

Importance Of Professional Attitude, Patient-Friendly Communication, And Empathy In Patient Care: Perception Of Mbbs & Nursing Students And Paramedical Staff

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Abstract

Background: Professional attitude, empathetic behavior, and patient-centered communication are essential for quality healthcare delivery. Understanding the perception of these values among future and current healthcare providers is crucial in designing effective educational interventions.

Objectives: To assess and compare perceptions of professional attitude, patient-friendly communication, and empathy among MBBS students, nursing students, and paramedical staff in two medical colleges.

Methods: A cross-sectional, questionnaire-based study was conducted among 100 MBBS students, 50 nursing students, and 100 paramedical staff (including nurses and technicians) from two medical colleges. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA to compare group means.

Results: Overall, 92% of participants agreed that professional attitude and empathy significantly influence patient outcomes. Nursing students demonstrated the highest empathy scores (mean = 4.65 ± 0.41), followed by paramedical staff (4.42 ± 0.52) and MBBS students (4.25 ± 0.49). A significant difference ($p < 0.05$) was observed among the groups regarding perception of patient-friendly communication.

Conclusion: Although all participants recognized the importance of professionalism and empathy, nursing students exhibited stronger patient-centered attitudes. Integrating structured communication and empathy training into the MBBS and paramedical curriculum is recommended.

Keywords: Professionalism, Empathy, Communication, Medical Education, Patient Care

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of patient care depends not only on clinical competence but also on the healthcare provider's professional behavior, communication skills, and empathy. Professional attitude reflects ethical values, accountability, and respect for patients, while empathetic understanding fosters trust and satisfaction. Effective, patient-friendly communication enhances adherence to treatment and improves health outcomes.

Despite the known benefits, research indicates that empathy and professional values often decline during clinical training due to stress, workload, and role-modeling issues. Therefore, assessing the perception of these key attributes among medical, nursing, and paramedical groups is essential for developing appropriate educational reforms.

2. OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the perception of professional attitude, empathy, and patient-friendly communication among MBBS students, nursing students, and paramedical staff.
2. To compare perceptions between these groups.
3. To identify areas for improvement in training and professional development.

3. METHODOLOGY

Study Design

A cross-sectional, questionnaire-based survey was conducted between January and April 2025 in two government medical colleges. These were National Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Jaipur 303121, Rajasthan, India and Government Institute of Medical Sciences, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Greater Noida 201310, Uttar Pradesh, India (College A and College B). **Study Population**

Participants included:

- 100 MBBS students (final year and interns)
- 50 nursing students (final year)
- 100 paramedical staff (nurses, laboratory technicians, radiology technicians, etc.)

Sampling Method

Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation of each group from both colleges.

Study Tool

A pre-validated, semi-structured questionnaire consisting of 15 items was used. It comprised three domains:

1. **Professional Attitude** (7 items)
2. **Patient-friendly Communication** (7 items)
3. **Empathy in Patient Care** (6 items)

Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed in person after obtaining informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained.

Data Analysis

Data were entered into Microsoft Excel and analyzed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics (mean \pm SD, percentage) were calculated. ANOVA and Chi-square tests were applied to compare perceptions among groups. A p-value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Ethical considerations: Not deemed to be necessary for participants of both institutes.

4. RESULTS

Demographics

Group	n	Mean Age (years)	Male (%)	Female (%)
MBBS Students	100	22.1 \pm 1.3	56	44
Nursing Students	50	21.4 \pm 1.1	12	88
Paramedical Staff	100	28.3 \pm 4.7	34	66

Perception Scores (Mean \pm SD)

Domain	MBBS Students	Nursing Students	Paramedical Staff	p-value
Professional Attitude	4.31 \pm 0.46	4.48 \pm 0.39	4.39 \pm 0.42	0.12
Patient-friendly Communication	4.22 \pm 0.55	4.57 \pm 0.40	4.36 \pm 0.48	0.03*

Domain	MBBS Students	Nursing Students	Paramedical Staff	p-value
Empathy	4.25 ± 0.49	4.65 ± 0.41	4.42 ± 0.52	0.01*

