



FACTORS AFFECTING CLINICAL LEARNING: PERCEPTION OF STUDENT NURSE AND CLINICAL INSTRUCTORS: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

Nursing

**Yasotha Vijaya
Ratnam**

Msc (N) Department of Nursing Education, Ministry of Defence

ABSTRACT

The nursing profession is facing many challenges that accompany the changes occurring in a rapidly developing country. Science and technologies will always be advancing. The study was conducted in the Sime Darby Nursing and Educational Services, in Shah Alam. Sime Darby Nursing and Educational Services is one the tertiary nursing college in Klang Valley. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Head of Programme of the college. The study will be included 20 clinical instructors and 72 final semester nursing students. The tool will be administered to the clinical instructors working in the wards. A meeting will be held with all the clinical instructors and student nurses and a brief description will be given before the questionnaires are administered. Time frame of collection of questionnaire is notified to the respective clinical instructors and student nurses. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Study revealed about responses towards important aspects of clinical learning environment.

KEYWORDS

Nurses, Nursing students, Clinical learning environment.

Introduction

Nurses as members of the healthcare team play an essential role in the realization of the vision. Nursing care provided by nurses must meet the expectations and needs of the people of a developing Malaysia. Hence, the nursing profession is facing many challenges that accompany the changes occurring in a rapidly developing country. Science and technologies will always be advancing. Thus, nurses have to keep up to date of what is happening with the objective to be able to care for clients who have been given the latest treatment and medical technological interventions. Nurses today are expected to provide nursing care beyond the "traditional boundary" (Rutty, 2005). This means, nurses must be competent to provide nursing care in the hospitals and in the clients' home as well as anywhere in the community. The nursing training includes a wide range of knowledge and skills required to provide various health services to the people. They gain a lot of knowledge from the nursing college and they acquire clinical expertise from experience gained during working in the wards. The clinical instructor faces a challenging task of producing competent nurses. The clinical instructors have to be good at teaching nursing subjects and also be good practitioners in the clinical area. The main task of the clinical instructor is to promote continuous learning in their students. This is especially necessary in this fast changing world of medicine. The clinical instructor should keep abreast with contemporary learning theories so that their teaching reflects current ideas of best practice. The clinical instructor should be aware of the difference in the teaching and learning of academic knowledge and the teaching and learning of practical skills. This will help them to use appropriate instructional methods in the classroom and in the clinical area to facilitate learning.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the Sime Darby Nursing and Educational Services, in Shah Alam. Sime Darby Nursing and Educational Services is one the tertiary nursing college in Klang Valley. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Head of Programme of the college. The study will be included 20 clinical instructors and 72 final semester nursing students. The tool will be administered to the clinical instructors working in the wards. A meeting will be held with all the clinical instructors and student nurses and a brief description will be given before the questionnaires are administered. Time frame of collection of questionnaire is notified to the respective clinical instructors and student nurses. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section I, elicited demographic data from the participants. Section II contained 24 statements related to the characteristics of an effective clinical teacher. These statements were then classified into five categories by the researcher. The five categories were: teaching ability, professional competence, evaluation, interpersonal relationship and personality. Section III of the instrument contained 12 statements related to clinical learning environment. Items 25 to 35 were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, similar to that in section II. Item 36 required the participants to rank in order of importance the persons contributing to their clinical learning. Prior to commencing the study, a formal seeking permission letter to Dr. Vengkata Samara Rao, Dean of College and copy to Puan Rosnah, Principle School of Nursing

submitted before the data collection method. All the clinical instructors and student nurses received an information letter about the study and the risks/benefits of the study were explained. The return of a complete questionnaire will be considered to indicate consent from the student nurses and clinical instructors.

