

## Perception of Nurse Interns about Clinical Assignment Preparation Requirements

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**Abstract:** Preparation of nursing students is an important component in the clinical experience. It includes: orientation to the clinical setting (patient, environment), using communication skills, patient education, nursing management and leadership, specifically, the educational preparation of nurses must provide the necessary skills and foundation for graduates to practice at a basic level of competency and safety. This study **aims** to investigate nursing interns' perception about their clinical assignment preparation requirement. The study **subjects** included 70 nursing students who were enrolled in internship year from 1st September 2011 to 31 August 2012. The study was **conducted** at Minia University Hospital and Maternity University Hospital affiliated to Minia University. Clinical assignment preparation **questionnaire** was used for data collection. The current study **revealed** that both psychomotor skills and steps of nursing process were perceived as highly important requirements for clinical preparation assignments. It is **concluded** that interns in this study identified a variety of areas they needed to prepare for successful clinical assignment, these areas include professional development and patient teaching. It was **recommended** to conduct a study to examine the relationship between faculty and student perceptions of baccalaureate students' preparation for clinical assignments.

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### 1. Introduction

Clinical teaching requires extensive preparation. Nursing students should be well prepared in a simulated environment (nursing laboratory) before entering the real clinical setting through such preparation, he /she can gain skills and apply theory into practice. After preparing students in the nursing lab the School of nursing should provide and select a suitable real clinical learning setting, so that theory and practice would complement each other in the place where students learn their technical skills.<sup>(1,2,3)</sup> Preparation includes; orientation to the clinical setting (patient, environment), using communication skills, patient education, nursing management, and leadership.<sup>(4,5,6)</sup> Moreover, The educational preparation of nurses must provide the necessary skills and foundation for graduates to practice at a basic level of competency and safety.<sup>(7,8)</sup>

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing reported that the nurse with a baccalaureate degree should be prepared to practice in all health care settings. The baccalaureate nursing curriculum includes development of clinical skills, scientific knowledge, decision-making skills, and humanistic skills.<sup>(4,5)</sup> Clinical assignments in nursing education provide opportunities for students to develop thinking skills vital to the effective delivery of patient care.<sup>(9)</sup> Clinical Assignment means either (a) the specific client with whom a student has contact for the purpose of performing nursing practice activities in clinical

learning experiences; or (b) the opportunities within health care agencies or in settings in which the student has contact with the client(s) and performs some nursing practice activities as part of clinical learning experiences. This method represents the most consistent strategy in planning learning activities in clinical instruction.<sup>(10,11)</sup>

Clinical assignments are chosen to enable learners to meet outcomes related to nursing leadership, management and improvement of patient care, and health care organizational goals. Undergraduate nursing students are usually introduced to concepts and skills of leadership and management in preparation for their future roles in complex health care systems. These students often benefit from clinical assignments that allow them to develop skill in planning and managing care for a group of patients.<sup>(10)</sup>

The clinical assignment should assist the nursing student to identify the patient's priority problem and plan care for that problem. The use of the nursing process is an effective means to this end. The nursing process is generally viewed as a tool for planning and providing patient care. This process consists of four steps namely: assessment, planning, intervention and evaluation. Assessment includes collecting information from a variety of sources in order to evaluate the health status of the client. Planning involves determining the approach to be used in the assisting the client toward optimal wellness. Intervention involves putting nursing care plan into

action to help client attain goals and achieve optimal level of health. This step requires knowledge, technical skills, and communication skills.<sup>(13,14)</sup> Finally, evaluation includes assessing the client's response to nursing interventions and comparing the response to predetermined standards or outcome criteria.<sup>(4)</sup> In addition, clinical assignments require other elements such as patient education. Patient education is the process by which health professionals and others impart information to patients that will alter their health behaviors or improve their health status.<sup>(15,16)</sup>

All Nurse Interns at El Minia Faculty of Nursing participate in the year-long Program (internship year). It is a year-long professional development and leadership program designed to increase the new graduate confidence, autonomy, and satisfaction that has proven to result in increased quality of patient care and increased patient safety. The Nurse Internship year has grown to the following specialty tracks: Critical Care, Emergency Department, Medical-Surgical Specialties, Cardiothoracic, and Women & Infants. Moreover, Nurse Interns are mentored throughout the program to increase both personal and professional growth and development through a variety clinical unit rotations and experiences designed to meet individual nurse needs.<sup>(17)</sup>

