

Original Article

## The Effect of Assertiveness Education on Communication Skills Given to Nursing Students

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This research was conducted with pre-test post-test control group semi-trial model to determine the effect of assertiveness education given to nursing students on communication skills.

**Methods:** The research was conducted between February 2017 and May 2017 at a faculty of health sciences. The research universe consisted 300 nursing students who took elective courses in the universities of health sciences. The sample of the research was determined as 50 experiments and 50 controls by power analysis. The experiment and control group was selected by simple random method. In the study, assertiveness training was given to the experimental group, and no application was made to the control group. In the collection of the data, the "Student Information Form" containing the descriptive characteristics of the students and "Communication Skills Inventory" was used.

**Results:** The communication skill inventory of the experimental group was  $102.940 \pm 4.829$  in pre-test total score and  $123.080 \pm 9.162$  in post-test total score. The control group's communication skills inventory pre-test total score average  $101.060 \pm 8.612$ , post-test total score average  $102.320 \pm 8.064$ . The control group's communication skills inventory pre-test total score average was  $101.060 \pm 8.612$ , post-test total score was  $102.320 \pm 8.06$ . There is no statistically significant difference between control and experiment group communication skills inventory pre-test sub-dimension and total point averages ( $p > 0.05$ ). The difference found between the control and experiment group communication skills inventory final test sub-dimension and total point averages is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** In the study, it has been determined that the assertiveness training given to the experimental group increased communication skills.

**Key Words:** Education, Nursing, Communication

### Introduction

Assertiveness is the ability of an individual to express his/her opinion in an honest and open manner, while expressing his/her emotions, thoughts, and the right of the other person (Lambertz & Blight, 2016). Assertive persons who are able to say clearly what they want to say and who have empathy ability, respect others and who can say no (Uzuntarla et al., 2016; Eliusuk, Gunes, Arslan; 2014).

Nurses are constantly in contact with patients and healthcare team members as required by their profession. Effective communication enhances the effectiveness of the nursing profession. Nurses should be able to act assertively to communicate well (Kelleci et al., 2011).

Assertiveness is an effective communication for the nurse, patient or any other person. Since nursing needs to communicate with an individual patient in particular, it is necessary

for the students to have good communication skills before starting their career (Uluoglu et al., 2007). It has been found that assertive education positively affects the aggressive behavior in studying Kutlu 's nursing students (Kutlu, 2009). Boket et al. found that the assertiveness training given to the students is effective in increasing the communication skills of the students (Boket et al., 2006).

Assertiveness training is given to overcome concerns about interpersonal communication (Top & Kaya, 2009; Lee et al., 2013; Yurtsal & Ozdemir, 2015) . The purpose of assertiveness education is to help individuals change their attitudes towards themselves, to facilitate their expressing their thoughts and feelings and to increase self-confidence (Niusha, Farghadoni, Safari, 2012; Lin et al., 20014; Obliagel, 2015). Researches have shown that assertiveness training improves human relations, affects personality behavior positively, increases positive personal reactions, and reduces social anxiety (Lambertz & Blight, 2016; Lee et al., 2013).

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of assertiveness education on nursing students' communication skills.

### Research Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub>: After the assertiveness training given to the nursing students, the communication skills of the experimental group will be higher than the control group.

### Methods

#### Study Design and Sample:

The study was conducted as a pre-test-post-test control group semi-trial model. Research in eastern Turkey on a university's health sciences faculty was conducted between February 2017-May 2017. The research population in eastern Turkey, the university's health sciences faculty has created a field of 300 nursing students in elective courses. By the power analysis of the sample of the research, 50 experiments were determined as 50 controls. Experimental and control group

names were listed and selected by simple random sampling method.

### Data Collection Instruments

**Student Information Form:** The questionnaire consists of 7 questions which includes the descriptive characteristics of the students prepared by the researcher (age, gender, income status, place to live for long time, number of children in the family, education of mother and educational status of father).

**Communication Skills Inventory:** Communication Skills Inventory is a 5-point likert type inventory developed by Ersanli and Balci in 1998 (Ersanli & Balci, 1998). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale is 0.72. The Cronbach Alpha scale of your scale in the study is 0.75. The scale consists of 45 expressions, the highest score is 225 and the lowest score is 45. The scale consists of three sub-dimensions, cognitive, affective and behavioral. The high scores on the scale indicate that the level of communication skills of the individual is high (Ersanli & Balci, 1998; Mersin, Oksuz, Demiralp, 2015).

