_____

Study on Awareness and Challenges in Using English Language among Nurses in a Multispeciality Hospital, Chennai

Aathira[1]*, Bhoomadevi[2]**

[1]Junior Administrator, Billroth Hospital, Chennai

[2]Assistant Professor, Sri Ramachandra College of Management, Sri Ramachandra Univeristy, Chennai

ABSTRACT: Background: Nurses these days face tough competition in their field. In order to sustain in the healthcare industry they have to augment their language and communication skills especially English language. Lack of improvement in their language impact the impression of hospitals. The success of an effective healthcare has been attributed to strong communication skills between the health personnel and the patients.

Objective: To assess the English communication skills among the nurses in a multispecialty hospital.

Materials and Methods: A study was done with a sample size of 150 among nurses to identify the level of English language among them and to further identify causes for poor compliance in using English for communication. The respondents were assessed with a questionnaire prepared after a pilot study.

Results: From the study, it was revealed that there is a strong relationship among the respondents in the aspect of training programme in English and its effectiveness on them. Most of the nurses gave an opinion that the difficulties faced by them were mostly related to grammar and the biggest challenge faced by a majority of them is the fear they carry. It is found that significant majority are of the opinion that a regular class for English speaking and communication is necessary for nurses to improve their diction.

Conclusion: Specific English tutoring classes is mandatory for the nurses and should also be combined with counseling sessions to overcome the fear of the language and speaking in English without inhibitions.

Keywords: Communication, Language, Nurses
_____*****_____

I. INTRODUCTION

Acquiring strong communication skills is essential in effective healthcare delivery. There are few barriers in the healthcare communication which includes lack of compassionate listening and insufficient analysis of purpose and context.

In a study by Pandey and Sinhaneti (2013), it has been underlined that usage of English language while talking and listening as the two most important skills specially needed for healthcare staffs at their workplace. With the rise of healthcare in India, we have become a major player in the international medical facilities and advancement. This has drastically increased the number of international inflow of patients. It's very clear that English is the dominant international language thus undermining its importance but it's also mandatory that health personnel must be proficient in more than one language as well. It has been noticed that Nurses' English Speaking Skills have rarely been assessed. That is why nurses do not pay attention to English speaking skills.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Having proper and clear communication for the nursing profession poses a great challenge in healthcare delivery as there are differing requirements for specific situations in the healthcare industry. Most of the nurses in our country are either from a rural background or from a regional medium school. They are well qualified and capable enough to get higher education and to make bright future, but communicating in English language becomes an obstacle in their career. The various problems faced by them range from grammatical errors, improper pronunciations, as well as inabilities to understand various accents. (Allen, et. al., 2007).

A multi specialty hospital caters to various layers of the population within the state, country as well as internationally (Muller, A. 2011). This requires a standard degree of English language skills for effectively handling patients and administering proper healthcare. The purpose of this study is to identify the English communication skills among the nurses. This study is an attempt to identify the causes for poor compliance in using English for communication and helps to devise new strategies for better English communication skills.

III. OBJECTIVES

- To assess the awareness of importance of English language among nurses.
- To assess the knowledge and attitude towards English language among nurses.

_____

- To analyze the barriers and challenges for speaking English among nurses.

IV.   MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study is confined to descriptive design and was carried out in a multispecialty hospital at Chennai from February to April 2016. Sample size was calculated using the formula, n=z²pq/e² taking P as 90% as per Behavioral Surveillance Survey (BSS) 2006 data for North-East India and e as 10% with 95% confidence interval and it came out as 150.

A structured questionnaire was used for interviewing the nurses (Marian V, et. al., 2007). Institutional ethics approval was obtained from the multi-specialty hospital where research is carried out. A Pilot study was conducted to check the reliability of the questionnaire for which the cronbachs alpha value was 0.62. Content validity was also done by distributing the questionnaire to the experts in the respective field.

Using simple random sampling technique, the nurses who have direct contact with the patients are selected (150 samples).

Statistical analysis: Data collected was presented in percentage, Chi square test, correlation and multiple regression was done using SPSS version 16 software.

