

PERCEPTIONS OF NEWLY ENROLLED NURSING STUDENTS REGARDING CLINICAL PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE

To explore the perception of newly enrolled nurses regarding their clinical practice.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative descriptive exploratory study design was used for this study. Data were collected from eight students recruited through purposive sampling techniques. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted. Data was transcribed verbatim and analyzed through thematic analysis.

RESULTS

The data were classified into three main themes including the student perception of the nursing profession, their perceptions about the role of a nurse, and the availability of resources for clinical learning. Further subthemes were also developed.

CONCLUSION

Different factors affect the student's clinical learning. Lack of the required resources and guidance from faculty negatively affects student motivation and competency in skills. Therefore, it's important to provide all the required resources and timely guidance to the students to improve their clinical learning and skills.

KEYWORDS: Clinical Practice, Perceptions, Nurses, Clinical Learning, Teaching

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INTRODUCTION

Nursing education comprises both theoretical teaching and learning as well as the practice in the clinical practice.¹ As the students become part of the nursing profession slowly and gradually in their

undergraduate training, they become familiar with the theory as well as the practice of Nursing. Usually, in the initial part of nursing education, the students learn the theoretical knowledge about nursing care that is later on applied in clinical practice. Theoretical teaching and learning are carried out at the classroom level whereas practical teaching and learning include learning clinical skills on patients.² The clinical side is more practical as compared to that of the theory. In clinical placements, students become more socialized by collaborating with other healthcare teams and they become part of the team by learning different skills.^{1,3} The transition from pre-clinical to clinical environment brings several problems for the nursing students.³ When students are placed in clinical areas, they have a preoccupied mind of working as staff nurses but as beginner students, they will have to perform very few skills only. Insufficient knowledge and repeatedly performing some of the basic skills only

can lead to anxiety and sometimes inferiority complex.⁴ It is also been found that the behavior of the clinical instructor and other staff members affects the learning and motivation of students toward their clinical.⁵ Literature shows that the behaviors of healthcare team members like ignoring the students and not considering them as part of the healthcare team can lead to depression and anxiety in students.⁷ There has always been a shortage of competent nurses.⁸ Competency is needed for the desirable outcomes.⁹ So, there is a need to make such changes in the educational system that produce clinically competent Nurses.¹⁰ As student nurses have to spend most of their time in clinical rotations it is necessary to identify the strength and weaknesses in their clinical training for their better understanding and to maintain a positive clinical environment that will enhance their learning outcomes. The students clinical experiences is an important determinant of the quality of nursing education.¹¹ Exploring the perception of students regarding their clinical and taking steps to maintain a positive environment will contribute to increasing the learning outcomes of nursing students.¹ The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of newly enrolled nursing students regarding clinical rotation.

METHODOLOGY

An exploratory-descriptive qualitative research design was used to explore the perceptions of newly enrolled nursing students toward their clinical practice. The study population was the students of baccalaureate of Science in Nursing (BSN) semester 2 enrolled in a well-reputed nursing college in Peshawar. The selection of participants was done through purposive sampling techniques.¹³ Year one students who had completed two weeks of clinical rotations in hospitals were selected for in-depth-interviews.⁶ Saturation was achieved after interviewing the eighth participant. After taking consent from the participant, they were interviewed by asking them open-ended questions. Data was recorded on an audiotape that was later on translated into English language and transcribed into written verbatim. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data.⁷ The criteria of Lincoln and Guba's framework were followed to ensure the trustworthiness of data which include credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability.⁸ Approval for the data collection was taken from the head of the department.

