

Awareness of part-time students of study programme Nursing Care about the importance of developing communication competences during their studies for working in a healthcare team

Świadomość studiujących kierunek Pielęgniarstwo w zakresie znaczenia rozwijania kompetencji komunikacyjnych w trakcie studiów pod kątem pracy w zespole opieki zdrowotnej

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STRESZCZENIE

ŚWIADOMOŚĆ STUDIUJĄCYCH KIERUNEK PIELĘGNIARSTWO W ZAKRESIE ZNACZENIA ROZWIJANIA KOMPETENCJI KOMUNIKACYJNYCH W TRAKCIE STUDIÓW POD KĄTEM PRACY W ZESPOLE OPIEKI ZDROWOTNEJ

Cel pracy. Celem badania jest zbadanie poziomu rozwoju indywidualnych kompetencji zawodowych związanych z komunikacją i pracą w zespole opieki zdrowotnej oraz analiza poglądów studentów studiów niestacjonarnych pierwszego stopnia na kierunku Pielęgniarstwo na Wydziale Nauk o Zdrowiu Uniwersytetu w Novo mesto na temat znaczenia i roli uczenia się komunikacji podczas studiów oraz w zespole opieki zdrowotnej, w którym pracują w swoim środowisku pracy.

Materiał i metody. Zastosowaliśmy ilościową, opisową, nieeksperymentalną metodę badań. Do analizy statystycznej wykorzystano test Levene'a i test T. Zastosowanym narzędziem pomiarowym był formularz, który został wypełniony przez 147 studentów kierunku Pielęgniarstwo.

Wyniki. Respondenci mają najwyższy poziom świadomości znaczenia komunikacji dla skutecznej pracy zespołowej ($\bar{x}=4,9$) i skutecznego leczenia pacjentów pod opieką zespołu ($\bar{x}=4,9$). W okresie badania najwyższy poziom rozwoju osiągnięto w zakresie umiejętności uświadomienia sobie, że za dobro pacjenta odpowiadają wszyscy członkowie zespołu ($\bar{x}=4,3$). Stwierdzono, że nie było statystycznie istotnych różnic w średniej świadomości znaczenia dobrej komunikacji w zależności od płci ($p=0,914$), wieku ($p=0,482$), poziomu wykształcenia ($p=0,997$) i poziomu złożoności pracy ($p=0,399$).

Wnioski. Skuteczne leczenie pacjentów zależy od jakości komunikacji. Cotygodniowe spotkania, szkolenia komunikacyjne i nadzór mogą być doskonałymi narzędziami do zwiększania kompetencji komunikacyjnych personelu pielęgniarskiego.

Słowa kluczowe:

studenci studiów niestacjonarnych, kompetencje komunikacyjne, zespół opieki zdrowotnej, pracownicy służby zdrowia

ABSTRACT

AWARENESS OF PART-TIME STUDENTS OF STUDY PROGRAMME NURSING CARE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCES DURING THEIR STUDIES FOR WORKING IN A HEALTHCARE TEAM

Aim. The aim of the study is to examine the level of awareness regarding the development of individual professional competences among Associate Degree Nursing students, particularly in relation to communication and working in a healthcare team. Additionally, the study aims to analyse their opinions on the importance and role of learning communication both during their studies and within the healthcare team.

Material and methods. We used a quantitative, descriptive, non-experimental method of empirical research. For statistical analysis we utilized Levene's and T-test. The measurement instrument employed was a questionnaire that was completed by 147 students of the Nursing Care programme.

Results. Respondents have the highest level of awareness concerning the importance of communication for effective teamwork ($\bar{x}=4.9$) and for the successful treatment of patients under the care of the team ($\bar{x}=4.9$). We found that there were no statistically significant differences in mean awareness of the importance of good communication according to gender ($p=0.914$), age ($p=0.482$), level of education ($p=0.997$) and job complexity ($p=0.399$).

Conclusions. Successful patient treatment depends on high-quality communication. Weekly meetings, communication training, and supervision can be excellent tools for enhancing the communication competences of nursing staff.

Key words:

health care professionals, health care team, part-time students, communication competencies

INTRODUCTION

Professions that involve working with people are among the most stressful. In the healthcare sector, the emotional demands of the job, high workload and time pressure further contribute to this stress. Effective communication skills among healthcare professionals are crucial, both in building strong relationships with patients and their relatives, as well as fostering collaboration among staff. As team members are process-oriented and focused on therapeutic outcomes, effective communication is a prerequisite for building and maintaining cohesion within the team. Nursing has become an increasingly demanding, complex and multifaceted health discipline over time. As the health needs of patients have become more complex, the healthcare system is also changing, requiring effective and innovative concepts of patient care that include teamwork, effective communication and interprofessional collaboration between different health professionals [1].