V.   RESULTS

From the percentage analysis it was found that 60 percent of the respondents had completed graduation in nursing, around 3 percent of the respondents had completed their post graduation and others have completed their diploma in nursing.

28 percent of the respondents have less than one year experience and 18.7% of respondents have 6 to 10 years of experience. 56.7 % of the respondents studied in English medium and 40 % of the respondents studied in Tamil medium.

Attitude of the Nurses: It was surprising to note that 97 percent of the respondents feel that English language skills help in achieving high standard for the hospital. On the contrary around 32 percent nurses feel that English language is not important in the hospitals various dealings.

Challenges Faced by the Nurses: It was revealed that 92 percent of the respondents always communicate in English among themselves and contrarily 45 percent of the respondents agreed only sometimes they will communicate in English with patients. The study reveals that 74.7 % of the respondents have difficulty in grammar, 8.7% of the

respondents have difficulty in vocabulary, 14% respondents have difficulty in pronunciation and only 2.7 % respondents have no problem. Out of 150 respondents, only 61percent attended the training in English language and 41 % of the respondents felt that the training was not effective and 59 % of the respondents felt the training was effective.

Confidence in Using English Language: Though training plays a major role, the study reveals that only 48 % of the respondents have more than three years of experience and the confidence in using English language have significant association with the experience (P<0.001). Only 3 percent of the respondents had completed their PG, 60 percent of the respondents had completed B.Sc. Nursing and 37 percent of the respondents had completed diploma in nursing. Hence the qualification and confidence level of nurses does not have any association whereas their experience and confidence level have significant association. In the study it was revealed that unpleasant situation faced by the respondents and feeling shy/fear while speaking in English has significant association (P<0.01).

Rating of Language Ability

Table-1 showing the rating of language ability of the respondents

Rating	Parameter	Percent
1	Understand but cannot speak	6.0
2	Understand and can speak with great difficulty	14.0
3	Understand and speak but with some difficulty	44.7
4	Understand and speak comfortably, with little difficulty	27.3
5	Understand and speak like a fluent speaker	8.0

The above table reveals that only 8 % of the respondents have rated themselves as 5 i.e. they can understand and speak like a fluent speaker. 6 percent of the respondents had rated themselves as 1. 14 percent of the respondents have rated themselves as 2 and 44.7 percent of the respondents have rated themselves as 3 and 27.3 % of the respondents have rated them as 4.

However, a maximum of 38.7 percent of the respondents are always confident enough to reply back when a patient talks to them in English and 34 percent of the respondents are sometimes confident enough to reply back when a patient talks to them in English.

Out of 150 respondents, 40 percent of them sometimes feel shy while speaking in English language, 10 percent of the respondents frequently feel shy while and 27 percent of the respondents always feel shy while speaking in English.

Knowledge and Attitude

Table-2 showing weighted average of challenges faced by the respondents towards Speaking English

Response	Weighted Average
Knowing English is very important	4.76
Correct grammar and good writing skills are necessary to perform job	4.52
Current English skills are enough to perform the job	4.02
Need to spend time in improving the language skills	4.34
English language helps in achieving high standard for the hospital	4.50

From the above table it is seen that the highest weightage 4.76 is given for the importance of knowing English, the next highest weightage is for agreeing correct grammer a good writing skill which is necessary to perform the job well and the least weightage is given for current English skills that are enough to perform the job.

Challenges Faced by the Respondents

Table-3 showing weighted average of challenges faced by the respondents towards Speaking English

Response	Weighted Average
Communication between the employees in English	3.73
Speaking to patients in English	3.32
Confidence to reply back in English	3.96
Communication between doctors and nurses in English	3.95
Listening international patients	4.07
Conversation of parents and siblings in English	2.56
Switching between Tamil and English	3.44
Difficult to find the right word	3.22
Initiating the conversation in English	3.45
Feeling shy/fear to speak in English	2.7

From the above table it is seen that the highest weightage of 4.07 is given for listening to International patients while they speak to them, the next highest weightage is for the confidence to reply back in English. The least weightage is for feeling shy /fear while talking in English.

