

Learning Feedback Journaling and Empathy of Selected National University Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

Nursing empathy is characterized as the ability of the nurse to understand the feelings, experiences, and psychosocial abilities of their patients. (Yu, 2021). There is considerable attention drawn to empathy in Nursing and relevantly the concept is firmly ingrained in all nursing discourse. Reflection as a hands-on experience modality to integrate empathy requires a student to actively engage in analysis, evaluation, and/or creation. (Schumann Scheel, 2017). The use of reflective journaling is a structured approach to direct learners on the process. The study explored the difference in empathy and learning feedback journaling scores before and after among fourth-year nursing students currently taking the course on Care of the Older Adults. It utilized the Jefferson Empathy Scale Nursing Student Version by Ward, J. (2009). The tool was a modified version of the Jefferson Empathy Scale for Health Profession Version. Descriptive Statistics was used in the demographics of the study participants including Frequency, Percentages, Mean, and Standard Deviations. Empathy scores of nursing students were described using Mean and Standard Deviation. To establish the difference, Mann-Whitney U was utilized. The Empathy of students has significantly improved before and after the clinical exposure given the two-week rotation. The Learning Feedback Journaling significantly improved the empathy scores of nursing students before and after the clinical exposure. Recommendations emphasized longer clinical exposures to further improve the empathy scores of nursing students and may significantly impact improvement in the quality of learning feedback journaling of students. Enhance History Taking Tool used in the College during discussion and return demonstration to incorporate emotional components as part of assessment parameters. Learning Feedback Journaling may be utilized as a teaching strategy to inculcate the value of empathy in clinical care. The use of non-verbal language by the nurse in the form of touch may manifest empathy at the bedside.

Keywords: Empathy, Learning Feedback, Nursing, Clinical Exposure

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1. INTRODUCTION

Empathy as a concept is closely linked to the caring process. Nursing empathy is characterized as the ability of the nurse to understand the feelings, experiences, and psychosocial abilities of their patients. (Yu, 2021) Nurses who show understanding of their patient's illness experiences will find their relationship enhanced, enabling a trusting relationship. With the development of trust, nurses can connect with the patients. This connection becomes relevant in the caring process.

There is considerable attention drawn to empathy in Nursing and relevantly the concept is firmly ingrained in all nursing discourse. The ability to perceive the meaning and feelings of another and to communicate those feelings to others becomes crucial in health care delivery, it is essential, then, to provide students with opportunities to develop empathy, as this will allow students to understand the patient's perspective and eventually utilize developed skills. The development of an empathic attitude in nursing students is imperative

To ensure the curricular integration of empathic skills among student nurses, several approaches were thought to create impactful evidence of its usefulness. Currently, limited research has been conducted on the ways empathy is embedded into curricular programs. (Peisachovich, 2023) A key element in the integration of empathy is a hands-on experience, which includes the use of simulation-based approaches, reflection, problem-solving, didactic lectures, active participation, and role modeling. (Peisachovich, 2023) While nursing programs do focus on the six elements of developing empathy, current research suggests that as students in nursing programs progress into their third and fourth years of education, levels of empathy decrease. (Graber, 2012; Peisachovich, 2023) Thus, there is a need for a more rigorous approach to integrating empathy into the curricular program. As emphasized by Peisachovich, one of the modalities by which empathy may be enhanced is through reflection.

Reflection as a hands-on experience modality to integrate empathy requires a student to actively engage in analysis, evaluation, and/or creation. (Schumann Scheel, 2017). Reflection is a process that is known to assist nurses in the development of necessary skills and competencies when undertaking training within clinical settings. Reflection allows students to make sense of the events that occur in clinical settings and to critically examine not only their roles, behaviors, actions, and beliefs but also those of others. A common feature of all models of reflection is that they provide a structured approach to reflection to direct the learner through a series of phases of the reflective process. In Nursing, the use of reflective journaling is a structured approach to direct learners on the process.

