

Nonviolent Communication as a Tool for Conflict Resolution in the University Setting: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Background: Nonviolent Communication (NVC), developed by Marshall Rosenberg, is a communication framework designed to resolve conflicts by fostering empathy, mutual understanding, and collaborative problem-solving, rather than resorting to blame or judgment.

Aim of the study: To explore the lived experience of nursing students and educators regarding the use of nonviolent communication in conflict resolution in the university setting.

Research design: A phenomenological approach was used to conduct the existing study.

Setting: The study was conducted at the faculty of Nursing, Zagazig University.

Subjects: A purposive sample of 40 individuals from Students and 40 individuals from nursing educators.

Tools of data collection: Two tools were used: Socio-demographic data sheet, and In-depth interview and focus groups. The interview data was analyzed using the NVivo V.12 software based on the reflexive intuitive thematic analysis method.

Results: Participants' perspectives on Nonviolent Communication (NVC) revealed three major thematic areas. First, concerning the sources of conflict within the university environment, key themes emerged: Administrative and logistical challenges, Discrepancies in teaching and learning processes and Issues related to student–teacher relationships and mutual respect. Second, regarding the understanding of NVC, themes included: Awareness of the core principles of NVC, Emphasis on empathy and compassion in communication and application of NVC strategies in real-life situations. Third, with respect to the perceived effects of NVC on conflict resolution, participants emphasized: The effectiveness of NVC in managing and resolving conflicts, The role of empathy and compassion in facilitating understanding and the practical application of NVC techniques in academic settings

Conclusion: Nonviolent Communication was perceived as an effective strategy for addressing both interpersonal and institutional conflicts within the academic environment.

Recommendations: It was recommended that NVC training be integrated into university curricula to promote healthier communication, reduce conflict, and foster more empathetic academic interactions.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution, Nonviolent Communication (NVC), Qualitative, The University Setting.

Introduction:

Conflicts across the world often emerge when communication systems become dysfunctional, leading to a breakdown in respect, understanding, acceptance, and trust. In such situations, communication between opposing parties tends to collapse, with each side unwilling to engage in dialogue. Narratives often become negative, and the communication frames used by adversaries are marked by blame and hostility. One of the central challenges in conflict resolution is transforming these negative frames into constructive and compassionate dialogue. Effective communication strategies are therefore essential for fostering genuine heart-to-heart interactions and restoring relationships. **(Rehema, 2021).**

The significance of peace and conflict resolution is widely recognized as a foundation for stability, growth, and human dignity across all societies. These processes are essential for fostering social reintegration, existential security, and individual development regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or belief **(Khan et al. 2022).**

In organizational contexts such as universities, conflict is inevitable due to the diversity of individuals who differ in personality, background, values, and perspectives. Disagreements often arise from differences in opinions, motivations, and expectations, which may lead to interpersonal or institutional conflict. Educational institutions, particularly universities, are complex ecosystems where effective communication is vital to maintaining harmony and achieving organizational goals. **(Cavaliere et al., 2021).**

Recent studies suggest that modern youth often struggle to empathize with others, which contributes to escalating conflict and misunderstanding. One communication strategy that addresses this challenge is Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication (NVC). NVC is designed to enhance connection and mutual understanding through a framework that emphasizes non-judgmental observation, recognition of feelings and needs, and clear, compassionate requests **(Batūraitė-Bunka et al., 2024).**

Conflict resolution is defined as the formal or informal process through which parties seek to peacefully resolve disputes **(Katie, 2024; Shahzad et al., 2020).** When applied through the lens of NVC, conflict resolution involves suspending judgment, identifying shared needs, and working toward mutual understanding. This structured approach increases the likelihood of reaching a resolution that respects the values and needs of all parties involved **(Williams et al., 2021).**

The "nursing students" generally refers to individuals who are actively enrolled in a professional or vocational nursing education program where they learn nursing skills, practice them, and are evaluated on their competency. This definition emphasizes the concrete identification of nursing students based on their participation in formal nursing education programs **(Zhou et al., 2023).**

Recently, qualitative studies have been widespread in various areas such as psychology, business, and sociology. In the last few decades, the utilization of the qualitative approach has grown in several fields. It may be utilized to investigate a variety of aspects of social interaction for the progress of society. Qualitative research provides descriptive or literary explanations of the hypothesis under the study. When a researcher wants a much more descriptive interpretation, then a qualitative technique could be chosen. It offers a richer and better understanding of society under investigation **(Tümen-Akyıldız, & Ahmed, 2021)**

Of the different qualitative research designs, the most appropriate for the current research was a *phenomenological design* which was a qualitative method aimed at grasping and portraying the fundamental essence of a phenomenon. This approach delved into the ordinary encounters of individuals while setting aside any preconceived notions the researchers may have had about the subject. Essentially, phenomenological research examined real-life experiences to uncover a richer understanding of how individuals interpreted those experiences **(Alhazmi and Kaufmann, 2022).**

Significance of the Study:

Conflicts in university settings are inevitable due to the diverse backgrounds, roles, and expectations of those involved. They can emerge from academic pressures, communication breakdowns, or differences in perspectives and may be further influenced by external social and economic factors **(Martínez-López et al., 2022).** Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a communication framework that emphasizes attentive listening, empathy, and the use of positive, non-judgmental language to foster understanding and peaceful conflict

resolution. It seeks to create authentic connections free from fear, guilt, or coercion, thereby promoting collaboration and mutual respect (Ten Eyck, 2019). While NVC has been implemented in various organizational and community contexts, its application within higher education, particularly in resolving conflicts between academic staff and students, has received limited empirical attention. So, this study seeks to explore the lived experience of nursing students and educators regarding the use of nonviolent communication in conflict resolution in the university setting.

Aim of the study:

The aim of the study was:

To explore the lived experience of nursing students and educators regarding the use of nonviolent communication on conflict resolution in the university setting.

Research questions:

1. What are sources of conflict in the university environment among the students and nursing educators?
2. What are the perspectives and opinions of students and nursing educators regarding nonviolent communication?
3. What are the effects of nonviolent communication on conflict resolution in the university environment?

Subjects and Methods:

Research design:

A phenomenological design was used to conduct this study.

