

## Assiut Internship Nursing Students' Opinions of Factors Affecting Their Clinical Learning Environment

Fatma Rushdy Mohamed & Nahed Thabet Mohamed

Assistant professor of Nursing Administration, Faculty of Nursing, Assiut University, Assiut, Egypt.

Lecturer of Pediatric Nursing, Faculty of Nursing, Assiut University, Assiut, Egypt.

### Abstract

**Background:** The clinical learning environment is an interactive network of forces within the clinical setting that influences learning outcomes. It includes everything that surrounds students and affects their professional development in the clinical setting. **Aim:** was to determine internship nursing students' opinions of factors affecting their clinical learning environment in Assiut University Hospitals. **Study design:** A descriptive design was used. **Setting:** Assiut University Hospitals- Assiut Governorate – Egypt. **Subjects:** The study sample consisted of 200 nursing internship students. A self-administered questionnaire to gather data about personal characteristics and clinical learning environment. **Results:** Displayed that the high mean scores and standard deviation of the internship nursing students opinions involved instructor, learning objective, and clinical environment factors respectively. In addition, there were negative correlations in scores of internship nursing students' opinions of their clinical learning environment (learning objectives, instructor, how to deal with students in clinical settings & clinical environment) and their residence with statistically significant differences respectively except for supervision and evaluation factor. **Conclusions:** The most influential factors affecting the students in the area of clinical practice are the instructor, learning objectives, and clinical environment. **Recommendations:** Developing “Clinical Practice Guide” based on the job description for internship nursing students training areas.

**Keywords:** *Internship Nursing Students, Opinions & Clinical Learning Environment.*

### Introduction

Nurse education requires the combination of both theory and practice; the integration of these components necessitates the involvement of effective psychomotor and cognitive skills (Morgan, 2006). However, Hennman & Cunningham, (2005) recognize that there is still a significant gulf between the theoretical component taught in the classroom and the complex realities of clinical practice. While nurse education has traditionally relied upon clinical placements to allow nursing students the hands-on skills experience that is not possible to teach in a classroom setting, this is becoming increasingly difficult, with limited resources and issues of patient safety to consider. According to Nalan, (2010), the quality of students' clinical experience is an important determining factor in the quality of nursing education.

One of the most critical experiences for student nurses is their exposure to patients in the clinical. It is where they encounter the human side of nursing. From an educational perspective, the clinical placement is the venue where skills, knowledge, and attitudes developed in the theoretical part of the curriculum are applied, developed and integrated. Learning in clinical practice provides up to half of the educational experience for students taking Bachelor of Science in Nursing (Newton et al.,

2010). It was accounted by Chan, (2009) that among student nurses, the clinical nursing environments is perceived as the most influential context for gaining nursing skills and knowledge. Happel, (2008) mentioned that from a clinical perspective, the nurses who preceptor and guide nursing students through weeks of learning experiences see them as potential new recruits to their specialty field of nursing.

In nursing education, clinical context is recognized as an essential arena for students to learn about practice in the “real world” (Egan & Jaye, 2009). Clinical placement represents an integral part of the nursing education curricula, so the place where practical work is carried out becomes a fundamental part of the students' learning experience. Clinical learning plays a crucial role in undergraduate nursing programs. Not only does it provide opportunities for students to apply theories learned in the classroom to the real world of clinical nursing, it also offers a socialization process through which students are introduced to the practices, expectations and real-life working environment of the nursing profession (Papastavrou et al., 2010).

### Significance of the study

By observation when the researchers work as an academic coordinator, Internship nursing students are

repeatedly exposed to situations that may cause them to suffer and reduce their ability to serve the patients. Understanding the factors that influence the quality and quantity of clinical education is helpful in solving the related problems. Internship nursing students need a good clinical practice environment in order to apply their knowledge and skills due to the fact that the clinical practice settings play an important role in the nursing profession. Therefore, the researchers decided to study internship nursing students' opinions of their clinical learning environment at Assiut University Hospitals.

### **Aim of the study**

Determine internship nursing students' opinions of their clinical learning environment at Assiut University Hospitals.

### **Research question**

What are the factors that affect internship nursing students' opinions of their clinical learning environment at Assiut University Hospitals?

### **Subjects & Method**

#### **Study design**

A descriptive design was used in the present study.

#### **Setting**

All areas which internship nursing students were trained in it, which included General & Postoperative ICUs, Causality Intensive Care Unit, and Coronary Care Unit (CCU), Pediatric & Obstetric ICUs, and Causality departments in Assiut University Hospitals- Assiut Governorate – Egypt.

#### **Subjects**

The study sample consisted of 200 nursing internship students. They were all student nurses who were enrolled in the nursing internship year (2015-2016) at Faculty of Nursing-Assiut University and trained in Assiut University Hospitals. Their age ranged from 20 to 23 years all of them were females.

