



Original Research

The Relationship between Self-Concept and Social Interaction among Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

Self-concept and social interaction are important factors in the development of nursing students' professional skills. A positive self-concept can enhance students' ability to engage in effective social interactions, which plays a vital role in building strong interpersonal relationships within academic and clinical practice environments. This study aimed to examine the relationship between self-concept and social interaction among nursing students at a private university in Tangerang. This study employed a quantitative correlational method with a cross-sectional approach. A total of, 302 nursing students from a private university in Western Indonesia were selected using a quota sampling technique. The instruments included the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) and the Social Interaction Psychology Scale, both of which were utilized in their validated Indonesian-language versions. Data analysis using Spearman's rank correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between self-concept and social interaction. The findings showed that most students had a moderate level of self-concept (64.9%) and social interaction (73.2%). Spearman's rank correlation analysis revealed a significant positive correlation of moderate strength between self-concept and social interaction among nursing students. This suggests that students with a better self-concept tend to demonstrate more effective social interaction. Therefore, educational institutions are encouraged to develop programs aimed at enhancing both self-concept and social interaction to support students' academic performance and professional development.

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INTRODUCTION

The nursing profession remains the backbone of healthcare systems globally, playing a pivotal role in delivering high-quality patient care, promoting health, and ensuring patient safety (International Council of Nurses, 2023). As the largest component of the global health workforce, nurses contribute significantly to the effectiveness and sustainability of healthcare services. Within this

context, the development of a strong professional self-concept among nursing students is vital, as it shapes their future professional identity, clinical competence, and interpersonal effectiveness within healthcare teams. Establishing a positive self-concept during nursing education not only supports students' academic and clinical performance but also enhances their confidence, communication skills, and readiness to navigate complex healthcare environments (Konlan et al., 2024).

Professional self-concept refers to an individual's perception and evaluation of themselves within a professional context. It includes elements such as self-esteem, body image, emotional regulation, autonomy, decision-making abilities, and social interaction skills (Almeida et al., 2023)). A positive professional self-concept has been associated with increased confidence, better academic and clinical performance, effective communication, and greater resilience in facing workplace challenges (Farčić et al., 2020). Conversely, a negative self-concept may result in decreased motivation, impaired professional development, and difficulties in coping with stress and interpersonal conflicts (Alghtany et al., 2024; Goliroshan et al., 2021).

Research indicates that self-concept is primarily shaped by personal experiences, interactions with others, and the environmental factors. Individuals who adapt well to social and academic environments tend to develop a positive self-concept, while those who struggle to adjust may experience negative self-perceptions (Azpiazu et al., 2024). Recent studies have reported that 13.1% of nursing students had a low self-concept and 67.7% a moderate one, indicating that self-concept issues are relatively common (Suak et al., 2023). Similarly, more than half of nursing students were found to have low self-esteem, affecting their social interactions, stress management, and clinical readiness (Dreidi et al., 2024). Given that nursing students regularly interact with patients, clinical supervisors, and other healthcare professionals, building a positive self-concept early in their training is essential. Confidence, emotional regulation, and effective interpersonal skills are essential in fostering therapeutic communication and ensuring professional competence (Siallagan & Ginting, 2021). Furthermore, a well-formed self-concept contributes to improved social interaction, better teamwork, and enhanced leadership skills among nursing students (Masela, 2019).

A preliminary survey conducted in October 2023 involving interviews with 10 nursing students at a private university in Tangerang revealed concerns related to both self-concept and social interaction. Notably, 90% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with themselves, reflecting low self-esteem. Sixty percent reported avoiding group discussions, while 40% felt unprepared to assume leadership roles, highlighting challenges in social interaction. Additionally, 60% of students reported difficulty managing their emotions during interpersonal conflicts. These findings suggest that issues in self-concept may directly influence nursing students' social interactions, justifying further investigation into this relationship. These responses suggest that issues related to self-concept may directly affect the way nursing students interact with others, both academically and clinically. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between self-concept and social interaction among nursing students, in order to better understand how self-perception influences their academic, social, and professional development.