Study Setting:

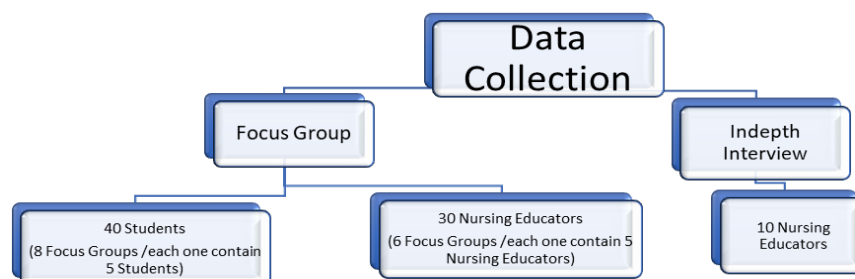
The current study was conducted at the Faculty of Nursing, Zagazig University, which consists of five floors. The first and second floors are designated for the faculty's employees, including staff and faculty members, and the other three floors include rooms for teaching theoretical subjects, laboratories, and small rooms for teaching practical subjects. The interviews took place at different places, such as the staff's office, the Psychological Counseling Unit Office, and practical sections, and via an online platform such as Zoom and Telegram. Data collection occurred over a period of four months (from the beginning of February 2024 to the end of May 2024).

Participants

This study utilized the purposive sampling technique to select participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which units are selected based on specific characteristics needed for the sample. This method relies on the researcher's judgment to identify and choose individuals, cases, or events that best provide the information necessary to achieve the study's goals (Patayon & Gementiza-Cubio, 2024).

A total of 80 participants were selected, consisting of 40 nursing students and 40 nursing educators from various academic years and departments. Inclusion criteria included physical and mental wellness and willingness to participate. Aliases were used to ensure anonymity. The interviews and focus group discussions provide a personal and detailed look at the experiences, viewpoints, and methods students and nursing educators use to manage classroom conflicts. This approach lets researchers delve into the details, difficulties, and successful approaches that might not be wholly revealed through numbers and statistics alone.

Sampling technique:



Figur (1): Flow chart showing the Sampling technique.

Tool for data collection:

The collection of data was concurrent and included the following: -

1. Socio- demographic data:

Socio- demographic data Adapted from **El-Gilany (2012)**, covering variables like age, gender, marital status, residence, income, family size, and education background.

2. In-depth interviews:

10 In-depth interviews Conducted with 10 nursing educators using semi-structured open-ended questions to explore their perceptions and experiences.

3. Focus groups discussions: -

A total of 14 focus group sessions were conducted, 8 with nursing students and 6 with nursing educators—each comprising 5 participants. The discussions were moderated by the researcher and followed a semi-structured interview guide to ensure consistency while allowing for open and flexible dialogue.

Field work:

Field work included the procedures of data collection which are divided into the preparatory phase and the implementation phase.

1. The Introductory phase:

Once permission was granted to proceed with the study, the researcher met with the vice deans for the Students Affairs and Education in faculty of nursing- Zagazig university, explained to her the study aim and procedures as well as the data collection forms including obtaining an official permission for the approval to conduct the study and get access to students. Then the academic year schedule and a list of students from the Students Affairs Department were also obtained. The introductory phase was executed in one month starting in the beginning of February 2024 and was completed by the end of February 2024.

2. The implementation phase:

The implementation phase was the actual contact with the students and nursing educators through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

Focus group discussions:

- Each focus group contained 5 homogenous participants (Included 8 focus group discussion for students which included 3 male and 5 female focus group discussion and 5 focus group discussion for nursing educators all were females), as far as possible from the same friendship groupings to encourage openness and honesty. Online focus group discussions were conducted by nursing educators due to limited free time for educators at faculty as they were very busy introducing lectures and doing exams. Online focus group discussions were implemented by adding nursing educators to a newly created group and requiring them to participate in online discussion sessions that gave the participants confidentiality by allowing them to use a participant number and allowing them to have their camera off during the discussion session. The focus group provided an organized discussion platform that enabled the researcher to collect responses from different individuals participating. The participants provided insight into their individual experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of the study topic. The role of the moderator in each focus group discussion was vital to creating an environment where the participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences and perceptions without judgment.
- The researcher began focus group sessions with explaining study and its purpose and ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality. Once informed consent was obtained orally from online focus group discussions and by written signing in other focus group discussions, the participants were asked to take place in focus group discussions then Participants were given additional time to complete a short demographic survey.
- The focus group sessions began with an introduction, during the introductory part of the session the moderator followed a brief welcome and introduction as an ice breaker. Also, what would take place

during the session and ground rules such as listening to each other respectfully, the privacy of each group member would be respected, and that they did not have to answer questions that made them uncomfortable.

- Prior to the main discussion there was usually a warm-up phase designed to make the participants feel at ease. During the warm-up participants generally introduce themselves to the group, beginning by choosing an alias instead of their real name to verify trustworthiness of the researcher's intentions about data obtained from them. Each participant was given a turn at each question. The discussion sessions lasted approximately 1 to 2 hours according to the details provided and for online focus group sessions on Zoom. When the session ended after 40 minutes, we started another session until we ended after approximately 1 to 2 hours. The discussion sessions were recorded using a Dictaphone.
- The focus group sessions started with an opening question to attract the participants' attention and encourage them to participate and express their opinions. The questions were progressively followed up to the main questions.
- a probe questions were used to take the discussion into still deeper territory, "Please tell me more about that", "What does this remind you of?", "Is this what you said?" or "Do you feel that that is right?". To obtain detailed responses, the researcher responded to the interviewee by utilizing active listening, using silence, keeping group members free to express themselves openly and distilling participants' responses.
- At the end of the discussion, the moderator asked the participants to add any comments they wanted to include. Also, they were thanked for their participation.

N.B. The researcher took the role of moderator (often referred to as a moderator or facilitator), while another staff member took the role of assistant moderator. The responsibilities of the moderator are initiating the debate, as well as inspiring participants to respond by expressing their perceptions and opinions confidently. Another crucial role of the moderator is to make members assure and comfortable to be engaged with the discussion effectively. Furthermore, everyone should be able to speak and interact (Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021). In the absence of an assistant moderator, the researcher played both roles.

In-depth interview

- 10 in-depth interviews were Conducted with nursing educators, and the researcher was solely responsible for collecting the data. Interviews were conducted face to face and a list of questions determined prior to the interview guided the process. The interview schedule was given to the participants in advance to give them a chance to think over the questions and not be 'put on the spot'. All interviews took place at a venue and a time that was negotiated with participants once consent forms had been received. Each interview was recorded using a Dictaphone to ensure that all the information gathered was available for analysis. Upon completion, each interview was then transcribed.
- Each interview lasted approximately half - one hour, depending on the degree of detail each interviewee contributed. It was confirmed that the interview is for a research study that is being done to gather information on (non-violence communication). Names would not be recorded, their participation is voluntary, and there is no penalty for refusing to take part. And finally, they may refuse to answer any question in the interview or stop the interview at any time.

