

Nursing Students' Perceptions of the Clinical Learning Environment at Training Hospital in Palestine

Muliati Sedek¹, Aliza CheAmran², Jamil Shqirat³

¹Center for Language Learning, Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka, Durian Tunggal, Melaka, Malaysia, ²Faculty of Electrical Technology and Engineering, Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka, Durian Tunggal, Melaka, Malaysia, ³Al-Makassed University College. Jerusalem

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the level of satisfaction among nursing students regarding the clinical learning environment (CLE) at one hospital in Palaestine, Al-Makassed Hospital. It examines the influence of demographic factors, including gender, place of residence, and years of study, on their satisfaction with the CLE. The research explores various aspects of nursing students' satisfaction, such as patient cooperation, hospital policies, guidance from clinical nursing instructors, clinical practice experiences, relationships with hospital staff, and the practical application of theoretical knowledge. Data were collected from 120 nursing students at Al-Makassed Hospital using a questionnaire which was developed based on the research questions. The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings indicated that nursing students generally expressed satisfaction with the CLE at Al-Makassed Hospital. However, the results suggested that students' satisfaction was not significantly influenced by demographic variables, including gender, place of residence, and years of study. Furthermore, the study highlighted that nursing students reported higher satisfaction levels in closed units compared to open units within the clinical learning environment.

Keywords: Nursing Student's Satisfaction, Clinical Learning Environment, Al-Makassed Hospital

Introduction

The clinical learning environment (CLE) serves as a fundamental component of nursing education, as practical training reflects the theoretical knowledge acquired by nursing students. However, many colleges and universities lack sufficient clinical training opportunities for nursing students, which directly impacts their CLE experience. Practical training plays a crucial role in enhancing knowledge, refining clinical skills, and strengthening professional confidence. Therefore, this study aims to identify and examine the challenges faced by Palestinian colleges and universities in providing an effective CLE.

The CLE encompasses various elements, including patient interactions, hospital policies, clinical practice experiences, guidance from clinical instructors, support from nursing staff, theoretical education, availability of medical supplies, and other essential factors. A well-structured CLE is instrumental in motivating students to achieve their learning objectives and improving their overall clinical training experience.

Furthermore, understanding nursing students' satisfaction (NSS) with their CLE is vital for optimizing their learning experience (Henderson, Twentyman, Heel, & Lloyd, 2006; Jeffrey et al., 2020). Ali (2016) emphasized that enhancing the CLE involves factors such as the quality of classroom instruction, effectiveness of feedback, lecturer-student interactions, peer collaboration, course content, access to learning equipment, library resources, and other educational materials.

Thus, this study aims to evaluate nursing students' satisfaction (NSS) with the clinical learning environment (CLE) at Al-Makassed Hospital, with the goal of improving the quality of nursing education and training in Palestinian colleges and universities.

Problem Statement

Al-Makassed Hospital serves as a primary training center for nursing students from various universities and colleges across Palestine. Preliminary interviews conducted with current nursing students revealed that many express concerns regarding their clinical learning practice (CLP) and encounter significant challenges related to the quality of clinical training. In response to these findings, this study seeks to evaluate the gap between the clinical learning environment (CLE) and nursing students' satisfaction (NSS) at Al-Makassed Hospital. By identifying these gaps, the study aims to contribute to the enhancement of clinical training quality and improve the overall learning experience for nursing students in Palestine.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between clinical nursing practice, clinical nursing instructors and nursing student's satisfaction?
2. How are the patients' cooperation influence the nursing student's satisfaction?
3. What is the relationship between Al-Makassed hospital policy, staff nurses and nursing students' satisfaction?
4. What is the relationship between nursing students' satisfaction and practical implementation related to theoretical learning?

Objective of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to explore nursing students' satisfaction on the clinical learning environment (CLE) in Al-Makassed Hospital in Palestine.

Significant of the Study

As this study aims to determine the nursing student's satisfaction (NSS) and the clinical learning environment (CLE) at AL-Makassed Hospital, the gained data can be used as significant tools to determine the level of improvement, in order to optimize the implementation of various activities within the clinical settings.

