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ASSESSMENT OF CHALLENGES FACED BY NURSING STUDENTS DURING CLINICAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT OF SELECTED NURSING COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

Nursing students are facing a series of challenges progressively in the clinical practices as well as in education system. Gap between theoretical leaning and its implementation during training has impact on nursing student's empowerment. The clinical learning environment is essential for students to accomplish desired learning outcomes most likely. Assessing the challenges in clinical learning environment helps to implement necessary changes in their teaching and learning so that better outcomes are generated. So, the researchers felt a need to evaluate the challenges faced by nursing students in clinical learning environment. The objectives of this study are to explore the challenges in clinical learning environment among nursing students and find the association between challenges in clinical learning environment and selected demographic variables. An exploratory sequential mixed method design was adopted in this study. It consists of two phases: qualitative and quantitative. In the first phase a total of 9 participants were included and data were collected with an open-ended interview guide. Interview guide was developed to evaluate various causes leading to challenges in clinical learning environment. Participants were 4 nursing students, 2 clinical instructors and 4 staff nurses. Interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim and transcripts were analysed by using Colaizzi's method. A total of 4 themes and 12 subthemes were generated from analysis of qualitative data. The major themes emerged were confidence, stress, knowledge, and support. From the themes generated from the interview, structured questionnaire was prepared and data collection was conducted in 50 nursing students studying in fourth year BSc Nursing. The findings stated that there were 78% students are facing mild challenges and 22% are facing moderate challenges. Chi square analysis showed that there was no significant association between selected demographic variables like age ($x^2 = 0.33$),gender ($x^2 = 0.66$),area of residence $x^2 = 3.52$), area of interest($x^2 =3.042$) and challenges faced by nursing students during clinical learning environment.

KEYWORDS: Evaluate, challenge, nursing students, clinical learning environment

INTRODUCTION

Background of the problem

Nursing encompasses autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups, and communities, sick or well and in all settings. It includes the promotion of health, the prevention of illness, and the care of ill, disabled and dying people. Educating nurses consists of the theoretical and practical training provided to nurses with the purpose to prepare them for their duties as nursing care professionals. Nurses play a critical role in health promotion, disease prevention and delivering primary and community care. They provide care in emergency settings and will be the key for the achievement of universal health coverage. Achieving health for all will depend on having enough well trained and educated, regulated, and well supported nurses and midwives, who receive pay and recognition commensurate with the services and quality of care that they provide[1]. Nursing is one of the most rewarding and challenging professions in health care. During a 12-hour shift, nurses may take on a demanding work load due to staffing shortages; endure work place bullying; risk exposure to infection; and despite all their professional experience, still lose patients. Nursing education is providing a combination of theoretical and clinical learning experiences to train students with required knowledge, skill and attitude for postgraduate professional practice. Clinical education is one of the fundamental domains in developing nursing profession, which provides the opportunity for nursing students to transform conceptual knowledge into psychomotor skills and apply them to patient care. Students' clinical experience is a determining factor in the quality of nursing education and has a significant influence on their learning outcomes and cultural adjustment in this profession. Nursing students should employ their knowledge and skills in clinical environments to acquire the required qualifications for taking care of patients, and their success depends to a great extent on efficient clinical training. Clinical training is regarded as the heart and essence of learning and education in nursing. Furthermore, clinical learning environment plays an important role in turning nursing students into professionals and preparing them to function as nurses. Many challenges of being a nurse can contribute to stress, burnout, and depression. Without proper coping mechanisms, these challenges can lead to medical errors, risks to patient safety, and poor health outcomes. Major challenges in clinical learning include the problems encountered by nursing students as they work in the clinical setting. The students report inadequate supervision by clinical staff, unsafe clinical placement, insufficient clinical experiences, competition with other health programs for limited practice settings, scarcities of qualified clinical instructors and heavy clinical instructor workloads. In addition, the changing nature of the clinical learning environment can produce other problems for nursing students. There is a relationship between the conditions of the learning environment and the professional development of students. An optimal clinical learning environment positively impacts student learning, while a poor environment can negatively impact professional progress. The unsuitable clinical environment can create some difficulties for nursing students in their professional learning and development. Not recognizing the challenges students encounter in the clinical environment reduces the effectiveness of the educational experience, limits student growth, and negatively impacts the development of professional skills and clinical competencies. Students experiencing an ineffective clinical learning environment are at increased risk of leaving the nursing profession. Few international studies have focused on identifying the challenges encountered by nursing students in the clinical learning environment. The School of Nursing (SON) at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) trains undergraduate nursing students to become competent nurses in the nursing profession. The school aims to prepare nursing students to be able to provide care to patients from different backgrounds. The major competencies include communication, assessment, patient care and leadership. This include being able to effectively communicate with the multidisciplinary team any changes identified on the care and treatment of a patient, assessment includes being able to perform a continuous comprehensive patient assessment on admission till rehabilitation on a patient, this is to ensure that the patients' needs are identified and relevant care is provided. While on training, the nursing students learn about leadership and management and are given tasks to build their professional development, they perform these tasks in the hospital and in the community

