Nursing Students’ Perceptions of Clinical Teaching Behaviors

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Abstract

Background: Learning in a clinical environment is one of the major factors that are contained in the nursing curricula. The purpose of this study is to assess clinical teaching behaviors and their influence on students’ learning process at a university in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Methods: Qualitative study was used. Nine students, studying in their second to final year formed. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted; Results: The ability of teaching among the nursing teachers has a great influence on the learning of the students. The teaching ability was highly associated with the learning process of the respondents; Conclusions: Every student had different opinions about what makes up a good teacher, and every student may have different preferences to their desired mode of learning. Therefore, it will be up to the teacher to realize the differences in the students and know how to effectively disseminate knowledge among them.

Keywords: Clinical teaching behaviors; Students’ perceptions; Nursing

Introduction

The rapid increase of the human population has led to a shortage of qualified nurses in recent days. This scarcity of qualified nurses is experienced in many countries across the world. The shortage of nurses within any country is a risky challenge as nurses play a major role in any country’s development. Precisely, many hospitals worldwide are under pressure to reduce the services they offer even though the patient demands are increasing. This nursing shortage in both Saudi Arabia and international markets has led to the establishment of numerous nursing educational institutions in recent years. However, the establishment of numerous nursing educational institutions has failed to address its primary goal of curbing the shortages of nurses in the health sector. This study aims to assess clinical teaching behaviors and their influence on students’ learning from the perspective of undergraduate nursing students. Having a closer look at nursing education, one can easily realize that the process does encompass three distinct domains of learning. According to [1] the three learning domains are the cognitive domain, the affective domain, and the psychomotor domain [1]. Moreover, nursing education has an objective of motivating nursing students to acquire relevant skills that help deliver quality patient care [2]. The nursing curriculum incorporates both the theoretical instructions as well as the clinical practice in numerous distinct hospital settings to effectively prepare nursing students to handle the unending challenges in complex settings of health centers [3].

Inadequacy in teachers’ knowledge precisely of the aims, goals, and objectives of nursing education is likely to hinder their vision of the desired learning results and decisions. Incompetent teachers are also likely to fail in facilitating the transfer of the theory into practice during learning sessions [4]. As nursing students are the direct recipients of the clinical instructions, they are eligible to observe and comment on their clinical teachers [5]. It is therefore essential for nursing teachers to provide an effective demonstration of appropriate teaching behaviors during their clinical teaching sessions to thoroughly prepare nursing students for their expected services in the complex systems of health care [6]. Ismail [7] stated that one of the basic components of the nursing curricula is the clinical experience since it provides real nursing experience as it involves actual patients [7]. Therefore, clinical learning can be considered the heartbeat of the nursing practice that bridges the theory-practice gap [8]. [9] states that the integration process of theoretical knowledge alongside real clinical practice is significant as far as the development of effective professional nurses is concerned [9]. Furthermore, good quality classroom teaching and high capability of demonstrating clinical competence can be said to
have a great impact on the careers of the students graduating from a nursing program [10].

According to [11] teaching is an interrelated process between two parties: teachers and learners. This relational practice should be constructed from both the need and desire for learning. Teaching should. Therefore, instructors or tutors must provide appropriate support to the learning process of the given students [11,12]. However, different people have different perceptions of the teaching process. Some individuals take it as a combination of mere classroom activities that have different qualities which are in a close relationship with the subjects or the content [13]. Besides, it is important to understand that teaching and learning are both social and communicative processes. It is from this aspect that teachers can facilitate the creation and maintenance of desired relationships with the respective students [14]. According to [15], teachers can show their commitment to their profession and also have some respect for both the students and their families, among others [15].

Appointment of teachers in the nursing educational institutions is majorly based on individual qualifications and one’s experiences as the way it is defined within the documents of the governing bodies [16]. According to [17] nursing teachers are supposed to be the bridge that links the nursing education and the clinical practice [17]. This can be achieved when they engage in monitoring the progress of students and providing those students with necessary support whenever the need arises hence facilitation of both theoretical and clinical teaching [18]. According to [19] it is the role of the nursing faculty to supervise nursing students regularly to promote the intended development [19]. Despite the notion in the public domain that one’s ability to teach in the classroom is enough to process in preparation for clinical teaching, the truth is far much opposite based on the multidimensional role [20,21]. Precisely, nursing teachers are supposed to provide their students with hands-on experience and practical techniques to ensure that patients attended to by these students after their graduation receive high-quality nursing care [22,23] argued that the magnitude of the quality of clinical learning largely depends on the actions and activities of teachers. These are transmitted through various verbal as well as non-verbal interactions in facilitating the learning of students in clinical settings [23,24] recommends that clinical teachers should pose the relevant characteristics of clinical teachers if they want to facilitate good entry of students in the so-called multifaceted world of the nursing practice [24].

