

From Tension to Teamwork: The Power of Role-Playing as a Teaching Strategy in Nursing Conflict Resolution

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Abstract— Conflict is an inevitable part of the healthcare environment, particularly in nursing practice where teamwork, communication and high-stress situations coexist. Ineffective conflict management can lead to decreased job satisfaction, poor team dynamics and compromised patient care. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of role-playing as a teaching strategy to enhance conflict resolution skills among nurses. A quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test design was adopted among staff nurses working in a tertiary care hospital. Participants underwent a structured role play based training session focusing on common workplace conflict scenarios. Conflict resolution knowledge and self-reported confidence were assessed before and after the intervention. Post intervention results demonstrated a significant improvement in nurses' understanding of conflict styles, communication strategies and confidence in handling conflicts. The findings suggest that role-playing is an effective, engaging and practical educational strategy for improving conflict resolution competencies in nursing practice.

Keywords— Role-playing, conflict resolution, nursing education, communication skills, nurse training.

I. INTRODUCTION

Conflict in healthcare settings is unavoidable due to differences in values, communication styles, workload pressures and professional roles. Nurses frequently encounter conflicts with colleagues, physicians, patients and family members, making conflict resolution a critical professional competency. Poorly managed conflict can lead to emotional distress, decreased teamwork, high staff turnover and compromised patient safety. Traditional lecture-based teaching methods often fail to prepare nurses for real life conflict situations. Experiential learning strategies such as role-playing, allow learners to actively engage in realistic scenarios, practice communication skills and reflect on their responses in a safe environment. Role-playing encourages empathy, critical thinking and behavioural change, making it particularly useful for soft-skill development such as conflict management.

This study was conducted to assess whether role-playing as a teaching method can improve nurses' knowledge, confidence and practical skills in managing workplace conflicts.

II. METHODS

Study Design

A quasi-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in a multispeciality hospital. A total of 74 staff nurses divided into 37 in control group and 37 in experimental group from different clinical units participated in the study. Nurses with at least one year of clinical experience were included.

Intervention

The intervention consisted of a structured role-playing training program on conflict resolution. The training included:

- Brief interactive lecture on types of conflict and conflict styles
- Demonstration of effective and ineffective conflict handling
- Group role-play scenarios based on real nursing workplace conflicts (e.g., nurse–nurse, nurse–physician, nurse–patient)
- Guided reflection and group discussion after each role-play
- Feedback from facilitators
- The session lasted 2–3 hours and was facilitated by nurse educators.

Data Collection Tools

- A structured knowledge questionnaire on conflict resolution
- A self-confidence scale for conflict management skills
- Observation checklist during role-play participation

Data Analysis & Interpretation

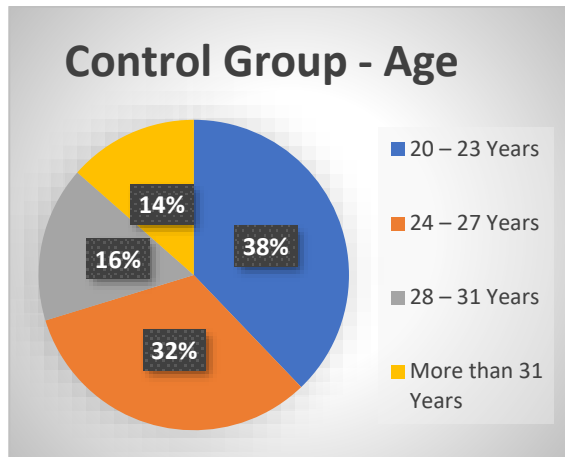
Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to compare pre- and post-test scores. Mean scores and percentage improvements were calculated.

III. RESULTS

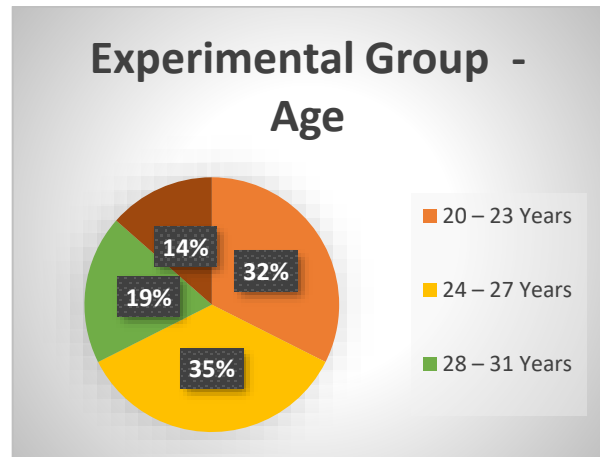
- The post-test findings showed a marked improvement in both knowledge and confidence levels among nurses after the role-playing intervention.
- Knowledge scores increased significantly, with nurses demonstrating better understanding of conflict types, assertive communication, and problem-solving approaches.
- Self-confidence scores improved, indicating enhanced readiness to address workplace conflicts constructively.
- Participants actively engaged in role-plays and reported increased awareness of their own conflict styles.