The College of Nursing of the National University is utilizing structured learning feedback journaling to enhance empathy among students. The study determined the relationship between learning feedback journaling on the empathy of students taking the course Care of the Older Adults.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Reflective journal writing in the form of a Learning Feedback Journal can be used to evaluate clinical learning and what challenges students are experiencing that may influence their learning. Reflective Journaling is seen as a means of self-examination to improve professional growth and has benefits such as discovering meaning, making connections, and developing critical thinking (Blake, 2005). It promotes personal and professional development by fostering self-reflection, critical analysis, and goal setting. (Mahlanze and Sibiyi, 2017) Reflective journaling enhances understanding of patient care, aids in proactive decision-making, facilitates corrective actions, and encourages open-mindedness. The use of reflective journaling influences learning by enabling the students to examine their feelings on the clinical scenario encountered critically. It also promotes active involvement and ownership of learning. Furthermore, the study emphasized the myriad benefits of reflective journaling in personal growth, professional advancement, clinical learning, decision-making, corrective actions, attitude examination, and active involvement in the learning process. This suggests that this methodology in teaching has a multitude of advantages as the learning process becomes active. In the study of Epp (2008) on reflective journaling, it yielded several key findings on the advantages of the methodology. It also examined the levels of reflection in undergraduate students' journaling, providing insights into the depth and quality of their reflective practices. The study also explored the impact of reflective journaling on students' learning, highlighting its positive influence on knowledge acquisition and skill development. KSA acquisition appears to be the hallmark of the advantages of using reflective journaling. Additionally, it observed an improvement in reflective writing skills over time, indicating the progressive nature of this form of self-reflection. Lastly, while limited evidence was available, the study touched upon undergraduate nurses' experiences creating written communication focused on critical reflection in practice (Epp, 2008).

Advantages and Benefits of Reflective Journaling

The advantages derived from the use of reflective journaling are likewise manifested in levels of self-reflection. The levels appear to be premised on the active process of reflection. The leveling demonstrates the achievement of learning outcomes. Thorpe (2004), in another study on reflective journaling, emphasized the importance of reflective learning journals as a powerful tool for fostering active learning among nursing students. It shed light on different categories of nursing students based on their level of reflection. Firstly, the category of non-reflectors comprised students who showed a lack of evidence in the deliberate appraisal of their experiences. In contrast, reflectors demonstrated insight by engaging in analysis, discrimination, and evaluation of their experiences, showcasing a higher level of reflection. The study also highlighted a third category, critical reflectors, who underwent a transformative process, evolving from their initial perspective. These findings highlighted the varying degrees of reflection among nursing students and emphasized the potential of reflective learning journals in promoting more profound levels of reflection for enhanced learning outcomes. The categorization of the development of reflection suggests the active process of learning outcomes acquisition.

Another advantage of Reflective writing is integration. This allows students to combine clinical experiences and takeaways with didactic material to understand practice and instruction better (Naber & Markley, 2015). Through this process, learners bridge the gap between theory and real-world application, drawing connections between classroom knowledge and hands-on experiences, fostering holistic comprehension. Reflective writing also encourages mindfulness, identifying strengths and areas for improvement and facilitating personal and professional growth. Through the amalgamation of practical experiences and a wealth of educational resources, students can obtain valuable perspectives, increase their understanding of the complexities within their field, and refine their skills as practitioners. Additionally, reflective writing enhances metacognition, enabling students to analyze their learning process, refine strategies, and acquire knowledge more effectively. This powerful educational tool empowers students to forge meaningful connections, develop self-awareness, and become better-equipped professionals, positively impacting their chosen field (Naber & Markley, 2015).

In a systematic review of the influence of journal logs conducted by Brown et.al. (2022), they identified three significant outcomes similar to the study of Mahlanze and Sibiyi in 2017. They found that journal logs promote reflection, allowing individuals to engage in deep thinking, introspection, and analysis of their experiences. This reflective practice enhances self-awareness and facilitates personal growth. Likewise, this finding is similar to the findings of Naber and Markley in 2015, emphasizing personal growth as a benefit and advantage. The review further highlighted the development of clinical judgment as an outcome of using journal logs. The practice of documenting and reflecting on clinical experiences enables individuals to refine their decision-making and judgment skills in complex healthcare scenarios. This finding is corroborated by the study of Mahlanze and Sibiyi in 2017, stipulating clinical learning is enhanced when reflective journaling is utilized. Lastly, they construed that journal logs contribute to emotional competency development. Through journaling, individuals can explore and regulate their emotions, improving emotional intelligence and effective interpersonal relationships. The systematic review underscored the positive influence of journal logs on reflection, clinical judgment, and emotional competency.