**Webster** (2006)<sup>(18)</sup> stated that, if nursing educators are made aware of the perceptions of nursing students and faculty members regarding the clinical preparation of nursing students, we may be able to improve the process of clinical preparation for the students by making it a more meaningful learning experience and an interesting and time efficient process for the clinical instructors. Another study conducted by **Ali** (2010)<sup>(1)</sup> revealed that both nursing students and educators ensured the great importance of preparing students for clinical teaching to decrease the problems which may be appear as a result of lack of students preparation, so they can save a lot of learning time.

To provide a framework and suggestions for a more efficient approach to clinical assignment preparation that encourages meaningful learning experience this study was conducted to identify what is the Perception of Nurse Interns about Clinical Assignment Preparation Requirements.

## 2. Material and Methods:

### Research design

This is a descriptive exploratory study.

### Setting

The study was conducted at the following settings: Two Minia University Hospitals, where nursing students spend their internship year namely Minia University Hospital and Maternity University Hospital affiliated to Minia University.

### Subjects

The study subjects included all nurse interns (n=70) who were enrolled in internship year within the academic year 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011 to 31 August 2012.

### Tool for data collection

Clinical preparation requirements questionnaire developed by **Barbarito** 1993<sup>(19)</sup> and modified by **Hickey** 2010<sup>(20)</sup>. The questionnaire is composed of 120 statements to measure the clinical preparation requirements. It is divided into two parts. **Part I** includes demographic data such as: age, gender, and academic achievements. **Part II** contains six subscales namely, *Steps In Nursing Process* (49 items), *Use of Resources* (9 items), *Psychomotor Skills* (15 items), *Teaching and Information Giving* (10 items), *Communication Skills* (16 items), and *Administrative Skills* (21 items). The Likert scale ranges from 1 (not importance) to 4 (essential). The questionnaire is scored by adding the items on each of the subscales. For *Steps In Nursing Process* the score ranged from 49-196. scores ranged between 49-65 indicated low importance, scores ranged from 66-130 indicated moderate importance, scores ranged from 131- 196 indicated high importance. Also, for *Use of Resources skills* the total score ranged from 9 to 36. 9-18 indicated low importance. 19-27 indicated moderate importance, and 29-36 indicated high importance. Furthermore, in *Psychomotor Skills* the total score ranged from 15 to 60. 15- 20 indicated low importance. 21-40 indicated moderate importance, and 41-60 indicated high importance. *Additionally, for Teaching and Information Giving skills* the total score ranged from 10 to 40. 10- 13 indicated low importance. 14-26 indicated moderate importance, and 27-40 indicated high importance. Moreover, regarding *Communication Skills* the total score ranged from 16 to 64. 16- 21 indicated low importance. 22-42 indicated moderate importance, and 43-64 indicated high importance. In addition, as regards *Administrative Skills* the total score ranged from 21 to 84. 21- 28 indicated low importance. 29-56 indicated moderate importance, and 57-84 indicated high importance.

### Methods

The study was conducted according to the following steps:

- Official Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the dean of the faculty of Nursing, Minia University, and the managers of two University hospitals.
- The Content validity of the tool was tested by a jury of four experts in the related field namely nursing education (2 experts), Nursing Administration, and Medical / Surgical Nursing departments.
- Permission was obtained from all Participants of the study after explanation of the study purpose.

- A pilot study was carried out on 10% of nursing students selected randomly from the nursing internship in order to test the relevance and applicability of the study tool.
- Reliability of the tool was tested using Alpha Coefficient test, its value was 0.97
- Questionnaire was individually administered to each Participant in the study setting. 30 minutes was given to complete it. Data were collected at the end of internship experience ( last month of their internship year)
- Total confidentiality of any obtained information was ensured.

### Statistical analysis

- Data was fed, coded, edited and analyzing using PC with statistical packages for social science (SPSS) version 10.0
- The selected level of significance was  $P \leq 0.05$ .
- Descriptive statistics were done using numbers, percentage, arithmetic mean and standard deviation, F test, and T test.