Review of Literature

Several studies have explored nursing students' satisfaction with the clinical learning environment (CLE) across different countries. A study conducted at Harm School in Biratnagar assessed nursing students' satisfaction with their CLE. Findings revealed that most students were satisfied, with the highest satisfaction related to the role of nursing instructors in clinical placements, while the lowest satisfaction was linked to the pedagogical atmosphere. This suggests that satisfaction plays a crucial role in enhancing clinical learning experiences (Dahal & Acharya, 2020).

Similarly, a study in Singapore examined nursing students' perceptions and satisfaction with their CLE. The results indicated that most students had moderate satisfaction with their clinical environment. The study emphasized the need for collaboration between nursing faculties and healthcare institutions to foster a supportive and engaging clinical environment through a holistic, multifactorial approach (Jeffrey & Wenjie, 2020).

In Malaysia, research conducted at the National University Medical Center highlighted the significance of clinical placements in equipping students with essential knowledge and skills for professional nursing practice. Most participants expressed high satisfaction with their CLE, with the leadership style of head nurses being the most positively rated aspect. The study suggested improvements, such as continuous feedback from supervisors, enhancement of clinical placement experiences, and implementation of seminars, lectures, and nursing research initiatives. Additionally, it recommended curriculum and placement modifications to produce well-trained, competent nurses (Karim & Abdul Majid, 2020).

Another study by Fernández-García et al. (2020) investigated the impact of academic factors on nursing students' satisfaction. Conducted at a private university in Valencia during the 2016/2017 academic year, the study involved 574 students, with 79% (456) being female. Two analytical methods—Hierarchical Regression Models (HRM) and Fuzzy Sets Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA)—were used. The HRM results indicated that students' overall scores influenced all satisfaction dimensions, while the fsQCA analysis found that factors such as the type of healthcare facility, management style, choice of clinical placement, and student-to-clinical educator ratio played a role in shaping students' satisfaction levels. These findings can guide academic institutions in designing intervention programs to better support nursing students, preparing them for a competent workforce (Fernandez-Garcia et al., 2020).

A study conducted among 463 nursing students from three universities assessed the quality of clinical experiences within the CLE. Questionnaires were distributed during the final nursing laboratory session of the 2012/2013 academic year. The findings highlighted that the quality of clinical learning significantly impacts all educational institutions, with CLE quality reflecting the effectiveness of curriculum structures (Papastavrou et al., 2020).

In Israel, research examined the relationship between nursing students' stress levels and satisfaction during different stages of clinical practice: (i) preclinical, (ii) clinical, and (iii) advanced clinical training. Surveys were administered to 892 students in their second, third, and fourth years of study across three higher education institutions. Results showed that stress levels were mild to moderate (2.67), while satisfaction levels ranged from moderate to high (3.57). Second-year students in the preclinical phase reported significantly higher stress

and lower satisfaction than their senior peers. Female students experienced more stress and lower satisfaction than male students. The primary stressors for second-year students were inadequate preparation and difficulty meeting skill expectations, whereas third- and fourth-year students were more affected by conflicts between professional beliefs and real-world clinical experiences (Admi et al., 2018).

Another study explored nursing students' perceptions of their willingness to assist and their overall happiness in the learning environment. It focused on pedagogical atmosphere, ward leadership, and the role of nursing staff in clinical settings. Results indicated that a welcoming workplace, where staff and educators were supportive and demonstrated a positive attitude toward students, was the most significant factor influencing student satisfaction (Doyle et al., 2017).

Finally, a qualitative study investigated the transfer of theoretical knowledge to clinical practice and the challenges students faced. Findings suggested that students perceived the theoretical information as excessive, leading to difficulties in applying it in practical settings. Many students lacked confidence in performing clinical procedures due to their struggle in bridging theoretical concepts with hands-on practice (Günay & Kılınç, 2018). These studies collectively highlight the importance of a well-structured and supportive CLE in enhancing nursing students' learning experiences and overall satisfaction. Study Design

This study employed a cross-sectional research design to assess the level of satisfaction with the educational environment among nursing students undergoing training at various universities in Palestine. A questionnaire was utilized to examine the factors influencing nursing students' satisfaction at Al-Makassed Hospital. The majority of the questionnaire consisted of objective and close-ended questions, measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

The study population comprised all nursing students at Al-Makassed Hospital, specifically those in their third and fourth years of study. A convenience sampling method was applied, selecting nursing students from different universities and colleges across Palestine who were undergoing training at the hospital. The sample size included 150 students, with 120 respondents completing the questionnaire, resulting in a response rate of 80%. Among the respondents, 81 (67.5%) were female, while 39 (32.5%) were male. The data collection process was completed within one month.