Reviewed literature suggests similarities between the advantages and benefits of reflective journaling and is significant in nursing student clinical training, catalyzing various essential outcomes. It facilitates self-reflection, stimulates critical thinking, fosters the integration of theory and practice, supports professional development, and nurtures a culture of continuous learning. Through active participation in this methodology, nursing students can fortify their clinical competence, cultivate a patient-centered approach, and relentlessly pursue excellence in their nursing practice.

Reflective Journaling and Empathy of Nursing Students

Empathy is a critical component of nursing care, and nursing students need to develop empathic skills during their education (Cunico et al., 2012). In practice-oriented education like nursing, students learn empathy through a practical approach, such as a video of a clinical scenario and learning with an expert patient (Ayu et al., 2023).

The development of empathy is a critical clinical competency for nursing students, and integrating the participation of expert patients into nursing education can prove instrumental in nurturing students' innate capacity for empathy. By engaging with expert patients, students have a unique opportunity to enhance their empathic skills. These individuals provide invaluable insights that can profoundly impact students' ability to empathize with patients with their lived experiences and extensive knowledge of the healthcare journey. Such an approach fosters a deeper connection between students and the human aspect of healthcare, ultimately equipping them to provide compassionate and patient-centered care. (Ferry et al., 2019).

Misra-Hebert et al. (2012) conducted a study exploring the impact of structured reflective writing, a form of reflective journaling, on empathy among healthcare practitioners, particularly physicians. The program integrated guided writing and group discussions, yielding significant empathy enhancements. Physicians engaged in reflective writing and shared reflections, improving empathy scores, suggesting that such writing fosters deeper patient understanding. Reflective writing provides a secure space for healthcare professionals to explore emotions and experiences, cultivating empathy, which may also work with students in nursing. This study underscores the positive influence of structured reflective writing on empathy, enabling physicians to connect emotionally with patients and provide empathic care, ultimately enhancing patient well-being, which may likewise be true for nursing students.

In Kahrman et al.(2016) study, empathic nurses better understand their patient's needs, making them at ease to discuss their problems and concerns. Understanding of individuals' emotions, perspectives, and experiences is paramount for healthcare professionals. This will empower them to effectively evaluate individuals' authentic needs and respond precisely by delivering customized services. By acknowledging and appreciating the distinctive circumstances surrounding each individual, healthcare professionals can guarantee that their interventions are meticulously tailored to meet the precise requirements of those under their care. Such an approach ensures an impactful and personalized healthcare experience for every individual.

In a systematic review conducted by Chen and Forbes in 2014 in medical education discovered that reflective writing receives greater emphasis in medical curricula. The review focused on assessing reflective writing exercises' impact on various aspects of student development, including their overall well-being, proficiency, and clinical skills. The findings

from the reviewed studies consistently indicated a significant enhancement in student empathy across all cases, thereby highlighting a substantial change in outcomes. It is essential to acknowledge that the lack of uniformity in outcome measurement throughout the existing literature hinders drawing definitive conclusions from this review (Chen & Forbes, 2014). Despite study design inconsistencies, reflective writing shows potential for early interventions to mitigate compassion loss and burnout in medical students, enhancing healthcare. However, the studies did not measure empathy from the patient's perspective, limiting its impact assessment on patient care. Nevertheless, students' improved empathy, self-reflection, cultural competency, and positive responses to curriculum changes support the adoption of reflective writing in medical education. The review stresses the need for more focused studies on empathy outcomes and evidence-based curricula to develop consistent and effective interventions to address early physician burnout and improve patient outcomes. However, comprehensive evidence is lacking, and the potential benefits of reflective writing warrant further exploration and development in medical education.