### 3. Results:

Table (1) illustrates the distribution of the study subjects according to their general characteristics. It is noticed that, the mean age for the subjects were  $22.36 \pm 0.89$ . The majority (84.29 %) of them were females. Nearly half (48.57%) of them had very good in academic achievement score.

Table 2 shows the percent distribution of the study subjects regarding importance measurement of clinical preparation requirements for clinical assignments. The majority of the sample reported clinical preparation requirements for clinical assignments as high or moderate importance. Psychomotor skills, steps of nursing process, and Teaching and Information Giving reported with high importance (81%, 80%, and 55.7%, respectively). Also the table revealed that communication, administrative skills, and use of resources reported with moderate importance (52.9%, 51.4%, and 44.3%, respectively)

According to Table 3 that, the study subjects had reported their highest percent level with psychomotor skills, steps of nursing process, Teaching And Information Giving (79.81%, 73.62%, and 70.11%, respectively), followed by administrative skills, use of resources, and communication skills (66.65%, 65.91%, and 65.51%, respectively).

Table 4 demonstrates the distribution of clinical assignment preparation requirements regarding

category of nursing process steps by the study sample. It was noticed that, the highest perceived percent by the study subjects with assessment, planning, and intervention (77.18%, 73.80%, and 72.71%, respectively) followed by evaluation (68.93%).

Table 5 shows the distribution of clinical assignment preparation requirements regarding category of Administrative skills by the study sample. It was observed that, the highest percent reported with time management (70.36%) followed by professional development and leadership skills (66.98%, 64.93, respectively).

Table (6) shows the relationship between gender clinical assignment preparation requirements of the study samples. It was noticed that, there were no statistical significant difference between mean scores regarding all clinical assignment preparation requirements except use of resources where was statistical significant difference with  $P=0.036$ , and  $T=2.14$

Table (7) illustrates Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) between Clinical assignment preparation requirements of the study sample. It was observed that, there was significant positive relationship ( $p = 0.01$ ) between all Clinical assignment preparation requirements together. It was found that  $r = 0.620$  in relationship between Steps of Nursing Process and Use Of Resources Furthermore,  $r = 0.504$  in relationship between Psychomotor Skills and Steps In Nursing Process,  $r = 0.577$  in relationship between Teaching And Information Giving and Steps of Nursing Process ,  $r = 0.377$  in relationship between Steps of Nursing Process and communication,  $r = 0.300$  in relationship between administrative skills and Steps of Nursing Process,  $r = 0.412$  in relationship between Psychomotor Skills and Use Of Resources,  $r = 0.632$  in relationship between Teaching And Information Giving and Use Of Resources,  $r = 0.506$  in relationship between communication and Use Of Resources,  $r = 0.465$  in relationship between administrative skills and Use Of Resources,  $r = 0.361$  in relationship between Teaching And Information Giving and Psychomotor Skills,  $r = 0.354$  in relationship between Psychomotor Skills and communication,  $r = 0.392$  in relationship between Psychomotor Skills and administrative skills,  $r = 0.441$  in relationship between Teaching And Information Giving and communication,  $r = 0.471$  in relationship between Teaching And Information Giving and administrative skills, finally,  $r = 0.878$  in relationship between communication and administrative skills.

**Table(1):** Distribution of the study sample according to their general characteristics ( n=70)

General Characteristic	No	%
1- Age:	Mean $\pm$ S.D	
	22.36 $\pm$ 0.89	
2- Gender :		
Male	11	15.71
Female	59	84.29
4- academic achievement of the previous year :		
Pass	0.0	0.0
Good	13	18.57
Very good	34	48.57
Excellent	23	32.68

**Table (2):** Distribution of important measurement for clinical assignment preparation requirements by the study sample. N= 70

Clinical Assignment Preparation Requirements	Importance					
	Low		Moderate		High	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Steps of Nursing Process	-	-	14	20	56	80
Use Of Resources	19	27.1	31	44.3	20	28.6
Psychomotor Skills	1	1.4	12	17.1	57	81.4
Teaching And Information Giving	1	1.4	30	42.9	39	55.7
Communication Skills	2	2.9	37	52.9	31	44.3
Administrative Skills	3	4.3	36	51.4	31	44.3