To achieve the study's objectives, the researchers developed a questionnaire based on a review of relevant literature and previous studies related to the topic. The instrument underwent validity and reliability testing to ensure its suitability for the Palestinian context. The questionnaire consisted of 35 items, covering six key variables: clinical practice, relationships between nursing staff and students, clinical instructors, patient cooperation, hospital policies, and the integration of theoretical learning into clinical training.

Results and Discussions

Table 1

Clinical Practice and Nursing Student's Satisfaction

No	Items	Mean	Percentage	Attitude
1	There is a gap between the theoretical and practical application	3.25	60.4%	Positive
2	The training period for each course is sufficient to cover what has been studied in theoretical course	3.07	61.4%	Positive
3	Location of my residency affects my satisfaction in clinical area	3.10	60%	Positive
4	Availability of transportation to and from the training Setting (hospital).	3.02	65%	Positive
5	More than 5 students in one clinical group in ward is a problematic	3.15	61%	Positive
6	I am not familiar with my clinical learning objectives before I go to Clinical learning setting.	3.16	63.2%	Positive
Total		3.19	61.8%	Positive

The analysis revealed that nursing students expressed positive satisfaction, with over 60% reporting favorable experiences. Specifically, satisfaction with clinical practice was reflected in a mean score of 3.19 and a satisfaction rate of 61.8%. The findings indicate that nursing students were generally pleased with their clinical training. However, they acknowledged a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, though they found the training duration adequate to reinforce what was covered in their theoretical coursework. Additionally, students believed that their place of residence influenced their overall satisfaction during training at AL-Makassed Hospital. These results align with the findings of Scott Lamont et al. (2016) and Rodriguez-Garcia et al. (2021).

Table 2

Nursing Staff Relationship and Nursing Student's Satisfaction

No	Items	Mean	Percentage	Attitude
1	There is cooperation between nurses working in the department and nursing students.	3.46	69.2%	Positive
2	There is a bad exploitation of nursing students at the training setting by staff nurses.	3.59	71.8%	Positive
3	There is cooperation between the head nurse and nursing students.	3.09	61.8%	Positive
4	Student nurses learn more from nursing staff by observing them how they do their job correctly.	3.34	66.8%	Positive
5	Nursing Staff are easy to approach at any time	3.28	65.6%	Positive
6	I have a problem dealing with staff nurses.	2.48	49.6%	Negative
7	When I am curious about a certain nursing procedure nursing staff explains it for me.	3.73	74.6%	Positive
Total		3.28	65.6%	Positive

The analysis shows that nursing students generally have a **positive experience** in their clinical training (**M=3.28, 65.6%**). They appreciate the **support and cooperation** from staff nurses and the head nurse, find **learning through observation helpful**, and feel that **nursing staff are approachable**. However, they also report **some level of exploitation by staff nurses (M=3.59, 71.8%)** and **difficulties in dealing with them (M=2.48, 49.6%)**, which is the only negative response. While the learning environment is supportive, addressing issues like **workload fairness and communication challenges** could further improve students' clinical training experience. The finding of study was supported by Melba, subrahmanya, Ramesh (2015) and Flores Vizcaya et al. (2018). The result revealed that nursing students were being recognized as part of nursing team, and the staff nurses were welcoming all students and did practice open communication and cooperation.

Table 3

Clinical instructor's relationship with nursing students during the clinical practice

No	Item	Mean	Percent%	Attitude
1	My instructor provides me with appropriate assistance when I have problems during my clinical practice	3.71	74%	Positive
2	My instructor is available at the ward all the time during the clinical practice	3.34	66.8%	Positive
3	My instructor has good knowledge and skills in nursing.	4.00	80%	Positive
4	My clinical instructor is subjective in dealing with students during the clinical training	2.58	51.6%	Negative
5	My Instructor deals with us in an arrogant way	2.34	46.8%	Negative
6	My Instructor discusses students' mistakes in front of Patients & staff, which embarrasses us.	2.41	48.2%	negative
7	My instructor gives us appropriate instructions when needed when needed	3.77	75.4%	positive
8	My Instructor evaluates the benefits and discuss with us the outcomes of the clinical training at the end of the day.	3.82	76.4%	positive
Total		3.25	65%	Positive