#### **Tool of data collection**

A self – administered questionnaire which classified into two parts:

- 1<sup>st</sup> part included personal characteristics as sex and residence.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> part factors affecting clinical learning environment questionnaire which developed by **Heidari & Noruzadeh, (2015)**. It consisted of 31 questions classified into five domains: objectives and curriculum, clinical instructor, how to deal with students in clinical settings, supervision, and evaluation. The scoring system of the questionnaire was in Likert-style ranking: yes (2), somewhat (1), and no (0).
- Reliability of the factors affecting their clinical learning environment study tool was turned to be

$\alpha = 0.88$ , which indicating a high degree of reliability. Validity was measured by five experts in the field of Nursing Administration and Pediatric Nursing.

#### **Administrative design**

An official permission was obtained from the Dean of the Faculty of Nursing – Assiut University, the hospital director, the nursing service director, and the head of each department for data collection after explaining the purpose of the study.

#### **Operational design**

This design explains the steps of actual implementation of the study, including the pilot and the field work.

#### **Preparatory phase**

After translation of the study tool, a pilot study was conducted to test both the clarity and understandability of the study tool, and detect the obstacles and problems that may be encountered during data collection.

#### **Pilot study**

The pilot study was carried out on 20 internship nursing students from the different training units at Assiut University Hospitals. Data collected from the pilot study were reviewed and no modifications were done and these students were included in the study subjects.

#### **Field work**

The actual data collection from internship nursing students at Assiut University Hospital was started from March 2016 to May 2016. Data collection was administered by the researchers with every internship nursing student individually in their workplace in the hospital. An explanation of the aim of the study was provided by the researchers to the participant. The questionnaire took about 10-15 minute by each internship nursing student to be filled.

#### **Ethical Considerations**

The research protocol was approved by the pertinent authority. Participants' oral consent was obtained after informing them about their rights to participate, refuse, or withdraw at any time. The purpose of this study was explained to all internship nursing students. Total confidentiality of any obtained information was ensured. The study maneuver could not entail any harmful effects on participants.

#### **Statistical design**

Upon completion of data collection, data entry was done using Epi-Info 6.04 computer software package, while statistical analysis was done using SPSS 21.0 statistical software packages. Data were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of means and standard deviations for quantitative variables. Spearman rank correlation coefficient was used. Statistical significance was considered at  $p \leq 0.001^{**}$

## Results

**Table (1): Distribution of residence characteristic of internship nursing students at Assiut University Hospitals (n=200).**

| Personal characteristic | No. | %           |
|-------------------------|-----|-------------|
| <b>Residence</b>        |     |             |
| Urban                   | 71  | 35.5        |
| Rural                   | 129 | <b>64.5</b> |

**Table (2): Mean and standard deviation of internship nursing students' opinions of factors affecting their clinical learning environment at Assiut University Hospitals (n=200).**

| Factors  | Mean ± SD  |
|--|------------|
| Learning objectives                            | 11.52±5.48 |
| Instructor                                     | 12.86±7.22 |
| How to deal with students in clinical settings | 3.69±2.43  |
| Clinical environment                           | 8.11±4.73  |
| Supervision and Evaluation                     | 1.92±1.27  |

**Table (3): Correlation of factors affecting clinical learning environment among internship nursing students' at Assiut University Hospitals (n=200).**

| Factors related to clinical learning environment |         | Learning objectives | Instructor | How to deal with students in clinical settings | Clinical environment | Supervision and Evaluation |
|--|---------|---------------------|------------|--|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Learning objectives                              | r-value | ---                 | ---        | ---  | ---                  | ---                        |
|  | P-value | ---                 | ---        | ---  | ---                  | ---                        |
| Instructor                                       | r-value | 0.654               | ---        | ---  | ---                  | ---                        |
|  | P-value | 0.000**             | ---        | ---  | ---                  | ---                        |
| How to deal with students in clinical settings   | r-value | 0.511               | 0.734      | ---  | ---                  | ---                        |
|  | P-value | 0.000**             | 0.000**    | ---  | ---                  | ---                        |
| Clinical environment                             | r-value | 0.582               | 0.711      | 0.672  | ---                  | ---                        |
|  | P-value | 0.000**             | 0.000**    | 0.000**  | ---                  | ---                        |
| Supervision and evaluation                       | r-value | 0.263               | 0.848      | 0.470  | 0.536                | ---                        |
|  | P-value | 0.000**             | 0.000**    | 0.000**  | 0.000**              | ---                        |

(\*\*) Statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$

**Table (4): Correlation between internship nursing students' opinions of factors affecting their clinical learning environment and residence.**

| Variable  | Spearman rank correlation coefficient |            |  |                      |                            |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|------------|--|----------------------|----------------------------|
|           | Scores                                |            |  |                      |                            |
|           | Learning objectives                   | Instructor | How to deal with students in clinical settings | Clinical environment | Supervision and Evaluation |
| Residence | -0.240**                              | -0.268**   | -0.139*  | -0.202**             | - 0.106                    |

(\*) Statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$

(\*\*) statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$

**Table (1):** Illustrated that nearly two-thirds of studied internship nursing students were from a rural area (64.5%).

**Table (2):** Displayed that the high mean scores and standard deviation were in instructor, learning objectives, and clinical environment factors ( $12.86 \pm 7.22$ ,  $11.52 \pm 5.48$ , &  $8.11 \pm 4.73$ ) respectively.