From the correlation analysis it is found that there is a high positive correlation between the training programme attendees and its effectiveness on them and there is low positive correlation between respondents who are confident enough to reply back in English and respondents and their Parents and siblings speak English well.

Regression analysis revealed that the unpleasant situations faced by the respondents have major influence on the attitude and knowledge possessed by the respondents and it is significant at 1 percent level of confidence.

VI.   SUGGESTIONS

It is suggested for all hospital authorities to have proper verification of the nurses before recruiting with proper emphasis and assessment of their English diction and communication.

The hospital authorities must also have specific English language training sessions for all the employees who include mainly the nurses and the office staff. They must ensure that the training should take place on a weekly basis and the attendance of the nurses monitored. The training persons appointed by the hospital must also have monthly assessment of the English diction and communication focusing more on grammar while speaking.

Proper encouragement of the staff on regular basis to communicate in English during work hours could be initiated by the administrators. It is also suggested to have specific counseling classes to overcome fear of communication in English which can break down the inhibitions. The doctors and the other administrative staff also should play a supportive role and restrict their medium of communication to English in order to bring more awareness of the English language among the nursing staffs.

VII.   CONCLUSION

The experience of learning another language has a major contribution to the overall education of a person. It is especially relevant to people, such as those in the various fields of medicine, who deal professionally with people of different ethnicity, race, language and nationality.

The study identifies that the nurses are well aware of the importance of the English language and the how integral it is for the upliftment of the entire hospital in regards to healthcare. Most of the nurses gave an opinion that the difficulties faced by them were mostly related to grammar and the biggest challenge faced by a majority of them is the fear they carry they have when they converse in English. The fear or shyness is found to be the result of them having faced unpleasant situations while speaking English. From the study it is found that significant majority are of the

152

opinion that regular classes for English speaking and communication is necessary for nurses to improve their diction. Special educators can be appointed who can expose the nurses to a wide range of vocabulary. Specific speech based and writing based interactions can further enhance their English skills (Poisson, T. 2009).

While active learning methods such as group discussions and presentations are mainstream methods, the faculty should also be aware of the barriers for these nursing students. It is also found that many qualified nurses do not initiate an English conversation as they had a low level of confidence while speaking English (San Miguel C, and Rogan F, 2015). Therefore we conclude that specific English tutoring classes should also be combined with counseling sessions for the nurses to overcome the fear of the language and speak in English without inhibitions. This is comparable to the study by Donnelly et al (2009) who said that the challenges faced by the nurses were mainly due to the lack of awareness and support at the institutional level and therefore encourages more similar activities.

This study can also be extended to other healthcare professionals like ward secretaries, dieticians, floor administrators who directly deal with patients.

LIMITATIONS: The study is been confined only to the Medical Centre nurses. Therefore, results cannot be generalized to the other hospitals.

Conflict of interests: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

REFERENCES:

[1] Allen, S., Chapman, Y., O'Connor, M., and Francis, K. (2007). The importance of language for nursing: Does it convey commonality of meaning and is it important to do so. *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *24*(4), 47.

[2] Donnelly T, McKiel E, and Hwang J. (2009). Factors influencing the performance of English as an additional language nursing students: Instructors' perspectives. Nursing inquiry, 16(3), 201-211.

[3] Marian V, Blumenfeld H K, and Kaushanskaya M. (2007). The Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q): Assessing language profiles in bilinguals and multilinguals. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 50(4), 940-967.

[4] Muller, A. (2011). Addressing the English language needs of international nursing students. Journal of Academic Language and Learning, 5(2), A14-A22.

[5] Pandey, I. and Sinhaneti, K. (2013). A Study of Required English Skills for Healthcare Personnel in Bangkok-Based International Hospitals. Leksika, 7 (1): 35, 44.

[6] Poisson, T. (2009). Finding Solutions to Language Barriers between Nurses and their Clients.

[7] San Miguel C, and Rogan F, (2015). Assessing students' English language proficiency during clinical placement: A qualitative evaluation of a language framework. *Nurse education today*, *35*(6), 771-776.