N.B. Data collection continued until a research closure was reached (theoretical saturation)

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research supports the findings and argues that attention should be given to the findings. Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research is important because the raw data that is collected is without a categorization matrix. Trustworthiness in qualitative studies is established when credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are present in a study (Stahl & King, 2020).

- **Credibility.**

Credibility, analogous to internal validity, refers to the researcher's confidence in the study's findings is true and accurate. To establish credibility, the researcher must ensure that the research participants are accurately identified and described in the study. This study used triangulation with the different data collection methods (i.e., focus group and in-depth interviews) to show that the study's findings are credible. During the primary data collection, the researcher ensured that ample time would be given to ensure that the researcher could listen, document, and obtain saturation of data.

Moreover, to ensure the credibility and validity of the data collection process and mitigate the risk of steering participant responses in a particular direction, a field test was carried out. An expert panel comprising three individuals was enlisted to review the questions utilized in the focus groups, questionnaires, and interviews. This review aimed to assess the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the questions with the study's objectives and research focus. By incorporating this rigorous validation step, potential biases or leading indicators within the data collection instruments were identified and addressed proactively, thereby enhancing the overall methodological integrity of the study.

- **Transferability.**

Transferability, corresponding to external validity, refers to how the researcher can demonstrate that the study's findings can generalize to other settings and groups. Based on the data collected from the current study, findings reveal that there are different interpretations of nonviolent communication in university environments. And the ambiguity of nonviolent communication can create miscommunication based on different interpretations of the users. So, this study's findings may be used to raise awareness on how nonviolent communication is perceived when used in university environments and whether communication policies need to be updated to address the use of nonviolent communication in the university environments to mitigate potential risk for conflicts between students and educators.

- **Dependability.**

Dependability, akin to reliability criterion, refers to the extent that the study's findings would be consistent if the study was to be repeated by others. It is the stability of the study's data under different conditions (Megheirkouni & Moir, 2023). Dependability was ensured in this study through: -

- ✓ An estimation path that describes the steps taken from the start of the research development, reporting, and findings.
- ✓ And records of the research path were kept throughout the entire study.
- ✓ Also, evidence collected from the focus groups and in-depth interviews were carefully documented and archived throughout the study.
- ✓ The researcher clearly outlined the process of analyzing data in this study.
- ✓ The themes and patterns that emerged through the data analysis were identified, and reports were created.

- **Confirmability.**

Confirmability, corresponding to objectivity criteria, refers to the ability of others to confirm findings. In qualitative research, confirmability is when the insights collected reflect respondent views only without any subjective or biased views of the researcher reporting the study's findings (Kakar et al., 2023). To accomplish this,

- ✓ The researcher took an objective reading of what she saw and heard during data collection, putting aside any past prejudices or expectations that might have influenced her interpretation.

- ✓ Additionally, audit trails were used by outside researchers to document the whole data analysis process, including how themes were identified, how sub-themes were organized, and how decisions regarding pertinent insights were reached.
- ✓ Recognition of shortcomings in study methods and their potential effects.

Pilot study

The pilot study was conducted at the Faculty of Nursing- Zagazig University, where two focus group discussions were conducted, one with 5 students and the other with 5 nursing educators each lasted for one to two hours, and one in-depth interview with one nursing educator lasted for half to one hour and conducted with one nursing educator. It was a very useful step for the researcher to be more experienced in applying qualitative research. The participants of two focus group discussions and one in-depth interview included in the pilot study were included in the main number of the study sample since no modifications were made.

Ethical consideration:

The study proposal was approved by the Ethical Committee at the Faculty of Nursing at Zagazig University with the code M.DZU.NUR/133/12/9/2023. The informed consent for participation in the study was taken from the subjects after fully explaining the aim of the study. Participants were given the opportunity to refuse participation, and they were notified that they could withdraw at any stage of study; also, they were assured that the information would be confidential and used only for research purposes. Confidentiality was confirmed by not writing names.

Data analysis design:

▪ Basic Steps in Qualitative Data Analysis:

There were two main processes for data analysis: A. data preparation and B. data analysis.

A. Data preparation:

The process of data preparation included transcription and translation. Data from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were transcribed from audio words to textual data by the researcher. After that, transcriptions were translated into English by researcher and then converted to a transcript for later validation. After the transcript had been generated, the actual names of participants were converted to code to protect the participants' privacy.

B. Data analysis:

Demographic items (age, gender identification, employment, and education level) were analyzed utilizing univariate descriptive statistics. The continuous variables, age and income, were analyzed using means, variances, and standard deviations. The categorical variables of gender identification, employment, and education level are summarized utilizing frequencies and proportions.

Raw data collected from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were uploaded and analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis using **Braun (2022)** thematic analysis approach and supported with NVivo. There are six steps in **(Braun, 2022)** thematic analysis approach that provides a clearly defined process to analyze the data collected; familiarization of data, initial coding, generating themes, validity, and reliability of themes, defining and naming themes, interpretation and reporting.