Savitha et al. emphasized in a study in 2021 that the reflective narrative process in medical education fosters students' recognition of the significance of patient care and the necessity of cultivating soft skills, like empathy, communication, and clinical expertise to become competent doctors. The analysis of these narratives revealed that students were beginning to address essential competencies required in medical practice, such as professionalism, ethics, and empathetic patient encounters. Moreover, including an additional level of reflection, encouraging students to empathize with others involved in clinical scenarios, led to a deeper understanding of the experiences. Reflective narratives are valuable for promoting empathy and developing critical competencies among future doctors. Additionally, the feedback obtained from analyzing these narratives aids faculty in refining the educational approach, ensuring a comprehensive learning experience for students during their early clinical exposure sessions.

The cultivation of empathy by improving emotional intelligence through journal writing was observed in the study of Harrison, P. A., & Fopma-Loy (2010). They reviewed the literature on emotional intelligence competencies in nursing education and practice, summarizing the assumptions derived from the literature that guided the project. Moreover, the article provides the journal prompts and presents student responses as examples, showcasing their reflections on these competencies. The findings strongly indicate that these progressive journal prompts are valuable tools for introducing and stimulating reflection on emotional intelligence competencies among nursing students. The article concludes by offering recommendations for incorporating these prompts into various nursing courses, highlighting their potential for widespread use. According to Rosaria et al. (2019), empathy, a vital component of emotional intelligence, involves the profound ability to comprehend and appreciate the emotional experiences of those around us. This suggests that empathy can be cultivated through reflecting on journal writing.

Adams and Scott (2018) emphasized the significance of reflective writing in nursing education to cultivate empathy among students. By encouraging them to combine personal patient care experiences creatively, reflective writing facilitates the discovery of deeper meanings from these encounters. The themes that emerged from their reflections, such as recognizing stereotypes, seeing the self in others, acknowledging hope, loss, and the fear of being forgotten, and finding meaning in interactions, align with the crucial empathic behaviors. This process of reflection allows students to comprehend patients' perspectives better, exhibit empathy, and deliver compassionate care. Although follow-up interviews were not possible due to the student's graduation, they would have provided valuable insights into their intended meanings and empathy development. By engaging in reflective exercises, nursing students are encouraged to become empathic practitioners capable of providing meaningful and compassionate care supported by a profound impact on their learning and direct patient care experiences. Ultimately, reflective writing is a vital component of nursing education. It fosters empathy and enables students to understand themselves, their patients, and the complexities of healthcare interactions, culminating in patient-centered and empathic practice.

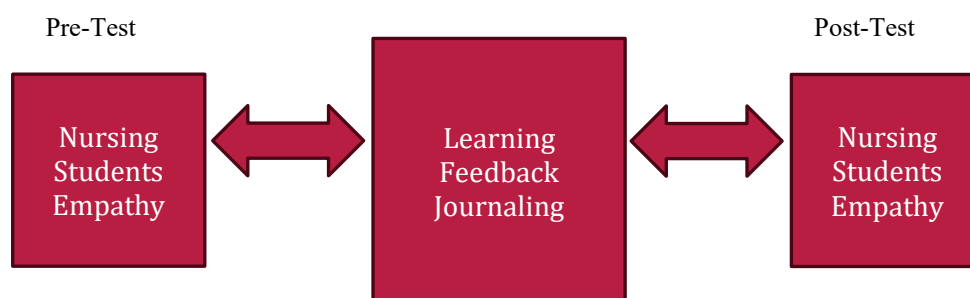
Jacobson and Jeffries, in 2018, found out that using reflective writing and storytelling fostered empathy and resilience in nursing students. Encouraging students to reflect on their experiences through writing helps them recognize the importance of patient care and the need to develop clinical and soft skills, such as empathy and communication. Through analyzing their narratives, students address essential competencies required for medical practice, including professionalism and ethics. The curriculum emphasizes the power of reflective writing to help nurses process workplace traumas, like needlestick incidents, and cope with burnout. Creating a writing community allows students to explore their own stories, share experiences, and strengthen their narrative capacity, enhancing their ability to attend to patients' stories. The benefits of expressive writing and reflective journaling are highlighted, demonstrating the positive impact on students' empathy, understanding, and overall well-being. The study also emphasized the significance of sharing personal stories as a powerful tool for healing and creating a supportive community among clinicians. Writing as a reflective tool in nursing education promotes empathy, resilience, and improved communication skills, contributing to a more compassionate and connected healthcare workforce.

