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Perception of Student Nurses about their Clinical Learning Environment at Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Center Lahore

Shazia Salamat Ali[1*], Asim Munir[1], Faisal Majeed[2], Saif Ullah[3], Ghulam Rasool[1] and Ali Hyder[4]

[1]Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Center Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan
[2]Doctors Hospital Nursing College, Lahore, Pakistan
[3]Benazir College of Nursing, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir College, Larkana, Pakistan
[4]Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University, Larkana, Pakistan

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Student nurses perceive that learning environment is a clinical area where students can learn new things according to their set objectives and enhance their knowledge and skills, there are a lot of challenges that students face during clinical placement. **Objective:** To explore perception of student nurses about their clinical learning environment at Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital & Research Center Lahore. **Methods:** This study was a cross sectional survey conducted at Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital from May 2022 to June 2022. Interprofessional clinical learning environment inventory tool was used for data collection from 37 student nurses. Data analysis was done by SPSS version 20.0. P-value<0.05 will be considered as significant. **Results:** There were 14 males and 23 female student is current study. 79% of the students showed positive perception and only 21% shows negative perception about their clinical learning environment. More than 94% nurse students suggested that clinical orientation was relevant and well organized according to their objectives.56% Students during their clinical rotation felt that they belonged to the same clinical area and 89% reported that the behavior of that area staff was friendly. There was insignificant association between gender and Clinical Learning Environment (P-value>0.05). **Conclusions:** The students showed positive perception and satisfaction about the clinical learning environment which indicates that the clinical learning environment is crucial for nursing students, enhancing their clinical, communication, and problem-solving skills.

INTRODUCTION

Clinical placement is essential part of nursing training and it is required for clinical skills development. Student nurses have different perceptions about clinical learning environment, some find it smooth and well organized, while other found it difficult because they face variety of challenges on daily basis[1]. There are multiple factors that affect students learning and that include learning environment atmosphere, engagement and collaboration between nursing students and clinical preceptors, and allocation of number of students to each preceptor in clinical area [2]. During clinical placement students need support from preceptors and senior nurses to meet their learning objectives other areas that need attention is staff-student relationship, students' relationship with preceptors and nursing managers and positive learning environment [3]. Literature says that, when students go to clinical area, they have different experiences some say that, they easily met their clinical objectives and other say that, they did not easily meet their clinical objectives due to unstructured learning opportunities [4]. Moreover, clinical placement may be frustrating for some students, for such students, teachers should identify the appropriate area for placement of students to meet their clinical objectives according to demand of their course and objectives [5].

Supportive environment can be composed of positive staff morale, stress free working environments, and adequate patient workloads. For legal prospective clinical placement is very important aspect of nursing education and required to ensure that student nurse will perform different clinical tasks according to national and international standards. For most of students, clinical placements are very stressful because of unclear objectives, improper area orientation and improper supervision and inadequate exposure of all clinical areas [6, 7]. Preceptor's role and relationship with students is very important in student's clinical learning, positive and supportive relationship enhances clinical learning while lack of support and motivation from supervisor puts negative impact on students learning. Studies has shown that students in clinical learning environment encounter non-supportive behavior and lack of professional relationship, lack of time, and engagement of supervisors in their clinical tasks which is a big challenge for nursing students [8]. In the hospital setting, wards serve as vital clinical learning environments for students, where they develop essential skills for future nursing practice. Beyond hospitals, clinical learning occurs in various settings such as nursing homes, mental health care centers, children's day care homes, and even prisons. Quality clinical learning environments are characterized by professional supervision, thorough orientation, and timely feedback, fostering the integration of theory into practice and the development of critical thinking skills among students [9, 10]. High-quality clinical learning environments prioritize student success through a healthy climate, diverse learning opportunities, and structured evaluation methods. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted traditional clinical learning, necessitating innovative solutions to maintain student-patient interactions and professional development. Ongoing evaluation and feedback mechanisms are crucial for identifying and addressing challenges, mitigating student stress, and optimizing learning outcomes [11, 12]. Ziba *et al.*, in 2021, has explored from a study done in Ghana on perception of student nurses about their clinical learning environment that, in health care setting nursing practice has vital importance and for development of nursing skills it is important for student nurses to go through clinical placement, their clinical efficiency depends on ability to apply theory in practice [13]. According to a study student nurses perceive that, clinical learning environment is the environment in which students start their clinical practice as novice and gradually lead to expert and acquire desired skills and competence to provide safe nursing care to patients [14]. The clinical learning environment is constantly changing and it is influenced by characteristics of supervisor, their feedback and teaching style, their education and clinical expertise.