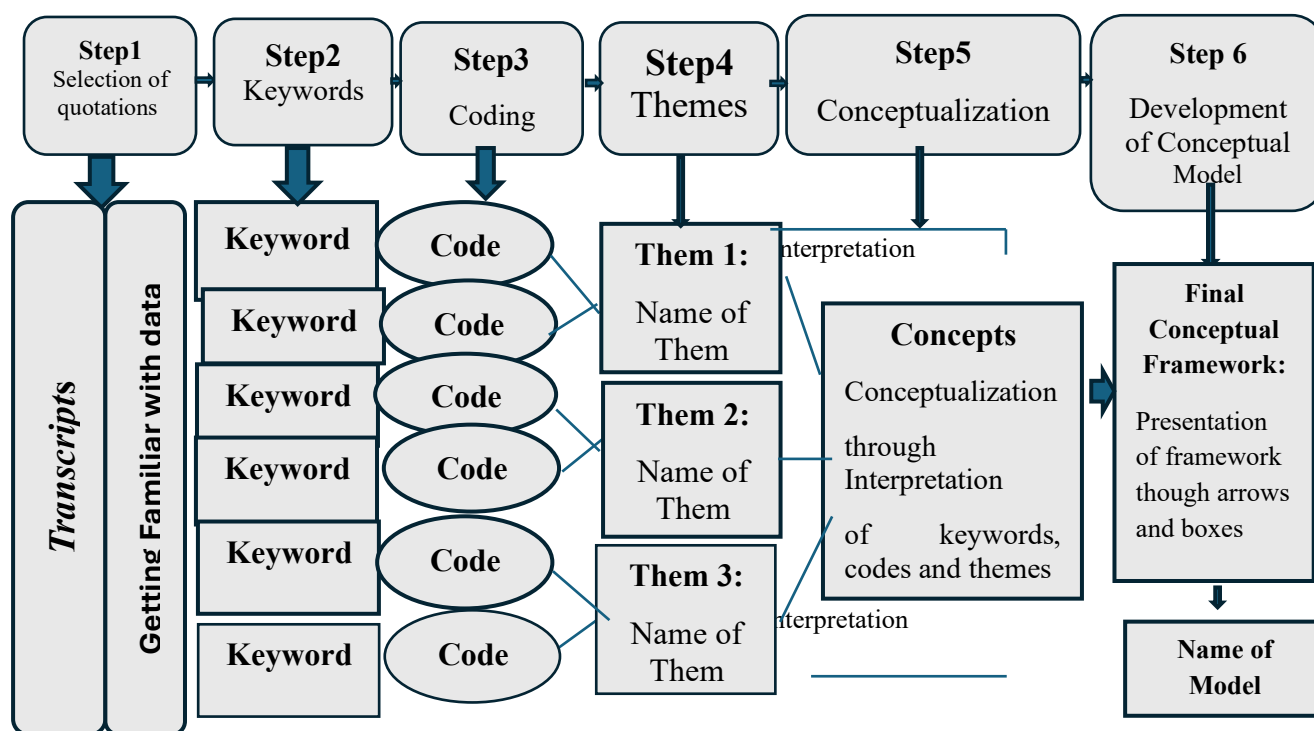


Figure (2): A Systematic Thematic Analysis process.

Source: Naeem et al. (2023)

As in figure 3: Following the six steps in the current study, the raw data was first transcribed. In Step One, the researcher became familiar with the data by reading and re-reading the transcribed data and writing down any initial codes noticed (Rathgeber, 2024). In Step Two, the researcher generated initial codes using NVIVO. During this step, the initial codes were generated. The raw data was coded first by using line-by-line coding that allowed for the coding to become more detailed, and thus the categorization process came next. Once categorization started, it became easier to detect recurring and consistent themes that emerged. In Step Three, the researcher used the codes that had already been identified and focused on a border level of the identified themes (Busetto et al., 2020). Step Four involved reviewing and refining the themes that had been created by making sure there was a coherent pattern. This was a two-step process where the coded data and the level of themes were reviewed separately (Hemming et al., 2021). Step Five was about defining and naming themes to capture the nature of each theme to allow the researcher to create an overall narrative of the data collected (Naeem et al., 2023). The last step, Step Six, was about producing a report of the data collected. This data analysis process was most appropriate because it enabled the researcher to identify recurring trends based on the responses provided by the participants by using the triangulation method.

Results:

Table (1) Personal Characteristics among the Studied students (n=40):

Variable	category	No	%
Age (Years)	20 years	5	12.5
	21 years	12	30.0
	22 years	15	37.5
	23 years	8	20.0
Gender	Male	15	37.5

	Female	25	62.5
Residence	Rural	33	82.5
	Urban	7	17.5
Distribution of birth order	First	16	40.0
	Middle	14	35.0
	Last	10	25.0
Marital status	Single	33	82.5
	Engaged	3	7.5
	Married	2	5.0
	Divorced	2	5.0
Income	Insufficient	1	2.5
	Sufficient for daily needs	16	40.0
	Sufficient for daily needs and emergencies	15	37.5
	Sufficient savings capacity	8	20.0
Family size (including participant)	2	1	2.5
	3	2	5.0
	4	6	15.0
	5	17	42.5
	6	10	25.0
	7	2	5.0
	8	2	5.0
Total		40	100

Table (1) shows that, 37.5 % of studied Students were aged 22 years old, 62.5 % of them were females, 82.5 % from rural areas, 40 % of them were first in distribution of birth order and 82.5 % were currently single. The table also reveals that 40 % of students studied had income sufficient for daily needs, 42.5 % of their family size was five.

Table (2) Personal Characteristics among the Studied nursing educator (n=40):

Variable	Category	No	%
Age (Years)	24-26 years	16	40.0
	27-29 years	7	17.5
	30-32 years	11	27.5
	More than 33	6	15.0
Gender	Male	2	5.0
	Female	38	95.0
Residence	Rural	30	75.0
	Urban	10	25.0
Distribution of birth order	First	9	22.5
	Middle	13	32.5
	Last	18	45.0
Marital status	Single	13	32.5
	Engaged	2	5.0
	Married	22	55.0
	Divorced	3	7.5
Income	Insufficient	2	5.0
	Sufficient for daily needs	27	67.5
	Sufficient for daily needs and emergencies	9	22.5
	Sufficient savings capacity	2	5.0

Distribution of specialization	Medical-Surgical Nursing	7	17.5
	Pediatric Nursing	8	20.0
	Obstetrics & Gynecology Nursing	6	15.0
	Geriatric Nursing	10	25.0
	Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing	5	12.5
	Community Health Nursing	3	7.5
Distribution of qualification	Nursing Administration	1	2.5
	Demonstrator	20	50.0
	Assistant Lecturer	10	25.0
	Lecturer	8	20.0
	Assistant Professor	2	5.0
Total		40	100

Table (2) shows that, 40 % of studied Nursing Educators are aged 24-26 years old, 95 % of them are females, 75 % from rural areas, 45 % of them are last in distribution of birth order and 55 % are currently married. The table also reveals that 67.5 % of studied nursing educators have sufficient income for daily needs, 25 % of studied nursing educator's Specialization are from Geriatric Nursing and 50 % of nursing educators are Demonstrators.

Table (3-a): Summary of themes and subthemes for research question No. 1 regarding Students Group.