**Table (3):** Showed that there were positive correlations among factors affecting clinical learning environment of internship nursing students' with statistical significance differences.

**Table (4):** Represented that there were negative correlations among internship nursing students' opinions of their clinical learning environment factors (Learning objectives, Instructor, How to deal with students in clinical settings & Clinical environment) and their residence with statistically significant differences ( $r = -0.240^{**}$ ,  $r = -0.268^{**}$ ,  $r = -0.139^*$  &  $r = -0.202^{**}$ ) respectively except for supervision and evaluation factor ( $r = -0.106$ )

## Discussion

Nursing students' clinical experiences are important for their learning, professional development, and preferences for future workplaces. In the clinical learning environment, there are varieties of influences that can significantly promote and hinder the clinical learning among novice students at the entry level (**Edwards et al., 2004**, **Myrick et al., 2006**).

The present study found that there were high mean scores and standard deviations as regard to the instructor, learning objectives, and clinical environment factors (**Table, 2**). These findings might be attributed to an effective clinical instructor should having the following up-to-date knowledge, clinical qualifications in education, expertise in clinical education, sophistication in interpersonal communications, enthusiasm and seriousness toward the job, a sense of humor, unconditionally accepting mistakes and shortcomings, patience, and flexibility working with students in the clinical environment. This result was similar to the findings that reported by (**Gaberson & Oermann, 2007**) who conducted a study about clinical teaching strategies in nursing and found that the most important qualities distinguishing effective from ineffective instructors were their interpersonal relationships and their personal characteristics. In addition, the current study results were in agreement with **Taghineja & Mehri, (2008)** who conducted a study about barriers to clinical education and stated that nursing students have considered the lack of clear job description and inappropriateness clinical education

with objectives as the major problems in clinical education .

Also, the present findings were in the same line with the results reported by **Ramezani & Kermanshahi, (2011)** who conducted a study about the quality of clinical education in nursing which clarified that the obstacles in clinical education which cause not reaching the desired objectives are related to the clinical instructors, to obtain harmony between training and clinic, the nursing instructors must have some especial skills. Moreover the present results consistence with the finding reported by **Sahebalzamani et al., (2011)** conducted a study in Islamic Azad University about comparison the viewpoint of nursing students and their trainers regarding preventing and facilitating factors of effective clinical teaching who found that one of the effective factors in clinical training is the creation of interest in the nursing students related to the nursing profession is the clinical instructors. Therefore the instructor reaction great deal of effects on the clinical students learning.

On the respect of our finding, the least mean scores were supervision and evaluation, complete supervision on clinical education and giving information on how to evaluate at the first session of education. This result was consistent with **Baraz Pardenjani et al., (2008)** who conducted a study about the state of clinical education at Tehran University of medical sciences from the viewpoint of students of nursing & midwifery and found that clinical evaluation from the nursing students' perspective was weak.

There were negative correlations among internship nursing students' opinions of their clinical learning environment factors (Learning objectives, Instructor, How to deal with students in clinical settings & Clinical environment) and their residence with statistically significant differences except for supervision and evaluation factors (**Table, 4**). These results were supported by **Papp et al., (2003)** conducted a study about Clinical Environment as a Learning Environment: Student Nurses' Perceptions Concerning Clinical Learning Experiences and clarified that a good clinical learning environment is described by nursing students as a clinical setting in which there is cooperation among staff and a good atmosphere where they feel appreciated and are given opportunities to study in order to achieve their objectives. Also the current study results similar to a study done by **Lewin, (2006)** titled by clinical learning environments for student nurses: key indices from two studies compared over a 25 years period and stated that a range of factors can positively influence the clinical learning environment including cooperation, attitude, morale and friendliness of the

staff, positive staff attitudes towards patient care, quality patient-centered care, and access to positive role models. While, in contrast, (Chan, 2002) found that rigid, hierarchical environments, lack of nursing practice guidelines, and lack of awareness of students' learning needs contribute to an unsupportive clinical learning environment. While ward-based, hospital learning environments remain fundamental, multidimensional milieus for nursing education, and indicated that not all practice settings are able to provide student nurses with positive clinical learning environments.