The present study was conducted to explore perception of student nurses about their clinical learning environment at SKMCH&RC Lahore.

METHODS

The study was conducted in nursing institutes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, using a cross-sectional analytical study design from March to December 2023. The study population was the nursing instructors that educate students in the private and public sectors at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa institute, which was recognized by the Pakistan Nursing Council and affiliated with Khyber Medical University. The nursing educators are the participants who have completed their undergraduate program and have a valid Pakistan Nursing Council license. The inclusion criteria for the study were that the participant must have a valid PNC license, have more than one year of experience, and teach current nursing subjects in any recognized institute, while nursing instructors who are on leave or are not willing to be voluntary participants are excluded from the study. The sample size was calculated assuming all the nursing faculty as the population, then using 95% confidence, 5% margin of error and 80% prevalence the sample size was 185, and the data of 4 participants were excluded because they had incomplete forms; therefore, the final sample size of the study was 181 using the convenient sampling technique. The data collection process consists of two steps. In the first step, the demographic data of the participants were collected, which was gender, age, education and experience, while a valid and reliable questionnaire was used for the second step of the study, which was attitude and satisfaction of the participant. The attitude level was evaluated through an 18-item questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale response from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The data were divided into mild (18–42), moderate (43 to 66) and high (67–90) levels of attitude through cutoff values. Reliability was 0.8 and the validity of the tool was 0.87 [14]. The level of satisfaction was assessed through a 30-item questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale response from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The values were nominated as mild with a score of 30–70, moderate with a score of 71–110, and high (71–110). The reliability was 0.86, the validity of the tool was 0.8 and the consistency of the tool for all the items was from 0.7 to 0.9 [15, 16]. Data analysis was performed through SPSS 22.0 as descriptive and inferential statistics. An independent t-test and an ANNOVA were used to identify differences within the groups, while a chi-square test was used to identify the association of attitude and satisfaction with demographic variables. The Ziauddin University Karachi ethical review committee accepted the project, and prior to data collection, each setting gave its consent. The study's goals and objectives were explained to the participants, and they

received assurances prior to giving their informed permission that the information would be kept private and that they would have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any moment to protect their rights.

RESULTS

There were 14 males and 23 female student is current study. More than 94% nurse students suggested that clinical orientation was relevant and well organized according to their objectives. Majority of students have positive perception about teaching strategies which were used by preceptors to enhance learning. Furthermore, study explored that a significant number of students thought that there was excessive supervision on students from supervisors. Study expressed that, there was heavy clinical work in clinical area for students and it should be reduced to enhance focused and objective oriented learning, 67%

Students preferred clinical preceptor of the same discipline as of students (nursing). More than 90% students agreed that, they achieved their clinical objectives given by nursing institution within given time, 56% Students during their clinical rotation felt that they belonged to the same clinical area and 89% reported that the behavior of that area staff was friendly and supportive and they also found that the relevant clinical placement provided sufficient learning opportunities 89%, preceptors were approachable to students, 89% students had clear idea about what was expected from them from clinical rotation in any designated area. Students found that, on completion of clinical rotation they were able to better understand their role in clinical area and it also improved their critical thinking, decision making and communication skills with patients, their families and staff table 1.

Table 1: Inter-professional Clinical Learning Environment Inventory (ICPLEI) Contained 15 Questions Regarding Student Nurses' Perception About Their Clinical Learning Environment at SKMCH

Sr. No.	Perceptions of Nursing Students	Strongly Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
	Perceptions of Student Nurses about their Clinical Learning Environment at SKMCH & RC Lahore					
1	The Purpose (Learning Objective) Of This Placement Was Made Clear	23	13	1	0	0
2	Orientation Was Relevant And Well Organized	23	12	2	0	0
3	The Teaching Strategies Helped Me In Learning	20	17	0	0	0
4	There Was Too Much Supervision On The Placement	4	21	10	2	0
5	The Workload In Clinical Area Was Too Heavy	19	7	6	5	0
6	My Preference Is For Mentor To Be Of The Nursing Discipline	11	21	2	2	0
7	I Valued Having Other Than Nursing Discipline Involve In Preceptorship	3	11	11	8	4
8	I Achieved The Nursing Specific Learning Objectives Within Given Time, Set By My Nursing Institution.	16	19	2	0	0
9	I Felt As If I Belonged To The Same Clinical Area	7	14	9	6	1
10	The Placement Provided Me With Sufficient Clinical Learning Opportunities	10	23	4	0	0
11	The Preceptor Were Friendly And Approachable	17	16	3	1	0
12	I Usually Had A Clear Idea Of What Was Expected Of Me	13	20	2	2	0
13	After This Placement, I Understood More About Nurses Role In Clinical Area	22	15	0	0	0
14	After This Placement, I Have a Better Understanding of the Patient's Role In Health Care Decision Making	18	17	2	0	0
15	I Felt Comfortable Communicating with Patients and Families to Seek Them Input Into Care	20	15	2	0	0