RESULTS

The data obtained were classified into three themes under the core concept of perception of the newly enrolled nursing students toward their clinical. These categories are the student's perceptions of the nursing profession, the required resources for clinical learning, and the work and role of a nurse. From these categories, further subcategories were developed as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Themes and Subthemes Emerged

Themes	Subthemes
The Student perception of the nursing profession	Stereotypical image Lifesaving profession Reasons for adopting nursing profession
Resources for learning at clinical	Availability and capabilities of the instructor Barriers to clinical learning Role of Institute in students learning
Perception about the work and role of a nurse	Demotivating factor Motivating factors

Theme 1: The Students Perceptions of the Nursing Profession

This category describes the various ideas that students have in their minds about the nursing profession. Some factors were the reason for most of the students to adopt Nursing as a career. There were also some factors which was a barrier to adopting a Nursing career. All these factors are listed below:

The Stereotypical Image of the Nursing Profession

A stereotypical image means a general and fixed idea that people have about something. It may be true and maybe false.⁹ The belief that nursing is a profession for females becomes a barrier for males to join the nursing profession. As one participant stated that

"But it was very strange for me that people think that this field is for females only"

Another participant said

"When I came the nursing, my goal was to change that perception that nurses only give medications to the patient on the clinical side"

The image that nurses are subordinates to doctors and work under the command of doctors is also very common among people. As one participant told us that "My uncle told me that you will be working under the doctor's order and you will not be doing anything on your own will"

Nursing as a Lifesaving Profession

The lifesaving profession means saving the life of people by giving them professional care including rescue, resuscitation, and first aid. A student stated that

“I was thinking that I can use the Nursing profession in any condition as a first aid and as a Nurse, it is very important to help out people e.g. in an accident so we can Resuscitate in a good way”

Students choose nursing to help people’s lives as they considered it a blessing to save someone's life. As one of the participants says

“Because lifesaving of the people may give us blessing”

Reasons for Adopting a Career in Nursing

Most of the students adopt the Nursing career because they failed to qualify for studying Medicine as told by a participant

“I never think that I will be coming to nursing. My first choice was MBBS but when I did not

Clear the test.so I start searching about nursing on Internet”

Some students also described job security and financial stability as the reason for adopting a nursing career as told by a participant

“In the medical profession, you can earn money easily that’s their perception so my mother just kind of emotionally blackmailed me to quit English and to go towards medical so that’s why I took nursing”

Scope of the Nursing Profession

There is a lack of awareness about the role and responsibilities of nurses among the people. Even the students who are joining the Nursing career have a wrong perception of it. A participant describes that

“After performing that skill, I was feeling not good. There was some skill that realize that it’s not my job. Like bed making, pamper changing. I think I am a bachelor’s student and if someone has a bachelor’s degree, they are not for such kind procedures. I am for administering medications, bed making, and the remaining such things should be done by the ward boys and nursing assistant.”

Another student told that

“The instructor came and she told us that today we are performing bed making and I was so astonished at first that I didn’t expect a nurse to do bed making like I know she does injection and IV

medications”

Some students have a perception of working like a doctor as described in this way

“I was thinking that I will go as a medical professional and I was excited and happy about it”

Theme 2: Resources for Learning at Clinical

In this category how do the required resources affect the students clinical? The four emerged categories are presented here.

Availability and Capabilities of the Instructor

Students complain that there is a shortage of clinical instructors for the students. A participant stated that

“I was thinking that I will learn a lot and there will be people guiding us but when I came

Here everything was different There is no one to supervise you there.”

The teacher’s expertise and dedication were also reported as a reason affecting the student’s clinical, as one of the participants verbalized

“Teachers are not guiding us properly like they are not demonstrating on the patient for

You. They are not with you so that you can clear your doubts from him.”

The insufficient number of teachers for students at clinical was also highlighted by students

“There should a proper amount of clinical instructors in colleges for each student. There Should be a clinical instructor in each ward and should properly guide the students”

Barriers to Clinical Learning

Certain barriers affect the students clinical and sometimes demotivate the students towards clinical. One of the barriers described by the students was the lack of patients confidence and trust in the students

“The patient doesn’t allow us because they see they are students so they say no. Most of the time patients are like that. During the time of IV also patient says no to us.”

