

Assessment of Pediatric Nursing Students' Perception about their Learning Experience

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Abstract:

Background: Students' learning experiences are impacted by multiple factors. Unfortunately, administrators and educators may find it difficult to change or control certain influencing factors found in a nursing programs' environment. Pediatric nursing students perform the clinical practice in different types of clinical settings. The pediatric clinical learning environment is important for students to be able to achieve the desired learning outcomes. **Aim:** to; assess pediatric nursing students' perception about their learning experience. **Design:** A descriptive research design. **Setting:** This study was conducted at Faculty of Nursing / Helwan University. **Subjects:** All available students (176) at the fourth academic year who passed the pediatric nursing experience were included in the study sample at the previously mentioned setting in the academic year 2017-2018. **Tools:** A structured questionnaire sheet to collect data consisted of three parts. Part one concerned with characteristics of students including age, gender, educational level and total grade of previous years, part two concerned with assessment of pediatric nursing students' perception of their learning experience and part three concerned with the assessment of students' satisfaction with their pediatric learning experience. **Results:** the study findings showed that the total perception of the studied sample regarding theoretical, practical and evaluation sections was positive. Also more than half of them were partially satisfied with their learning experience. **Conclusion:** pediatric nursing students had positive perception about their learning experience in theoretical, practical and evaluation sections. **Recommendations:** Students should share in planning their pediatric learning experience and their satisfaction should be monitored periodically. **Keywords:** Pediatric nursing, students, perception, learning experience.

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I. Introduction

In recent years, nursing education has been focusing on theoretical and clinical education for the purpose of increasing student's satisfaction through bridging any gap between theoretical and clinical education. ^[1] Graduates of nursing programs are expected to demonstrate specific skills and knowledge upon graduation for gaining a greater understanding of nursing programs that may provide valuable insight for the nursing profession and improve current educational practices. ^[2] Nursing education is currently facing many challenges making it difficult to meet the targets of learning and education including a national nurse faculty shortage and accomplish more tasks with fewer resources. ^[3]

Perception is a process where a person selects, organizes, identifies and interprets the sensory information received in order to understand the surrounding environment. Perceptions act as filters, to prevent from being overwhelmed by all of the surrounding noise (stimuli). Perceptions can be shaped by learning, memory, and expectations. Pediatric nursing students' perceptual systems also help to see the world as stable, even when the stimulus received is incomplete and/or changing. ^[4]

Pediatric nursing students perform the clinical practice in different types of clinical settings. The pediatric clinical learning environment is important for students to be able to achieve desired learning outcomes. ^[5] Exposure to pediatric patients in the clinical environment is one of the most critical experiences for student nurses. The pediatric health care setting is the place where skills, knowledge and attitudes developed in the theoretical part of the curriculum are applied, developed and integrated. ^[6]

Each student presents with different learning needs, creating a massive challenge for nurse educators. Understanding students perceptions may provide valuable insight and potentially lead to better learning experiences in the future for a diverse nursing student population. ^[7]

Students' learning experiences are impacted by multiple factors. Unfortunately, administrators and educators may find it difficult to change or control certain influencing factors found in a nursing programs'

environment. ^[8] Classroom size and setup, technology implementation, peer interactions and relationships with educators can affect students' learning experiences in higher education. ^[9]

Students should understand the evaluative processes and policies related to nursing programs, including the evaluation of faculty and students. Accurate and consistent student understanding of this process is crucial to improve personal learning experiences and to gather critical evaluative data for a nursing program. Also, nursing students' reflection about the evaluation of learning experiences can provide valuable insight as to the influential factors of the learning environment and what students value from the educational experiences. ^[10]

Students' satisfaction makes reference to "the learning experience". One of the most important roles of an educational institution is to offer relevant learning experiences to the students. ^[11] A higher level of satisfaction indicates how adequately educational methods are succeeding in stimulating thinking and learning. On the other hand, a below satisfactory level often indicates a lack of balance between academic requirements and the abilities that empower the students to accomplish the academic requirements. ^[12]