This is also echoed by [25] who emphasized such importance [25]. The quality of behaviors during the teaching process can result in either positive or negative impacts as far as the students’ integration of the theory into clinical practice is concerned [26,27] argues that clinical teaching behaviors are part of the nursing learning environment and have a fundamental potential to impact the learning of students [27]. Numerous evidence shows that the rating of students can prove to be the most reliable and valid indicator as far as effective teaching is concerned [28]. The perception of the nursing students on the performance of their clinical teachers can be said to be a very significant indicator that can help to modify and to facilitate clinical instructions [29,30] states that exploring the perceptions of the nursing students on specific clinical teaching behaviors that are portrayed by nursing teachers and their expected behaviors when enhancing the clinical teaching sessions will be of great help when preparing the relevant development program of nursing faculty [30]. According to [31] this will lead to an appropriate process of fostering integration of theoretical concepts into practice among the students [31]. In this case, the students included in the study are those pursuing a nursing undergraduate degree at a university in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia [32].

Materials and Methods

Study design and setting

A qualitative study of phenomenological approach was used. This research work was done at a University in Riyadh, female college of nursing, Saudi Arabia. This is one of the largest, oldest, and most reputable higher education institutions in the country. It’s Nursing Administration and Education program has many students who are trained specifically to work as nurse administrators. In particular, the students attending this program represent an excellent base for the research and the institution itself is a convenient setting where the present research could be carried out professionally and without barriers.

Research Sample and Data collection

Purposeful sampling was used for sample selection in this study. Nine bachelors of science (nursing) female students studying in their second to final year course formed the group of respondents. Those students who did not practice high-fidelity simulators were excluded from the group of respondents. The process of data collection was singly marred by the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews that were conducted on an individual basis. The process was practiced among different students until the students’ experiences showed repetitive phrases and expressions, which meant saturation of the data. Each female nursing student in the respondent group was allocated a minimum of 30 minutes with some taking a maximum of 50 minutes to respond to the research question. During the interviewing process, responses were recorded and were later transcribed for the analysis of the collected data. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics committee (IRB) of the research unit in the university. Participation in the study was voluntary, and the participants were informed of that during the consenting process. Furthermore, all the participants’ data and information were kept confidential to protect the participants. The participants then signed informed consent.

Data analysis

Thematic content analysis was employed to drive themes with
a close association of Nvivo software program that proved relevant during the transcription of the recordings. This software was produced by the QRS international for analysis of qualitative data.

**Results**

**Demographic profile of the students**

The group of students that were willing to participate in the research study took part in interviews. The methodology followed in this research study interviews. Before focusing on the answers that the nursing students provided in the interview, there is other information that has to be looked at. First, there are the demographics of each participant. The demographics are intended to offer more rationale as what other factors may have influenced the perspectives of the participants. Factors such as age, gender, and level of study may influence the way people perceive things. The table below gives a representation of the overall demographics of the participants who took part in the study (Table 1). Table 1 illustrated the demographic information of the nursing students in a university. All nine students who participated were females. Moreover, 8 students (89% of the total participant’s respondents) were single, and one student (11%) was married. From a total of 9 students, 1 student was from level 3. The same applies to level 4, 6 and 8. All these four.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Age</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 years - less than 40</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-89%</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Married</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of Study</td>
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<td>-11%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-11%</td>
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**Factors influencing clinical learning**

From the transcriptions that were made from the interview recordings, the majority of respondents admitted that evaluation was the main factor that influenced clinical learning among numerous female students. Earlier on, we had set out to investigate the most probable factor in teaching success in nursing institutions. Nursing students that are involved in the test had the option to choose between a variety of factors. The factors, in this case, were evaluation, interpersonal relationship between teacher and learners, and the teaching ability of the teachers. A few female nursing students highlighted interpersonal relationships as the factor that had a great impact in affecting the clinical students’ perceptions, which means that the success of learning programs can be boosted by ensuring there is a good relationship between teachers and students. It is also true from the interview results that there is a clear relationship between the actual clinical teaching behavior that was practiced by the nursing teachers in the University in Riyadh and the learning process of the female nursing students. The majority of the respondents argued that the ability of teaching among the nursing teachers have a great influence on the learning of the students. This means that the more students are taught by individuals with great teaching abilities, the more their learning is positively impacted. In spite of numerous respondents admitting that evaluation directly influenced the actual practiced clinical teaching behavior, it is the teaching ability that was highly associated with the learning process of the respondents.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