(Abubu & Jeggels, 2010). The nursing students are given an opportunity to develop these competencies in a campus-based simulation laboratory as well as in various clinical settings within the Western Cape Province. Identifying the challenges is important to improve the quality of a clinical training program. As a result, identifying the problems commonly encountered by students in the hospital can lead to solutions that result in better learning experiences and increased satisfaction with nursing as a profession.

Need and significance of the study

Nursing as a profession is extremely important in maintaining and protecting the health of the world's population. According to the report 59% of all healthcare professional are nurses and the global purpose of nurses is currently around 28 million of which 19.3 million are professional nurses,6 million are associate professional nurses, and the reminders are not being classified. Currently as per the WHO, there are approximately 27 million men and women who are making the global nursing and midwifery workforce. Interestingly this accounts for just 50% of the global health workforce there are over 3 million registered nurses in India. India at present has 1.96 nurses per thousand population. Kerala has the highest number of nurses. Nursing education consists of two complementary components: theoretical and practical training which make nursing students able to gain the knowledge skills. Clinical education is regarded as an important and essential aspects of program of nursing education. The Clinical Learning Environment is the area where curriculum theoretical components may be incorporated with the practical and converted into professional skills and attitudes within an emotionally safe setting. However, students record experiencing challenges in Clinical Learning Environment (CLE), which raise question about nature of challenging clinical learning environment, its effect on learning of students and how learners could react to this. Components of nursing unit culture and practice optimistically affect students perception in the Clinical Learning Environment (CLE): teamwork and good staff morale and their attitude in the direction of patient care, quality patient centered care and availability of good role models. On the contrary, absence of nursing practice guidelines, rigid, hierarchical environments, and absence of awareness of learning and confidence was considered as another barrier experienced during clinical training by International students. Learners lack confidence during clinical rotation to restricted language skill that was also recognized as the same by nursing staff. Furthermore, change in behaviours and performances of nursing students in the clinical environment could negatively affect their learning, improvement in patient care, and professional performance. Clinical environmental stays as significant aspects in students competence, development, confidence and fulfillment of their anticipated learning outcomes. Perceptor and clinical educators have an important role in preparing students to accomplish their professional goals by constant support and resource provision. The factors that may comprise the Clinical Learning Environment include the physical space, psychosocial, interaction elements, organizational culture and teaching and learning elements. Preparation of students to enroll into the clinical setting is one of the significant factors that clinical education quality. These attributes sometimes verify accomplishment of learning outcomes and the learners self-confidence. Therefore, identifying these challenges could enhance practicing and improve students planning and promotion quality. Inability to recognize the problem and the challenges; learners encounter within the Clinical Learning Environment (CLE) prevents students from efficient learning and progress. Consequently, the growth and development of their skills will be affected.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

A study to evaluate the challenges faced by nursing students during clinical learning environment of selected college, Pathanamthitta district.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Explore the challenges in clinical learning environment among nursing students.

