

Undergraduate Nursing Students' Knowledge, Attitudes, Willingness and Barriers Toward Caring for People Living with HIV/AIDS: A Qualitative Study

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Introduction:

Nurses play a significant role in providing care for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). However, undergraduate nursing education programs directly influence nurses' HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitudes, willingness, and overall ability to deliver effective care to PLWHA. Despite this impact, few studies have explored nursing students' willingness and barriers toward caring for PLWHA.

Methods:

This qualitative descriptive study aimed to explore undergraduate nursing students' knowledge, attitudes, willingness and barriers toward caring for PLWHA in Oman. Forty undergraduate nursing students, comprising equal numbers of males and females enrolled in clinical courses in their third, fourth, and fifth years, were selected to participate in eight focus group discussions. The students were invited from one major accredited nursing college in Oman using a convenience sampling approach. The qualitative data were analysed using a thematic analysis.

Results:

Five major themes were emerged: 1) lack of HIV/AIDS knowledge, 2) attitudes toward PLWHA, 3) willingness to care for PLWHA, 4) approaches toward HIV/AIDS prevention, and 5) the need for HIV/AIDS education and training to support PLWHA. The study findings revealed that nursing students demonstrated insufficient HIV/AIDS knowledge, including transmission methods and treatments, and held negative attitudes toward caring for PLWHA. They received inadequate HIV/AIDS education in their theoretical and clinical nursing courses. Furthermore, they were found to be reluctant to provide care for PLWHA due to the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS and the fear of contagion.

Conclusion:

This study underlines the need for HIV/AIDS education and training for undergraduate nursing students. The study findings provide implications for nursing leaders to integrate HIV/AIDS-focused courses into nursing education programs. This integration can enhance HIV/AIDS knowledge and foster positive attitudes toward caring for PLWHA, consequently improving their quality of life and contributing to the elimination of HIV/AIDS.

Keywords: *HIV/AIDS, knowledge, Attitudes, Nursing Education, Qualitative research, HIV/AIDS elimination.*

Disclosure of Interest Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Human subjects approval statement

Ethical approval was obtained from the Deanship of Research and the Ethical Committee of the College of Nursing at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).

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