### Procedure

Ethical approval and legal permission were obtained from the relevant places before the investigation started. Explanations were made to the students about the research and verbal permissions were taken. The "Student Information Form" and "Communication Skills Inventory" prepared by the researcher were used to collect the data. Questionnaires and scales were completed by the students in about 15 minutes. In the study, Communication Skills Inventory was applied as a preliminary test before starting the research for both experimental and control groups. 8 weeks of assertiveness training was given to the experimental group after pretesting. There was no application to the control group in this process. After the training, "Communication Skills Inventory" was applied as a final test to both experiment and control group.

## Content of Assertiveness Training

- To distinguish between assertive and passive and offensive behavior,
- To define, accept and respect our own rights as much as others do,
- To suppress the excitement,
- To develop effective interpersonal relationships, Establishing meaningful and close relationships,
- To develop non-verbal behavior skills,
- Expressing thoughts, feelings and beliefs in an effective way.

### Session First

- To soften the atmosphere, reduce the inconvenience of the members and give them the opportunity to identify with the names of the members of the education.
- To teach members about group rules and what to expect from this work.
- Give the group members the opportunity to demonstrate their awareness of assertive, passive, and aggressive behaviors.

### Session Second

- To show the importance of non-verbal communication in our daily life.
- To show what the non-verbal messages of verbal behaviors and assertive, passive, aggressive behaviors.
- To teach group members to recognize their non-verbal behavior and to praise assertive behavior.

### Session Third

- To encourage members to become aware of each other's nonverbal behaviors and to praise their aggressive behavior. If someone does not give you permission to give the idea that you will not be able to oppress it or violate your rights.
- To give members the opportunity to practice assertive, passive and aggressive behaviors and to correct misunderstandings.

### Session Four

- To teach you not to compliment and to give positive compliments assertively.
- Encouraging members to talk about themselves. To show that you do not agree, to ask why, and to teach you how to say hello.

### Fifth Session

- Teaching make a request and refusing assertively,
- Giving the members the opportunity to see their own deficiencies.
- To ensure that members directly and indirectly express positive and negative feelings and thoughts about each other and tolerate negative feelings and thoughts.
- To ensure that members are aware of different voices.

### Session Six

- Explain the positive aspects of assertiveness.
- Explain the negative aspects of aggression.

### Session Seven

- To identify and change the unrealistic thoughts that prevent members from assertivizing behaviour.
- To relax group members, to make them aware of the muscles in their bodies and to encourage them to practice in their real life as well.

### Eighth Session

- Assertiveness education, the attitude of the educator and the opinions and suggestions about the way of education.
- To make evaluation of education.

### Statistical Analysis

Percentage distribution, mean, Chi-square, t test in independent groups, paired t test were used in the evaluation of the data.

**Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of the Experiment and Control Group**

Descriptive Characteristics	Control Group		Experimental Group		Test Value and p
	N	%	N	%	
<b>Age</b>					
18-28	48	96	50	100	$X^2=0.143$
29-39	2	4	0	0	$p > 0.05$
40 ve üzeri	0	0	0	0	
<b>Gender</b>					
Woman	39	78	35	70	$X^2=0.078$
Male	11	22	15	30	$p > 0.05$
<b>Income status</b>					
Income<Expense	3	6	2	4	$X^2= 0.073$
Income=Expense	43	86	42	84	$p > 0.05$
Income>Expense	4	8	6	12	
<b>Long Time Location</b>					
Village	3	6	3	6	$X^2=0.097$
Town	2	4	2	4	$p > 0.05$
District	9	18	9	18	
Province	36	72	35	72	
<b>Number of Children in the Family</b>					
0-2	13	26	12	24	
3-5	22	44	27	54	$X^2=0.076$
6 and over	15	22	11	22	$p > 0.05$
<b>Education of the mother</b>					
Illiterate	9	18	10	20	
Literate	7	14	4	8	$X^2=0.111$
Primary education	21	42	16	32	$p > 0.05$
Secondary	13	26	20	40	
<b>Education of the father</b>					
Illiterate	2	4	5	10	
Literate	5	10	5	10	$X^2=0.0286$
Primary education	23	46	20	40	$p > 0.05$
Secondary	20	40	20	40	