METHOD

This study employed a cross-sectional design. The target population comprised 1,239 nursing students enrolled at a private university in Tangerang, Indonesia. A total sample of 302 students was selected using a quota sampling technique, which ensured representation across key characteristics such as academic year, age, gender, and faculty affiliation. The inclusion criteria were nursing students actively enrolled in the program at the time of data collection, while the exclusion criteria included students who were on academic leave or temporarily suspended from academic activities during the study period. Data collection took place between February and May 2024.

The variables measured were self-concept and social interaction. Self-concept was assessed using the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) developed by Fitts (1971), which was translated into Indonesian by Dwinanda (2019). The scale consists of 25 items, with a total score range of 48-200. A score of 150-200 indicates a high level of self-concept, 99-149 indicates a moderate level, and 48-98 indicates a low level. Validity and reliability testing conducted on 30 respondents yielded correlation coefficient values ranging from 0.373 to 0.618, exceeding the *r*-table value of 0.361. The Cronbach's alpha for the self-concept scale was 0.850, indicating high reliability. Social interaction was measured using a psychological scale questionnaire originally developed by Abdulsyani (1994) and adapted into Indonesian by Dwinanda (2019). The scale consists of 25 items, with a total score range of 48-200. A score of 150-200 indicates a high level of social interaction, 99-149 indicates a moderate level, and 48-98 indicates a low level. Validity and reliability testing with 30 respondents resulted in correlation coefficient values ranging from 0.363 to 0.627, also surpassing the *r*-table value of 0.361. The Cronbach's alpha value for the social interaction scale was 0.808, indicating good reliability. Data were collected online using a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Pelita Harapan (No. 043/KEPFON/I/2024).

RESULT

The results of this study highlight the distribution of respondent characteristics, levels of self-concept and social interaction, and the correlation between these two variables. Descriptive analyses were used to summarize demographic data and score distributions, followed by a bivariate analysis to determine the relationship between self-concept and social interaction among nursing students.

Table 1. Distribution of self-concept in nursing students (n = 302)

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	53	17.5
Medium	196	64.9
High	53	17.5

Table 2. Distribution of social interaction in nursing students (n = 302)

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	32	10.6
Medium	221	73.2
High	49	16.2

Based on Table 1, the majority of nursing students at one of the private universities in Tangerang have a moderate self-concept (64.9%). Similarly, Table 2 indicates that most students also demonstrated a moderate level of social interaction (73.2%).

Table 3. Spearman's rho correlation test results (n = 302)

		Self-concept	Social interaction
Self-concept	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	1.000	0.447
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		0.001
	N	302	302
Social interaction	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	.447	1.000
	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	.000	
	N	302	302

Table 3 shows that the Spearman rank correlation test is 0.447 with a p-value of 0.001, indicating a significant correlation between self-concept and social interaction among nursing students at one of the private universities in Tangerang. The correlation coefficient of 0.447 suggests a moderate positive relationship between self-concept and social interaction. In other words, nursing students with higher self-concept scores tended to report higher levels of social interaction.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of nursing students exhibit a moderate level of self-concept. This may reflect a transitional phase commonly experienced by nursing students, particularly as they navigate academic demands, clinical experiences, and the ongoing process of forming a professional identity. At this point in their education, students are often in the process of reconciling their personal self-perception with the expectations and

responsibilities of the nursing profession.

Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of themselves, which is shaped through personal experiences, social interactions, and the educational and clinical environments in which they are situated. A moderate level of self-concept may result from various internal and external factors. Internal factors include personal experiences, self-confidence, and individual values, while external factors encompass the academic environment, peer relationships, feedback from lecturers and clinical instructors, and the organizational culture within clinical settings. Self-concept significantly influences students' motivation, interpersonal relationships, academic performance, and readiness to manage complex clinical situations (Konlan et al., 2024).