Themes	Number of participants	Sub-Themes	Responses
Administrative and Logistical Challenges	(7)	Platform and Enrollment Issues	"The platform and congestion during its procedures, along with the disregard for solutions despite many complaints, and they see our struggles firsthand." (P3)
		Lack of Clear Communication Regarding Administrative Procedures	"Unclear identity of the person responsible for solving crises and problems. One time, a student entered the dean's secretary's office and left crying." (P 6)
Teaching and Learning Discrepancies	(7)	Inconsistent Lecture Quality and Exam Content Mismatch	"Focusing on certain lectures while exam questions come from outside them and are extremely difficult." (P9)
		Faculty Behavior and Attitude Toward Students	"Some professors are arrogant and speak in a condescending manner as if they are superior to students." (P6)
		Professors' Resistance to Student Input and Feedback	"Some professors argue and refuse to admit mistakes, even when students provide correct information." (P11)
Exam-Related Stress and Scheduling Issues	(6)	Overlapping and Compressed Exam Schedules	"Lack of organization during exams; practical, oral, and final exams are scheduled back-to-back." (P9)
		Unclear Academic Calendar and Exam Dates	"Unclear semester timeline; we only find out about final exams a week before." (P8)

Student Treatment and Institutional Policies	(5)	Unfair Collective Punishments	"If one student makes a mistake, the entire class gets punished." (P9)
		Lack of Student Support and Psychological Guidance	"There should be an active role for a social counselor to intervene in conflicts." (P4)
Financial and Resource Constraints	(5)	Financial Burdens and Payment Difficulties	"The college insists on collecting the full annual tuition in one payment instead of splitting it." (P 5)
		Lack of Access to Essential Learning Materials	"Professors teach from different materials than the textbook and refuse to provide them to us." (P3)
Classroom Environment and Student Conduct	(4)	Class Overcrowding	"The college is small, yet they accept too many students." (P6)
		Disruptive Student Behavior	"Some students disrupt lectures with loud talking or laughing." (P7)

*P(Participant)

Table (3-b): Summary of themes and subthemes for research question No. 1 regarding nursing educators Group.

Themes	Number of participants	Sub-Themes	Responses
Communication Issues	(13)	Unclear emotions and expectations	"I might get upset and angry with a student, but it's not clear to the student why I'm upset because I didn't explain it." (P1)
		Lack of proper interaction and engagement	"Some professors don't show appropriate facial expressions when interacting with students, such as lack of interest." (P4)
		Judgmental attitudes and biased behavior	"Using a judgmental approach, meaning judging a student from one incident and treating them based on that judgment." P (21)
Academic Policies and Assessment Issues	(11)	Exams, grades, and evaluation methods	"Students care most about grades. Even if we treat them with respect, if the final exam is difficult, they forget all the good interactions." (P5)
		Lack of clear academic structure and policies	"The most important source is grades and exams." (P8)."
		Differences in departmental rules and expectations	"Some departments strictly follow rules while others are lenient, which makes students feel pressured by the strict department." (P2)
Student-Teacher Relationship and Respect	(8)	Disrespect from students toward professors or vice versa	"Students crossing the line of respect with the professor or feeling insulted by the professor." (P19)
		Harsh treatment or lack of appreciation from professors	"Bullying or mocking a student, making their peers laugh at them." (P20)

Generational and
cultural differences

"The generation gap between students and professors, with professors sometimes not bridging this gap effectively." (P5)

*P(Participant)

Table (4-a): Summary of themes and subthemes for research question No. 2 regarding students' group.

Themes	Number of participants	Sub-Themes	Responses
Understanding the Core Principles of Nonviolent Communication	(4)	Fundamental Element (Observation, Feelings, Needs, and Requests)	"Observation, feelings, needs, and requests—if we follow these in our interactions, life will be better." (P 7)
		Respectful Requesting Behavior	"We need to express our feelings and make requests respectfully first." (P 9)
		Non-judgmental observation	"I shouldn't judge anyone but instead describe the situation first." (P8)
Prior Knowledge and Discovery of NVC	(2)	Existing Familiarity	"I knew these principles before, but I didn't know they were called nonviolent communication. I feel like professors have started to understand us better." (P6)
		Intuitive Application	"I didn't know the term 'nonviolent communication' before, but I think I already use it when talking to my younger sister." (P5)
Emphasizing Empathy and Compassion in Communication	(2)	Empathetic Understanding	"We should put ourselves in the other person's shoes." (P6)
		Emotional Awareness	"I should pay attention to my emotions and needs, express them, and also respect others' emotions and needs." (P4)
Application for NVC in Real-Life Situations	(2)	Personal Relationship	"It's something really important that we need, and I've decided to use it to improve communication in my personal relationships. Communication shouldn't just be studied; it must also be applied well." (P6)
		Positive Reinforcement	"Yes, I shouldn't judge someone. Instead, I should help them see that studying is important rather than calling them a failure." (P8)

*P(Participant)

Table (4-b): Summary of themes and subthemes for research question No. 2 regarding nursing educators' group.

Themes	Number of participants	Sub-Themes	Responses
Understanding the Core Principles of	(7)	Recognizing the Four Steps of NVC	"First, I observe without making an immediate judgment. The second step is to express my feelings. After that, I will state what I need to fulfill my emotions. Lastly, I will make my request." (P2)

Nonviolent Communication		Expressing Feelings and Needs Clearly	"First, I observe the situation without judging the person. Then, I express my feelings and state what bothered me in the situation. Next, I say what I want to get rid of the negative feelings and tell the person what they should do." (P1)
Emphasizing Empathy and Compassion in Communication	(6)	Importance of Empathy in Understanding Others	"Empathy and understanding, that we understand each other." (P5)
		Listening More Than Speaking	"Compassion and understanding the other person's perspective, listening more than speaking, giving the other party a chance to express themselves, meaning a relationship between two people involving give and take." (P1)
Application for NVC in Real-Life Situations	(6)	Applying NVC Unconsciously in Daily Life	"I've been applying them unconsciously, meaning I always practice observation and empathy, within limits and depending on the situation and the student." (P2,interview)
		Taking Time Before Responding	I understand that I need to take my time before making any "decisions or actions, ensuring that my response is not punitive." (P7)
Awareness and Learning About NVC	(5)	First-Time Exposure to NVC	"This is my first time hearing about it, but I understand the importance of not harming others with my words or actions and focusing on behavior rather than personal attacks." (P5)
		Learning from the Discussion	"Before the session, I didn't know much. But I learned that if I encounter a situation that upsets me, I should observe without judgment, organize my thoughts, advise the person on what to change, and make my request gently and non-violently." (P13)

*P(Participant)

Table (5-a): Summary of themes and subthemes for research question No. 3 regarding students' group.