2. Assess the level of challenges faced by nursing students in clinical learning environment.

3. Find out the association between level of challenges in clinical learning environment and selected demographic variables.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS:

1. Evaluation: In this study evaluation refers to a process of identifying challenges of nursing students in their clinical learning environment.

2. Challenges: In this study, it refers to the problems in the clinical settings as per student's view.

3. Clinical learning environment: In this study, it refers to an area where students learn about patient care and its clinical practice in inpatient, outpatient and community setting.

4. Nursing students: In this study, nursing students are students who are studying in 4th year BSc nursing.

ASSUMPTIONS:

1. Nursing students may experience difficulties regarding clinical learning environment.

2. Effective teaching learning strategies helps the nursing students to gain skill in nursing.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Research design used in this study was Exploratory Sequential Mixed Method Design.

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Setting of the study

The physical location and condition in which data collection takes place in a study is called setting.28 Present study was conducted in selected nursing college in Pathanamthitta.

Population

In this study, population consist of IVth year B.Sc. nursing students.

Sample and sampling techniques

Sample:

Phase 1: IVth year BSc nursing students, clinical instructors, staff nurses

Phase 2: IVth year B.Sc. nursing students

Sample size:

Qualitative: Until data saturation attained & Quantitative:50

Sampling technique:

Non probability purposive sampling technique.(Quantitative phase)

Inclusion criteria

1. Students who are presently studying in fourth year B.Sc. nursing

2. Staff nurses with minimum 3 years of experience

3. Clinical instructors with minimum experience in clinical area.

Exclusion criteria

1. Who are not willing to participate in study

Tool/Instruments

The tool used in the study consists of two sections

Section A: Demographic variables like age of student, gender, residence.

Section B: Qualitative study: Semi structured interview on challenges faced by nursing students during clinical learning environment among nursing students.

Section C: Quantitative study: Likert scale to assess the challenges faced by nursing students during clinical learning environment.

Description of tool

Section A: Consist of demographic variables like age of the student, sex, whether day scholar or hostellers and area of interest.

Section B: consist of 5 questions in qualitative phase

Section C: 25 questions in quantitative study.

Scoring consists of: 0-25 -No challenge

25-50-Mild challenge

50-75- Moderate challenge

75-100- Severe challenge

100-125- Very severe challenge

Data collection process

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research question and evaluate outcomes. The data collection period for this study was 11/08/2023 – 15/08/2023. Before commencing the task of data collection formal permission was obtained from the Principal, MGM Muthoot college of nursing, Kozhencherry. The data collection was done for 4 days at selected nursing college at Pathanamthitta. For qualitative study, subjects were selected until data saturation was attained and for quantitative study about 50 students be selected. Prior consent was obtained from the selected samples. Interviews and Likert scale was used to collect the data from the nursing students who are facing challenges in their clinical learning environment.

Plan for data analysis

Data analysis is the technique used to reduce, organize, and give meaning to the data. It involves contrasting and comparing final data to determine what pattern, themes, or threads emerge. Data analysis is planned based on the objectives of study. After the collection data, qualitative data will be analysed Colaizzi's method, themes and subthemes will be derived and quantitative data will be organized, tabulated and summarized. Data is analysed by using inferential statistics by Chi square test. Analysis was organized under following headings

Section A: Description of demographic variables.

Section B: Qualitative study: Description of semi structured interview to assess the challenges faced by nursing students during clinical learning environment

Section C: Quantitative study: Likert scale to assess the challenges faced by nursing students during clinical learning environment.

The research methodology is making an overall plan for a research problem to solve it in a systematic and scientific manner. This chapter delt with the description of the research approach and design, setting of the study, population and sample, sampling technique, sampling criteria, description of the tool and validity of the tool, data collection process and plan for data analysis.

RESULT:

Section 1: Description of general information of participants

Table 1: Frequency and distribution of general information.