The study of Xue et al. (2023) utilized narrative medical theory training and reflective writing to instill empathy and professionalism, emphasizing the significance of empathy training in healthcare education. Randomized controlled trials were employed to evaluate the impact of these interventions on nursing students' empathy, professionalism, and humanistic

caring ability, providing a robust evaluation method. Narrative medical theory training utilized real patient stories to deepen students' understanding of patient perspectives and enhance empathy. Reflective writing facilitated self-awareness and personal growth, improving empathy and awareness of patient impact. The study revealed that heightened empathy in nursing students yielded positive outcomes, such as increased patient adherence to treatment and higher patient satisfaction, resulting in stronger patient-nurse relationships and more effective treatment results. Integrating these training methods into nursing education positively impacted students' empathy, professionalism, and humanistic caring ability, benefitting their future careers and patients' well-being. Emphasizing empathy training in healthcare education can foster a more compassionate and patient-centered healthcare system, ultimately leading to improved treatment outcomes.

The literature suggests that the development of empathy among nursing students compels the integration of reflective journaling during their training, enabling individuals to recognize and comprehend someone's emotions and establish an emotional connection with them. Additionally, as empathy plays a significant role in nursing, it must be taught in a manner that allows for evaluation and subsequent integration into the clinical teaching of nursing students during their practical training. Current nursing education programs often focus on imparting clinical knowledge and technical skills. Still, they may not provide adequate opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences and understand patients' perspectives. Incorporating reflective journaling can bridge this gap by empowering students to construct deeper and more meaningful self-reflection, providing them with the emotional and interpersonal skills needed to foster compassionate empathy.

Conceptual Framework:



The study explored nursing students' empathy before and after learning feedback journaling as a clinical teaching methodology. The students accomplished the Jefferson Empathy Scale (Nursing Student Version, 2009) to determine their empathy level. Learning Feedback Journaling per exposure was utilized as a teaching-learning strategy in the clinical area with the intent to improve the level of empathy. The structured learning feedback journal format was evaluated using a rubric. After the second week of clinical exposure, the students accomplished the Jefferson Empathy Scale to determine their level of empathy.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Learning Feedback Journaling as a modality to improve the empathy of student nurses is crucial. The study explored the relationship between empathy and learning feedback journaling among fourth-year nursing students currently taking the course on Care of the Older Adults. It addressed the following objectives:

To determine the empathy of nursing students before and after learning feedback journaling

To determine the Learning Feedback Journal Grade before and after clinical exposure?

To determine the difference in the Learning Feedback Journal Grade of nursing students before and after clinical exposure

To determine the difference in the empathy of nursing students before and after learning feedback journaling

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

What is the empathy score of nursing students during the first and second weeks of learning feedback journaling?

What is the Learning Feedback Journal Grade of students before and after clinical exposure in the care of older adults?

Is there a significant difference in the Learning Feedback Journal Grade of students before and after clinical exposure in the care of older adults?

Is there a significant difference in the empathy scores of nursing students during the first and second weeks of learning feedback journaling?

5. RESEARCH DESIGN:

The study utilized a prospective, descriptive, comparative research design. The investigation ultimately described the difference between structured learning feedback journaling and empathy scores of student nurses taking the course on the Care of Older Adults before and after their clinical exposure.

