

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Nurse-Patient Interactions: Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Skills of Filipino Nurses in Public Hospitals

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study assessed the relationship between the levels of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills among ward nurses in selected public hospitals in Manila City in order to address the limited research on how these soft-skill domains interact and influence nurse–patient interactions in the Philippine public health context.

**Methods:** A descriptive–correlational design was employed to determine the relationship between nurses' intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. The study was conducted in three government-funded public hospitals in Manila that were chosen through purposive sampling based on patient volume and accessibility. The sample (N=122) consisted of Filipino nurses working in clinical wards for at least six months to two years and employed in three public hospitals in Metro Manila. Data was collected using an adopted and validated tool via online and face-to-face questionnaires. Multivariate Analysis of Covariance and Pearson Correlation were used to test the hypotheses.

**Results:** The analysis revealed that there is very high correlation between the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills of the respondents as revealed by the null hypothesis ( $p\text{-value} = <0.001$  and  $R = 0.930$ ). However, profile variables such as age, type of ward, and number of years employed as ward nurse showed no significant correlation on either intrapersonal skills or interpersonal skills of the respondents. However, analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between sex and both intrapersonal skills ( $p = 0.002$ ) and interpersonal skills ( $p = 0.004$ ).

**Conclusion:** Intrapersonal and interpersonal skills were distinct yet critical competencies in nurse–patient interactions. Results suggested the need for targeted training and gender-sensitive interventions to strengthen these skills. These findings provided a basis for healthcare institutions to design development programs and for future research to expand on soft-skill dynamics in nursing.

**Keywords:** *Filipino nurses, interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, public hospitals*

## Introduction

Nursing practice is grounded in both technical expertise and relational competence. While hard skills ensure the accurate execution of clinical procedures, soft skills—particularly intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities—sustain the therapeutic nurse–patient relationship. Intrapersonal skills such as confidence, self-motivation, and focus enable nurses to regulate emotions and maintain

professional integrity, while interpersonal skills such as communication and empathy are essential for building trust, fostering rapport, and engaging patients in meaningful interactions (Lombardo et al., 2019; Beattie et al., 2019).

Evidence shows that these soft skills significantly influence the quality of nurse–patient interactions and, ultimately, patient

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outcomes (Widjaja & Saragih, 2018; Laari et al., 2021). However, despite their importance, they are often undervalued in both research and training, where the emphasis continues to privilege routinary technical competencies (Whitehurst, 2016). This imbalance is concerning given that patients consistently highlight the importance of nurses' relational skills including empathy and communication as essential to their satisfaction with care (Laari & Dube, 2017; Laari et al., 2021).

The challenge is particularly acute in public hospitals, where heavy workloads and systemic constraints limit opportunities for therapeutic engagement. Filipino nurses, renowned worldwide for their compassionate care, face unique pressures in sustaining intrapersonal resilience and interpersonal effectiveness within these demanding environments. Yet, soft skills remain underexplored in nursing scholarship, with limited studies examining how intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies interact, develop, and shape real-world clinical practice (Sancho-Cantus et al., 2023). Addressing this gap is critical not only for advancing nurse–patient interactions but also for supporting nurses' well-being and professional growth. Moreover, this study attempted to empirically classify the soft skills into interpersonal and intrapersonal domains not only as to how nurses relate to others but also as to how they understand and manage themselves in various clinical environments.

This study was anchored on Imogene King's Goal Attainment Theory, which underscores the importance of dynamic nurse–patient interactions and mutual goal-setting in achieving health outcomes (Park, 2021). King's framework highlights that effective communication and relational competencies are not peripheral but central to nursing practice. Thus, investigating intrapersonal and interpersonal skills through this theoretical lens had provided a deeper understanding of how these abilities function in everyday ward-based care.