Themes	Number of participants	Sub-Themes	Responses
NVC's Role in Enhancing Empathy	(6)	Perspective-Taking	" Give others the benefit of the doubt and put myself in their shoes. For example, if a professor seems upset, I assume they might have personal problems." P1 "If everyone saw things from the other person's perspective, all problems would be resolved." (P2)
		Compassion in Conflict	"Yes, because if I communicate with kindness and compassion instead of violence, it will prevent the other person from becoming defensive." (P4)
The Effectiveness of NVC in		Effective Communication	"Yes, because when we feel that the professor understands us and is willing to listen, it gives us space to express everything inside us." (P5)
		Mutual Respect	"Yes, it will have an impact because we will be more aware of expressing our feelings and needs. For example, we won't be afraid to say that we don't understand if we've had a long school day. The professor, if they are understanding, might

Conflict Resolution	(6)		suggest postponing the lesson to another day, reducing conflicts between us." (P15)
		Practical Problem-Solving	"Yes, because as a student, if I understand nonviolent communication, I will appreciate the professor and acknowledge that they also have other responsibilities and problems. This will help me listen calmly"(P16)
Long-Term Impact	(4)	Future Relationships	"Yes, and we will have more trust in the people around us. The circle of people we trust will expand beyond just our parents and siblings. When I go out, I will feel understood and realize that not everyone will fight with me. Our interactions will be smoother. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Hell is forbidden for those who are easygoing, kind, and gentle.'" (P12)
		Psychological Well-Being	" Yes, because everyone will be comfortable talking to those around them and won't be misunderstood, so they can speak spontaneously and everything will be fine." (P11)
Relational Dynamics	(4)	Student-Teacher Relationship	"Yes, of course, a lot, because I will put myself in the place of the person in front of me, so I will not anger from him, which will reduce conflicts." (P7)
		Building Trust	"Yeah, of course, but with limits because if you're good with me, I'll be good with you too. But there are other people I have to be strict with, so there should be limits, meaning I shouldn't be too open or too strict." (P18)

*P(Participant)

Table (5-b): Summary of themes and subthemes for research question No. 3 regarding nursing educators' group.

Themes	Number of participants	Sub-Themes	Responses
The Effectiveness of NVC in Conflict Resolution	(7)	Improved Understanding and Reduced Mis-communication	"Absolutely, because what caused the problems between us was that we didn't understand each other. With nonviolent communication, we will understand each other, understand our feelings and needs, and start putting ourselves in the other person's shoes." (P4).
		Positive Psychological Impact	"If we deal with this style with the students or even our work colleagues, there will be more and more sympathy between us, which will make a positive difference in our psychological state."(P3)
Challenges in Implementing NVC		Cultural and Environmental Barriers	"Yes, definitely, but it will take a long time, and we will face many difficulties in applying it until people get used to it due to cultural differences." (P5).

NVC's Role in Enhancing Empathy	(6)	Personality Differences and Resistance	"But I believe the key factor is the individual's personality. Some people respond well to empathy and prefer nonviolent communication, while others are accustomed to strict and authoritarian approaches." (P4)
	(6)	Developing Compassion and Emotional Awareness	"Through empathy, understanding the other person's feelings and needs, and striving to meet them, mutual understanding will improve, reducing conflicts and improving communication." (P2)
		Creating a Safe and Trusting Environment	"It can have an incredibly positive impact because it makes the person in front of me feel safe, knowing that I will understand and appreciate the situation without fear of my reaction." (P4)
Practical Applications and Real-life	(5)	NVC in Educational Settings	"If both students and professors express their feelings and needs clearly and compromise, it will reduce conflicts." (P5)
		NVC in Conflict Resolution Scenarios	"I entered a section and found a student quarreling with another. I didn't want to be violent or judgmental, so I spoke to them calmly and asked one to apologize. Later, the student told me he didn't want to upset me, and the situation changed." (P3)

*P(Participant)

Discussion:

NVC has been described as a simple, powerful, and widely adopted method that could peacefully address issues related to conflict, pain, and violence at the community level. Some studies demonstrated the benefits of NVC for the community, particularly in conflict resolution. As, NVC assisted at-risk youth in resolving conflicts and enhanced youth perseverance, interpersonal communication, and academic performance (**McMahon & Pederson, 2020**).

At one level, Nonviolent Communication can be used in all types of relationships, a class discussion, a chat at work, or a civic deliberation in the community. Through NVC, individuals can identify and diminish reactive and alienating responses to challenging social situations while increasing their skills in empathic conflict resolution and positive relationship building (**Epinat-Duclos et al., 2021**).

Therefore, this study aimed to explore the lived experience of nursing students and educators regarding the use of nonviolent communication in conflict resolution in the university setting.

Concerning sources of conflict in the university environment among students and educators: -

1. Students' Perspectives

The analysis of student responses revealed six major themes relating to academic conflict: (1) administrative and logistical challenges, (2) exam-related stress, (3) discrepancies in teaching and learning, (4) student treatment and institutional policies, (5) financial and resource constraints, and (6) classroom environment and student conduct.

- The first theme, administrative and logistical challenges, included two sub-themes: (a) platform and enrollment issues, and (b) lack of clear communication regarding administrative procedures.

In the first sub-theme, students expressed persistent frustration over technical issues with digital platforms, especially during enrollment periods. They described delays, system congestion, and unresolved complaints. These challenges pointed to broader institutional inefficiencies, lack of responsiveness, and insufficient mechanisms for addressing student concerns. The findings are consistent with **Watson et al. (2016)**, who reported

that students and Student Unions at Kingston University found institutional complaint processes difficult to navigate and lacking fairness. Similarly, **Nakaweesa (2023)** highlighted that students in Uganda faced significant challenges with e-learning systems, which were often non-intuitive and lacked adequate user training.

The second sub-theme addressed the lack of clear communication regarding administrative procedures. Many students felt uncertain about whom to approach for problem resolution, with one account describing a student leaving a dean's office in visible distress. This illustrated the emotional burden caused by unclear institutional pathways. These findings align with **Pham (2024)**, who noted that students in U.S. institutions often faced poorly explained support systems and an absence of transparent guidance for academic and professional development.