6. METHODOLOGY:

Students enrolled in the Care of Older Adults in the current semester were part of the study. On the first day of exposure to the Clinical Area, the students accomplished the Jefferson Empathy Scale (Nursing Student Version, 2009) to determine their empathy level. Learning Feedback Journaling per exposure was utilized as a teaching-learning strategy in the clinical area with the intent to improve the level of empathy. The structured learning feedback journal format was evaluated using a rubric. After the second week of clinical exposure, the students accomplished the Jefferson Empathy Scale to determine their level of empathy.

7. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS:

The study utilized the Jefferson Empathy Scale Nursing Student Version by Ward, J. (2009). The tool was a modified version of the Jefferson Empathy Scale for Health Profession Version. The Nursing Student Version has a reliability coefficient index of 0.77. (Ward, 2009) Ten of the items are positively worded and directly scored according to their Likert weights, and the other 10 items are negatively worded, thus reverse scored. Negatively worded items are usually used in psychological tests to decrease the confounding effect of the acquiescence response style, a tendency to constantly endorse “agree” (or “disagree”) responses to the items (Hojat, 2007). The scale is untimed and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. The scale scores can range from a minimum of 20 to a maximum of 140. Higher scores indicate a more empathic orientation. The Learning Feedback Journal Rubric will be used to evaluate the Reflective Journal during the first and second weeks of clinical exposure. The rubric is anchored on a four-point Likert scale where 4 is excellent, 3 is good, 2 is satisfactory, and 1 needs improvement. The tool has a Cohen Alpha level of 0.26 signifying fair agreement among experts of the LFJ Rubric as a reliable tool.

8. STATISTICAL TESTS:

Descriptive Statistics was used in the demographics of the study participants including Frequency, Percentages, Mean, and Standard Deviations. To determine the empathy of nursing students, Mean and Standard Deviation were used. To establish the difference, Mann-Whitney U was utilized.

9. RESULTS AND FINDINGS:

Learning Feedback Journaling as a modality to improve the empathy of student nurses is crucial in today's health care delivery. The study explored empathy and its relationship with learning feedback journaling.

To answer the first research question, what is the empathy score of nursing students during the first and second weeks of learning feedback journaling? The empathy scores of student nurses are presented in Table 1

Table 1: Empathy Scores of Student Nurses (N=34)

Components	Before	After
1. Nurses' understanding of the emotional status of their patients, as well as that of their families is one important component of the nurse-patient relationship.	97	108
2. Patients value a nurse's understanding of their feelings which is therapeutic in its own right.	94	99
3. Understanding body language is as important as verbal communication in nurse-patient relationships.	104	104
4. Patients feel better when their nurses understand their feelings.	103	105
5. I believe that empathy is an important therapeutic factor in medical treatment.	93	101
6. I believe that emotion has no place in the treatment of medical illness.	87	40

7. Nurses should try to stand in their patient's shoes when providing care to them.	92	102
8. A nurse's sense of humor contributes to a better clinical outcome.	99	102
9. Empathy is a therapeutic skill without which the nurse's success is limited.	98	103
10. Nurses should try to think like their patients in order to render better care.	113	116
12. Asking patients about what is happening in their personal lives is not helpful in understanding their physical complaints.	91	41
13. Nurses' should try to understand what is going on in their patients' minds by paying attention to their non-verbal cues and body language.	121	122
14. Attentiveness to patients' personal experiences does not influence treatment outcomes.	69	60
15. Attention to patients' emotions is not important in history taking.	101	33
16. I do not enjoy reading nonmedical literature or the arts.	107	36
17. Because people are different, it is difficult to see things from patients' perspectives.	69	91
18. It is difficult for a nurse to view things from a patient's perspective.	103	36
19. Nurses' understanding of their patients' feelings and the feelings of their patient's families does not influence medical or surgical treatment.	89	45
20. Nurses should not allow themselves to be influenced by strong personal bonds between their patients and their family members	86	39

Legend:

*Positive Range Scale**Negative Range Scale*

0-40	Low Empathy	Very High Empathy
41-80	Moderate Empathy	High Empathy
81-120	High Empathy	Moderate Empathy
121-140	Very High Empathy	Low Empathy

Analysis:

The table shows the empathy scores of students before and after the learning feedback journaling. The highest score in the empathy tool was noted in the parameter: *Nurses should try to understand what is going on in their patients' minds by paying attention to their non-verbal cues and body language*, ($\Sigma=121$, VD= Very High Empathy) suggesting that non-verbal and body language of patients are being considered by the students in perceiving what the patients are experiencing. The finding reflects very high empathy in the said parameter. Student's critical attention to non-verbal cues and body language is a manifestation of empathy. This suggests that there is an increasing sensitivity and awareness of non-verbal cues critical for the perception of the needs of patients. The increase in the same parameter was noted after the learning feedback journaling, suggesting that LFJ has influenced the sensitivity of students in the use of non-verbal cues to better understand the patient. The minimal increase may be attributed to shorter exposure to the unit and patient interactions. The finding of this study is similar to the study of Kahrman in 2016, emphasizing that emphatic nurses better understand their patient's needs, making them at ease to discuss their problems and concerns. Understanding individuals' emotions, perspectives, and experiences is paramount for healthcare professionals as this reflects empathy. Training future nurses to be sensitive to non-verbal cues as a means to address patient's needs is very critical to the development of empathy at the

earliest stage of training and education.

The lowest score in the empathy tool was from the parameter: *Because people are different, it is difficult to see things from patients' perspectives* ($\Sigma=69$, VD=High Empathy). This suggests that student nurses believe that it is also not difficult to see different perspectives of patients. The ability of student nurses to see different perspectives is a manifestation of being empathic. The finding implies that the sensitivity to patients' viewpoints may imply the need for student nurses to be more cognizant to be perceived as empathic from the patient's perspective.

After the LFJ, several parameters in the Jefferson Empathy Tool had a considerable decrease and increase in the scorings made by the students. It is noteworthy to emphasize the following improved empathy scores, from having low empathy to high and very high empathy scores: For negatively stated parameters: *Attention to patients' emotions is not important in history taking*, (Pre-Test M=101)(Post-Test M=33); *It is difficult for a nurse to view things from a patient's perspective* (Pre-Test M=103)(Post-Test M=36); *Asking patients about what is happening in their personal lives is not helpful in understanding their physical complaints* (Pre-Test M=91)(Post-Test M=41); *I believe that emotion has no place in the treatment of medical illness* (Pre-Test M=87) (Post-Test M=40). These findings further suggest that Empathy is manifested when the student nurse can focus on history-taking and the relationship between patient's physical complaints and their personal lives. Empathy may likewise be manifested in the interplay of emotion in the treatment of medical conditions. This implies that when a student understands that emotion plays a role in recuperation, they will be able to become more sensitive in understanding patient's emotions, thus reflecting the manifestation of empathy. For positively stated parameters: *Because people are different, it is difficult to see things from patients' perspectives* (Pre-Test M=69)(Post-Test M=91). The improvements in the empathy scores among students reflect a significant sensitivity to individuality however empathy is likewise improved. This is corroborated by the pre-test empathy scores being moderate to a significant increment of high empathy scores.

To answer research question two, what are the Learning Feedback Journal Cumulative Grades of students before and after clinical exposure in the care of older adults, Table 2 presents the pre-test and post-test grades in the learning feedback journal of students in the care of older adults.

Table 2: Learning Feedback Journal Grades (N=34)

	Pretest Grade	Posttest Grade
Learning Feedback Journal	83.70	90.56

Legend:

75-80	Fair
81-85	Satisfactory
86-90	Very Satisfactory
91-95	Highly Satisfactory
96-100	Excellent

Analysis:

Learning Feedback Journal (LFJ) is a structured approach to reflection to direct the learner through a series of phases of the reflective process. The LFJ scores of students in the care of older adults before the actual exposure was M=83.70. The findings suggest that the LFJ score is satisfactory before the actual exposure of students. After the exposure to patients in elderly home care, there was an increase in the LFJ score of 6.86. This suggests that the LFJ appears to be effective in the reflective process and may affect the empathy scores of student nurses. The finding of the study is supported by a similar study by Savitha in 2021, when it is specified that encouraging students to empathize with others involved in clinical scenarios, led to a deeper understanding of the experiences, thus empathy was improved. Further, the study of Xue (2023) supported the findings of this study. Narrative medical theory training in the form of reflective journaling utilizing real patient stories to deepen students' understanding of patient perspectives and enhance empathy was evident. It further revealed that heightened empathy in nursing students yielded positive outcomes, such as increased patient adherence to treatment and higher patient satisfaction, resulting in stronger patient-nurse relationships and more effective treatment results. Integrating these training methods into nursing education positively impacted students' empathy, professionalism, and humanistic caring ability, benefitting their future careers and patients' well-being. Emphasizing empathy training in healthcare education can foster a more compassionate and patient-centered healthcare system, ultimately leading to improved treatment outcomes.

To answer, research question three, is there a significant difference in the Learning Feedback Journal Grade of students before and after clinical exposure in the care of older adults is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Test of Difference in the LFJ Scores (U-Test)

Before Clinical Exposure	$\underline{U}=0.014$
After Clinical Exposure	$p=0.05$

Analysis:

The test of difference shows a significant increase before and after exposure in the care of older adults as reflected in the learning feedback journal mean scores. The scores have a significant increase of 6.86. The test of difference was significant at a 0.05 level of significance. In the study of Cotta (2020) in Sao Paolo, after the clinical simulation activity, the students demonstrated an improvement in the score obtained, using a validated empathy assessment scale.

To answer research question 4, is there a significant difference in the empathy scores of nursing students during the first and second weeks of learning feedback journaling is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Test of Difference in Empathy Scores (U-test)

Before Clinical Exposure	$\underline{U}=0.026$
After Clinical Exposure	$p=0.05$

Analysis:

The test of difference in the empathy scores before and after clinical exposure in the care of older adults shows a significant difference in the empathy scores suggesting that there is an improvement in the empathy of students in the clinical area. This can be attributed to the actual interactions of students with patients and enabling them to empathize with older adults. The test of difference was significant at a 0.05 level of significance. The present study is supported by the study of Wang in 2022 among first-year nursing students' empathy after clinical exposure, there was a significant increase in first-year nursing students' total empathy level after they took the five-day clinical placement. The initial clinical contact with the clinical learning environment helped nursing students enhance their empathy levels. Lim (2023) emphasized that longitudinal and personalized support from the faculty is critical.

10. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several important limitations need to be acknowledged. One limitation is the use of self-ratings. It is well-known that in empathy studies using self-ratings, people tend to overrate their empathy due to such processes as social desirability. Other limitations include the relatively small sample of nursing students as participant sample. It would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study, with the same student group measured at various points over time. Another limitation is that it was conducted at only one university.

11. CONCLUSIONS:

1. The Empathy of students has significantly improved before and after the clinical exposure given the two-week rotation.
2. The Learning Feedback Journaling significantly improved the empathy scores of nursing students before and after the clinical exposure.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Longer clinical exposures like one month may further improve the empathy scores of nursing students and may significantly impact improvement in the quality of learning feedback journaling of students.

Enhance History Taking Tool used in the College during discussion and return demonstration to incorporate emotional components as part of assessment parameters.

Learning Feedback Journaling may be utilized as a teaching strategy to inculcate the value of empathy in clinical care.

To conduct a longitudinal empathy study, with the same student group measured at various points over time.

The use of non-verbal language by the nurse in the form of touch may manifest empathy at the bedside.

Implications to Nursing Practice and Education

Empathy may be enhanced over time and therefore may be practiced at the bedside. Nurses must be acquainted with body language and other non-verbal cues to identify and address needs and therefore may be manifested to patients. The nurse's ability to use nonverbal language in the form of touch may improve empathy recognition of patients. Nurse educators similarly must be able to relate the concept of empathy to students during their clinical exposure. Cognizance of the patient's body language while caring at the bedside becomes crucial in the development of emphatic characteristics. As the concept may be enhanced over time, nurse educators must utilize learning feedback journaling as a strategy in the repertoire of clinical teaching methodologies

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