Given that the nursing profession is now highly developed and is continuously updating and focusing on holistic and individualised patient care, communication is essential in the planning and implementation of care. The attitude of the nurse and health technicians toward both the patient and each other influences the patient's well-being and, consequently, the success of the treatment. Therefore, building a community that ensures the patient feels secure and supported in a partnership-based relationship is a challenging and responsible aspects of nursing [2].

The purpose of nursing teams is therefore to have healthy and happy patients. Quality healthcare services can only be delivered through collaboration between different professionals or healthcare teams, which requires good communication. If healthcare professionals do not communicate effectively, medical errors can occur, which can lead to permanent consequences such as various injuries or even death of the patient.

Health teams are made up of different health professionals. The composition of the team depends on the task or the type of problem the health team is solving, and the success of teamwork depends largely on the team members' cooperation with each other and with the patients. The team approach brings many positive changes in treatment outcomes [1].

Communication is a fundamental tool for healthcare delivery, enabling us to work together and determining the quality of care. It can take place within or between teams, with communicators sending or receiving specific information [3]. The aim of communication is to identify employees or team members with the organisation,

to educate and inform employees, to motivate employees and achieve loyalty, and to develop positive interpersonal relationships. Communication in teams is used to promote understanding and identification with the goals set, to stimulate the generation of ideas and thus to achieve the goals set. According to Drenovec and Zupančič [4], communication in healthcare organisations is becoming more and more challenging, as healthcare professionals are often confronted with the difficult health status of patients, high expectations from supervisors, colleagues and patients' families. Modern technology and the associated access to information, which can be of varying quality, also contribute to more complex communication. As a result, healthcare professionals face communication barriers that can negatively affect the work process, which can lead to less successful team relationships or patient treatment. Successful patient care depends on communication within the healthcare team, as well as communication between healthcare staff and the patient. In fact, effective communication skills of healthcare professionals are crucial both in relation to patients and relatives and between staff. Research [5-7] shows that healthcare workers are aware of the importance of empathetic attitudes towards patients and effective communication, but not all of them are proficient in these skills. As mentioned above, healthcare professionals are often confronted with patients' difficult health conditions, different expectations from patients' relatives, supervisors and colleagues, and communication in healthcare settings is becoming more and more challenging. Modern technology and access to information of varying quality further complicate communication. As a result, healthcare professionals face various barriers to communication that can have a negative impact on team relations, the work process and, consequently, on the success of patient care.

The nurse in the nursing team is the link between the doctor and the patient, being in a subordinate position to the doctor, but also carrying out activities that are very important to the patient. Every day, she encounters people whose inner balance is disturbed - patients and their relatives, accompanied by fear, helplessness and ignorance. She is constantly in contact with many people from different professional fields who influence her positively or negatively, so it is important that she knows how to communicate effectively, both verbally and non-verbally, in order to achieve good results in her work [8]. However, she is also often faced with ethical dilemmas in her work - situations where moral demands conflict and raise questions about what is the best thing to do. The nurse must be an autonomous and responsible person with highly developed personal and ethical norms. It is important to think and act ethically, and

for success in the field, a high level of empathy is essential. Ethical values, professional communication and the ability to empathise are important elements that nurses need to master in order to be successful [9].

Based on our experience in higher education, good communication is not only based on the physical abilities of nurses, but also on their education and experience. To be successful in their work, nurses need to educate themselves, learn communication skills and how to interact in healthcare teams. They need to acquire different aspects and applications of communication in different areas of nursing. In this context, it is understood that the importance of nurse-patient communication should be emphasised and nursing education should focus on nurses' communication skills [9].

In practice, we believe that nurses often lack the cultural capital in terms of the relevant knowledge and communication skills needed to work effectively. This is particularly evident in those nurses who have not been fully integrated into nursing education, but who nevertheless work as a nurse. In practice, this poses a problem for patients, colleagues and relatives, as communication is one of the fundamental elements for the success of a healthcare team or institution. Given that we are confronted with this issue on a daily basis, we decided to study the opinion of part-time students of the Higher Professional Nursing Programme on communication and its impact on relationships in nursing teams.

