



Original Article



Perception of Conducive Learning Environment among Students in Nursing Colleges, Islamabad

Sumayya Bibi¹, Saba Khurshid^{2*}, Shagufta Parveen³, Umbreen Dildar⁴ and Zareena Parveen¹¹Department of Nursing, College of Nursing, Bhakkar, Pakistan²Department of Research & Development, National University of Medical Sciences, Rawalpindi, Pakistan³College of Nursing, Armed Forces Post Graduate Medical Institute, National University of Medical Sciences, Rawalpindi, Pakistan⁴Department of Nursing, Poly Clinic Hospital, Islamabad, Pakistan

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Saba Khurshid

Department of Research & Development, National University of Medical Sciences, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
sabakiani8@gmail.comReceived date: 25th January, 2025Acceptance date: 15th March, 2025Published date: 31st March, 2025

ABSTRACT

Nursing education is essential for developing skilled healthcare practitioners, and Students' educational experiences and outcomes are significantly impacted by their learning environment. **Objective:** To find out how Islamabad, Pakistan's nursing schools' students feel about the supportive learning environment. **Methods:** In a descriptive cross-sectional study, 220 nursing students enrolled in Post-Registered Nurse Bachelor of Science in Nursing (PRBSN) and Generic Bachelor of Science in Nursing (GBSN) programs participated. Responses were collected anonymously using the Dundee Ready Education Environment Measure (DREEM). SPSS version 25.0 was used to analyze the data in order to obtain a more detailed grasp of the perceptions of the pupils. **Results:** The 220 participants in the study, 90 (40.9%) identified as male and 130 (59.1%) as female. The overall mean score of 153 out of 200 indicates that people have more favourable opinions about the supportive learning environment than they do negative ones. Further investigation revealed that students in the GBSN program had even more favourable opinions of a supportive learning environment ($P < 0.001$) according to the independent t-test than students in the PRBSN program. Additionally, female students displayed significantly more positive perceptions ($P < 0.001$) compared to their male counterparts. **Conclusions:** In examining the nursing students' perceptions, this study identified both commonalities and differences in their perceptions. While positive aspects were acknowledged, negative perceptions also surfaced. The study concludes that creating a conducive learning environment in nursing colleges is essential for fostering positive student experiences and enhancing the overall quality of education.

INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving world of education, one element that stands out as crucial in shaping students' educational journey, is a favourable learning environment. Nowhere this is more evident than in specialized fields like nursing. As gatekeepers to the future of healthcare, nursing colleges hold immense responsibility in preparing and developing competent professionals [1]. It is therefore imperative to gain a deep understanding of students' perspectives on the learning environment to continuously improve. Over the past few decades, in Pakistan, the field of nursing education has undergone a significant overhaul. From

relying on diploma-based programs to adopting a degree-based curriculum, there has been a noteworthy shift towards a more comprehensive educational approach for nurses [2]. This change has shifted the focus from basic training to more in-depth, university-level instruction. Despite this transformative progression, there is a lack of solid research that evaluates the overall effectiveness of this new model in nursing colleges [3]. Although there is a plethora of information regarding the key principles of creating a suitable learning environment, there exists a lack of understanding when it comes to the specific



intricacies within nursing colleges in Pakistan [2, 4, 5]. The existing literature also lacks a detailed analysis of the specific challenges and benefits that have emerged following this pivotal transition [6, 7]. In light of this, this study seeks to bridge these gaps by thoroughly examining the impacts of the shift on nursing education. The primary purpose of this research is to examine how nursing students in Pakistan perceive the learning environment within their colleges. The objectives of this investigation are twofold: first, comprehensively evaluating and analyzing the students' opinions on the physical infrastructure and amenities present in their nursing colleges through the use of the self-administered questionnaire, and second, investigate the role of different factors like program and gender among students participating in the Post Registered Nurse Bachelor of Science in Nursing (PRBSN) and Generic Bachelor of Science in Nursing (GBSN) programs in influencing how students see the overall learning environment.

Despite the crucial role of a supportive learning environment in shaping nursing students' academic performance and professional development, limited research in Pakistan has comprehensively explored students' perceptions across different nursing programs. Existing studies often focus on single institutions or specific aspects of education, leaving a gap in understanding the overall educational environment and the influence of factors such as program type and gender. Addressing this gap is essential to inform strategies for improving nursing education quality. The goal of this study was to uncover important information that can guide educational practices and policies, ultimately raising the bar for nursing education.

METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was used. Current research was carried out at two nursing colleges located in Islamabad, Pakistan from April to October 2024. The sample was calculated by using the Rao Soft Sample Calculator at CI 95% and 5% margin of error. A convenience sampling method was used to contact 278 students enrolled in the Post-Registered Nurse Bachelor of Science in Nursing (PRBSN) and Generic Bachelor of Science in Nursing (GBSN) programs. Finally, 220 students (79%) ultimately chose to participate after signing informed consent. The study comprised students presently enrolled in Post-Registered Nurse Bachelor of Science in Nursing (PRBSN) and Generic Bachelor of Science in Nursing (GBSN) programs. Whereas, the students returning from a month-long break, re-entering the educational system, currently ill, dealing with a recent family loss or illness, or on probation were excluded from the study. The self-administered questionnaire was especially utilized to

gather data in order to fulfil our research goals. The questionnaire covered demographic details such as age, gender, enrolled program, and year of enrollment in Section A. Whereas, section B focused on students' opinions of the conducive learning environment, with the utilization of the internationally validated scale, measure of the Dundee Ready Education Environment (DREEM)" [8]. The DREEM comprises 50 items that are categorized into five subscales and scored on a five-point Likert scale (0-4): impression of learning with 12 objects, teachers-related perception based on 11 items, 8 items academic self-perception, 12 items in atmosphere-related perception and 7 items in social self-perception subscale. Remarkably, the correction process involved reversing scores for nine negative items, where dissatisfaction with the item was now expressed by greater scores. With matching categories of 0-50 very poor, 51-100 many difficulties, 101-150 more positive than negative, and 151-200 good perceptions, the questionnaire's maximum possible score is 200. Moreover, the separate range for all subscales is more specifically used to calculate respondents' responses. The DREEM is a reliable scale with 0.86 Cronbach's alpha coefficients [9]. To analyze the data, we utilized the DREEM author guide, it enabled us to collect frequencies, mean values, and standard deviations for the subscales in the questionnaire. Prior to being loaded into SPSS version 25.0, the data were meticulously coded and verified for accuracy. The frequency and percentage were determined using descriptive statistics. Additionally, based on selected gender and programs, an independent sample t-test was used to identify any changes in scores pertaining to the perception of the learning environment and its subscales.

RESULTS

The study findings showed that total 90 (40.9%) male and 130 (59.1%) female nursing students participated in this study. When it came to enrollment status, 120 (54.5%) were pursuing the GBSN program, whereas 100 students (45.5%) were enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (PRBSN) program for post-registered nurses. Furthermore, in Table 1, the result highlights how students perceive various aspects of education, as measured by the DREEM questionnaire. Across different dimensions of perception, we can see a trend towards positivity. Specifically, in terms of Learning-related Perception, the majority of students 169 (76.8%) reported a positive outlook, while a smaller percentage 37 (16.8%) had a negative view of teaching. Similarly, in terms of teacher-related perception, a significant portion 163 (74.1%) saw teaching in a positive light, with a minority 46 (20.9%) suggesting a need for further training. Lastly, concerning Academic Self-Perception, the highest percentage of

respondents 143 (65%) expressed positive emotions, with only a small fraction 1 (0.5%) reporting feelings of failure. The findings from the Atmosphere-related Perception showed that a large majority of students 158 (71.8%) perceived a positive environment, while a small minority 1 (0.5%) had a negative perception. Similarly, in the Social Self-Perception results, a significant portion of students 114 (51.8%) described the social environment as "Not a Nice Place," while a smaller percentage 88 (40%) deemed it as "Not too bad." Interestingly, only a handful of participants 4 (1.8%) rated it as "Excellent." These outcomes offer valuable insights into students' overall perceptions, highlighting both positive aspects and areas that may require attention and development (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Participants n=220

DREEM Subscales	Scoring Range	Frequency (%)
Learning Related Perception	Very Poor	0 (0%)
	Teaching viewed negatively	37 (16.8%)
	More positive	169 (76.8)
	Highest Positive approach	14 (6.4)
Teachers Related Perception	Very Bad	2 (0.9%)
	Need of Some Re-training	46 (20.9%)
	In Right Direction	163 (74.1%)
	A model teachers	9 (4.1%)
Academic Self Perception	Feeling of Failure	1 (0.5%)
	Feeling of Negative Aspects	26 (11.8%)
	More Positive Feelings	143 (65%)
	More Confident	50 (22.7%)
Atmosphere Related Perception	Terrible Environment	1 (0.5%)
	Many issues that need to be changed	49 (22.3%)
	Positive Environment	158 (71.8%)
	More positive feeling about overall environment	12 (5.5%)
Social Self Perception	Miserable	14 (4.6%)
	Not a Nice Place	114 (51.8%)
	Not too bad	88 (40%)
	Excellent	4 (1.8 %)

Table 2 demonstrates the significant mean difference in the overall score between GBSN (24.70 ± 3.35) and the PRBSN students (22.84 ± 2.79) with a p-value of 0.050. Whereas a non-significant mean difference was reported on teacher-related perception and social self-perception among the two groups. Moreover, a significant mean difference was in learning-related perception, academic self-perception, and atmosphere-related perception found among GBSN and PRBSN students on subscales (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparisons between GBSN students and PRBSN students on DREEM and its subscales