**Table (3) :** Distribution of clinical assignment preparation requirements by the study sample. N= 70

Clinical assignment preparation requirements	Mean	S.D	%
Steps of Nursing Process	144.30	21.46	73.62
Use Of Resources	23.73	6.15	65.91
Psychomotor Skills	47.89	8.39	79.81
Teaching And Information Giving	28.04	6.57	70.11
Communication Skills	41.93	10.83	65.51
Administrative Skills	55.99	15.32	66.65

**Table (4):** Distribution of clinical assignment preparation requirements regarding steps in nursing process by the study sample. N= 70

Steps of Nursing Process	Mean	S.D	%
Assessment	27.79	5.34	77.18
Planning	32.47	5.43	73.80
Intervention	78.53	13.58	72.71
Evaluation	5.51	1.61	68.93

**Table (5):** Distribution of clinical assignment preparation requirements regarding Administrative skills by the study sample. N= 70

Administrative Skills	Mean	S.D	Total	%
Leadership practices	12.99	4.19	909	64.93
Time Management	2.81	0.98	197	70.36
Professional development	40.19	11.22	2813	66.98

**Table (6):** The relationship between gender and clinical assignment preparation requirements of the study samples.

Clinical assignment preparation requirements	Male		Female		T value	P value
	X	S.D	X	S.D		
Steps In Nursing Process	135.27	16.38	145.98	21.99	1.53	0.130
Use Of Resources	20.18	4.21	24.39	6.25	2.14	0.036*
Psychomotor Skills	47.36	5.77	47.98	8.83	0.22	0.824
Teaching And Information Giving	25.82	4.94	28.46	6.78	1.23	0.224
Communication Skills	38.45	9.92	42.58	10.95	1.16	0.249
Administrative Skills	50.64	10.22	56.98	15.96	1.27	0.209

**Table (7):** Correlation Coefficient (r) between Clinical assignment preparation requirements of the study sample

Clinical assignment preparation requirements	Steps In Nursing Process	Use Of Resources	Psychomot or Skills	Teaching And Information Giving	Communication Skills	Administrative Skills
Steps In Nursing Process		0.620**	0.504**	0.577**	0.377**	0.300*
Use Of Resources			0.412**	0.632**	0.506**	0.465**
Psychomotor Skills				0.361**	0.354**	0.392**
Teaching And Information Giving					0.441**	0.471**
Communication Skills						0.878**
Administrative Skills						

#### 4. Discussion

Graduates of a baccalaureate nursing program should be able to perform, teach, delegate, and supervise with safety and competence.<sup>(6)</sup> Clinical instruction, as it currently exists, may not be effectively preparing nursing graduates for the realities of today's health care environment. Also, health care agencies have identified areas of weakness in newly hired graduate nurses.<sup>(21,22)</sup> Moreover, The nursing students' perspective related to their clinical learning experiences is an important aspect in studying clinical teaching.<sup>(20)</sup>

This study aims to identify nurse interns' perception about their clinical assignment preparation requirements. The study findings revealed that, the majority of the sample reported psychomotor skills as high important (81%). These findings are in line with **Hickey** (2010)<sup>(20)</sup> who reported that specific psychomotor and technical skills mastery was "important" for entry into practice.

Moreover, the results of the study demonstrated that steps of nursing process reported as high important by the majority of participants (80%). This finding agrees with **Hickey** (2005)<sup>(6)</sup> findings. He stated that, Nurses must be able to assess, diagnose, plan care,

communicate with patients and families, and apply theoretical and scientific knowledge and principles of care to patients.

