Clinical Learning Environment among Nursing Students

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Abstract

The nursing students' satisfaction is considered as a prime factor in assessing the clinical learning environment. A nonexperimental descriptive research study was conducted with the aim of assessing the level of satisfaction of the clinical learning environment (CLE) among nursing students at selected settings. An enumerative sampling technique was adopted and selected 168 who met the inclusion criteria. The ethical committee approval was obtained from the institution. All respondents were carefully informed about the purpose of the study and their part during the study and how the privacy was guarded. The tool comprised of background variables and structured clinical learning environment inventory is developed by the researcher. The finding showed that the students had moderate level of satisfaction in all the dimensions of clinical learning environment. There was a positive relationship between the level of satisfaction and clinical training and procedure completion ($r = 0.7$, $p < 0001$) and learning experience of the students ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.000$).

Keywords: Clinical learning environment, Level of satisfaction, Nursing students.

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Introduction

Learning in the clinical setting is a vital aspect of nursing education considering the fact that nursing profession is based on clinical practice. Clinical practice is crucial as it prepares nursing students to become competent nurses in the clinical setting. Researchers have showed that effective and extensive learning takes place in the clinical settings. Action should be planned in order to facilitate learning in clinical setting in addition to creating a conducive clinical learning environment. Satisfaction in work does not depend on the length of days, but in the way we make of them. The clinical experience of student nurses is important for their learning, professional development, and preference for their working place.[1] The competency level of nursing students is based on the intellectual capacity acquired and to a large extent on the skills taught to them during their course.

The learning activities during the clinical posting of nursing students are considered as the clinical learning environment (CLE). The CLE is an interactive network of forces within the clinical setting that influences skill learning outcomes. It includes everything that surrounds students and influences their professional development in the clinical setting. There is considerable evidence supporting the CLE as extremely beneficial in familiarizing students with clinical judgment and decision-making, critical thinking, supports the students to recognize the consequences of their mistakes, and provides various sociocultural, biological, psychological, and mental aspects of patients' care. The CLE is the place where the theoretical dimension of the curriculum is integrated with the practical and transformed into professional skills and attitudes within a safe clinical environment. However, the nursing students view this situation as the most anxiety-provoking environment in the nursing curriculum as they are expected to play a dual role as a student nurse and a staff nurse. The ongoing changes in health care that needs together with the shift in nursing education to academic levels have transformed students' clinical experiences from "learning by doing" to evidence-based learning. However, not all clinical settings are conducive to students' learning outcomes or contributing to their competencies' development.

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Need for Study

It is noted commonly that nursing students are dissatisfied with clinical learning environment due to few contributing factors, namely uncomfortable in the clinical posting due to lack of knowledge and skill, the ward sisters, charge nurses give a negative opinion about the clinical setting where nursing students are found in a ward atmosphere not conducive for skill learning. Nursing students found clinical environment incompatible with learning as a lack of an easy approach to clinical staff and inability to get supervisors' feedback related to mistakes and solutions for other issues faced by the students. It was also observed that there is no d0ifference in the work nature between each level of the students that makes the students to routinely do the same work all throughout four years. There is a lack of space and time for bedside learning, and most of the time there are differences in what was taught in the theory class and what is practiced in the clinical setting. The clinical learning and clinical environment play a vital part in equipping the nursing student's knowledge and clinical skill. The aim of this descriptive study is to examine the level of satisfaction of nursing students regarding the clinical learning environment (CLE). This study will help the educators to understand the expectation of the students in the clinical area and what is the real clinical situation in order to plan their clinical experience to provide a positive CLE and proper supervision. The results and the

recommendation of this study may play a part to increase clinical supervisor's awareness of instructing and teaching to the students in the clinical areas.

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

A descriptive study to assess the level of satisfaction regarding clinical learning environment among nursing students at selected settings.

Objectives

- To assess the level of satisfaction regarding CLE among nursing students.
- To associate the level of satisfaction regarding CLE with selected demographic variables.

Hypothesis

H1: There will be a significant association between the level of satisfaction regarding CLE and the selected demographic variables.

Methodology

A descriptive research design was adopted. The accessible population was B.Sc. (N) nursing students studying II, III, and IV years. After obtaining the institutional permission, all the students' names from II, III, and IV years were collected by the researcher from the class coordinator. The researcher verified from the daily attendance register that all the students listed were going for clinical duty without any break from November 2018 to June 2019. The inclusion criteria include the students studying II, III, and IV year B.Sc. (N) for the academic year 2018–2019, and the exclusion criteria included the students who belong to I yr B.Sc. (N), who were on leave during clinical posting, absent during data collection, and who were not willing to participate in the study. Total enumerative sampling was used to select all the students as research participants who met the inclusion criteria. The informed consent was obtained from all the study participants after explaining the purpose of the research.