1.1 Significance of the Study

Effective learning is undoubtedly associated with the belief of gaining knowledge of surroundings, which in turn affects the experiences and learning outcomes for students. The assessment of pediatric nursing students' perception about their learning experience at the faculty of nursing help educators and staff in measuring the quality of learning that's presented in pediatric department. ^[13] So it's of great importance to improve and continuously modify educators' teaching strategies, evaluation tools, course content, learning environment to achieve the desired and intended learning outcomes. Once steps are taken forward to develop the pediatric nursing learning environment this will help in improving pediatric students' perception about their learning experience.

1.2 Aim of the study

This study aimed to assess pediatric nursing students' perception about their learning experience.

1.3 Research Questions:

The present study intended to answer the following question:

1. What is the perception of pediatric nursing students' about their learning experience?

II. Subjects and methods

2.1 Research design:

A descriptive research design was used to achieve the aim of this study.

1.2 Research setting:

The study was conducted at Faculty of Nursing / Helwan University.

2.3 Subjects:

A purposive sample included all available students (176) at the fourth academic year who passed the pediatric nursing experience and accepted to join the study at the previously mentioned setting in the academic year 2017-2018.

2.4 Tools of data collection:

One tool was utilized in data collection as the following:

Tool (I): A structured questionnaire sheet: it was developed by the researcher after reviewing the related literature and it was divided into three parts:

Part I:

Concerned with characteristics of students including age, gender, educational level, total grade of previous years ... etc.

Part II: Concerned with assessment of pediatric nursing students' perception of their learning experience including nursing and non-nursing courses was consisted of three sections:

1- **Theoretical section:** consists of (23) items.

2- **Practical section:** consists of (63) items.

3- **Evaluation section:** consists of (9) items.

Scoring system: Pediatric nursing students' responses were measured on a 3-points Likert type-rating scale ranging from "1= Never, 2= Sometimes and 3= Always. The perception was considered positive if the score was \geq the median score for the scale and negative if the score was $<$ the median score. For the theoretical section the perception was considered positive if the score was ≥ 47 and negative if the score was from 23 to $<$ 47. While for the practical section the perception was considered positive if the score was ≥ 154 and negative if the score was from 63 to $<$ 154. Also for the evaluation section the perception was considered positive if the score was ≥ 22 and negative if the degree was from 9 to $<$ 22.

Part III: Concerned with the assessment of students' satisfaction with their pediatric learning experience that was consisted of (17) items.

Scoring system: Pediatric nursing students' responses were measured on a 5-points Likert type-rating scale ranging from "1= Never and 5= Always. The satisfaction level was classified as: Satisfied if the total percent was $\geq 75\%$, partially satisfied: if the total percent was from 25 to $< 75\%$ and unsatisfied: if the total percent was $< 25\%$.

2.5 Pilot Study:

A pilot study was conducted on 10% of the study subjects (17 students). The aim of the pilot study was to determine clarity, applicability of the tool and to estimate the time required for fulfilling the questionnaire sheets. Those students in the pilot study were included in the main study sample as there was no radical modification in the tool.

2.6 Field Work:

The actual fieldwork started at the beginning of August 2017 and was completed by the end of January 2018. The researcher met the Dean of Faculty of Nursing / Helwan University and Head of Administration Department to explain the aim of the study to gain their approval on data collection. The researcher collected data by himself through meeting the students at the fourth academic year who passed the pediatric nursing experience and explaining the purpose of the study to them in the study setting. The questionnaire sheet was distributed and completed by each student. The researcher was present all the time during fulfilling the forms to answer any questions. The time needed by students to complete the questionnaire was ranged between 20-30 minutes. The researcher checked the completeness of each questionnaire to ensure the absence of any missing data.