**Table 2. Experimental and Control Group Communication Skills Inventory (CSI) Total Score Averages Before and After Assertiveness Training**

Scale	Groups	Pretest	Last Test	Inter Groups		Inter Groups	
		Mean	Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
CSI	Control	101.060±8.612	102.320±8.064	2.104	0.096	2.778	0.085
	Experimental	102.940±4.829	123.080±9.162	12.026	<b>0.000</b>	3.380	<b>0.000</b>

### Ethical Considerations

Approval from Ethics committee of Inonu University Faculty of Health Sciences and legal permission from institutions where the study was conducted were taken in order to conduct the study. The students included in the study were informed about the aim of the study and their questions were answered. The students were informed about the fact that their information would be kept confidential and not be used in any other place.

### Results

In the study, 100% of the experimental group is in the age range of 18-28, 70.0% is female, 84.0% is middle income and 72.0% is living in the city center. 96.0% of the control group was in the age range, 78.0% was female, 86.0% was in the middle level and 72.0% was living in the city center. There is no statistically significant difference when comparing the control group and the experimental group in terms of temperamental properties ( $p > 0.05$ ). The control and test groups are similar in terms of their promotional properties (Table 1).

There was no statistically significant difference between the control sub-dimension and the total point average of the control group before and after assertive education in the study group ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 2). The difference between the pre-and post-assertiveness communication skills of the experimental group and the inventory sub-dimension and total point averages is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). There was no statistically significant

difference between the controls and the experimental group in the pre-assertiveness communication inventory sub-dimension and total score averages ( $p > 0.05$ ). A statistically significant difference was found between control and experiment group after assimilation education communication sub-dimension and total point averages ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 2).

### Discussion

In the study, most of the control group was determined to be in the age range of 18-28 years, female, middle income, living in the province center, the number of children in the family is 3-5, mother's education level and father's education level is primary school graduation. Most of the experimental group was in the age range of 18-28 years, female, income status is medium, living in province center, number of children in the family is 3-5, mother and father education level is primary school graduation (Table 1). According to these findings, it can be said that the students in the control and experimental groups are similar in terms of their promotional characteristics. Literature studies support our findings (Kelleci et al., 2011; Adana, 2010).

There was no statistically significant difference in communication skills, inventory sub-dimension and total score averages before and after assertiveness education in the control group of the study ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 2). In the control group, communication skills were slightly reduced after pre-test and post-test. In the

experimental group, the difference between the assertiveness subscale and the total point average of assertiveness education before and after communication is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 2). The assertiveness training given to the experimental group after the pre-test increased the communication skills of the students. In a study conducted on Adana students, we found that the assertiveness level of the post-assertiveness experimental group was higher than the control group (Adana, 2010).

Hojjat et al. found that assertiveness training increased the assertiveness, happiness level, and academic success of students (Hojjat, 2016). It can be considered that assertiveness education leads to an increase in communication skills because of the ability to increase interpersonal interaction, to express feelings and feelings comfortably, and because people can understand each other better.

There was no statistically significant difference between the controls and the experimental group in the pre-assertiveness communication inventory sub-dimension and total point averages ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 2). It was determined that the control and experiment groups were similar in terms of their promotional properties.

A statistically significant difference was found between control and experiment group after assertiveness post-training communication skills inventory sub-dimension and total score averages ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 2). This finding confirms our hypothesis, "Increasing Assertiveness Training Communication Skills Given to Nursing Students".

Bozkurt and Kavas found that assertiveness training positively affects communication skills (Bozkurt & Kavas, 2015). In studies on Erozkhan high school students, found that communication skills are important in problem solving skills and interpersonal relationships (Erozkhan, 2009). These results show the effectiveness of assertiveness education.

## Study Limitations

The limitation of this research is included only 1 Faculty investigation, study was conducted with a small sample group and the study recruitment was in only one location; therefore, study findings cannot be generalized to other settings.

## Conclusion

While there was no difference in communication skills in the control group with no assertiveness training in the study, there was an increase in communication skills in the experimental group with assertiveness training. As a result, it seems that there is not enough empirical work on the effect of assertiveness education on communication skills. It can be said that working on larger groups would be beneficial. It may be advisable to add assertiveness training course to the course curriculum of nursing students.

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