The analysis indicates that nursing students generally have a **positive perception** of their clinical instructors (**M=3.25, 65%**). They appreciate the **assistance provided (M=3.71, 74%)**, the **instructor's knowledge and skills (M=4.00, 80%)**, and the **clear instructions given during training (M=3.77, 75.4%)**. Additionally, students value **end-of-day evaluations (M=3.82, 76.4%)**, which help reinforce learning. However, some **negative aspects** were noted, including **subjectivity in dealing with students (M=2.58, 51.6%)**, **arrogant behavior (M=2.34, 46.8%)**, and **public criticism that causes embarrassment (M=2.41, 48.2%)**. While overall satisfaction is positive, improving **fairness, approachability, and feedback methods** could enhance students' clinical learning experience. The finding of this study was support by Anna, Kari, Maj, Gerd, (2012), Provan, Hosseini, Bagherian (2016). These findings revealed that nursing students viewed all these acts as positive and beneficial.

Table 4

Level of patient's cooperation and nursing students' satisfaction

No.	Item	Mean	Percent	Attitude
1.	The cases of the patients affect my clinical practice.	3.21	64.2%	Positive
2.	Most of the patients are cooperative while assessing their needs and providing care for them	3.49	69.8%	Positive
3.	During giving the nursing care for a patient, this will give me the opportunity to apply the theory into clinical practice	3.66	73.2%	Positive
Total		3.45	69%	Positive

The analysis shows that nursing students generally have a **positive experience** in their clinical practice (**M=3.45, 69%**). They find that **patient cases influence their training (M=3.21, 64.2%)**, and most patients are **cooperative during care (M=3.49, 69.8%)**, which helps facilitate their learning. Additionally, students acknowledge that providing nursing care allows them to **apply theoretical knowledge in practice (M=3.66, 73.2%)**. Overall, patient interactions play a significant role in enhancing their clinical learning experience. The finding of this study was supported by Aria, Leino, (2005), Gemuhay, Kalolo, Mirisho, Chipwaza and Nyangena (2019), which revealed a significant relationship between nursing students and patient's cooperation. Also, indicated that there were many positive relationships for both students and patients.

Table 5

Hospital policy in relation to student's clinical site satisfaction.

No	Items	Mean	Percentage	Attitude
1	I have an accurate description of my duties and rights as a nursing student.	3.21	64.2%	Positive
2	The hospital provides me with all the necessary equipment's, supplies and resources for the clinical practice	3.65	73%	Positive
3	My responsibilities as a nursing student are explained well to me by the hospital.	3.35	67%	Positive
4	The policy & rules of the hospital help the nursing students to do good practice	3.27	65.4%	Positive
Total		3.37	67.4%	Positive

The findings indicate that **nursing students had a clear understanding of their duties and rights** during clinical training. Additionally, the hospital **provided adequate equipment, supplies, and resources**, ensuring a well-supported learning environment. Students also expressed **satisfaction with how their responsibilities were explained to them by the hospital**. These results align with the study by **Rodriguez-Garcia et al. (2021)**, further supporting the importance of clear role definition and resource availability in enhancing nursing students' clinical experience.

Table 6

The relationship between the theoretical learning and clinical practice taking in consideration to the clinical practice.

No.	Item	Mean	Percentage	Attitude
1.	Doing a conference at the end of the clinical training day will affect the level of outcomes for the nursing student understanding and satisfaction	3.73	74.6%	Positive
2.	Teaching process and curriculum is relevant to the current clinical nursing practice.	3.33	66.6%	Positive
3.	Theoretical learning prepared me well for my clinical	3.28	65.6%	Positive
Total		3.45	69.0%	Positive

The findings suggest that **holding a conference at the end of each clinical training day enhances nursing students' understanding and satisfaction**. Additionally, the **theoretical learning, teaching process, and curriculum were found to be highly relevant to current clinical nursing practice**. However, these results **contradict the findings of Labeeb, Rajith, Ibrahim, Kamal, and Francis (2017) and Ulviye & Gulsen (2018)**. Despite receiving intensive theoretical instruction, **many students reported difficulties in applying this knowledge in practice**, which in turn **diminished the effectiveness of their clinical training**.