Another barrier explored was the gender issue in the context. For those students who have 1st-time exposure to coeducation, it is quite difficult for them to perform practical skills in front of opposite genders due to cultural values.

“It is good to be in co-education but for me, it was my very 1st experience so it was quite difficult for me to perform such practical work in front of all these students.”

Language barriers also have an impact on student

learning at clinical.

“As I don’t know the Pashto language so it is very difficult for me because of language barriers to make history”

Similarly, the clinical timings for the newly enrolled student are too long as per their objectives. They feel bored because they are just there for observation only.

“Also, we have a few objectives of our clinical like vitals sign observation and taking history. So, all these things finished in minutes. After that, we are free and have nothing to perform. So, we feel bored over here for setting for such a long time”

The behavior and attitude of nursing staff also have an impact on student motivation toward learning. Students feel good and enjoy their clinical when they get a friendly and cooperative staff.

“When they ignore you and avoid you, you are going taking history and doing whatever, they do not guide, they don't tell you that okay, this ward is specific for this and how many beds and rooms and about specific medications we use in this ward, so then you feel very under-motivated”

Role of Institute in Student’s Learning at Clinical

There is a lack of proper management for the placements of students in each ward. The number of students in each ward is high and students do not get an equal opportunity to practice their skills. The students stated the same as

“We did not get the opportunity to practice the skill that we learn in skill lab like IV line and injections etc. number of students per ward are too high, so it is difficult to engage them in the ward.”

“I have my 3 rotations in the same ward and I have only done the vital signs there are some skills that can only be performed in certain wards like I am waiting for my rotation in ward A to perform cannulation.”

The need for student counseling facilities in the college was also highlighted by students. Sometimes the students have misperceptions about their roles which causes them to feel demotivated toward the profession.

“But when reach the end of the semester and exposed to the clinical and seek some guidance... From my teachers. And they told me that such skills are mostly performed by the ward boys but you just have to learn them for necessity. So now we are feeling happy.”

Theme 3: Perception of the Work of a Nurse

After getting admission in nursing, most nursing students did not know the responsibilities of nurses. Some of them found nursing skills and procedures very embarrassing. There are differences of opinion among students regarding the job and role of a nurse some take it as motivating while others consider it as demotivating towards their clinical learning.

Demotivating Factors

Some of the students feel ashamed and demotivated while performing some of the nursing skills. One participant told us that

“I didn’t expect bed making so I feel very ashamed at that time when I was Signing off that skill so I just said to myself that I will never do bed making in the hospital site so it was very embarrassing for me”.

Another participant told:

“I saw the topic bed making. I was very shocked and disappointed. I have to continue with that and when I performed that I felt ashamed and even that simple skill was very hard for me to perform”

Most of the students are very anxious during their initial clinical rotation. Working at the clinical site initially is very stressful for them. One of a student shared their experience in this way:

“I was inexperienced and I don’t know what I have to do”

Motivating Factors

When students are allowed and encouraged to be involved in patient care, they feel happy and motivated caring a real patient. One of the participants stated it in such words

“They provide me the opportunity, by doing CPR I feel very happy.”

The nursing staff has a vital role in the motivation of students toward the clinical. One of the participants shared with us that

“The staff in the ward is very friendly they help you and teach you and guide you so that you enjoy clinically but when they ignore you and avoid you, they do not guide you make you demotivated”

There is also some impact of society's image of nursing and different nursing roles in the motivation of students toward the clinical. A participant shared:

“Some procedures in nursing care do not seem good in our Pathan culture. Some procedures like hygiene, bed bath, pampers changinglike that”

With frequent exposure, students adjust themselves to clinical and how to utilize their time in learning properly. A participant stated that