Moreover, Bayoumi et al., (2012) conducted a study about evaluating nursing students' anxiety and depression during initial clinical experience and stated that lack of clinical experience, unfamiliar areas, difficult patients, fear of making mistakes and being evaluated by faculty members were expressed by the students as anxiety-producing situations in their initial clinical experience.

### Conclusion

The most influential factors affecting the students in the area of clinical practice are the instructor, learning objectives, and clinical environment.

### Recommendations

- Apply preceptor-ship to ensure continuity of learning internship nursing students.
- The orientation program should conduct and share preceptors in it.
- Developing "Clinical Practice Guide" based on the job description for internship nursing students training areas.

### References

1. Baraz Pardenjani, S., Rostami, M., Loorizadeh, M., (2008): State of Clinical Education at Tehran University of Medical Sciences from the Viewpoint of Students of Nursing & Midwifery. The Journal of Medical Education and Development, 2(2):16–26.
2. Bayoumi, A., Elbasuny, M., Mofereh, A., Assiri, M., & Fesal, A., (2012): Evaluating Nursing Students' Anxiety and Depression during Initial Clinical Experience, International Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, 2(6), Pp.277-281.
3. Chan, D., (2002): Associations between student learning outcomes from their clinical placement and their perceptions of the social climate of the clinical learning environment. Int. J. Nurs. Stud. 39 (5), Pp. 517–524.
4. Chan, D., (2009): Development of an innovative tool to assess hospital learning. Nurse Education Today, 21(8), Pp. 624–631.
5. Edwards, H., Smith, S., Courtney, M., Finlayson, K., & Chapman, H., (2004): The impact of clinical placement location on nursing students' competence and preparedness for practice. Nurse Education Today 24, 248-255.
6. Egan, T., & Jaye, C., (2009): Communities of clinical practice: the social organization of clinical learning. Health 13 (1), Pp. 107–125.
7. Gaberson, K., & Oermann, M., (2007): Clinical teaching strategies in nursing, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, New York: Springer .
8. Happel, B., (2008): The importance of clinical experience for mental health nursing – part 1: undergraduate nursing students' attitudes, preparedness and satisfaction. International Journal of Mental Health Nursing 17, Pp. 326–332.
9. Henneman, E., & Cunningham H., (2005): Using clinical simulation to teach patient safety in an acute/critical care nursing course. Nurse Educator 30, Pp. 172–177.
10. Heidari, M., & Noruzadeh, R., (2015): Nursing students' perspectives on clinical education, J Adv Med Educ Prof. ; 3(1): Pp.39–43.
11. Lewin, D., (2006): Clinical learning environments for student nurses: key indices from two studies compared over a 25 year period. Nurse Educ. Pract. 7 (4), Pp. 238–246.
12. Morgan, R., (2006): Using clinical skills laboratories to promote theory - practice integration during first practice placement: An Irish perspective, J Clin Nurs 15, Pp. 155–161.
13. Myrick, F., Phelan, A., Barlow, C., Sawa, R., Rogers, G., & Hurlock, D., (2006): Conflict in the preceptor-ship or field experience: A rippling tide of silence. International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship 3. <http://www.bepress.com/ijnes/vol3/iss1/art6>. Retrieved 11.01.09.
14. Nalan, O., Hulya, B., Sevilguler, D., & Sevilay, Y., (2010): Nursing students' opinions regarding the clinical practice guide. Procedural Social and Behavioral Science, 2, Pp. 21620–2165.
15. Newton, J., Jolly, B., Ockerby, C., & Cross, W. (2010): A Clinical Learning Environment Scale: a factor analysis. Journal of Advanced Nursing 66, Pp.1371–1481.
16. Papastavrou, E., Lambrinou, E., Tsangari, H., Saarikoski, M., Leino-Kilpi, H., (2010): Student nurses experience of learning in the clinical environment. Nurse Educ. Pract. 10 (3), Pp. 176–182.

17. **Papp, I., Markkanen, M., Von Bonsdorff, M., (2003):** Clinical Environment as a Learning Environment: Student Nurses' Perceptions Concerning Clinical Learning Experiences. *Nurse Educ. Today* 23 (4), Pp. 262–268.
18. **Ramezani, M. & Kermanshahi, S., (2011):** A survey of the quality of clinical education in nursing. *Journal of Jahrom University of Medical Sciences*. 9. Persian
19. **Sahebalzamani, M., Salahshoorian Fard, A., & Akbarzadeh, A., (2011):** Comparison the viewpoint of nursing students and their trainers regarding preventing and facilitating factors of effective clinical teaching in Islamic Azad University, Marageh Branch. *Medical Science Journal of Islamic Azad University*, 21(1) 38-43.
20. **Taghineja, H., & Mehri, K., (2008):** Barriers to Clinical Education. *Journal of Kerman Nursing and Midwifery School*, 14 (1): P.8.