2.7 Ethical considerations:

Prior study conduction, ethical approval was obtained from both the Scientific Research Ethical Committee of Faculty of Nursing / Helwan University and each nursing student, where the aim of the study and its expected outcomes was clearly explained, also the researcher clarified that the study was harmless, all the gathered data was used for the research purpose only with confidentiality and anonymity.

2.8 Statistical Design:

The data were organized, revised, coded and analyzed using the SPSS statistical package version 22. Descriptive analysis was performed in form of frequency and percentages for qualitative variables and in form of $X \pm SD$ for quantitative variables. Student "t" test was performed to compare between two means while F test was used to compare between more than two means. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test the bivariate correlation. The level of significance was considered when the p value is below 5%.

III. Results

Table (1): Number and percentage distribution of personal characteristics of the studied sample (n=176).

Student characteristics	Number (No.)	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Male	64	36.4
Female	112	63.6
Age in years:		
20<22	100	56.8
22 \leq 24	76	43.2
Education:		
Technical Nursing School	94	53.4
Technical Nursing Institute	82	46.6
Residence:		
Urban	112	63.6
Rural	64	36.4
Marital status:		
Single	162	92.0
Married	10	5.7
Living:		
With Family	112	63.6
At Hosting House	32	18.2
At Private Home	32	18.2

Table (1) shows that more than half of the study sample (63.6%, 56.8%, 53.4% and 63.6%) were females, aged between 20 < 22, graduated from technical nursing schools and living at urban residence with their families respectively. Also the majority of the study sample (92%) were single.

Table (2) Total perception of the studied sample regarding theoretical, practical and evaluation sections (n=176).

Perception	Positive		Negative	
	No.	%	No.	%
Theoretical section	95	54	81	46
Practical section	91	51.7	85	48.3
Evaluation section	97	55.1	79	44.9

Table (2) clarifies that the study sample had positive perception of theoretical (54%), practical (51.7%) and evaluation (55.1%) sections.

Figure (1): Total satisfaction of the studied sample about their learning experience (n=176).

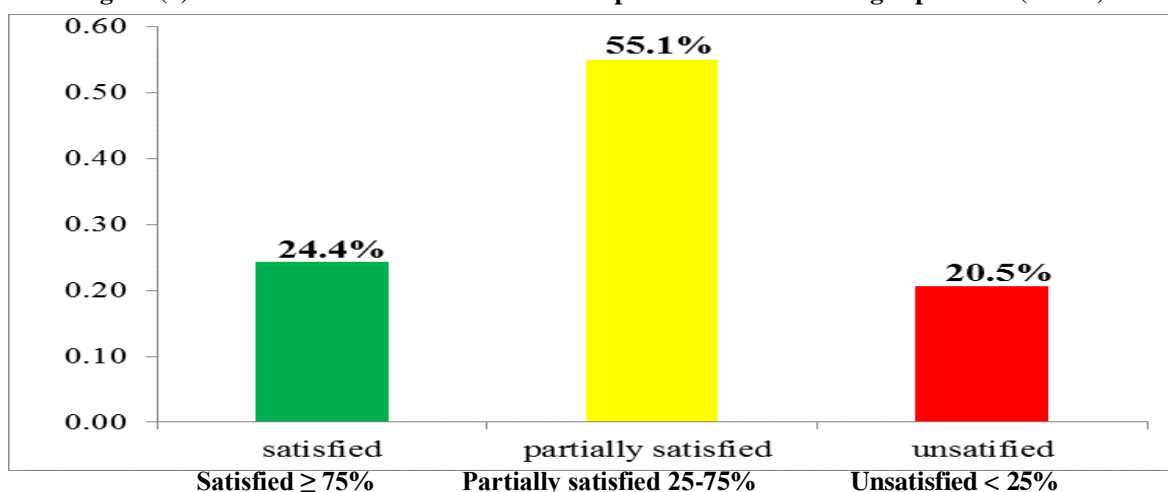


Figure (1) illustrates that about one quarter (24.4%) of the study sample were satisfied with their learning experience while less than one quarter (20.5%) of them were unsatisfied.