Results

• Demographic data

The most common age group of respondents was 20-24 years old (63.9%, n=46) followed by 25-29 (30.6%, n=22) and 30-34 years old (5.5%, n=4). Within the group of student nurse respondents, SPM was the highest level of education among the majority of the respondents (75%, n=54) while 25% of the students have STPM (n=18) that shown in Figure 4.2.2. Among the student nurses fifty percent (n=36) have previous working experience before enlisting into the nursing training programme. Of the 20 respondents in the sample, 10 (50%) of the clinical instructor's are aged 35-39. Within these respondents, 4 has worked as staff nurse for 6-8 years and 6 of them has worked as staff nurse for 9-11 years. From the crosstabulation output, 6 (30%) of the respondents are aged 40 – 44. Of the 6 respondents aged between 40-44, 4 (66.7%) has worked as staff nurse for 12 – 14 years and 2 of them has working experience as staff nurse for 9 – 11 years. The table also shows, 4 (20%) of the clinical instructors are aged 45 – 49 years old and has working experience as staff nurse more than 14 years.

- Responses to important items of clinical learning environment

Table 1: Students responses to the six most important items related to clinical learning environment.

Rank	Item	Mean ()
1	High workload inhibits learning.	4.38
2	A high variety and frequency of patient diagnosis and conditions.	4.30
3	A friendly and democratic style of ward management.	4.22
4	Students learn by observing how the staff nurse carries out her role.	4.11
5	All staff on the ward, from the ward manager to the students feels part of a ward team.	4.08
6	A happy ward for staff, students and patients.	4.00

Table 2: Clinical instructors' responses to the six most important items related to clinical learning environment.

Rank	Item	Mean ()
1	Wards with adequate facilities and equipment.	4.43
2	A high variety and frequency of patient diagnosis and conditions.	4.13
3	Students learn by observing how the staff nurse carries out her role.	4.03
4	A happy ward for staff, students and patients.	3.82

5	High workload inhibits learning.	3.73
6	All staff on the ward, from the ward manager to the students feels part of a ward team.	3.72

There were differences in the degree of importance they held for all the categories except the category of personality. The analysis of variance between the groups is as follows: teaching ability, $F=47.4871$, $p=0.0000$; professional competence' $F=9.9404$, $p=0.0029$; evaluation, $F=28.4910$, $p=0.0000$; interpersonal relationship, $F=54.5843$, $p=0.0000$; and personality, $F=0.1568$, $p=0.6940$. Though personality has a similar rating by both the groups; when viewed in relation to all the other categories, it is the least important category to the students. The clinical instructors on the other hand, rank personality as the 4th important category.

Discussion

The discussion of results is focused on clinical teacher characteristics which consist of the following characteristics; teaching ability; professional competence; evaluation; interpersonal relationship; and personality. The other area of focus is the clinical learning environment which has twelve items.

The nursing students' perceptions of the characteristics of an effective clinical teacher are dissimilar to that of the clinical instructors. Differences between students' and teachers' perceptions were also found by Stuebbe (1980) and O'Shea and Parsons (1979). However Morgan and Knox in 1983 found that there were similarities in perceptions of students and teachers. Therefore there are inconsistencies in the research findings. This is to be expected as the researchers used different methods of data collection. Some used questionnaires while others used critical incident study. Interviews were also used to collect data. Another reason for the differences in the results could be the different population sample. For example, Brown (1981) used senior nursing students, while Knox and Morgan in 1985 used junior and senior nursing students.

The students in this study gave high ratings to evaluation and interpersonal relationship. This finding is congruent with those described by Brown in 1981 and O'Shea and Parsons (1979). The high ratings on evaluation may be a result of anxiety experienced by the students because the teaching and learning of clinical skills takes place in an environment where errors can have grave consequences for a patient. High scores ascribed to interpersonal relationship, a finding collaborated by Brown (1981) and Wiley (1984) might be a further expression of anxiety by the students. Worried they might harm the patient; students want a teacher who can make them feel at ease, a teacher to whom they can turn for reassurance. The students perceived their best teachers as a nice person who was able to relate well to them. Rogers (1969) states that one of the most important conditions which facilitate learning is the attitudinal quality of the interpersonal relationship between facilitator and learners. Findings from this study seem to reflect this view.

Research on clinical learning environment and its relation to the level of stress of students would prove useful to understand the factors in the clinical area which can influence the students' clinical learning. Critical incidents study can be used to obtain more information on the characteristics of effective clinical teachers and the attributes of the clinical environment which affects clinical teaching and learning. Research on the characteristics of an effective clinical instructor/ clinical teacher can be used to develop clinical instructor/ clinical teacher evaluation tools.

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