### Objectives and Hypotheses

The present study aimed to assess the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills of ward nurses in three selected public hospitals in Manila as they engaged in nurse–patient interactions. Specifically, it sought to determine the respondents' demographic profile in terms of age, sex, and length of employment; determine their levels of intrapersonal skills, particularly confidence, self-motivation, and focus; and evaluate their levels of interpersonal skills, specifically effective communication and empathy. This study aimed to determine the relationship between intrapersonal and interpersonal skills among Filipino ward nurses in public hospitals in Manila in order to examine whether demographic factors influence these skills.

## Methods

### Design

This study employed a **descriptive–correlational design**, which is appropriate for identifying and describing relationships among variables without manipulating them. The approach allowed examination of the association between intrapersonal and interpersonal skills of nurses and selected demographic factors.

### Study Sites

The research was conducted in selected three public hospitals in Manila. These hospitals were chosen because they cater to a high volume of patients and represent typical settings where Filipino ward nurses provide direct bedside care. To preserve institutional confidentiality, hospital names were withheld among all of the respondents who worked in government-funded facilities that offered general medical and surgical ward services.

### Sample and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants who met the following inclusion criteria: (a) Filipino male or female nurse, (b) currently employed in a public hospital in Manila City, at least six months but not more than two years of work experience as a ward nurse, (d) directly providing patient care in general ward units, and (e) willingness to participate through signed informed consent. Nurses assigned to specialized units (e.g., intensive care, operating room, pediatrics) and those holding administrative or supervisory roles were excluded to ensure comparability of experiences. The focus on nurses with 6 months to 2 years of tenure was intended to capture early-career professionals who have already adjusted to their roles but are still in the formative stage of skill development. As of December 2023, the Department of Health reports a total of 2,638 public hospital nurses working within the City of Manila. The initial sample size ( $N=347$ ) was computed using Slovin's formula. However, this target was not achieved due to prolonged response times from respondents that were attributed to their busy schedules inherent to their nursing duties and to time constraints. A total of 122 respondents participated.

### Instrumentation

Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire adapted from Paolini's (2021) *Development of the Social Emotional Scale: Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Skills*

*Impacting Career Performance and Academic Performance.* The instrument measured intrapersonal skills (confidence, self-motivation, focus) and interpersonal skills (effective communication, empathy). Both online (via Google Forms) and printed copies were distributed to maximize participation. The instrument had been previously validated, and for this study, reliability testing yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency (Hair et al., 2010).

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) were used to summarize the respondents' demographic profile and levels of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) and Pearson Correlation were applied as inferential tests to examine the relationships between the key variables while controlling demographic covariates.

### Ethical Considerations

The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Review Board of a higher education institution in Metro Manila. Ethical principles of beneficence, respect for human dignity, and justice guided the research process. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity, confidentiality of responses, and the right to withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions. Data was stored securely and accessed only by the researchers.

## Results

### Respondents' Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 122 respondents. Results indicated that the majority of respondents (39%) are young adults, with the highest concentration of respondents falling between the ages of 25 to 39. The age group with the most frequent response is 29, with 10.7% of the total respondents. The age range of the respondents was relatively narrow, with the youngest respondent being 25 and the oldest being 49. There was a preponderance of female respondents (53.3%). Majority of respondents (over 63%) had two or more years of experience as health professionals, while a smaller

**Table 1.** Frequency and Distribution of Respondents' Profile

| Variable                   | f  | %    |
|----------------------------|----|------|
| <b>Age</b>                 |    |      |
| 25–30                      | 43 | 35.2 |
| 31–36                      | 53 | 43.5 |
| 37–42                      | 19 | 14.9 |
| 43–48                      | 4  | 3.2  |
| 49–54                      | 3  | 2.5  |
| <b>Sex</b>                 |    |      |
| Male                       | 57 | 46.7 |
| Female                     | 65 | 53.3 |
| <b>Years as ward nurse</b> |    |      |
| > 2 years                  | 77 | 63.1 |
| 1–2 years                  | 43 | 35.2 |
| 6 months–<1 year           | 2  | 1.6  |

**Table 2.** Level of Intrapersonal Skills

| Domain          | Mean | SD    | Interpretation |
|-----------------|------|-------|----------------|
| Confidence      | 3.30 | 0.675 | Very High      |
| Self-motivation | 3.23 | 0.679 | High           |
| Focus           | 3.28 | 0.677 | Very High      |
| <b>Overall</b>  | 3.27 | 0.677 | Very High      |

portion (35.2%) had worked for 1 to 2 years, while a very small fraction (1.6%) had been employed for 6 months to 1 year.