The data collection tool has two parts: one as back ground variable and modified clinical learning inventory which has a total of 50 statements from five dimensions, namely orientation, clinical training and supervision, clinical procedure completion, learning experience, and cooperation. The department atmosphere is comprised of 55 items in the tool. The five-point Likert scale was rated as strongly agree to strongly disagree with the reliability of 0.78 to 0.65. The content validity was obtained from the experts before administering to the research participants. The questionnaires were distributed to participants by the faculty who was not directly involved with their clinical supervision and students were asked to rate the various factors of clinical learning environment using the rating scale within one week after completing the clinical posting for the academic year 2018–2019 in the classroom during the theory block. Each of the students took around 25–30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

RESULTS

The data were analyzed using the latest SPSS version; descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, mean, and standard deviation, were used to describe the background variables.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution—sociodemographic variables, $n = 168$

Sociodemographic variable	F	%
Age in years		
18–19	52	31
19–20	65	39
20–21	1	30
Interested to study nursing		
Yes	145	87
No	23	13
Area of posting		
Critical care units	60	36
General wards	85	50
Mother and child unit	23	14
Duration of posting		
<2 weeks	52	31
2–4 weeks	77	46
4–6 weeks	39	23
The clinical supervisor available in your ward/areas		
Yes	150	89
No	18	11
Will you get opportunity to get all the ward rotation uniformly?		
Yes	141	84
No	24	16
Will the ward in charges/supervisors teach you during clinical posting?		
Yes	130	77
No	38	23
Will you get an opportunity to learn different types of procedures		
Yes	150	89
No	18	11

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of background variables of the students. Many of the students (39%) belonged to the age of 18–19 years of age with age ranging from 18 to 21 years, with a mean of 19 years and standard deviation 1.03 years. With regard to the levels of students studying, nearly half of the participants (46%) were pursuing II year B.Sc. (N) degree course for the academic year 2018–2019 (Fig. 1). Similar percentage was observed in the clinical posting too; that is, 46% of the students were on Medical Surgical Nursing II (MSN II) posting in all the specialty areas (Fig. 2). Half of the students (50%) were in general ward posting. Many of the students had (46%) 2–4weeks of clinical postings in the same area. Most of the students (89%) were supervised by the clinical supervisor. Most of the students (84%) expressed that they were uniformly rotated in all the areas. Most of the students (77%) expressed that the ward in charges teach them during clinical posting in the respective wards. Highest percentage of students (89%) informed that they had opportunity to learn different types of procedures during the clinical postings.

Table 2 depicted that the majority of the students have moderate level of satisfaction regarding the clinical learning environment.
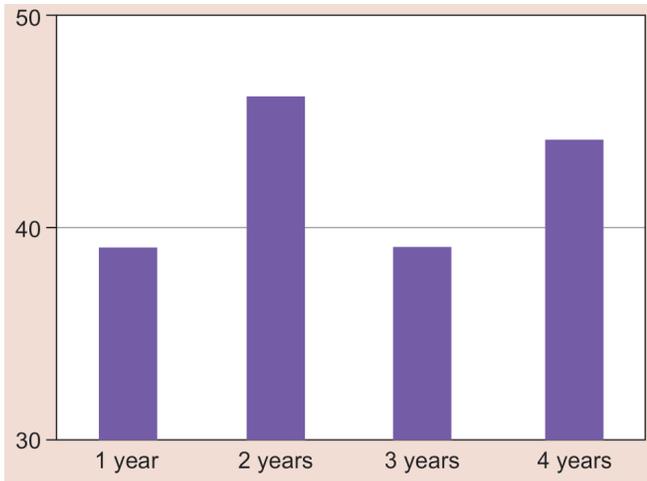
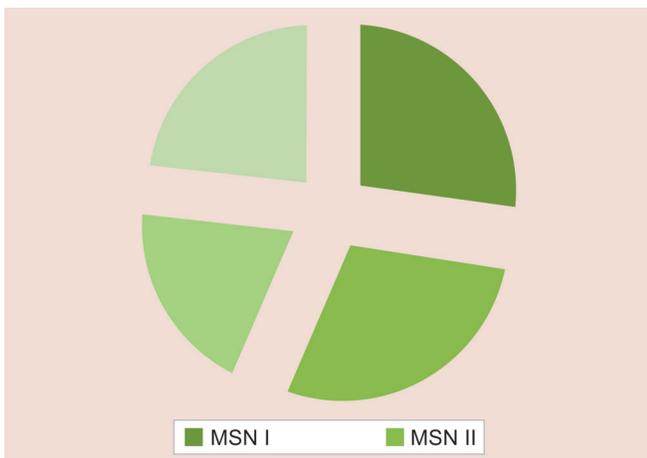**Fig. 1:** Percentage of students studying in different classes