“Now I am feeling good with time and learning how to engage myself in the care. Astoday I have identified a patient with a bed soar and advised them for bed care by myself. I also did it some bed care by myself... Advise them for proper positioning and a lot of other things”.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the perception of nursing students regarding their clinical rotations in their initial days of exposure to the clinical. The students were asked why they have chosen nursing as a profession. Most of the students replied that job security was the reason for choosing the nursing profession. These findings are consistent with other studies in which participants describe stability and job security as the reason to choose Nursing as a career.⁹ Some students also told that they came to Nursing because their parents wanted to. This is true for developing countries like Pakistan in which more than 50% of admission decisions are taken by parents.¹⁰ Few students also describe God’s blessings and opportunities to get involved in the help of humankind as the reason to choose Nursing. This is also consistent with the findings of the study conducted in Bahrain in which Nursing was described as a profession of helping others, providing care, and improving the lives of individuals and communities.¹² After enrolling in Nursing, some factors demotivated the nursing students towards their clinical learning and also the nursing profession. The traditional stereotypical image of the Nursing profession and nurses is one of the demotivating factors where nurses are considered a helper to the doctors and work under the instruction of the doctors. Such words are also used by participants in other research in which the term „subordinate“ was used for Nurses.¹³ Also, it is being found from our study that society has a false view about the role of nurses that they only give Medications and IV lines. Such results are also highlighted in several other studies in which it is found that the role of a nurse is handling body fluids, administering injections, and giving basic care to patients.^{13,14,15,16} In addition, society’s negative attitude toward certain Nursing skills also influences student

motivation toward the profession. As is found in this study that society does not have a good eye on people's certain roles such as diaper changing and basic hygiene care. Students also think that such skills should not be performed by Nurses because they are highly educated, and it does not suit to them. There should be a nursing assistant or ward boys for performing such things. People also have a perception regarding the competency of the students due to which they do not allow student Nurses to care for them. Similar findings were also described in a study conducted in Iran in which students believe that patients have a lack of trust in the information provided to them the students regarding their health.¹⁶ The lack of supervision and shortage of clinical faculty also affect the clinical competency of the students. This study noted that teachers come only to maintain discipline not to teach and supervise you. A study conducted in Botswana also reported the lack of teaching and guidance from the lecturer during the clinical experience of the students.¹⁶ Another study conducted in Iran by Nabavi and Vanaki (2010) also found that teachers are not there with students at the clinical site and students are performing patient care without supervision.¹⁷ The supervision and cooperation that students get from the staff nurses also influence the student’s motivation. The relationship between students and staff nurses is very important because staff nurses are role models for the students and their attitudes toward the students directly affect their feelings about the students. Students revealed that when staff nurses give us proper attention while performing some skills, we feel good and motivated but most of the time they ignore us. A study conducted in Palestine also find out that the staff nurses perceive the students as trouble and disturbance at the ward, and they prefer to work independently without giving time to students education.¹⁸ Another study conducted in the UK also reported that nursing students are mistreated by the hospital staff, they are ignored and neglected to be a part of the health care teams.¹⁹ Such behaviors can create psychological issues in students like depression and anxiety which can cause them to quit the Nursing profession. Another important finding was that students feel bored and exhausted due to long clinical hours and limited objectives. The credit hours for clinical are planned by the Pakistan Nursing council but it is the institutional responsibility to engage the students to buy assigning them tasks and objectives to utilize them fruitfully.²⁰ A study conducted in Iran also showed that students face anxiety during their starting

clinical and face a lot of difficulties during their initial placements.²¹

LIMITATIONS

This study was limited to only one study settings and used only in-depth interviews as data collection technique. Future studies may include more settings and may use multiple methods such as documents, observations etc for better understanding of the topic.

CONCLUSION

Study findings revealed that students face challenges regarding their clinical practice including a shortage of clinical faculty, lack of supervision stereotypical ideas regarding nursing in society, ignorance from the staff members etc. Such challenges negatively influence the motivation of students toward the Nursing profession affecting their learning process. Improper management for clinical placements also affects the students learning and leads to frustration and stress. The findings suggest that there should be proper resources and faculty available for students. Also, career counseling and job description should be properly taught to each student before taking admission to clarify their understanding about nursing profession.

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