	Frequency	Percentage %
Age in years		
18-20	2	2
21-23	48	98
Above 23	0	0
Gender		
Male	4	8
Female	46	9
Area of residence		
Hostellers	40	80
Day scholars	10	20
Area of interest		
Ward	4	8
Neuro Surgical ICU	4	8
Neuro Medical ICU	14	26
Critical Care Unit	5	10
Casualty	16	34
Operation Theatre	7	14

Description related to themes and subthemes

1. Confidence

Confidence in clinical practice is the ability to deal with clinical scenarios. Confidence level among nursing students is an important factor that enables them to carry out their duties competently in the clinical area. Most of the nursing students lack confidence in clinical skills. Changes in the nursing curriculum that encourage more of the students and their study activities can cause change in the student confidence level in the clinical setting. The students expressed that there they experience a lack of communication, motivation and practice in the clinical environment.

1:1 Lack of communication

Communication plays an important role in nursing field to provide continuous care to the patients. It is necessary to have a good communication between nursing staffs, clinical instructors and students. Only a few students reported that they face challenges due to lack of communication. Majority of students agreed that they maintained a good communication among staff nurses, instructors and patients..

1.2 Lack of practice in clinical learning environment

Clinical learning environment is one of the most valuable opportunities for student learning in a programme. Experimental learning provides an opportunity for students to practice knowledge, skills and attitude in the workplace where they are ultimately expected to perform. The students, instructors and staff nurses have agreed that the nursing students are not getting much time to practice in clinical learning environment.

1.3 Lack of motivation

Motivation is an internal feeling and a psychological phenomenon which generates within an individual. Only a few students and instructors reported that they face lack of motivation. Majority of students and instructors agreed that they have enough motivation to work in the clinical learning environment.

2. Stress

Stress amongst nursing students is one of the most underappreciated yet impact full issue they face. Nursing students experience multiple stressors as they are expected to apply theoretical learning and develop critical thinking skills while in the professional environment. Perceived overwhelming negative stressors can lead to absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, and a high employment turnover rate.

512.1 Negative comments from people

People come out with negative comments for a whole load of different reasons. Sometimes they are dealing with their inner anger. Other times they are simply jealous or tired. And then there are people who don't know how to be positive. Majority of the participants expressed those negative comments from people is a challenge in their clinical learning environment.

2.2 Limitation of collecting data

There are certain limitations faced by the nursing students in collecting data from an unconscious or chronically ill patient. The feeling from the patient cannot be expressed or communicated properly. Majority of the students expressed limitations of collecting data as a challenge in the clinical learning environment.

2.3 Lack of ability to organize

Poor organisational skills make people less efficient and less effective. Lack of sleep may lead to long term stress. It may create physical as well as psychological stress to them. Majority of the participants agreed that they get adequate resting periods in the clinical learning environment.

3. Support

Support is essential to provide continuing care for patients. Improving nursing students perceived social support, self-compassion and professional self-concept are beneficial for promoting their mental health. It is adequate for nursing educators to take measures to develop nursing students enhance their professional self-concept.

3.1 Lack of constructive feedback

Constructive feedback should provide an unbiased critique of performance, recounting events as they occurred, with the intention to correct errors and increase understanding. Majority of the participants agreed that they felt lack of constructive feedback in the clinical learning environment.

3.2 Restrictions in assessing patients

There are so many restrictions faced by the nursing students in their curriculum. They were restricted from the activities they desire as they are students. Majority of them agreed that they have experienced restrictions in assessing the patients from senior staffs.

3.3 Judgemental attitude

Judgemental attitude means judging someone without knowing the person. The person was critical of them because they form opinions of people and situations very quickly, when it would be better the person to wait until they know more about the person or situation. Majority of the participants expressed that majority of the senior staffs have judgemental attitude towards nursing students.

4. Knowledge

Knowledge is the eye of desire and can become the pilot of the soul. The more the knowledge gained the more the power and success to the people.

4.1 Gap in practical and education

Students face challenges in both educational and practical section. Sometimes they become doubtful and disorganized about the basic procedures. All of them expressed that they feel a much gap between the practical and educational level.