Students with a lower self-concept tend to experience higher levels of anxiety when confronted with unfamiliar clinical situations, exhibit lower confidence when interacting with healthcare professionals, and are more vulnerable to academic stress. These challenges can negatively impact students' engagement in the learning process and diminish their effectiveness in performing professional roles within clinical settings (Gebreegziabher et al., 2025). Research has shown that sustained, experience-based mentorship programs can significantly enhance the professional self-concept of nursing students (Miao et al., 2024). In addition, reflective learning activities, such as reflective journaling and structured group discussions, have been proven effective in assisting students to critically evaluate their clinical experiences and foster a more positive self-perception (Murillo-Llorente et al., 2021).

Consistent with the findings on self-concept, the majority of nursing students at a private university in Tangerang also demonstrated a moderate category of social interaction. Most students were able to socialize effectively within their new environment, actively participate in both academic and non-academic activities, greet others warmly, and exhibit friendliness. They also adapt well in discussions, respect differing opinions, initiative to start a conversation, and maintain engagement during communications. These findings align with previous research, which found that the majority of respondents had moderate social interactions (Sanköse et al., 2024). Likewise, research by Burgaz Kinas et al. (2025) found that nursing students generally possess strong social interaction skills, driven by a genuine interest in forming interpersonal relationships.

Nursing students develop social interaction skills through communication, collaboration, and engagement with others. Strong social interactions are often fostered by positive self-confidence, which encourages students to engage effectively with their peers (Miao et al., 2025). Students with good social interactions will show less anxiety in communication, feel comfortable talking to others, confidently express opinions, and show mutual respect in discussions (Burgaz Kinas et al., 2025). These findings further support the significant relationship between self-concept and social interaction among nursing students. This is consistent with previous

studies that also identified a strong correlation between self-concept and social interaction in nursing populations (Garcia-Pereyra et al., 2023). Higher levels of self-concept are associated with stronger social interactions, while lower self-concept tends to correlate with reduced social engagement (Paramitha et al., 2024).

Understanding self-concept is essential for nursing student to effectively carry out their duties and responsibilities. A positive self-concept enables students to interact with patients and collaborate with healthcare professionals in clinical settings. Nurses who possess a strong self-concept tend to exhibit more positive social interaction (Garcia-Pereyra et al., 2023). Moreover, a positive self-concept is closely linked to high interpersonal communication, characterized by effective communication and problem-solving abilities (Suak et al., 2023). Nursing students with high self-confidence are also more likely to adapt successfully to academic environments (Moreno-Cámara et al., 2024; Bidjuni et al., 2016).

Self-concept significantly influences an individual's ability to engage in social interactions. Those with a positive self-concept tend to exhibit traits such as self-confidence, which support better adaptation within social environments (Ulfa et al., 2022). In contrast, individuals with a negative self-concept may experience persistent feelings of inferiority and inadequacy, ultimately limiting their social interactions. Previous research has demonstrated a positive relationship between self-concept and social interaction, suggesting that individuals with a well-developed self-concept are more likely to participate actively in social settings and be accepted by their peers. Therefore, nurturing a positive self-concept in nursing students is crucial for their successful social adjustment and professional development (Paramitha et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study revealed a significant moderate positive correlation between self-concept and social interaction among nursing students at a private university in Tangerang. Most students demonstrated moderate levels of both self-concept and social interaction, suggesting that while they are in the process of adapting to academic and clinical demands, further efforts are needed to strengthen their professional identity and interpersonal competencies. These findings underscore the importance of fostering a positive self-concept during nursing education to enhance students' confidence, emotional regulation, and ability to build effective social relationships.

To support this development, educational institutions and nursing educators are encouraged to implement interventions, such as mentorship programs, reflective practices, and communication training. These initiatives can help cultivate a stronger self-concept, ultimately promoting more effective social interactions and better preparedness for clinical practice. However, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to certain limitations of the study, such as the use of a cross-sectional design and self-reported questionnaires, which may introduce bias and limit the ability to

establish causal relationships.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this research.

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