### Level of Intrapersonal Skills

As shown in Table 2, respondents reported very high levels of intrapersonal skills, with confidence ( $M = 3.30$ ), self-motivation ( $M = 3.23$ ), and focus ( $M = 3.28$ ) all rated as high to very high range.

### Level of Interpersonal Skills

Respondents also demonstrated very high interpersonal skills, particularly in effective communication ( $M = 3.28$ ) and empathy ( $M = 3.27$ ) (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Level of Interpersonal Skills

| Domain                  | Mean | SD    | Interpretation |
|-------------------------|------|-------|----------------|
| Effective Communication | 3.28 | 0.622 | Very High      |
| Empathy                 | 3.27 | 0.615 | Very High      |
| <b>Overall</b>          | 3.28 | 0.619 | Very High      |

**Table 4.** *Relationship Between Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Skills (Pearson Correlation Result)*

| Skill Set     | Mean | SD    | df  | p      | R     |
|---------------|------|-------|-----|--------|-------|
| Intrapersonal | 3.27 | 0.652 | 121 | <0.001 | 0.930 |
| Interpersonal | 3.27 | 0.610 |     |        |       |

**Table 5.** *Relationship Between Skills and Demographics (MANCOVA Results)*

| Variable      | Dependent Variable   | F     | p      |
|---------------|----------------------|-------|--------|
| Age           | Intrapersonal Skills | 0.841 | 0.664  |
| Age           | Interpersonal Skills | 0.779 | 0.738  |
| Sex           | Intrapersonal Skills | 9.58  | 0.002* |
| Sex           | Interpersonal Skills | 8.52  | 0.004* |
| Years of Work | Intrapersonal Skills | 0.192 | 0.826  |
| Years of Work | Interpersonal Skills | 0.341 | 0.711  |

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

### Relationship Between Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Skills

Table 4 shows that intrapersonal and interpersonal skills ( $R = 0.930$ ) are highly correlated, hence, not accepting the null hypothesis.

### Relationships with Demographic Variables

Table 5 presents the associations between demographic factors and the two skill domains. No significant differences were observed for age or years of employment, while sex was significantly associated with both intrapersonal ( $p = 0.002$ ) and interpersonal skills ( $p = 0.004$ ).

## Discussion

This study examined the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills of ward nurses in public hospitals in Manila, addressing a gap in Philippine nursing research where soft skills have been relatively underexplored. The findings confirmed that nurses in these settings exhibit very high levels of both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, consistent with the international reputation of Filipino nurses for compassionate, patient-centered care. The presence of a significant relationship between the two skill domains and the influence of gender point to a clearer picture of how soft skills develop and operate in practice. Both involve how nurses interact with others, enhance patient care, and improve overall outcomes.

Demographics of age, sex, and length of service of nurses have multi-faceted impact on both nurses' intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, reflecting a combination of experience, adaptability, and the ability to resonate with changing social and cultural trends (Atalla et al., 2024). The predominance of younger nurses mirrors the demographic composition of the Philippine nursing workforce, which is heavily represented by early-career professionals entering clinical service (Alshammari & Alenezi, 2023). This trend is significant because younger nurses often bring adaptability and technological fluency—such qualities that are becoming increasingly important in contemporary healthcare environments (Goodrich & Lazenby, 2023). The slightly higher proportion of female nurses reflects long-standing global gender patterns in the profession, though recent studies underscored that both male and female nurses bring distinct but equally valuable strengths in intrapersonal and interpersonal domains (Carpenter et al., 2018).