Figure 1 shows the perception of nursing students regarding their clinical learning environment. 79% of the students showed positive perception and only 21% shows negative perception about their clinical learning environment.

Perception of Nursing students
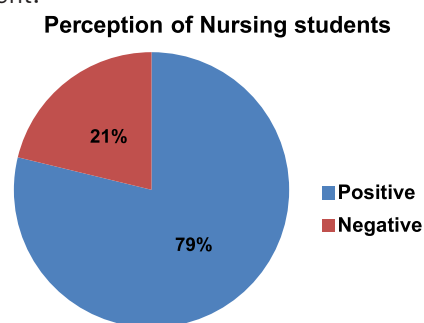
Figure 1: Perception of Student Nurses about their Clinical Learning Environment

There were 14 males and 23 female student is current study. 10 males and 18 females shows positive perception about their teaching environment, only 4 males and 5 females shows negative perception. There was insignificant association between gender and Clinical Learning Environment (P-value>0.05) table 2.

Table 2: Association of Gender with Perception about their Clinical Learning Environment

Variables	Positive	Negative	Total	p-Value
Male	10	4	14	
Female	18	5	23	0.6385
Total	28	9	37	

DISCUSSION

Data was collected from 37 students that include post RN degree and diploma nurse students at SKMCH and RC Lahore, majority of students feel that the purpose of clinical placement was made clear to them and orientation for clinical placement was well organized and relevant, clinical placement enhanced their learning regarding that clinical area and there was adequate supervision by preceptor in clinical area. 79% of the students showed positive perception and only 21% shows negative perception about their clinical learning environment. Serçekuş *et al.*, in 2016, has identified through research that, good preceptorship had positive impact on their learning and majority of students were satisfied during their clinical learning [17]. According to Chan *et al.*, in 2018 in contrast some other studies suggested that, students had different perception about their clinical learning environment, and these different perceptions can be due to change in teaching technology and resources available in clinical environment in developing countries, other factors include instructors, experience, communication skills, attitude of peers and learning environment, and organizational learning and teaching culture [18]. In

currents study it was reported that majority of students have positive perception about teaching strategies which were used by preceptors to enhance learning. Furthermore, study explored that a significant number of students thought that there was excessive supervision on students from supervisors. These findings were in line with findings of Papathanasiou *et al.*, in 2014 calculated the mean of clinical learning environment observations which revealed clinical learning environment orientation relevant and individualized and students were satisfied with their clinical supervision and strategies used to enhance their learning [19]. In currents study it was reported that 56% Students during their clinical rotation felt that they belonged to the same clinical area and 89% reported that the behavior of that area staff was friendly and supportive and they also found the relevant clinical placement provided sufficient learning opportunities 89%, preceptors were approachable to students and 89% students had clear idea about what was expected from them from clinical rotation in any designated area. These findings are comparable with Cant and Colleagues which further explored that, quality of preceptorship depends on role and responsibilities assigned to preceptor, assigned preceptors per student and their supervision strategies, those students who had preceptor allocated to small number of students showed good learning and performance in contract to those who had one preceptor on large number of students. And those students who had same supervisor in all clinical areas were more satisfied and had good relationship with preceptors [20].

CONCLUSIONS

In was concluded that the student showed positive perspective regarding clinical learning environment. Students were satisfied with the supervisor ship which enhanced their communication skills with patients and other health care professionals. In addition, Proper supervision, healthy professional relationship among students, preceptors and multidisciplinary team and timely assessment and feedback from preceptors in clinical area by the same discipline helps students.

Authors Contribution

Conceptualization: SSA
Methodology: SU, GR
Formal analysis: GR
Writing, review and editing: AM, FM, AH

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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