The evaluation was considered as the most influential factor in the actual practiced clinical teaching behavior because it is of great importance for teachers to be honest and also provide relevant feedback that is constructive for effective clinical teaching [33]. According to [34] for one to become an excellent teacher, he/she should consider moving away from being an ‘installer’ to becoming a ‘facilitator’ as well as laying the appropriate foundation by continuing to develop his/her teaching ability [34]. It is through a self-development process that an instructor can have knowledge and experience that is required in facilitating the smooth integration of the classroom theory to the acquisition of appropriate practical techniques of nursing students [35]. An evaluation was chosen as the most influential factor for a variety of reasons. Perhaps the most obvious reason is the advantage it brings to the process of learning. Learning is similar to a refining process. Constant evaluations and assessments ought to be conducted for the learner and the teacher to be aware of the student’s capabilities and weaknesses.
Knowledge of thyself is critical for any educational progress to be made [36]. Through evaluation, both the teacher and student can know areas where the student is strong and areas where the student is weak. Corrections or intense learning procedures can then be implemented by the teacher to improve the student in areas that he/she is weak in. After the students have been taught again, the teacher can evaluate the students to assess whether the working techniques are working or not [37]. Evaluation is also critical in determining the efficiency of teaching practices that a teacher may wish to implement.

The teacher can use a new strategy and use previous assessments that were conducted before the use of new teaching strategies as the baseline for the assessment. By simply doing this, teachers can know whether it is time to change teaching methods or to stick to one with positive results [38,39] the teachers’ competency and their personality were expected to be identified by the majority of the nursing students as significant factors that affect the efficiency of clinical learning [39]. However, some students went for teaching ability as the main component [40,41]. A teacher’s teaching ability and their competence can be conveying the same meaning since competency encompasses teaching ability. According to [43] this supportive relationship can easily lead to reduced stress levels among students and increase both the self-confidence of learners as well as some sense of calmness hence improving the learning process. Calm learners are more likely to pay enough attention to their studies as compared to stressed ones. [42,44] asserts that the high competency level, personality, and the teaching ability of the nursing teachers directly improve the students’ clinical performance [43]. From the results of the study, we can see that most students believe that evaluation is key to better teaching practices. The other students believe that proper teaching is promoted by the competency of the teacher, their personality, and their teaching ability. From a critical point of view, it is evident that evaluation is a characteristic that falls within a much broader category [44]. Both the teacher’s teaching ability and competency mean that such teacher has great mastery over most things associated with the profession. Since evaluation is a major part of the teaching profession, all competent teachers can be required to have great evaluation skills.

There is a need for nursing teachers to come up with relevant strategies that will enable students to integrate clinical theory concepts into the field practice without much difficulty. This is because clinical experience has come to be one of the components which produce anxiety among the nursing students. Since the clinical care setting is busy and somehow complicated, the effective teaching process within the nursing field does require a lot of flexibility, some enthusiasm, as well as the recognizable dedication. The role of nursing teachers requires the maintenance of a climate full of trust and respect while providing relevant support to both the learning and development of nursing students. This trust and respect should be mutual in such a way that they are observed by both students and their teachers for the improved admirable learning and teaching process. Respective teachers in nursing educational institutions should be competent with great interpersonal relationship skills, great ability of teaching, and relevant personality attributes to achieve the learning and teaching climate that has mutual trust and respect. Numerous factors define the professional competence of the teachers in their task of transferring knowledge from theoretical perspectives to practical situations that allow nursing students to provide quality services in the field.

Some of these factors include problem-solving abilities, technological skills, ability to think critically, specialized psychomotor, and professional value. When all these abilities are combined, the result is a competent teacher. This means that teachers should not focus on selecting teaching strategies or styles but should instead focus on holistically improving their competence through the mastery of all skills that are required by good teacher. Every student is different and similar to how the nine students who took the survey had different opinions about what makes up a good teacher; every student may have different preferences to their desired mode of learning. Therefore, it will be up to the teacher to realize the differences in the students and know how to effectively disseminate knowledge among the students. To effectively do this, the skill of evaluation is required. However, this is not the only skill that is required to make an overall good teacher. All the skills combined lead to higher competency in teacher’s thus better learning by their students. The finding of the study is recommended to nursing educators to consider the various teaching strategies for each student in their clinical teaching to improve students’ clinical skills at various clinical site.

**Conflicts of Interest**

“The authors declare no conflict of interest.”

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