The study also revealed that, more than half (55.7%) of the study sample reported Teaching and Information Giving as high important. This finding is in the same line with **Ali** (2010)<sup>(1)</sup> findings who stated that, providing patient information in a manner that permits patient dignity and respect, motivates and addresses the patients' individualized needs through energizing interaction. So, Students need to be skilled and trained in the way of teaching patient.<sup>(1)</sup> Moreover, educating patients is vital to reducing hospitalizations and improving patient quality of life. Through education, patients can be made aware of their disease process and potential treatment options.<sup>(23)</sup>

Furthermore, the study results revealed that, more than half (52.9%) of the study sample reported communication skills as moderate importance. This finding is supported by **Hickey** (2005)<sup>(6)</sup> findings who stated that, the practice of nursing requires expert theoretical and scientific knowledge, communication, and cultural competence. In addition, **Leh** (2008)<sup>(24)</sup> stated that the nurse is expected to coordinate the activities of the various members of the health care

team, and to ensure that appropriate patient information is clearly communicated.

Moreover, the findings of the study revealed that, more than half (51.4%) of the study sample reported administrative skills as moderate important. This finding is in agreement with **O'Connor** (2006)<sup>(3)</sup> and **Janice** (2012)<sup>(25)</sup> who suggested that the professional role of the nurse includes provider of care, designer, manager, and coordinator of care.

Also, findings of the study revealed that more than the third (44.3%) of the study sample reported use of resources skill as moderate importance. This result is in agreement with the study conducted by **Barbarito** (1993)<sup>(19)</sup> who suggested that use of resources to be more important than other requirements.

In addition, the study sample reported their highest percent (77.18%) with the assessment step followed by 73.80% for planning step. The findings of the present study were supported by **Ramont** (2006)<sup>(26)</sup>. He stated that, assessment is the most critical step involves collecting, organizing, and analyzing information/data about the patient results in nursing diagnoses. Furthermore, Planning step provide consistent, continuous care that will meet the patient's unique needs Includes Patient Goals & Nursing Orders. Patient Goals are directly related to the patient's problem as stated in the nursing diagnosis. Also, Nursing Orders Describe what the nurse will do to help the patient achieve the goals.

Additionally, the study subjects reported their highest percent (70.36%) with time management. The findings of **Rogers et al.** (2007)<sup>(27)</sup>, **Sleeper** (2008)<sup>(28)</sup>, and **krautscheid** (2008)<sup>(29)</sup> studies were similar to that of the present study. They revealed that clinical environments should allow nursing Students to learn and practice not only psychomotor skills but also communication, time management, and organizational skills were reported as more important. In addition **Ali** (2010)<sup>(1)</sup> suggested that, time is money in human language, this demonstrates the great importance of time as one of available resources.

In addition, the results founded that There were statistical significant difference regarding gender and use of resources where  $P=0.036$ , and  $T= 2.14$ . This finding contradicts with the findings of **Hickey** (2005)<sup>(6)</sup> who reported that there no statistical significant difference regarding gender and the importance of clinical experiences components.

Finally, it was interesting to find a positive relation between all clinical assignment preparation requirements. This finding is supported by **Hickey** (2005)<sup>(6)</sup> and **Ormrod** (2004)<sup>(30)</sup> results. They mentioned that, the practice of nursing requires expert theoretical and scientific knowledge, specific psychomotor and technical skills, communication, cultural competence, and professional values.

In conclusion, all clinical assignment preparation requirements perceived by the study sample as high or moderate importance. This may be due to the nature of preparation phase where teaching outcomes depending on it.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion:

1. The findings of this study revealed that student preparation for clinical assignment should include psychomotor skills and steps of nursing process, as well as the acquisition of common advanced clinical skills as use of resources, communication, and administrative skills
2. Students in this study identified a variety of areas they needed to prepare for successful clinical assignment, these area include professional development and patient teaching.
3. All clinical assignment preparation requirements perceived by the study sample as high or moderate importance.

### Recommendations:

#### *I-Recommendations for nurse educators and nursing programs:*

- Nursing education must reexamine current approaches to clinical teaching and seek methods to better prepare future nurses.
- Proper use of the clinical setting resource should involve adequate pre-clinical preparation of students, suitable clinical experience and clinical evaluation appropriate to the clinical context. Also, students require organized support and co-operation with teachers.
- Nursing educators need to look at how many written assignments are required and whether fewer written assignments would still meet the objectives of the course.

#### *II- Recommendations for further research:*

1. The relationship between faculty and student perceptions of baccalaureate students' preparation for clinical assignments.
2. Attitudes of graduates of Baccalaureate nursing program towards their clinical instructional experiences.

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