DREEM Subscales	GBSN Mean \pm SD	PRBSN Mean \pm SD	p-Value
Learning related Perception	31.29 ± 5.48	28.09 ± 4.67	0.050
Teachers related Perception	25.42 ± 4.79	25.90 ± 3.92	0.490
Academic Self Perception	22.50 ± 4.16	20.25 ± 3.92	0.010
Atmosphere related Perception	29.92 ± 5.01	27.30 ± 5.21	0.010
Social Self Perception	13.13 ± 3.64	13.91 ± 3.62	0.120
Total Perception of Conducive Learning Environment	24.70 ± 3.35	22.84 ± 2.79	<0.001

DREEM (Dundee Ready Educational Environment Measure)

The overall perception of a conducive learning environment also showed a significant mean difference between male and female students, as indicated in Table 3, with female students (24.35 ± 2.95) having a more positive perception than male students (22.72 ± 3.29).

Table 3: Gender Comparisons between GBSN students and PRBSN students on DREEM and its subscales

DREEM Subscales	Male Mean \pm SD	Female Mean \pm SD	t-Value	p-Value
Perception of Conducive Learning Environment	22.72 ± 3.29	24.35 ± 2.95	-3.847	0.001

DREEM (Dundee Ready Educational Environment Measure)

DISCUSSION

Assessing nursing students' perceptions of a supportive learning environment in their nursing schools was the primary goal of the current study. The findings showed that students generally had a favorable opinion of the learning environment. According to the study's findings, nursing students had a more favorable perception of a conducive learning environment since it improved their academic performance, success, and degree of satisfaction. Our study is in line with similar investigations conducted globally, as well as within nursing colleges in Pakistan. Studies repeatedly demonstrated that nursing students had a positive opinion of suitable learning environments [1, 10-14]. Interestingly, in agreement with earlier research, our study confirms that students in the Generic Bachelor of Science in Nursing (GBSN) program typically have a more favorable opinion of the learning environment than those in the Post-Registered Nurse Bachelor of Science in Nursing (PRBSN) program [9, 15, 16]. Nevertheless, a study conducted in Pakistan in 2016 revealed a noteworthy anomaly to this pattern, wherein PRBSN students displayed a more favorable attitude. This could perhaps be attributed to variances in course content, pedagogical methods, or individual traits [1]. These discrepancies in their opinions may result from the varied traits of students pursuing two distinct professional degrees. While PRBSN students already possess a basic diploma in nursing, GBSN students are entry-level nursing students. So, curriculum changes, teaching methodologies, and modules could influence their perceptions easily. Moreover, it observed a

more positive perception of the learning environment among female nursing students, which aligns with the results of another study [1]. Inconsistent findings have been reported by a recent study conducted in Pakistan [17] as the male nursing students exhibited more positive perceptions about the learning environment as compared to female students. The fact that female students in the current study had more positive opinions than their male counterparts may suggest that students' perceptions and interactions with the learning environment varied depending on their gender [18, 19]. This can be because there are more female nursing students in Pakistan nursing colleges, therefore this gender bias can affect their perception of the conducive learning environment [7, 20]. Further exploration is warranted to delve into the specific factors contributing to these observed differences, particularly the reasons behind the heightened positive perception among GBSN students and female participants. It is crucial to recognize the limits of this study even if it provides insightful information about how nursing students in Pakistan see the educational environment. One drawback is that response bias could result from using self-reported data from a questionnaire. To get in-depth insight, future researchers should conduct qualitative studies. Additionally, this cross-sectional study included colleges located in twin cities Rawalpindi and Islamabad so it cannot be fully generalizable to other regions in Pakistan. Further research in diverse contexts is needed for a comprehensive understanding of this topic to enhance the generalizability and applicability of the results to a broader spectrum of health education contexts.

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design and the inclusion of only two nursing colleges in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, self-reported responses may introduce bias. Future research should employ longitudinal and qualitative approaches across diverse regions to gain deeper insights, enabling institutions to develop targeted interventions that further enhance the learning environment for nursing students.

CONCLUSIONS

This study involved surveying nursing students in Islamabad and Rawalpindi regarding their opinions of the classroom. Overall, the results were positive, adding valuable insights to the ongoing conversation about nursing education. By acknowledging the crucial role of a supportive learning environment, teachers and institutions can utilize these findings to personalize their teaching methods, improve facilities, and provide better support to their students. Notably, the variations between program types and genders emphasize the importance of tailored approaches in both education and practice. Moving forward, continued cooperation, research, and an effort to

address identified areas for improvement can lead to significant advancements in the field.

Authors' Contribution

Conceptualization: SB

Methodology: UD, ZP

Formal analysis: SK

Writing and Drafting: SP

Review and Editing: SP, SK, UD, ZP, SB

All authors approved the final manuscript and take responsibility for the integrity of the work.

Conflicts of Interest

All the authors declare no conflict of interest.

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