2. Nursing Educators' Perspectives

Nursing educators identified four core themes contributing to conflict with students: (1) communication issues, (2) academic policies and assessment practices, (3) student-teacher relationships, and (4) mutual respect. Each theme contained sub-themes that illustrated nuanced educator experiences.

The theme of communication issues comprised three sub-themes: (a) unclear emotions and expectations, (b) lack of proper interaction and engagement, and (c) judgmental attitudes and bias.

In the first sub-theme, educators acknowledged that they occasionally failed to communicate expectations clearly, which led to student confusion. This issue may stem from the absence of standardized communication practices in nursing education, resulting in inconsistent interactions. Similarly, **Alamoush (2023)** reported that both positive and negative interactions in clinical training significantly impacted nursing students' motivation and emotional responses. In contrast, **van Dyk et al. (2022)** found that fostering a trusting educator-student relationship led to a more relaxed and productive learning environment in South Africa, emphasizing the value of open, consistent communication.

The second sub-theme revealed that non-verbal cues such as lack of eye contact or disengaged body language contributed to students perceiving educators as disinterested. However, **Putra et al. (2024)** emphasized the importance of non-verbal communication in higher education, finding that gestures and facial expressions greatly influenced student engagement and motivation.

The third sub-theme, Judgmental Attitudes and Biased Behavior, captured instances where educators formed negative perceptions of students based on isolated incidents. This bias, potentially attributed to the "halo effect" (**Lawrence et al., 2024**), may influence future interactions unfairly. **Alamoush (2023)** found that students often avoided confrontation with educators due to fear that conflicts would negatively affect academic progress. Conversely, **Lawrence et al. (2024)** reported that students valued fairness and equality in interactions, highlighting a desire for impartiality from educators.

Concerning perspectives and opinions of students and nursing educators regarding nonviolent communication

1. Students' Perspectives

Concerning students' perspectives on their prior knowledge, understanding, and application of nonviolent communication (NVC). Their responses provide insights into how they interpret and implement NVC principles in academic and personal interactions. The responses from students revealed several themes, categorized into four themes: understanding the core principles of Nonviolent Communication, prior knowledge and discovery of NVC, emphasizing empathy and compassion in communication, and application of NVC in real-life situations.

The first theme, "understanding the core principles of Nonviolent Communication" which is comprised of three sub-themes: (a) fundamental element (observation, feelings, needs, and requests), (b) respectful requesting behavior (c) and non-judgmental observation.

In the first sub-theme, 'Fundamental Element (Observation, Feelings, Needs, and Requests)', most students stated the fundamental elements of NVC observation, feelings, needs, and requests as essential for improving communication. According to NVC theory, compassionate communication goes through a first stage, where a non-judgmental objective observation about a particular situation is followed by acknowledging the accompanying emotional response to the observed situation as the second stage. The third stage involves identifying met and unmet needs related to the observation, which is greatly influenced by an individual's self-awareness and knowledge about distinct feelings and underlying universal needs. The fourth stage involves addressing a non-demanding request towards the dialogue partner for behaviors satisfying one's unmet needs (Wacker & Dziobek, 2018).

This result was so consistent with **Julia et al. (2024)**, who conducted a systemic review about compassionate communication and reported that fourteen articles discussed the theory of Non-violent Communication (NVC), which suggested a new language of life, which is a four-stage process to effective conflict resolution and positive relationship building, as it prevents one from responding violently to challenging social scenarios.

In the second sub-theme, 'Respectful Requesting Behavior,' Most students stated that they recognized the importance of respectful requests. This finding may be explained by the approach developed by **Marshall Rosenberg (2015)** that promotes more empathetic, respectful, and constructive communication between people. As NVC principle framing needs as respectful requests rather than demands, which fosters cooperation and reduces defensiveness.

This result was so consistent with **Adriani et al. (2024)**, who conducted a scoping review about Nonviolent communication as a technology in interpersonal relationships in health work and reported that studies have shown that NVC is a light technology that has made it possible to improve interpersonal relationships. NVC is a non-confrontational approach used to address conflicts without blaming or judging others. It focuses on objective observations, feelings, needs, and requests, facilitating mutual understanding and solutions.

In the third sub-theme, 'Non-judgmental observation', many students stated that they recognized the importance of non-judgmental observation in fostering effective dialogue. **Rosenberg (2003)** indicated that students' emphasis on non-judgmental observation aligns with the first step of the NVC model, which promotes cognitive de-biasing by separating observations from evaluations, facilitating clearer and more empathetic dialogue.

The previous results were supported by **Espiritu (2023)**, who conducted a qualitative study about nonviolence, peace, and nonviolent communication towards a holistic framework for a nonviolent world. After five studies on nonviolence and nonviolent communication training in education settings, Espiritu reported that nonviolence was an essential component in the teaching of peace, love, empathy, compassion, expressing sympathy for one's opponents, recognition of one's own and others' universal needs, belief in the possibility of human transformation, connection across difference, non-judgmental expression of thoughts and feelings, talking about emotions without judgement, and use of positive language.

Also, **Batūraitė-Bunka et al. (2024)**, who conducted a qualitative study about unveiling the effects of nonviolent communication training on youth empathy in Lithuania, reported that observation lets people avoid moralistic judgments about others and leads to interpersonal connection. Observation is related to empathy because to be able to feel and try to understand another individual first, humans need to give up prejudice and judgements.

2. Nursing Educators' Perspectives

Concerning nursing educators' perspectives on their prior knowledge, understanding, and application of nonviolent communication (NVC). Their responses provide insights into how they interpret and implement NVC principles in academic and personal interactions. The responses from nursing educators revealed several themes, categorized into four themes: Understanding the Core Principles of Nonviolent Communication, Emphasizing

Empathy and Compassion in Communication, Application for NVC in Real-Life Situations, and Awareness and Learning About NVC. Each theme is further divided into sub-themes that capture specific concerns raised by nursing educators.

The first theme, "Understanding the Core Principles of Nonviolent Communication " comprises two sub-themes: (a) recognizing the four steps of NVC and (b) Expressing feelings and needs clearly.

For the first sub-theme, "Recognizing the Four Steps of NVC, many nursing educators admit that they demonstrated an understanding of the four-step process of NVC, which includes observing without judgment, expressing emotions, stating needs, and making requests.