Fig. 2: Percentage of students in various clinical posting

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of the level of satisfaction of various dimensions of clinical learning environment

Score interpretation	High level of satisfaction		Moderate level of satisfaction		Low level of satisfaction	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Orientation, communication, and feedback	50	30	107	63	11	7
Clinical training and supervision	46	27	111	66	11	7
Procedure completion	22	13	112	67	34	20
Learning experience	15	9	126	75	27	16
Cooperation and department atmosphere	6	4	118	70	44	26

B.Sc. (N) students. There is a significant relationship between the level of satisfaction and clinical training and procedure completion ($r = 0.7$, $p < 0001$) and learning experience of the students ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.000$).

DISCUSSION

The students are on long clinical block in the II year was the reason that higher percentage was II year students (Fig. 1). Similar percentage was observed in the clinical posting too, that is 46% of the students were on Medical Surgical Nursing II (MSN II) posting in all the specialty areas. Similar finding was noted in a study conducted by Masilaca, School of Nursing, Fiji (Fig. 2). Half of the students (50%) were in general ward posting. This is because there are many general area according to the specialty area in which maximum students are posted for clinical experience. Many of the students had (46%) 2–4 weeks of clinical postings in the same area. This shows that students will be able to confidently learn the ward routine over a period of four weeks. Most of the students (89%) were supervised by the clinical supervisor. This showed that the institution has followed the faculty-student ratio as per INC norms in the clinical area. Most of the students (84%) expressed that they were uniformly rotated in all the area. This showed the appropriate curriculum implementation. Most of the students (77%) expressed that the ward in charges teach them during clinical posting in the respective wards. It showed that regular clinical teaching is conducted by the clinical supervisor. Highest percentage of students (89%) informed that they had opportunity to learn different types of procedures during the clinical postings.[2,3] This proves that the teaching hospital takes a keen interest in providing opportunity for clinical learning of procedures.

Majority of the students felt moderate level of satisfaction regarding learning experience and cooperation and department atmosphere (75 and 70). A moderate level of clinical environment perception from nursing students sets as high level of concern wherein all items or components of the clinical setting need to be improved, especially the need to work in conjunction with nurse managers and clinical nurses to provide a conducive clinical learning environment.[4]

There is a significant relationship between the level of satisfaction and clinical training and procedure completion ($r = 0.7$, $p < 0.001$), learning experience of the students ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.000$).

Table 2: Overall frequency and percentage of level of satisfaction with regard to the clinical learning environment among the B.Sc. (N) students, $n = 168$

Score interpretation	F	%
High level of satisfaction	7	4
Moderate level of satisfaction	148	88
Low level of satisfaction	13	8

Table 3 focused on the percentage of the frequency of the level of satisfaction of various dimensions of clinical learning environment: most of the students expressed moderate level of satisfaction with regard to orientation, communication, and feedback; clinical learning and supervision; and procedure completion as 63, 66, and 67%, respectively. Majority of the students felt moderate level of satisfaction regarding learning experience and cooperation and department atmosphere as 75 and 70%.

With regard to association, there was no association between the background variables of the students and the level of satisfaction regarding clinical learning environment among

The findings were congruent with the study on perception and satisfaction with the clinical learning environment among nursing students where satisfaction with the CLE subdimensions was highly significant and had a positive relationship with the total clinical learning environment.[3] In the path model, 35% of its total variance of satisfaction with CLE is accounted by leadership style, clinical nurse commitment (variance = 28%), and patient relationships. Higher age, GPA, and completion of a number of clinical courses were significant in the satisfaction with the CLE among these students.

CONCLUSIONS

The study findings revealed that students had moderate level of satisfaction with regard to all the five dimensions of clinical learning environment. Learning environment varies between institutions, hospitals, clinical settings, and supervision. General ward seems to deliver the finest learning situations for the nursing students as there are more patient's statistics in comparison with the critical care units. It is important that the clinical setting fulfills the requirements regarding a good learning environment so that students consider that the learning is substantial and develops in all the domains of nursing. It also promotes the students' self-confidence in handling the patient.

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