Notably, while length of employment has been theorized to influence resilience, confidence, and interpersonal maturity (Stephens, 2022), the present study did not find it to be a significant factor (see later results). This suggested that beyond tenure, other influences—such as formal training, mentorship, and workplace culture—may play more pivotal roles in shaping nurses' intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.

These findings, therefore, implied that Filipino ward nurses are self-aware, confident, and able to maintain focus in clinical environments. Confidence had been linked to informed

decision-making under pressure (Siedlecka et al., 2021). While, self-motivation reflected resilience and a growth mindset was also deemed essential for managing stress and continuous learning (Matos et al., 2020). High focus aligned with goal-setting theory, where persistence predicted achievement (Locke & Latham, 2019). In King's Goal Attainment framework, such self-regulation and clarity of purpose enabled nurses to enter transactions with patients as goal-oriented partners, supporting shared decision-making, and progress toward mutually set outcomes.

#### **Intrapersonal Skills and Resilience in Early-Career Nurses.**

The very high ratings were notable given the early-career composition of the sample ( $\leq 2$  years). These ratings echoed findings that confidence and focus facilitate role adaptation and competence building (Duckworth et al., 2019; Siedlecka et al., 2021) and resonate with Filipino cultural values such as *tiyaga* (perseverance) and *lakas ng loob* (courage). Consistent with King, intrapersonal clarity and control had provided the personal system stability needed for effective interactions within the interpersonal system.

#### **Sustainability of Resilience in Resource-Constrained Settings.**

While high self-motivation and confidence are promising indicators of professional adaptability, they also raised questions about sustainability. Public hospitals in the Philippines are often characterized by limited resources, high patient loads, and emotional strain on staff. Without adequate institutional support, even highly resilient nurses may experience “wear and tear” over time, leading to emotional exhaustion and attrition (Hariti & Ernawati, 2020). This highlighted the need for hospital administrators to reinforce resilience not only at the individual level but also through supportive organizational policies, mentoring systems, and wellness programs. These findings also stressed previous research suggesting that confidence and focus are critical for early role adaptation and for building competence in patient care (Day & Ashford, 2019; Duckworth et al., 2019). They also resonated with Filipino cultural values such as *tiyaga* (perseverance) and *lakas ng loob* (courage), which may underpin the intrapersonal strengths observed in this cohort.

In addition, this study's findings highlighted the nurses' ability to establish rapport and adapt communication styles to diverse patient needs. Communication adaptability is especially critical in multicultural and high-stress healthcare contexts, where clarity and sensitivity can directly affect patient outcomes (King & Leonard, 2022). Empathy was also strongly evident, particularly in active listening and perspective-taking. This reflected earlier studies identifying empathy as central to therapeutic

relationships (Decety & Jackson, 2019; Reid et al., 2019). Together, these results affirmed that Filipino nurses continue to embody compassionate care despite systemic pressures in public hospitals.

**Interpersonal Competence and Patient-Centered Care.** The very high scores in communication and empathy reinforced the centrality of relational skills in ensuring patient-centered care. Rapport-building has long been associated with improved trust, treatment adherence, and satisfaction (Reid et al., 2019), while empathy has been linked to reduced patient anxiety and stronger therapeutic alliances (Decety & Jackson, 2019). The finding that both domains were consistently strong suggests that, even under workload pressures, Filipino nurses prioritize relational aspects of practice alongside technical competence. This aligned with global evidence that patients consistently rank empathy and communication as equally important to procedural skill (Laari et al., 2021; Goodrich & Lazenby, 2023). Together, these results affirmed that Filipino nurses continue to embody compassionate care despite systemic pressures in public hospitals.

**Sustaining Empathy Under Systemic Pressures.** While the high ratings are encouraging, sustaining interpersonal skills in resource-limited environments remains a challenge. Public hospitals in Manila are characterized by high patient-to-nurse ratios and time constraints, which may erode opportunities for meaningful interaction. Without institutional support, such as communication training, reflective practice groups, and policies to address burnout, nurses' capacity to consistently demonstrate empathy may be compromised. Literature warns that compassion fatigue and emotional exhaustion can undermine even the strongest interpersonal competencies (Batson et al., 2020). Thus, deliberate reinforcement of interpersonal skills through professional development and supportive workplace culture is essential.