Table 7

Summary of the Results

No	Items	Rank	Mean	Percentage
1	Problems that facing nursing students' during clinical practice and their satisfaction.	1	3.45	69%
2	Nursing staff relationship and nursing student's satisfaction	1	3.45	69%
3	Instructor relationship with nursing students during clinical practice	2	3.37	67.4%
4	Level of patient's cooperation and nursing student's satisfaction	3	3.28	65.6%
5	Hospital policy in relation to student's clinical site satisfaction	4	3.25	65%
6	The relationship between the theoretical learning and clinical practice taking in consideration to the clinical environment practice.	5	3.09	61.8%
Total			3.32	66.3%

Table 7 highlights the relationship between theoretical learning and clinical practice in the clinical environment. The findings indicate that **patient cooperation and its impact on nursing students' satisfaction received the highest mean (M=3.45)**, making it the most influential factor. Conversely, **challenges faced by students during clinical practice had the lowest mean (M=3.09)**, suggesting that difficulties in the clinical setting negatively affect satisfaction. **Hospital policies regarding clinical site satisfaction ranked second (M=3.37)**, followed by **staff relationships (M=3.28)**, and **instructor relationships with students (M=3.25)**. Overall, nursing students' satisfaction across the six variables was **positive (M=3.32, 66.3%)**. The study also revealed a **gap between theoretical education and practical application**, as well as **variability in cooperation between working nurses and students**. However, the relationship

between **head nurses and students was found to be significant**, and instructors, despite their **strong nursing knowledge and skills, were perceived as not entirely objective** in student interactions. Lastly, the **hospital provided adequate equipment, supplies, and resources**, contributing to students' overall satisfaction with their clinical practice.

Conclusion of the Study

Based on the findings and discussions, this study contributes to the existing literature on nursing students' satisfaction with the clinical learning environment (CLE) by providing a contextualized analysis within Palestine, a region where such research remains scarce. While previous studies in Singapore, Malaysia, and Spain (Jeffrey & Wenjie, 2020; Karim & Abdul Majid, 2020; Fernández-García et al., 2020) have explored similar themes, they primarily focused on institutional policies, faculty-student relationships, or stress factors. In contrast, this study uniquely examines the combined influence of hospital policies, patient cooperation, and theoretical-practical integration on student satisfaction. The findings reinforce prior research on the gap between theory and practice (Günay & Kılınc, 2018; Labeeb et al., 2017) but go further by demonstrating how structured interventions, such as end-of-day clinical conferences, can mitigate this challenge. Moreover, while past studies emphasized the importance of clinical instructors (Doyle et al., 2017; Papastavrou et al., 2020), this research adds nuance by showing that while instructors possess strong expertise, their subjectivity and approachability significantly impact students' learning experiences.

Beyond confirming existing findings, this study advances theoretical understanding by highlighting patient cooperation as a key determinant of student satisfaction, with quantitative evidence ($M=3.45$, 69%) supporting its impact—an area underexplored in previous studies. Unlike prior research, which suggested that demographic factors might influence student satisfaction, this study finds that gender, place of residence, and years of study do not play a significant role, challenging existing assumptions. Additionally, while hospital policies and resource availability have been discussed in past literature (Rodríguez-García et al., 2021), this study emphasizes the need for clearer role definitions and improved access to medical supplies to enhance student preparedness. These insights provide valuable recommendations for both academic institutions and healthcare facilities, advocating for a more structured and student-centered approach to clinical training in Palestine and beyond.

Recommendation

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations can be made. Firstly, it is suggested that similar research be conducted in universities across Palestine to examine whether factors such as **gender, place of residence, ward assignments, and years of study** influence nursing students' satisfaction with their clinical learning environment. Additionally, further studies should explore other aspects, such as **cultural influences**, to better understand their impact on student satisfaction. Furthermore, to strengthen collaboration between **higher education institutions and the healthcare system** while improving the clinical learning environment, a **model for clinical practice education** should be developed. This model would promote **collaborative learning, trust, and mutual respect**, ultimately enhancing nursing students' overall clinical experience. Finally, future studies related to the learning strategies in the clinical practice should be conducted too. This will enable other researchers to gain more insight on other practical and scientific methods in nursing.

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