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A Survey on the Current State of Political and Ideological Literacy Among Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective To investigate the current status of political and ideological literacy among nursing interns and its influencing factors, providing a reference for the reform of political and ideological education in nursing programs. Methods Convenience sampling was used to select 115 nursing interns from Pingdingshan City as study subjects, who were surveyed using a questionnaire on political and ideological literacy. Results The overall average score for political and ideological literacy among nursing interns was 156.21 ± 28.36 points. Comparisons of average scores for ideological and political literacy among nursing students of different ages, educational levels, political affiliations, and whether they served as class officers all showed statistically significant differences ($P < 0.05$). Multiple linear regression analysis indicated that all these factors were independent determinants of nursing students' ideological and political literacy ($P < 0.05$). Conclusion: The political and ideological literacy of nursing interns is generally at a good level, and age, educational background, political affiliation, and whether they serve as class officers are the main influencing factors.

KEY WORDS: Nursing interns; Ideological and political literacy; Status survey

INTRODUCTION

Political and ideological literacy refers to the sum of qualities, cultivation, and abilities required for college students to understand the inevitability of the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics through the study of political and ideological theories, and to apply the Marxist materialist conception of history to resolve and address various social issues. Currently, within China's higher medical education system, medical students generally exhibit a lack of enthusiasm regarding their professional interests and long-term career development plans. This state is shaped by a combination of factors, including individual cognition, the educational environment,

and the industry context. Nursing staff are a key force in safeguarding public health; they require not only solid professional competence but also excellent moral character and professional ethics. Deviations in values will hinder the advancement of the Healthy China strategy. As the future workforce of the nursing profession, nursing students should possess strong ideological and political literacy. With the advancement of the Healthy China strategy, the role of nursing in disease prevention and health promotion has become increasingly prominent, placing higher demands on comprehensive professional competence. As the core of professional competence, ideological and political literacy influences nursing students' career choices and professional identity,

and is closely related to clinical humanistic care, ethical decision-making, and the protection of patient rights. Therefore, conducting a survey on the current status of ideological and political literacy among nursing students during clinical practice holds significant practical importance. Although the term “political and ideological literacy” is not used in foreign literature, nursing education has conducted in-depth research on similar dimensions such as professional ethics, humanistic care, and professional values. For example, studies by Işıl İşeri et al. indicate that integrating ethics and values education into nursing curricula helps enhance students’ professional identity and moral literacy, leading to the development of mature educational models and evaluation systems. Domestic research has largely focused on the connotations, importance, and general strategies of ideological and political literacy, while specialized studies on clinical nursing students are limited, with scattered perspectives and a lack of systematic analysis and pathways for improvement. For instance, research by Yongxia Mei et al. indicates that the ideological and political literacy of clinical nursing students is acceptable but still has room for improvement. Research by Na Bu et al. shows that the ideological and political literacy of clinical nursing students is positively correlated with their sense of life’s meaning, and that ideological and political literacy can directly influence students’ sense of life’s meaning. Clinical nursing students are at a critical juncture of transitioning from theory to clinical practice, marking a crucial stage in the formation of their values and ideological and political literacy. Domestic research in this area has started late, features small sample sizes, and has a narrow scope. It lacks in-depth exploration of influencing mechanisms such as the clinical environment, teaching behaviors, and internship stress, making it difficult to provide targeted evidence for the reform of ideological and political education.

Therefore, this study focuses on nursing students in Pingdingshan City to assess their level of ideological and political literacy and analyze the influencing factors, with the aim of enhancing their ideological and political qualities, providing a reference for ideological and political education in nursing curricula, and contributing to the cultivation of high-quality nursing professionals who possess both professional skills and ideological and political literacy, thereby aligning with the requirements of the Healthy China strategy for the nursing workforce.