This study's finding further suggested that both skill sets were highly developed. The strong correlation implied that these domains operate interdependently. This is consistent with the evidence conveyed by Hernani (2020) that intrapersonal and interpersonal domains are two inseparable units where interpersonal relationships are embodied by the intrapersonal elements. However, the dimensions of emotional intelligence can be context-dependent (Kim & Sim, 2020) and may follow distinct developmental trajectories (Hariti & Rejeki, 2020). This also echoed King's framework: intrapersonal regulation (personal system) and interpersonal communication (interpersonal system) are distinct processes that both contribute to successful goal attainment but do not necessarily covary.

**Interdependency of Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Domains.** The significant association between the two domains was notable, given that self-confidence and self-awareness naturally translate into stronger communication or empathy. The findings also implied that intrapersonal resilience and interpersonal competence are parallel and complementary. For example, nurses' ability to understand and to manage themselves (intrapersonal) directly influence their ability to interact with others (interpersonal). They demonstrated high self-motivation and focus leading to communication adaptability. Likewise, they showed strong empathy and demonstrated self-regulation under stress. This correlation indicated that strong intrapersonal skills, such as self-awareness and emotional regulation, are foundational for developing effective interpersonal skills like empathy and communication.

**Implications for Nursing Education and Practice.** The strong correlation of these domains underscored the need for dual strategies in training and professional development. Reflective practices such as journaling, mindfulness, or peer debriefing could strengthen intrapersonal skills like self-awareness and confidence. Meanwhile, structured workshops, role plays, and simulation-based training are better suited for cultivating interpersonal competencies such as communication clarity and empathy. Institutions should avoid “one-size-fits-all” approaches and instead design complementary interventions that deliberately address both skill sets, ensuring nurses are equipped for both self-regulation and relational engagement in practice.

**Demographic Influences on Soft Skills.** The results showed that sex was significantly associated with both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, while age and length of employment were not. This aligned with studies reporting gendered patterns in emotional intelligence: female nurses often demonstrate stronger empathy and communication, whereas male nurses may exhibit greater confidence and stress regulation (Perez-Fuentes et al., 2019). In the Philippine context, sociocultural norms may reinforce these differences, with women traditionally socialized into caregiving roles and male nurses, as a minority, feeling pressure to project self-control. These gendered tendencies highlighted that soft-skill development is not uniform, but patterned by social expectations and professional positioning.

Conversely, the absence of significant effects for age and tenure challenges the assumption that maturity and experience naturally enhance soft skills (Stephens, 2022). Instead, evidence suggested that education, structured reflection, and

workplace culture exert stronger influence (Ernawati & Bratajaya, 2021; Nel et al., 2013). This underscored the need for hospitals to move beyond demographic assumptions and instead provide institutional support—such as mentoring, in-service training, and reflective practice groups—that intentionally nurture both self-regulation and relational competence across all career stages. Within King's Goal Attainment framework, such support systems strengthen the transactional process by ensuring that nurses, regardless of sex, age, or tenure, are equipped to engage patients in mutual goal-setting and effective care interactions.

**Implications for Workforce Development.** These findings carried important implications for practice. Training programs should avoid one-size-fits-all approaches. Instead, they should be gender-sensitive, harnessing the relational strengths often associated with female nurses while supporting male nurses in cultivating empathy and communication. Likewise, education and hospital management should design interventions that cut across career stages—such as in-service workshops, reflective practice groups, peer mentoring, and supportive supervision—to foster growth in both domains regardless of age or tenure. By emphasizing culture and education rather than demographic assumptions, institutions can better ensure that all nurses, regardless of sex or years of service, are equipped with the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills essential for patient-centered care.