➤ Nurses expressed high satisfaction with the interactive learning approach and found it more effective than traditional lectures.

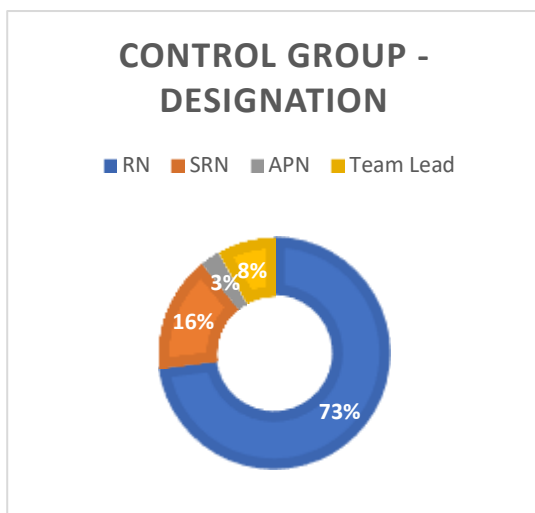
➤ Overall, the results confirmed that role-playing significantly improved nurses' conflict resolution competencies.



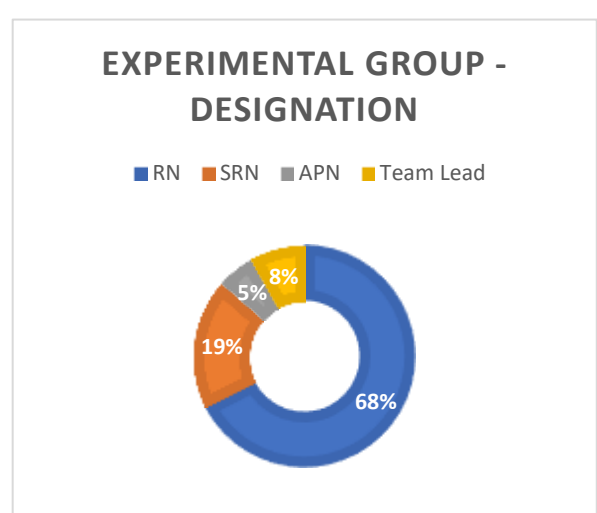
Control Group



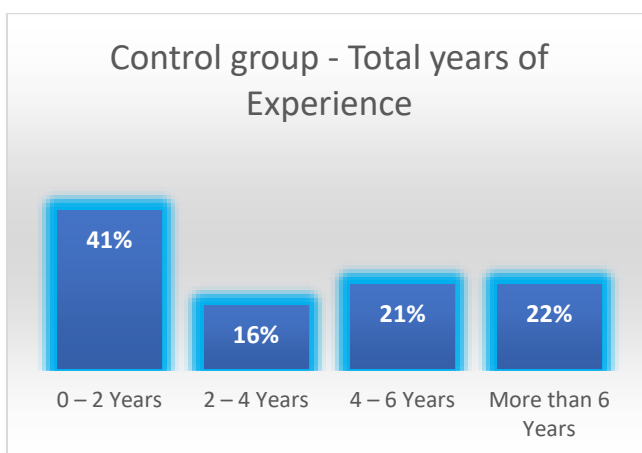
Experimental Group



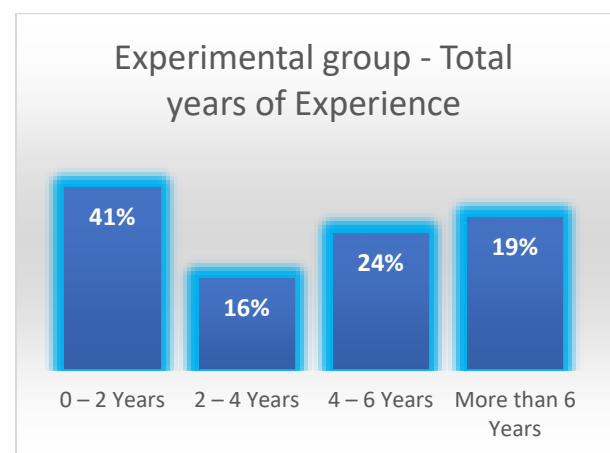
Control Group



Experimental Group



Control Group

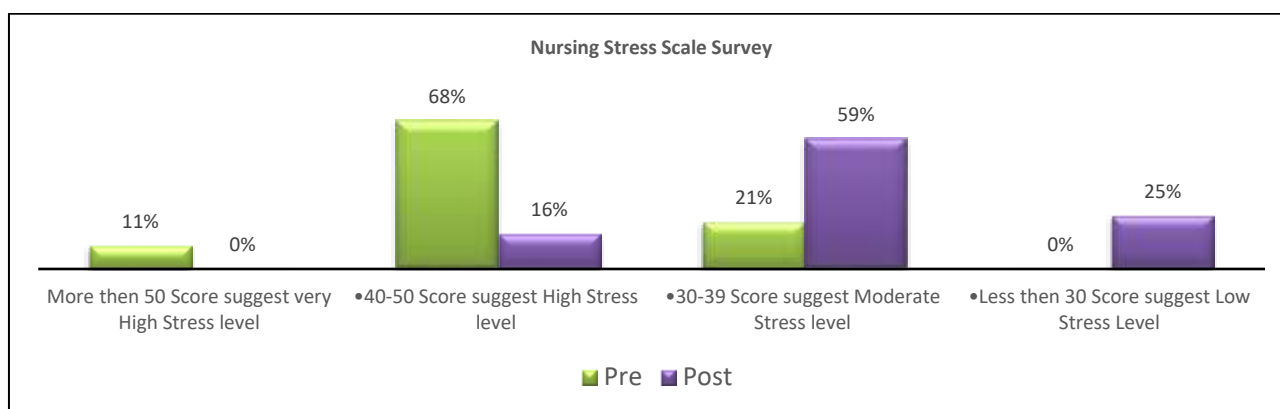


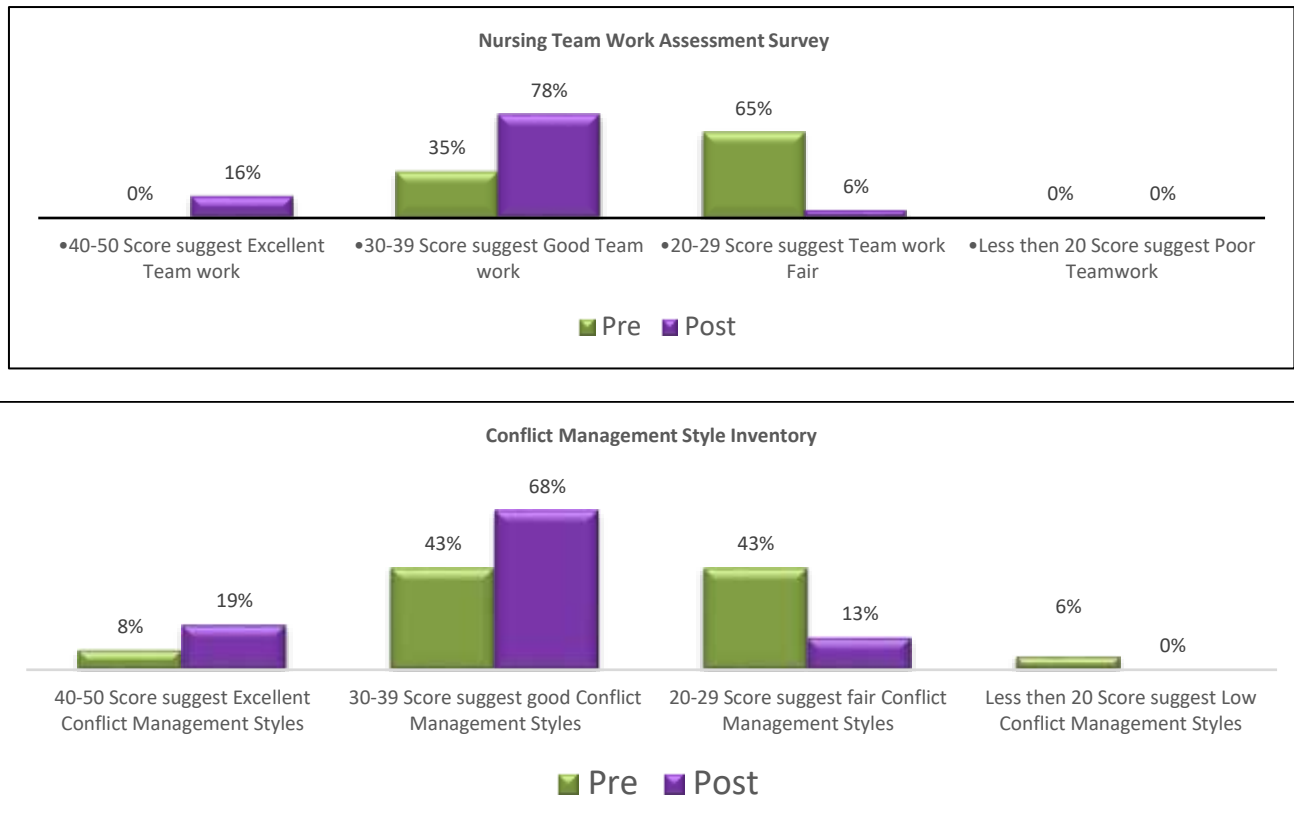
Experimental Group

Survey Questions on Nursing Stress Scale							
SN	Category	Question	Response				
			1=Never	2=Rarely	3=Sometimes	4=Often	5=Very Often
1	Workload	Having too heavy a workload, too much responsibility.					
2	Workload	Not enough time to provide emotional support to patients.					
3	Workload	Not enough staff to adequately cover the unit.					
4	Patient Care	Watching a patient suffer.					
5	Patient Care	Dealing with the death of a patient.					
6	Lack of Support	Lack of support from superiors.					
7	Lack of Support	Lack of support from colleagues.					
8	Conflict with Doctors	Conflicts with doctors regarding patient care.					
9	Conflict with Doctors	Lack of communication with doctors.					
10	Uncertainty	Uncertainty concerning the treatment of a patient.					
11	Uncertainty	Being unsure of what a patient will need.					
12	Death & Dying	Being unable to help a patient in severe pain.					
13	Death & Dying	Feeling helpless in the face of a patient's suffering.					
14	Inadequate Preparation	Feeling inadequately prepared for certain tasks.					
15	Inadequate Preparation	Not enough training for dealing with emergencies.					