1. Subjects and Methods

1.1 Study Population

From October to December 2025, 115 nursing interns from a Grade A tertiary hospital in Pingdingshan City were selected using convenience sampling. Inclusion criteria: ① Full-time nursing students; ② Those who had completed ≥ 6 months of clinical internship; ③ Those willing and able to complete the questionnaire independently. Exclusion criteria: ① Those who had interrupted their internship for ≥ 2 weeks due to sick leave, personal leave, or other reasons; ② Those with mental illness or cognitive impairment. ③ Those simultaneously participating in other relevant studies.

1.2 Research Methods

A questionnaire survey was conducted. After approval by the hospital’s ethics committee, the researchers distributed the questionnaires on-site. Prior to the survey, the research objectives, completion requirements, and confidentiality principles were explained. Responses were collected anonymously and returned immediately. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed, with 115 valid responses collected, resulting in a valid response rate of

95.83%.

1.3 Research Tools

A self-designed questionnaire for general demographic information was used, covering seven items: gender, age, educational background, place of origin, political affiliation, whether an only child, and whether serving as a class officer.

We adopted the Political Ideological Competence Scale for Nursing Interns developed by Yuhan Liu, which comprises six dimensions—political literacy, patriotism, moral literacy, legal literacy, cultural literacy, and professional literacy—with a total of 44 items. The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale with positive scoring, where scores from 1 to 5 represent “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” respectively. The total score ranges from 44 to 220, with higher scores indicating higher political and ideological literacy. The scale’s grading criteria are as follows: 44–110 points is “Unsatisfactory,” 111–154 points is “Satisfactory,” 155–187 points is “Good,” and 188–220 points is “Excellent.” The scale demonstrates good reliability and validity (Cronbach’s α coefficient of 0.852).

1.4 Statistical Methods

SPSS 26.0 statistical software was used to analyze the research data. Categorical data, such as gender and educational background, were presented as sample size (n) and proportion (%). Continuous data, such as political and ideological literacy scores, were expressed as mean $\pm$ standard deviation ($\bar{x} \pm s$). Intergroup comparisons of political and ideological literacy levels among nursing students with different demographic characteristics were performed using t -tests. Multivariate linear regression analysis was used to analyze influencing factors. A P -value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

2. Results

2.1 Political Ideological Literacy Scores and Comparisons Among Nursing Students

See Table 1 for the scores on the political and ideological literacy of nursing students.

Table 1 Overall Profile of Political and Ideological Literacy Among Nursing Interns ($n=115$)

Item	Number of Items	Score	Average Score
Political Literacy	8	28.52 ± 5.21	3.57 ± 0.65
Patriotism	6	21.36 ± 4.38	3.56 ± 0.73
Moral Character	6	22.15 ± 4.52	3.69 ± 0.75
Cultural literacy	5	17.89 ± 3.97	3.58 ± 0.79
Rule of Law Literacy	7	23.74 ± 4.86	3.39 ± 0.69
Professional Competence	12	42.55 ± 6.89	3.55 ± 0.57
Total Score	44	156.21 ± 28.36	3.55 ± 0.64

There are varying degrees of differences in the ideological and political literacy of nursing students with different demographic characteristics; the scores are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Comparison of Political Ideological and Ethical Competence Scores Among Clinical Nursing Students with Different Demographic Characteristics (n=115)

Item	Number of Cases (%)	Score	t/F-value	P-value
Age (years)			9.87	0.043
18–20	38 (33.04)	150.13 ± 19.67		
21–23	65 (56.52)	159.25 ± 17.82		
24 and above	12 (10.43)	161.58 ± 16.49		
Gender			3.76	0.289
Female	102 (88.70)	158.62 ± 18.35		
Male	13 (11.30)	154.31 ± 20.27		
Education			10.25	0.017
Associate's degree	50 (43.48)	151.89 ± 18.93		
Bachelor's	65 (56.52)	159.15 ± 16.21		
Home Province			8.52	0.074
City	32 (27.83)	158.06 ± 17.54		
Counties and towns	45 (39.13)	156.24 ± 18.16		
Rural	38 (33.04)	153.79±19.28		
Political affiliation			29.78	0.000
CPC Member (including probationary members)	11 (9.57)	168.45 ± 14.32		
Members of the Communist Youth League	92 (80.00)	157.37 ± 18.05		
General public	12 (10.43)	149.18 ± 20.56		
Whether an only child			2.91	0.406
Yes	43 (37.39)	155.72 ± 19.01		
No	72 (62.61)	158.53 ± 18.07		
Whether serving as a class officer			16.43	0.001
Yes	38 (33.04)	162.37 ± 16.85		
No	77 (66.96)	153.59 ± 18.76		