### Synthesis of Findings

This study showed that Filipino ward nurses demonstrated very high levels of both intrapersonal (confidence, self-motivation, focus) and interpersonal (communication, empathy) skills, reaffirming their centrality in nurse–patient interactions. These two domains are not separate, suggesting the creation of a feedback loop where positive interpersonal interactions can reinforce positive self-feelings, while a nurse's internal state can influence the success of their external interactions. The significant associations with sex highlighted patterned differences—where female nurses excel in empathy and communication, while male nurses excel in confidence and regulation—both outcomes consequently shaped by sociocultural norms and professional positioning. In contrast, age and length of employment were not predictive, underscoring that experience alone does not guarantee stronger soft skills. Instead, workplace culture, structured support, and education emerge as more decisive in shaping these competencies. Anchored on King's Goal Attainment Theory, the findings emphasized that confidence, self-regulation, empathy, and communication are

essential elements of the transactional process, enabling mutual goal-setting and patient participation in care.

### Limitations

This study had several limitations that temper the interpretation of its findings. First, the use of purposive sampling and the restriction to public hospitals in Manila City had limited the generalizability of results to other regions or to private healthcare settings. Second, the cross-sectional design had prevented conclusions about causality or skill development over time. Third, the reliance on self-reported questionnaires had introduced the risk of social desirability bias, as respondents may overestimate their competencies. Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs to track skill development across the career trajectory, using mixed-methods approaches to capture qualitative depth, while also incorporating observational measures of nurse–patient interactions to validate self-reports.

### Implications for Nursing Practice

This study underscored the critical role of soft skills in sustaining high-quality nurse–patient interactions, particularly in resource-constrained environments such as public hospitals. The significant correlation between intrapersonal and interpersonal domains highlighted the need for dual-track interventions: reflective learning, mindfulness, and self-awareness activities to strengthen intrapersonal growth; and communication skills workshops, empathy training, and simulation-based exercises to sharpen interpersonal abilities.

The significant gender differences further pointed to the need for **gender-sensitive approaches** in training and workforce development. Programs should leverage the relational strengths often observed among female nurses while creating opportunities for male nurses to further cultivate empathy and communication. Conversely, male nurses' tendencies toward confidence and stress management can be highlighted as strengths to be shared across the workforce.

Finally, the finding that neither age nor experience predicted skill levels suggested that soft-skill development should not be left to time or tenure but must be deliberately fostered through institutional culture and continuing education. Nursing service offices and hospital administrators should embed soft-skill training into professional development, mentorship, and appraisal systems, ensuring that relational competence is cultivated alongside technical expertise. Such an approach is vital for building a resilient, patient-centered nursing workforce capable of meeting the complex demands of public healthcare.

### Conclusion

This study addressed the gap in understanding how Filipino ward nurses developed and utilized intrapersonal and interpersonal skills in nurse–patient interactions, an area often overshadowed by the focus on technical competencies. The findings revealed that respondents, predominantly young and early-career nurses, reported very high levels of both intrapersonal skills, particularly confidence, self-motivation, and focus, and interpersonal skills, namely communication and empathy. These results affirmed the resilience and compassion that characterize the Filipino nursing workforce.

In relation to the study objectives, the demographic profile highlighted the predominance of younger nurses and a slight majority of females, consistent with the national nursing workforce pattern. The assessment of intrapersonal skills showed that nurses possess strong self-regulation and confidence, qualities crucial for navigating stressful clinical environments. Similarly, interpersonal skills were also found to be highly developed, underscoring nurses' ability to communicate effectively and empathize with patients even under systemic pressures.

The study also tested the relationship between intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Results showed significant association, rejecting the null hypothesis that these domains operate interdependently. This finding suggested that resilience and self-regulation could automatically translate into relational competence, underscoring the need for dual strategies in training. Furthermore, demographic analysis revealed that sex was significantly associated with both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, with women tending toward empathy and communication, and men toward confidence and stress regulation. In contrast, age and length of employment did not significantly affect these competencies, partially rejecting the null hypothesis and indicating that skill development is shaped more by education and workplace culture than by tenure.

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*“Equity in care is achieved  
not by intent alone, but by structures  
reshaped and systems reimaged.”*