4.2 Lack of professional knowledge

Professionalism is knowing how to do it, when to do it, and doing it. Lack of professional knowledge creates a negative impact on students' life. Only few students have adequate knowledge about the profession. Majority of them lack knowledge, thus facing challenges in the clinical learning environment.

4.3 Lack of interest

Interest in the profession is the important thing to stick on the profession. Interest help them to gain more knowledge and help to overcome the challenge that they faced in the day-to-day life. The instructors and staff nurses expressed that the students lack interest in doing procedures and working in the clinical learning environment.

Distribution of samples according to each prob

Distribution of students according to the level of confidence 32 (64%) students having higher level of confidence, 18 (36%) students having medium level of confidence, no student were having the low level of confidence. Distribution of students according to the level of support 44 (88%) students are supported by co-workers, clinical instructors and staff nurses, 6 (12%) students get minimal support from co-workers, clinical instructors and staff nurses, no students

were unsupported by the co-workers, clinical instructors and staff nurses. Distribution of students according to the level of stress 11 (22%) students were having higher level of stress, 39 (78%) students were having medium level of stress, no students having low level of stress. Distribution of students according to the level of knowledge 18 (36%) students were having adequate knowledge, 32 (64%) students were having average knowledge, no students were showing below average knowledge.

Evaluate the challenges faced by nursing students during clinical learning environment of selected college, Pathanamthitta.

Description of self-structured questionnaire to evaluate the challenges of clinical learning environment among nursing students, no students were having no challenges, 39 (75%) students were having mild challenges,11 (22%) students were having moderate challenges, no students were facing severe or very severe challenges.

DISCUSSION:
The findings have been discussed with reference to the objectives, assumption and findings of the related studies. It is organized under the following section:

Section 1: Discussion related to the results of interview method.

Challenges among nursing students had a great impact on students' life physically as well as psychologically. The students encounter that the challenges can generate stress, lack of confidence and inadequate knowledge. The major themes that emerged include confidence, stress, support, knowledge. The samples reported ways of copying with challenges faced.

Section 2: Discussion related to distribution of demographic variables of nursing students in selected college.

Analysis of data identified the most of samples 49 (98%) who participated in the study belonged to the group of 20-23 years. 92% of the subjects in the present study were females. Majority (80%) of the subject in the present study resides in hostel. Majority (34%) of the subjects in the present study were interested to work in casualty.

Section 3: Discussion related to different probe scores based on challenges among nursing students.

Distribution of students according to the level of confidence 32 (64%) students having higher level of confidence, 18 (36%) students having medium level of confidence, no student were having the low level of confidence.
Distribution of students according to the level of support 44 (88%) students are supported by co-workers, clinical instructors and staff nurses, 6 (12%) students get minimal support from co-workers, clinical instructors and staff nurses, no students were unsupported by the co-workers, clinical instructors and staff nurses.
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LIMITATIONS:
1. Sample size was small, this limit the generalization of study.
2. The study was limited to the selected college, Pathanamthitta.
3. The study was limited to students between age group of 18-23 years.
4. The study was done only on evaluation of challenges faced by nursing students and not on practical ways to overcome those challenges,

RECOMMENDATIONS:
1. Similar study can be conducted among large sample to generalize the findings.
2. Study can be carried out among nursing students of private and government colleges.

CONCLUSION:
The findings of the study concluded that the distribution of nursing students of selected college according to age revealed that 1 (2%) students were in the age group of 18-20, 49 (98%) students were in the age group of 21-23, (0%) students were in the age above 23.

Distribution of students with reference of gender 4 (8%) students were males and 46 (92%) were females. Distribution of students according to area of residence, 10 (20%) students were day scholars and 40 (80%) students were hostellers.

Distribution of students according to area of interest 4(8%) students were interested in ward, 5(10%) were interested in cardiac critical care unit, 4 (8%) were interested in neurosurgical ICU,

14(26%) were interested in neuromedical ICU, 16(34%) were interested in casualty, 7(14) were interested in operation theatre.

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