The first degree programme in Nursing in the Republic of Slovenia is designed in accordance with Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council [10] on the recognition of professional qualifications and Directive 2013/55/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council [11]. Changes in the training of nurses have also been brought about by the Bologna Declaration, which, in order to achieve the objectives of the Bologna Process, sets out the guidelines for the design of the curriculum of the nursing curriculum, on which the training of future registered nurses and registered health professionals is based. Nurse education emphasises the need to take into account the generic ICN competencies for nurses and the formal qualifications defined in the Competency Framework. The training of nursing students plays an extremely important role in this regard. However, as part-time students are mainly employed students who are already working in healthcare and are in daily contact with patients, it is assumed that, as far as possible, they already have developed communication skills and are able to work in a nursing team. However, as the curriculum must ensure that graduates are professionally competent in communication and teamwork according to the European Federation of Nurses' Associations (EFN) guidelines [12], we wanted to check whether the curriculum provides them with sufficient content in communication and teamwork to, most importantly in our view, build on the skills they have already acquired in the clinical setting.

AIM

This is an important topic, as good communication is the key to good quality care and successful treatment of patients. A review of the literature shows that there has been a considerable amount of research on communication in healthcare at all levels of healthcare. In higher education, however, we systematically analyse the competences acquired during and after studies every academic year. In this paper, we will focus on the acquired professional competences of developing communication skills in a professional environment (national and international), competence in leadership, organisation and cooperative teamwork [13], and participation in the treatment process within the health care team and the implementation of diagnostic and therapeutic programmes [14]. In addition, according to Tuning Educational Structures in Europe II [13], each graduate must acquire subject-specific competences covering six domains, and we will focus our research on Domain 5: Communication and interpersonal competences (competence to communicate effectively) and Domain 6: Leadership, management and teamwork (to gain an understanding that patient well-being is achieved through a combination of efforts, activities and responsibilities of all members of the healthcare team and the competence to organise, manage and communicate collaboratively with all staff members. The study programme also ensures that, from a professional perspective, graduates will be able to exercise the following competences in accordance with the European Federation of Nurses' Associations (EFN) guidelines [12]: communication and teamwork, where, among other things, graduates are expected to be able to communicate, interact and work effectively with colleagues /.../.

The aim of the study is to analyse the opinions of part-time students enrolled in Nursing Care program at the University of Novo Mesto, Faculty of Health Sciences (N = 147) regarding the importance and role of learning communication skills during their studies and within their healthcare teams in their work environment. Additionally, the study seeks to assess the level of development of individual professional competences related to communication and teamwork in the healthcare settings.

We formulated the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: Female students are more aware of the importance of good communication than male students.
- Hypothesis 2: Older working students (aged 41 and above) are more aware of the importance of good communication than younger working students (aged 40 and below).
- Hypothesis 3: Employed students with a higher level of education (college) are more aware of the importance of good communication than employed students with a lower level of education (secondary school).
- Hypothesis 4: Student employees in more responsible positions (senior nurse, senior health technician, specialist) are more aware of the importance of good communication than student employees in less responsible positions (mid-level nurse, nursing technician).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We used a quantitative, descriptive, non-experimental method of empirical research. For data collection, a structured questionnaire based on similar questionnaires was used [15-20], adapted, and supplemented for the needs of the study. We also collected data based on the ICN competencies for graduate nurses [21].

Prior to the survey, in order to test the working hypotheses and measurement instruments, we conducted a pilot survey on a small sample ($N = 20$), which allowed us to validate the questionnaire and test the reliability and validity of the selected measurement instruments.

The first part of the questionnaire covered socio-demographic data, identifying students' workplace and how many work teams they are part of. In the second part of the questionnaire, we were interested in nursing students' competence to independently perform ICN competencies in the areas of Communication and Interpersonal Competencies (8 statements related to this area) and Leadership, Management and Teamwork (7 statements related to this area). The third part of the questionnaire aimed to explore the respondents' perception of the importance of communication during their studies and in everyday tasks in the work environment. They indicated their level of agreement with the given statements using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – „Strongly disagree” to 5 – „Strongly agree”.

The reliability of the instrument was acceptable ($\alpha = 0.690$). Data were coded and analysed using Microsoft Office Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics 24.0 software. For statistical analysis we used parametric statistical tests (Levene's and T-test) based on normal distribution of data. Statistical significance was tested at the 5% level of risk ($p < 0.05$). Ethics were considered and ensured throughout all stages of the research process.