2.2 Multiple Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing the Ideological and Political Literacy of Nursing Students on Clinical Rotation

With the comprehensive evaluation score of political and ideological literacy among nursing interns set as the dependent variable, this study selected key independent variables closely related to it—such as age, educational background, political affiliation, and whether serving as a class officer—based on univariate analysis. Using multiple linear regression, the study examined the magnitude of each independent variable's effect on the dependent variable as well as the relationships among them. See Table 3 for details.

Table 3 Coding of Independent Variables

Variable	Value Description
Age	18–20 years old = 1, 21–23 years old = 2, 24 years old and above = 3
Educational Attainment	Associate's degree = 0, Bachelor's degree = 1
Political Affiliation	General public = 1, Communist Youth League member = 2, CPC member (including probationary) = 3
Class Officer	No = 0, Yes = 1

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis (Table 4) show that age, educational level, political affiliation, and whether serving as a class officer were ultimately included in the regression equation ($P < 0.05$) as independent factors influencing the ideological and political literacy of nursing interns, with political affiliation having the strongest positive predictive effect on ideological and political literacy. The overall

test of the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 28.74$, $P < 0.001$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.312, indicating that the aforementioned variables explain 31.2% of the variance in political and ideological literacy.

Table 4 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Political Ideological Literacy Among Nursing Interns

Variable	B-value	SE	β	t-value	P-value
Constant	112.36	6.07	—	18.52	<0.001
Age	1.25	0.74	0.08	1.69	0.043
Education	6.26	1.47	0.21	4.25	<0.001
Political Affiliation	9.14	1.27	0.35	7.18	<0.001
Whether serving as a class officer	5.78	1.24	0.24	4.67	<0.001

3. Discussion

Analysis of the Overall Level of Political and Ideological Literacy Among Nursing Students at this study shows that the total score for political and ideological literacy among nursing students was 156.21 ± 28.36 points, indicating a good level. This suggests that nursing students generally possess the political and ideological literacy required for nursing positions and meet the basic requirements for nursing talent development. Qualified nursing personnel should not only possess a solid foundation of professional knowledge and proficient technical skills but also demonstrate sound professional ethics and conduct, as well as a proper professional identity^[8]. However, only 4.34% of students were rated as “excellent,” with the majority falling into the “qualified” and “good” categories, indicating significant room for improvement—a finding consistent with the results of studies by Yongxia Mei et al.

Dimension analysis revealed that moral literacy scored the highest, attributable to the influence of clinical instructors’ role modeling and ethical norms; legal literacy scored the lowest, reflecting insufficient legal education, inadequate integration of case studies, and weak knowledge in this area among nursing students, which urgently requires strengthening.

During their clinical rotations, nursing students tend to focus on clinical skills, resulting in insufficient integration with ideological and political education, which often leaves their overall competence at a basic level; the complex doctor-patient environment and professional pressures can also influence their values. Instructors should focus on guiding students to empathize with patients’ suffering and needs, strengthen their sense of medical humanism, and promote the integration of medical humanism education with clinical practice. This will allow ideological and political education to be seamlessly incorporated into professional curricula, thereby achieving an educational effect that “nurtures students subtly and imperceptibly”^[9]. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a university-hospital collaborative system for ideological and political education during the clinical internship phase to achieve a deep integration of ideological and political education with clinical practice.

