the two groups on NPVS two sample independent T-Test and ANOVA was used. A p-value of < 0.05 was considered as statistically significant

Discussion
This study showed novel information about the professional values held by the graduate nurses from two different programs in Punjab. Diploma nurses scored significantly higher than BSN graduates on four subscales; professional self -concept, social awareness, nursing services role and nursing originality. Results of present study are consistent with other studies [16].

Milisen, et al and O'Brien et al believed that graduates prepared through an extensive educational period in which BSN graduates had more inclination to adhere to self-concept in professionalism [16, 17]. The current study findings revealed that mean score for professional self-concept in baccalaureate nurses group was lower than the diploma nursing graduates. It showed that diploma nurses are more focused on the self-concept of profession which means there is a need to look into BSN program delivery and faculty, as BSN program is in a developing phase in Pakistan.

A study by Angel et al. and Takese et al. concluded that not only education but skill enhancement enabled nurses to enhance social awareness in different roles [18, 19]. The results of current study showed that majority of graduate nurses in both programs are socially aware, but diploma graduates showed higher values in social awareness than baccalaureate graduates. In BSN graduates, this might be developed due to dominant social view of nursing as physician assistant rather than cooperating personnel. This negative social perception declines the professionals retention that cause the shortage and attrition of the nursing graduates. Takese, et al also highlighted that nurses believed that publically they were perceived more negatively were considered of low status [19].

Findings of Scott, Cruess et al. and Gull et al. are consistent with the finding of the present study regarding nursing professionalism which led to the advancement in education and training of nurses [20-22]. This advancement helps to develop professional insight and sense of professionalism amongst nurses which enable them to deal with complex tasks in clinical areas. The mean score for nursing professionalism in baccalaureate graduate group was lower than diploma graduate group. Similarly, Secrest et al. and Reason reported lower level of professionalism (at least perception wise) among baccalaureate nursing students which could be largely due to many factors like as an assistant role in a team, lack of awareness about the patient condition and hesitation to communicate with patient/ family members. These nurses also believe that they are not being valued for what they have been doing [23]. Furthermore, complexity of the nursing job, lack of professional insight and uniqueness of nursing practice weaken the perception of professionalism. Every specialized group has its own professional subculture and particular knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, and language which provide its members a paradigm. The lack or absence of these unique characteristics declines the nursing professionalism and their service role.

On account of Service roles, current study negates the findings of Hendel et al. and Gull et al. that Baccalaureate prepared nurses are theoretically and scientifically more orientated and skillful than nurses having diploma education. The BSN graduates hold broad theoretical knowledge and are better problem-solvers. The knowledge and skill of nurses enable them to understand their professional responsibilities and upgrade professional image [22, 24]. Current study results show that B.Sc. nurses have lower scores than Diploma nurses with significant difference in both groups. The current difference might be due to lack of understanding of service role by student nurses and faculty in both programs. Brodie et al also outlined similar finding that, "nursing students misjudged the complexity of knowledge and responsibility of the nurses' role which create stress, job insecurity and failure to discriminate the role expected and role performed" [25]. They act as physician assistant in multidisplinary meetings due to ambiguity in their role and fail to express their opinions. Regarding nursing originality, results of study by Riley and Beal are similar with respect to clinical nursing practice and update of professional knowledge [26]. Current study findings showed that BSN graduate nurses scored slightly higher than Diploma graduate nurses in nursing originality, however no significant difference was observed in mean scores. Nurses need professional identity through hard work, providing public service and by improving clinical practice. Tyreman stated that, "nurses have lack of understanding of their patient, and they do not put their best in clinical practice and hence they lose professional identity and professional respect" [27]. Therefore, nurses need to understand different human health problems to take timely decisions in clinical practice. This practice of nursing attitude dominates nurses in the delivering of client service and shapes the identity of the profession.

Implication for nursing administration and nursing practice
Proactive planning should be made to align organizational and professional nursing values. This will help organizations to retain qualified and experienced professional nurses and reduce turnover rate. Collaboration between the nursing administration and academicians should be encouraged to enhance practice values of the future workforce with the help of senior registered nurses.

Implication for nursing education
To describe cause-and-effect relationship, a prospective study should be carried out to examine professional values developed from a specific educational program which will better inform educationalists of its effectiveness. The nurse educators and practitioners should review the essence of nursing within their own context and change

it according to upcoming practice expectations so that a balance and harmony is achieved in professional values development and value based work orientation.

Limitation of the study
- This study used a cross sectional analytical design which is not suitable to identify cause and effect relationship of different study variables and demographic characteristic of the study participants.
- Limited time, and limited availability of financial, material and human resources forced us to have small sample size and that too from only three civilian and one military nursing institute in Lahore and Rawalpindi. Inference made on such modest sample may be a challenge to generalize the results. However, with similar demographic characteristics the findings can be generalized.

Strengths of the study
This is a unique study which will add substantive body of nursing knowledge in the field of nursing by identifying their professional values. In Pakistani context, entry into professional nursing is mainly from these two areas but professional values of both the groups have not been thoroughly investigated. The findings of this study provide an opportunity for discussion on this issue to explore the reasons for difference in professional values of the two groups in some more detail.

Implications for future research
In future, large scale studies with broader spectrum should be conducted across the country to identify the gaps and recommend viable solutions. Researchers should endeavor to address the development of professional nursing values and congruence of personal values with professional values and professional values with organizational values. For in-depth study of professional values, a phenomenological study approach may be used to explore individual experiences and identify existent barriers. There is a dire need to study and correlate the relationship of demographic characteristics of graduate nurses, duration of clinical exposure and professional values development across all health care sectors in country.

Conclusion
Majority of nursing graduates rated professional self-concept, social awareness and nursing professionalism as highest, social role as moderate and nursing originality as the lowest in both diploma and baccalaureate groups. However, significant difference was observed in four subscales; professional self-concept, social awareness, nursing professionalism, and nursing service role in which diploma graduates scored higher than BSN graduates. The identified gaps should need to be bridged and steps should be taken to improve professional nursing values.

Recommendations
- The additional training and education should be imparted for all practicing nurses and nurse educators about nursing ethics and professional values to make nurses more competent.
- A purposeful mentoring program should be initiated with consideration to professional values for each group of students, all practicing nurses by nurse educators and nurse administrators.
- The role of social workers, religious leaders and media may be encouraged and sensitize towards the respects of nurses and foster their moral and ethical premises.

- Publication of research based studies on nursing will promote understanding about professionals and enhance the positive public image of the nursing profession.

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