The survey was completed by 147 part-time students, 123 of whom were women (84%) and 24 men (16%). The majority of respondents (58%) were aged between 20 and 30 years, 30% were aged between 31 and 40 years, 10% were

aged between 41 and 50 years and 2% were aged between 51 and 60 years. When it comes to 37% of the respondents, they are senior nurses, 35% are intermediate nurses, 24% are nursing technicians and 4% are senior nursing technicians and specialists. In terms of team size, most respondents work in large teams (44%) with more than 21 employees, while 27% of respondents work in medium-sized teams with 11 to 20 employees, and 29% of respondents work in small teams of up to ten employees. As far as education is concerned, 53% of respondents completed secondary school and 47% completed higher education.

RESULTS

We started by asking respondents how they perceived their development of subject-specific competences in communication and teamwork during their studies. They identified the importance of each professional competence in the work environment and their opinion on its development.

■ Tab. 2. Assessment of communication and teamwork skills acquired during studies

Competences		Definition by	
		relevance	level of development
		\bar{X}	\bar{X}
Communication and interpersonal competences			
1.	the ability to communicate effectively (including the use of technology) with patients, families and social groups in normal and specific communication environments / atmospheres	4.4	4.2
2.	competence to encourage patients and their carers to express their problems and concerns and to respond appropriately to the situation, e.g. emotionally, socially, psychologically, spiritually or physically	4.5	4.0
3.	the ability to take account of the patient's point of view and work towards preventing abuse	4.3	3.9
4.	competence to work as part of a team	4.7	4.2
5.	the ability to perceive the atmosphere / climate of the patient's institutional care and to adapt behaviour to the situation	4.3	4.0
6.	competence in the use of communication and counselling techniques	4.3	3.9
7.	the ability to identify psychological conditions such as anxiety, stress and depression, provide emotional support and counselling	4.4	3.9
8.	competence in medical record keeping, report writing and the use of appropriate technology	4.4	3.9
Leadership, management and teamwork			
9.	the ability to recognise that the patient's well-being is achieved through a combination of efforts, activities and responsibilities of all members of the healthcare team	4.6	4.3
10.	the ability to lead and coordinate a team and to delegate care activities correctly	4.4	4.0
11.	the ability of staff to work and communicate effectively with each other, with an emphasis on the efficient use of time and quality standards	4.3	4.0
12.	the ability to assess risk, actively promote health and ensure the safety of all people in the work environment	4.5	4.2
13.	knowledge of relevant nursing quality standards and the ability to apply them critically and to use evaluation methodologies	4.2	3.9
14.	competence to mentor, educate, support, supervise nursing students and other health care providers	4.3	3.6
15.	knowledge of the principles of nursing financing and the efficient use of financial resources	4.0	3.5

■ Tab. 1. Description of the sample

Gender	f	f %
man	24	16
woman	123	84
Age	f	f %
up to 30 years	85	58
31 - 40 years	44	30
41 - 50 years	15	10
51 - 60 years	3	2
Workplace	f	f %
registered nurse	51	35
nursing technician	35	24
senior medical technician and specialist	6	4
senior nurse	55	37
Size of the team they work in	f	f %
up to 10 members	43	29
11 - 20 members	64	44
20 members and more	40	27

Respondents identified the competence to communicate effectively (including the use of technology) with patients, families and social groups in normal and specific communication environments/atmospheres ($\bar{x}=4.2$) and the competence to work in a team ($\bar{x}=4.2$) as the most developed communication competences that they develop during their studies. The most important competences they want to develop during their studies are competence to work in a team ($\bar{x}=4.7$) and competence to encourage patients and their carers to express their problems and concerns and to respond appropriately to the situation, e.g. emotionally, socially, psychologically, spiritually or physically ($\bar{x}=4.5$).

■ Tab. 3. Awareness of the importance of good communication in the work environment

Good communication is important for:	1	2	3	4	5	\bar{x}	SD
	f%	f%	f%	f%	f%		
good team relations	0%	1%	1%	12%	86%	4.8	0.46
working more effectively as a team	0%	0%	1%	12%	87%	4.9	0.38
fewer errors in the work process	0%	1%	2%	12%	85%	4.8	0.50
more successful treatment of patients under the care of the team	0%	0%	2%	9%	89%	4.9	0.39
good reputation and trust in the profession and the team	0%	1%	4%	21%	75%	4.7	0.59

As can be seen from the responses, respondents are aware of the importance of good communication, rating all statements highly (mean score of all responses ($\bar{x}=4.8$)). Respondents are most aware that communication is important for the team to work more efficiently ($\bar{x}=4.9$) and for the successful treatment of patients in the team's care ($\bar{x}=4.9$). They also agree that good communication is important for good team relationships ($\bar{x}=4.8$), for fewer errors in the work process ($\bar{x}=4.8$) and for a good reputation and trust in the profession and the team ($\bar{x}=4.7$).