Analysis of Factors Influencing the Ideological and Political Literacy of Nursing Students During Clinical Practice

Age

This study found that political and ideological literacy levels increase with age. Younger nursing students have limited social experience, immature professional awareness, and a one-sided understanding of professional values; older nursing students, however, possess rich clinical experience, have been tested in diverse scenarios, and exhibit greater ideological maturity. They are better able to rationally cope with professional pressures and more

readily comprehend the social responsibilities and mission of the nursing profession. It is recommended to implement tiered education: for nursing students aged 18–20, focus on professional awareness and role transition education; for those aged 21–23, incorporate medical ethics and legal case studies into teaching; and for students aged 24 and older, leverage their exemplary role to strengthen their sense of professional mission. In the teaching process, instructors should adhere to established pedagogical principles, prioritize the enhancement of teaching skills and the management of instructional pacing, while tailoring instruction to individual student needs.

Educational Level

This study found that undergraduate nursing students’ ideological and political literacy is significantly higher than that of associate degree nursing students. Undergraduate programs have a longer duration, a well-developed ideological and political curriculum system, and emphasize the cultivation of humanistic literacy and critical thinking; nursing students also have more opportunities to participate in ideological and political practices and volunteer services. In contrast, associate degree programs focus on skills training, with insufficient depth and limited coverage in ideological and political education. It is recommended that universities and colleges collaborate to strengthen the ideological and political education of associate degree nursing students. The weight of ideological and political education in assessments should be appropriately increased. Based on an understanding of students’ existing cognitive structures, competency levels, and practical needs, new assessment standards should be refined to organically integrate formative and summative assessments^[11]. Ideological and political elements should be incorporated into practical training courses, and platforms for social practice should be established to narrow the gap in competencies resulting from differences in educational level.

Political Affiliation

This study found that nursing students who are Party members possess the highest level of ideological and political literacy, followed by those who are members of the Communist Youth League, with non-members ranking lowest. Party members, having undergone systematic ideological and political training and organizational life exercises, demonstrate stronger political identification and a greater sense of responsibility; remaining true to their original aspirations and living up to their mission is not only a professional requirement for every healthcare worker but also a political requirement for every Party member^[12]; League members, having received regular ideological guidance, demonstrate higher levels of competence than non-members; non-members lack sustained ideological and political cultivation and suffer from insufficient ideological guidance. It is recommended that the leading role of Party and League organizations be leveraged to strengthen

ideological and political enlightenment for non-member nursing students, incorporate ideological and political performance into internship evaluations, and stimulate proactive engagement in ideological and political learning.

Whether Serving as a Class Officer

This study found that nursing students serving as class officers exhibit higher levels of ideological and political literacy. In their roles, class officers undertake service and coordination responsibilities, which continuously strengthen their sense of responsibility and spirit of dedication. They are able to translate ideological and political theories into practical skills, making them better suited to the demands of clinical collaboration. Through experiences gained from clinical practice and the influence of teachers' guidance by example, nursing students have strengthened their professional identity and deepened their understanding of professional ethics^[13]. It is recommended to expand the scope of student leadership roles by establishing positions such as ideological and political liaisons and group leaders, thereby creating an inclusive practical training platform. Both parties should jointly establish clinical teaching demonstration bases, select representative wards for educational renovation, and designate specific areas for teaching activities, skills training, and reflective discussions to foster a conducive environment for professional skills training that integrates humanistic literacy^[14], enabling more nursing students to enhance their sense of responsibility and ideological and political literacy through practical experience.

4. Summary

This study found that the overall ideological and political literacy of nursing interns at a Grade A tertiary hospital in Pingdingshan City is generally good, but there is still significant room for improvement. Among the factors influencing the level of ideological and political literacy, age, educational background, political affiliation, and whether the student holds a student leadership position are the primary determinants. This suggests that clinical instructors, when conducting training for nursing interns, should focus on comprehensively evaluating the aforementioned influencing factors. By integrating the individual characteristics and practical needs of the interns, they should systematically implement targeted ideological and political education to enhance the interns' ideological and political literacy. This will, in turn, promote the all-round, high-quality, and sustainable development of the nursing professional workforce, thereby comprehensively improving the overall literacy and professional competence of the nursing team.

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