This study is consistent with **Khuyen (2019)**, who conducted a qualitative study about the role of nonviolent communication in addressing power in Viet Nam, which revealed that the participants properly applied NVC principles as they empathized with themselves and with others and practiced honest expression for both sides. Practitioners mentioned observing their feelings and honestly expressing their met/unmet needs. They then suggested strategies to fulfill the needs of both sides. **Khuyen (2019)** concludes that “this conversation approach helped stakeholders to limit hurtful communication and focus on good intention and solutions.”

In the second sub-theme, "Expressing Feelings and Needs Clearly," as many nursing educators demonstrated, A significant emphasis was placed on expressing feelings and needs clearly, ensuring that communication remains non-judgmental and solution focused.

This finding match that of **Batūraitė-Bunka et al. (2024)**, who conducted a study about unveiling the effects of nonviolent communication training on youth empathy, where they revealed that the participants recognize and understand their feelings and needs and express themselves honestly.

Concerning the effects of nonviolent communication on conflict resolution in the university environment.

1. Students' Perspectives

The responses from students regarding their experiences with Nonviolent Communication (NVC) highlight key themes that emphasize the role of empathy, conflict resolution, and long-term impact on relationships and psychological well-being. The findings suggest that students perceived NVC as facilitating a paradigm shift in communication dynamics, enhancing empathic listening and reducing reactive conflict responses.

The first theme, "NVC's Role in Enhancing Empathy" comprised three sub-themes: (a) Perspective-Taking, (b) Emotional resonance and (c) Compassion in conflict.

In the first sub-theme, 'Perspective-Taking,' and the second sub-theme, 'Emotional Resonance,' many students acknowledge that seeing situations from others' perspectives helps resolve conflicts. This mindset shift enables them to interpret others' behaviors with compassion rather than hostility. **Batson (1997)** explained this due to perspective-taking having been shown to enhance interpersonal understanding and reduce misinterpretation, as supported by empathy and social cognition literature.

The previous results were supported by **Nosek & Durán (2017)** in Italy, who conducted a study about Increasing Empathy and Conflict Resolution Skills through Nonviolent Communication (NVC) Training in Latino Adults and Youth and reported that participants shared gratitude for being able to express and understand feelings and needs, for being heard, for being together in community—particularly the “Latino community”—and for being given the opportunity to “safely and positively” improve their lives. As the following theme emerged, “Enter the other’s shoes.” This theme captures the increase in empathy gained through understanding the feelings and needs of others.

In the third sub-theme, 'Compassion in Conflict,' many students emphasized that a recurring sentiment is that using compassionate communication strategies reduces defensiveness and fosters cooperative dialogue. **Krueger et al. (2012)** reported that this is aligned with affective neuroscience research suggesting that empathic communication activates oxytocin-related responses, which enhance social bonding and conflict resolution.

This result is consistent with the study of **Koopman & Seliga (2021)**, who conducted a study about teaching peace by using nonviolent communication for difficult conversations in the college classroom, which found that NVC can be useful for difficult conversations in any college classroom, particularly for deepening students' understanding of nonviolent action. Two important NVC principles—appealing to emotions and pointing to unmet needs—were established as key aspects of nonviolent action.

Also, the results of our study aligned with the results of **Terepyshechi & Khomenko (2019)** who conducted a study about Development of Methodology for Applying Nonviolent Conflict Resolution in Academic Environment; reported the following themes: "empathy, expressing sympathy for one's opponents". education as a means of developing a culture of peace and nonviolence, non-judgmental expression of thoughts, and recognition of others' needs. And recommend the method of nonviolent communication authored by Marshall Rosenberg in developing a method of nonviolent conflict resolution in the academic environment.

2. Nursing Educators' Perspectives

Concerning the effects of nonviolent communication on conflict resolution in the university environment. The responses from nursing educators regarding their experiences with Nonviolent Communication (NVC) highlight key themes that provide valuable insights into the perceived impact, challenges, and practical applications of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) in academic and professional settings.

The first theme, "The Effectiveness of NVC in Conflict Resolution " which comprised two sub-themes: (a) Improved understanding and reduced miscommunication and (b) Positive psychological impact.

In the first sub-theme, "Improved Understanding and Reduced Miscommunication," many nursing educators acknowledged that NVC improves communication clarity by promoting structured emotional expression and empathetic listening, thereby reducing instances of misinterpretation and conflict. They emphasized that miscommunication is often the root cause of conflicts and that practicing NVC principles can improve mutual understanding.

In accordance, **Nosek et al. (2014)**, who conducted a mixed-method study about Nonviolent Communication (NVC) training increasing empathy in baccalaureate nursing students, reported qualitative findings that the new skill of NVC suggests the benefit of tuning into the needs of others to help nursing students understand more effectively. This is also a key aspect of therapeutic communication and demonstrates an increase in empathy. Many students shared the success of using NVC with conflicts they have with roommates.

In the second sub-theme, "Positive Psychological Impact" Many nursing educators highlighted the psychological benefits of NVC, noting that empathy-driven interactions contribute to psychological safety and positive group dynamics, which are essential for effective academic environments.

This result is consistent with **Visakavičiūtė & Bandzevičienė (2019)**, who conducted a systematic review of the impact of the nonviolent communication intervention program on the social behavior of the participants, where the results of this systematic review assumed that the NVC intervention program can be an effective tool for changing the patterns of social behavior of individuals and groups, as it enhances communicative empathy and sensitivity to one's and others' needs and experiences and develops the ability to verbalize and empathetically deal with stress and conflicts.

Moreover, **Holmström (2022)**, who conducted a study about enhancing the effects of emotion-focused individual and couples therapy by nonviolent communication, reported that an emotion-focused therapist could introduce NVC as a facilitating tool for helping clients express their needs in a manner that likely engenders

compassion. NVC also assists clients in hearing others with empathy outside the therapy session, without the emotion regulation support from the therapist. The timing for the beneficial use is described for both the individual and couples therapy processes.

Conclusion:

The current study findings concluded that Nonviolent Communication enhances communication and conflict resolution in academic settings. Its application helps reduce misunderstandings and build stronger, trust-based relationships.

Recommendation:

Based on the findings, the study recommended:

1. Integrating NVC Training into university curricula and student orientation programs.
2. Informing the heads of scientific departments at the Faculty of Nursing – Zagazig University about the study results, with the aim of promoting the culture of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) as an effective tool for enhancing empathy and resolving conflicts within the university environment.
3. Establishing a communication protocol grounded in NVC principles across academic departments.
4. Appointing trained counselors to mediate conflicts using NVC.
5. Further research is recommending in other faculties and universities to validate the findings.

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