■ Tab. 4. T-test: awareness of the importance of good communication by gender

Gender	Descriptive statistics			Levene's test		T-test		
	N	M	SD	F	p	t	df	p
women	123	4.80	0.343	0.005	0.944	-0.108	104	0.914
men	24	4.81	0.510					

Assuming homogeneity of variances, the t-test for independent samples showed no statistically significant differences between male and female students in their awareness of the importance of good communication ($p = 0.914$). The first hypothesis that female students are more aware of the importance of good communication than male students cannot be confirmed on the basis of the results.

■ Tab. 5. T-test: awareness of the importance of good communication by age

Age	Descriptive statistics			Levene's test		T-test		
	N	M	SD	F	p	t	df	p
20 to 40 years	129	4.82	0.371	0.212	0.646	0.706	106	0.482
41 years or more	16	4.74	0.337					

The hypothesis that older working students (aged 41 and above) are more aware of the importance of good communication than younger working students (aged 40 and below) also has to be rejected ($p = 0.482$).

■ Tab. 6. T-test: awareness of the importance of good communication by education

Education	Descriptive statistics			Levene's test		T-test		
	N	M	SD	F	p	t	df	p
secondary school	78	4.82	0.363	0.006	0.939	0.004	105	0.997
college	69	4.81	0.358					

Assuming homogeneity of variances, a t-test for independent samples between students with different levels of education showed no statistically significant differences in awareness of the importance of good communication ($p = 0.997$). The third hypothesis, that employed students with a higher level of education (college) are more aware of the importance of good communication than employed students with a lower level of education (high school), cannot be confirmed on the basis of the results.

■ Tab. 7. T-test: awareness of the importance of good communication in relation to the workplace

Workplace	Descriptive statistics			Levene's test		T-test		
	N	M	SD	F	p	t	df	p
less responsible	86	4.79	0.427	2.664	0.106	-0.847	104	0.399
more responsible	61	4.85	0.258					

The hypothesis that students in more responsible jobs (senior nurse, senior health technician, specialist) are more aware of the importance of good communication than students in less responsible jobs (mid-level nurse, nursing technician) must also be rejected ($p = 0.399$).

DISCUSSION

In a survey of 147 part-time students of the higher professional study programme Nursing at the University of Novo Mesto, Faculty of Health Sciences, we found that they are aware of the importance of communication as a fundamental tool for the delivery of health care, which allows them to collaborate and determines the quality of healthcare, as also noted in other authors' research [1, 22-25]. According to [9, 26-27], good communication between healthcare staff and patients is essential for a successful outcome of nursing care and for faster and more durable treatment. Effective communication skills among healthcare professionals are crucial, both in their interac-

tions with patients and their relatives and in collaboration with team members [4]. According to [26], good team functioning in patient care is only possible with the participation of all team members and with regular communication. Each team member can contribute to the successful treatment and rehabilitation of the patient by acting appropriately.

The results also showed that gender, age, education and workplace do not influence the perceived importance of good communication between the members of the professional teams in which the respondents work. Good communication fosters trust, cooperation, and respect, while maintaining a sense of dignity, good self-esteem, and autonomy for all members of the professional team. Nursing students should therefore strengthen skills during their studies, including listening, answering questions, asking questions, explaining in simple layman's language, encouraging users to ask questions, encouraging participation in decision-making [28-32]. Unfortunately, there are too few opportunities for good-natured and frank conversations in workplaces today. There is a lack of encouragement and praise and an increasing amount of criticism and comments, so that nurses in particular are often exposed to stressful situations. Popovič [33] therefore believes that it is essential to continuously improve communication between staff members. Even when a team member feels that he/she does not communicate anything to others, when he/she is silent and reserved, he/she communicates his/her negative attitude towards others by his/her behaviour. It is important that the respondents are very much aware of the importance of good communication, as good communication is a prerequisite for the success of the team. Gordon [34] also says, communication builds trust, trust generates commitment, commitment generates teamwork and teamwork generates results. Without good communication, it is not possible to create trust and cohesion that are the prerequisites for strong relationships, and these are the prerequisites for building a successful team.