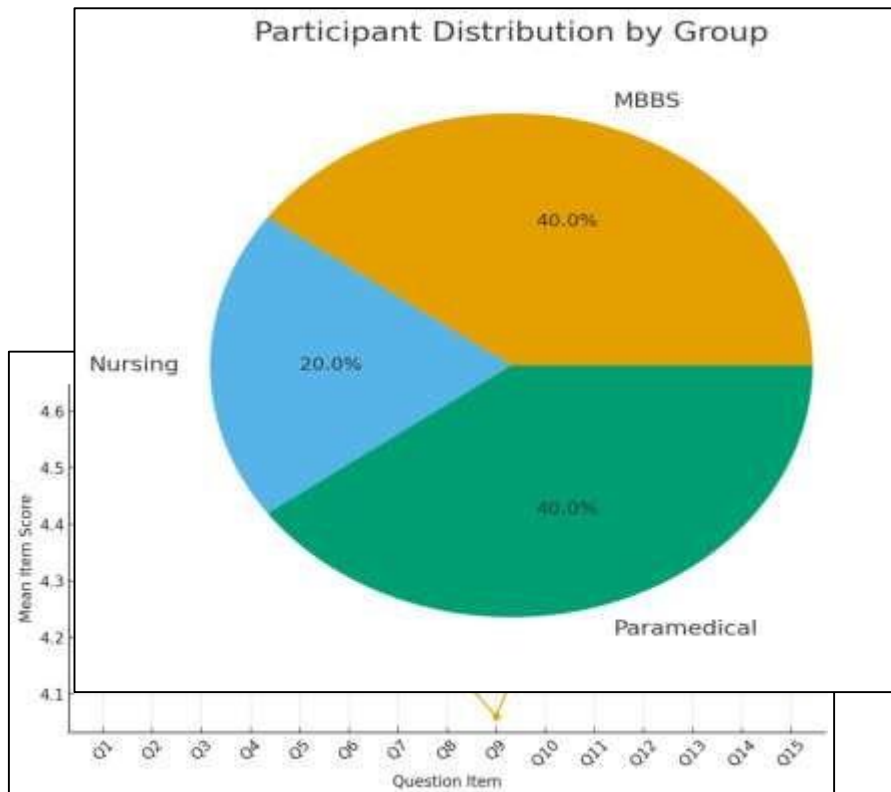
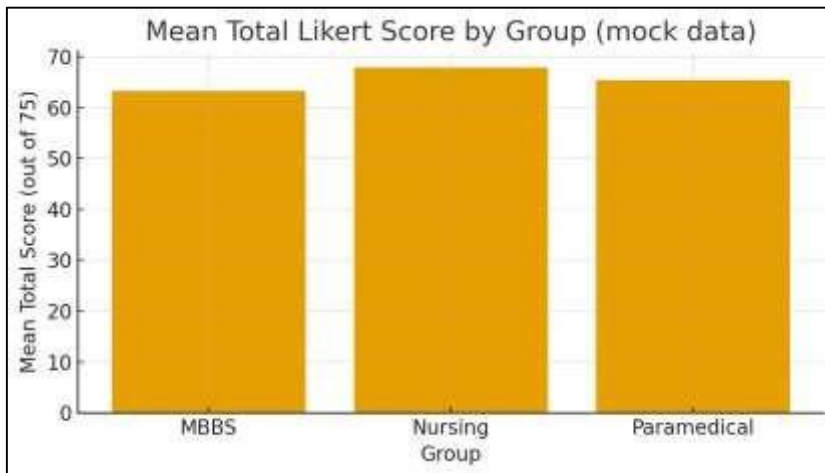
*p < 0.05 significant.

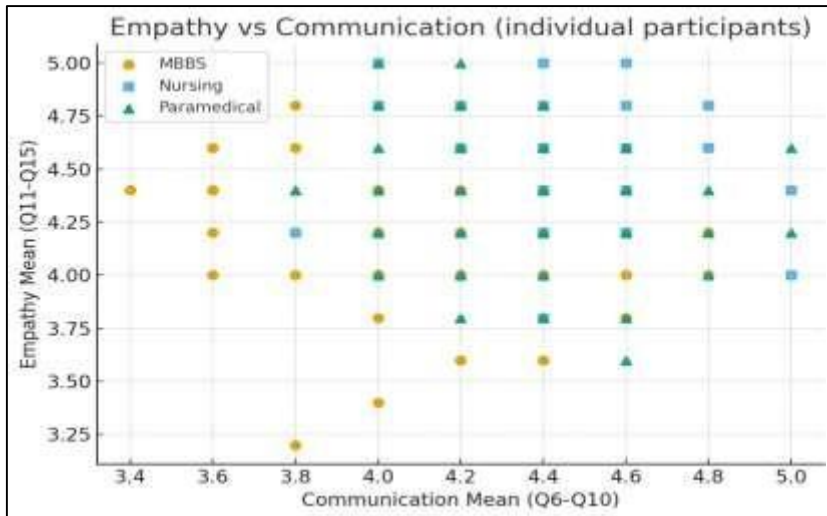
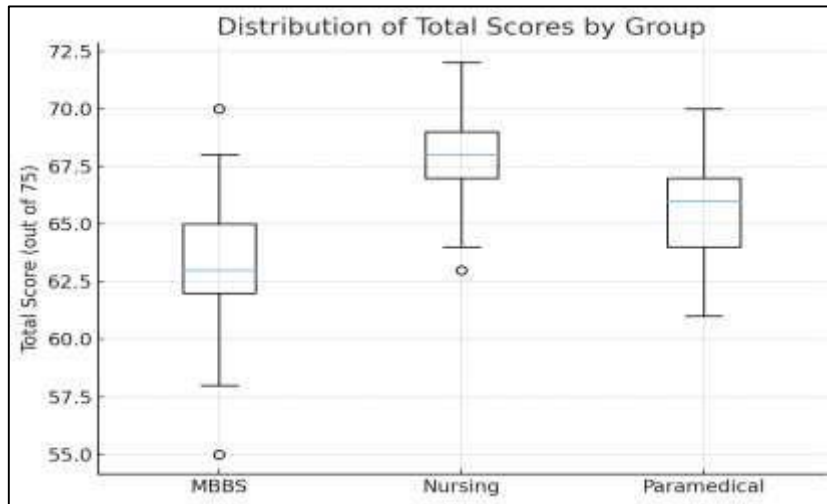
Qualitative Observations