Teamwork Assessment Scale							
SN	Category	Question	Response				
			1=Never	2=Rarely	3=Sometimes	4=Often	5=Very Often
1	Communication	Team members share relevant information openly.					
2	Communication	Team members actively listen to each other.					
3	Collaboration	Team members work together to solve problems.					
4	Collaboration	Team members support each other's decisions.					
5	Coordination	Tasks are clearly assigned to each team member.					
6	Coordination	Team members coordinate their actions effectively.					
7	Respect	Team members respect each other's contributions.					
8	Respect	Conflicts among team members are resolved professionally.					
9	Responsibility	Each team member takes responsibility for their tasks.					
10	Responsibility	The team takes collective responsibility for outcomes.					

Conflict Management Styles Inventory							
SN	Category	Question	Response				
			1=Never	2=Rarely	3=Sometimes	4=Often	5=Very Often
1	Competing	I try to win my position regardless of others' opinions.					
2	Competing	I assert my views strongly in a conflict situation.					
3	Avoiding	I avoid conflict situations whenever possible.					
4	Avoiding	I sidestep disagreements rather than address them.					
	Accommodating	I often give in to others' demands to maintain harmony.					
6	Accommodating	I prioritize relationships over my personal interests in conflicts.					
7	Compromising	I look for a middle-ground solution in disputes.					
8	Compromising	I am willing to negotiate to find a mutually acceptable solution.					
9	Collaborating	I work together with others to find the best solution for all.					
10	Collaborating	I encourage open discussion to reach a win-win solution.					





IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study support the effectiveness of role-playing as a teaching strategy for conflict resolution in nursing education. Experiential learning allowed nurses to practice real-life situations in a safe environment, receive feedback and reflect on their behaviours. This aligns with adult learning theory, which emphasizes learning through experience and reflection. The improvement in confidence is particularly important, as many nurse's hesitate to address conflicts due to fear of confrontation or lack of communication skills. Role-playing helped reduce this barrier by normalizing conflict and offering structured strategies to manage it. Similar findings have been reported in previous nursing education studies where simulation and role-play enhanced communication and teamwork skills.

Integrating role-playing into regular in-service education and leadership training programs could help create healthier work environments and improve patient care outcomes.

V. CONCLUSION

Role-playing is an effective, low-cost, and engaging teaching method for improving conflict resolution skills among nurses. The study demonstrated significant improvements in knowledge, confidence and practical application following role-play-based training. Nursing administrators and educators should incorporate role-playing into staff development programs to strengthen people skills, enhance teamwork and promote a positive organizational culture.

Recommendations

- Incorporate role-play sessions into ongoing nursing education
- Use real clinical conflict scenarios for better relevance
- Conduct follow-up studies with larger samples and control groups
- Integrate role-playing into leadership and preceptor training programs

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