Respondents rate the interpersonal relationships within their work team as high on average, as they often work together, communicate pleasantly and well, have positive interpersonal relationships and care about each other's well-being. Team relationships are built through communication, as communication triggers the process of building a cohesive team, building trust, trust triggers commitment, commitment promotes teamwork and teamwork produces results. Without good communication, it is not possible to build trust and cohesion, which are prerequisites for strong relationships, and these are prerequisites for building a successful team [35-37]. Research on relationships between health professionals shows that they are paramount for quality care. Dissatisfaction with relationships, lack of self-esteem, autonomy and respect for others can also destroy well-equipped and well-staffed departments [8]. We would add that the team leader plays the most important role in this context, as they must create the conditions for effective and open communication within the team, fostering strong relationships and trust between team members.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the survey, we advise teaching teams at higher education institutions teaching first degree programmes in Nursing to:

- While it is the responsibility of higher education institutions to prepare the curricula of regulated nursing degree programmes in accordance with the Directive, the changing needs of patients, healthcare staff, healthcare institutions and society as a whole must be taken into account. An ageing society requires knowledge and competence in specific areas of nursing, which points to the need for new or enhanced acquisition of key professional competences by students during their studies.
- Part-time students represent an adult population for whom andragogical principles must be strictly applied. They are intrinsically motivated to study and acquire new knowledge when they are actively involved in learning processes and when they are offered knowledge that they find useful and relevant to their work.
- Communication and teamwork are among the key competences in the daily work and professional development of nursing students, the use of which benefits patients and healthcare providers in terms of job satisfaction and quality service delivery. For this reason, it would be worthwhile to consider more teaching in both areas to make the curriculum more relevant to their communication and teamwork challenges in the work environment.
- Curricula should include the development of ways to improve communication and teamwork – using patient simulations to teach communication skills in complex clinical interactions. The same applies to teamwork. In fact, students can only acquire competences on the basis of active and modern teaching methods and forms that allow them to gain authentic experience and master different clinical situations.
- The development of communication and teamwork skills among students needs to be continuously assessed, as this will be the only way to make changes and updates to study programmes in higher education, as well as proposals to improve the quality of curricula.

Based on the results of the survey, our advice to healthcare team leaders is:

- regular weekly meetings with all team members to discuss challenges, weekly targets and current topics and things needed to be successful as a priority, to review key strategies and, above all, to ensure that team leaders and team members are not uncomfortable sharing motivational messages, etc;
- occasional communication training, even though our research has shown that respondents develop good communication and interpersonal skills during their studies. Training is important to realise that there is a big difference between communication and successful communication, which can also mean whether we are successful or not, whether we achieve something or not, whether patients understand us or not. Communi-

cation training also increases staff performance. Learning from books and attending lectures is not enough to improve communication skills, as communication skills are most effectively learned or modified through experiential learning methods, discussing examples of difficult communication from the workplace, incorporating patient simulation, assessing and analysing a role-play scenario, etc;

- supervision, which is one of the successful ways of managing stress and problems at work, increased job satisfaction, lower emotional exhaustion and more frequent use of constructive ways of coping with problems, which is extremely important for the professional and personal development of health professionals, which will also improve the quality of health services, which is also reflected in the development of competence in communication, leadership, management and teamwork.

The present study has several limitations. The first is the lack of professional and scientific literature that would have been suitable for the preparation of the paper, but most of it is more than ten years old. The second limitation is that, when reviewing publicly available original and peer-reviewed scientific articles, we found that there is a large body of research on the development of communication and team competencies among nurses in the work environment, but there is extremely little published research on nursing students' self-assessment of the level of development of their communication and team competencies during their studies. A third limitation is the geographical restriction of the study to part-time nursing students at the University of Novo mesto, which makes it impossible to generalise the results to a wider population. On the other hand, the survey included only part-time students. It would be useful to include full-time students in further research and to identify differences in the competence to perform communication and team competences between full-time and part-time students, and to adapt teaching methods and forms accordingly, in line with andragogical principles. In the future, research can focus on the level of the whole Slovenian area. A self-assessment of the development of communication and teamwork competences among full-time and part-time students at all higher education institutions offering the first degree programme in Nursing could be investigated.

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