- 85% of MBBS students acknowledged that empathy training was inadequate in their curriculum.
- 90% of nursing students emphasized the role of emotional connection in healing.
- 78% of paramedical staff felt that communication barriers often arise due to workload and hierarchical issues.

5. LIMITATIONS

- Cross-sectional design limits causal inference.
- Self-reported responses may introduce bias.
- Study limited to two medical colleges; larger multicentric studies are recommended.





15-item Likert questionnaire

Instruction to respondent: For each statement below, please tick one option on the Likert scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree.

Professional attitude (items Q1–Q5)

- Q1. I maintain professional behavior and appearance during patient care.
- Q2. I respect patient confidentiality at all times.
- Q3. I accept responsibility for my actions and apologise when needed.
- Q4. I behave courteously toward patients and colleagues.
- Q5. I follow ethical guidelines even under stressful situations.

Patient-friendly communication (items Q6–Q10)

- Q6. I explain procedures to patients in simple, understandable language.
- Q7. I check patient understanding before proceeding with care.
- Q8. I use respectful, non-technical language with patients.
- Q9. I encourage patients to ask questions about their condition and treatment.
- Q10. I communicate clearly with patients' families/caregivers.

Empathy in patient care (items Q11–Q15)

- Q11. I try to understand patients' feelings and concerns.
- Q12. I show compassion when patients express distress.
- Q13. I consider patients' emotional needs when planning care.

Q14. I listen actively without interrupting the patient.

Q15. I treat each patient as an individual, not just a clinical case.

- Bar chart: shows mean total Likert score (sum of Q1–Q15; max = 75) by group (MBBS, Nursing, Paramedical). In the synthetic data nursing scored highest on average.
- Pie chart: participant distribution by group (40% MBBS, 20% Nursing, 40% Paramedical — matching the sample sizes you specified).
- Line plot: mean score per item (Q1–Q15) for each group — useful to identify which items/domains differ most between groups.
- Box plot: distribution of total scores by group (visualizes medians, IQR, outliers).
- Scatter plot: each participant's communication mean (Q6–Q10) vs empathy mean (Q11–Q15), with markers by group — useful to see correlation at the individual level.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings highlight that while all groups value professionalism, empathy, and patient-friendly communication, the intensity of perception varies. Nursing students consistently scored higher, likely due to greater patient interaction and holistic care training. MBBS students, though aware of its importance, reported time constraints and clinical pressure as barriers.

Empathy has been linked to improved clinical outcomes, reduced patient anxiety, and enhanced doctor-patient relationships. Training modules emphasizing reflective learning, simulated patient encounters, and mentorship may enhance these attributes.

Similar findings were reported by Shashikumar et al. (2021) and Hojat et al. (2018), who observed empathy declines during medical training but remains high in nursing education.

7. CONCLUSION

Professional attitude, patient-friendly communication, and empathy are foundational pillars of effective healthcare. Nursing students showed the highest empathy and communication scores, suggesting their curricula emphasize interpersonal skills more effectively. Incorporating structured modules on empathy, communication skills, and ethics across all healthcare training programs is essential.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Introduce formal courses on communication and empathy in MBBS curricula.
2. Conduct inter-professional workshops promoting teamwork and mutual respect.
3. Implement continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms for professionalism.
4. Encourage reflective practice and patient feedback systems.

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