Table (3): Correlation between the studied sample perception of theoretical, practical, evaluation sections and their total evaluation in the previous academic years.

Perception sections	Total evaluation in the previous academic years	
	Pearson's correlation	P-value
Theoretical section	r = 0.073	0.334
Practical section	r = -0.254	0.001
Evaluation section	r = -0.074	0.330

*: Significant at P ≤ 0.05 **: Significant at p ≤ 0.0 ***: Significant at p ≤ 0.001

Table (3) clarifies that there was no statistically significant correlation between the students' total perception of theoretical and evaluation sections and their total evaluation in the previous academic years as the P-value was (0.334, 0.330) respectively while there was statistically significant correlation between the students' total perception of practical section and their total evaluation in the previous academic years as the P-value was (0.001).

IV. Discussion

As regards the gender of the studied sample **table (1)** revealed that near to two thirds of the study sample were females. This result is similar to study by **McNeill** ^[14] conducted in Washington entitled "Self-Efficacy and Select Characteristics in Nurses Who Respond to a Pediatric" who found that the majority of the participants were female (97%). This finding is familiar as females are more interested in nursing than males because the image of male nurses is not completely accepted in the Egyptian community.

In relation to the age of the studied sample **table (1)** also clarified that more than half of them were aged between 20<22. This finding is supported by **Dafogianni et al.** ^[15] in a study entitled "Nursing Students' Views on their Clinical Placement in Pediatric Hospitals of Athens, Greece" who stated that the mean age of the students was 22.3. This finding could be due to that the average normal age for a bachelor degree nursing student who finished the pediatric nursing learning experience will be within this age.

As regard to evaluation of theoretical part for nursing and non-nursing courses **table (2)** showed that more than half of the study sample perceived that there were different methods for evaluations as written and oral exams. This result comes in agreement with the result of **Heidari & Norouzadeh** ^[16] in a study entitled "Nursing Students' Perspectives on Clinical Education" who stated that the majority of students' achievement was improved when clinical educators used formative and summative assessment. From the researcher point of view professors and demonstrators must use different methods of evaluation to appraise students' performance regularly.

In relation to evaluation of practical part **table (2)** illustrated that more than two thirds of the study sample reported that there was a unified checklist to all students for evaluation. This finding may be due to that checklist is the basic student practical evaluation method. While less than one quarter of them revealed that they never got feedback to improve their performance after practical evaluation. This result is not supported by **Siganga & Jeggels** ^[17] who stated that majority of students perceived positively regarding benefits of feedback to continue in-service training and correct any gap.

As regard total satisfaction of the studied sample about their learning experience it was revealed from **figure (1)** that about one quarter of the study sample were satisfied with their learning experience. This result is not supported by **Walker et al.** ^[18] in a study conducted in Australia entitled "Indicators of Undergraduate Nursing Students' Satisfaction with their Learning Journey: An Integrative Review" who reported that the majority of the students were satisfied regarding learning experience. This finding could due to the gap between the professors and students especially about the students' personal needs.

As regard the correlation between the students' perception of theoretical, practical, evaluation sections and their total evaluation in the previous academic years **table (3)** revealed that there was statistically significant correlation between the students' total perception of practical section and their total evaluation in the previous academic years as the P-value was (0.001). This result is similar to **Botma** ^[19] who stated that there was a significant correlation between passed knowledge with new practical setting that help students to focus more and manage daily challenges in clinical setting. From the researcher point of view bachelor nursing program is a chain must be built on the previous years' experience.

V. Conclusion

The study concluded that, pediatric nursing students had positive perception about their learning experience in theoretical, practical and evaluation sections.

VI. Recommendations

In the light of the study findings, the following recommendations are suggested: Students should be involved in planning their pediatric nursing learning experience. Periodic assessment of pediatric nursing students' satisfaction about their learning experience. Emphasis on keeping proper ratio between number of students and teachers in theory and practice. More practice should be done for students in different pediatric nursing procedures.

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