## Original research article

# The relationship of clinical learning environment to nursing students' academic motivation

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ABSTRACT

*Objectives:* Nursing education is a process that includes theoretical and practical learning and requires the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and skills. Nursing students need a positive clinical practice environment in order to apply their knowledge and skills, due to the fact that the clinical practice settings play an important role in the nursing profession. This study was carried out to explore the relationship of clinical learning environment to nursing students' academic motivation.

*Methods:* One hundred and twenty-seven (127) nursing students who had been training at Giresun University, Faculty of Health Sciences, were enrolled in this descriptive study. The data were collected using the 'Clinical Learning Environment Scale' and the 'Academic Motivation Scale'.

*Results:* In this study, 34.6% second class, 37% third class and 28.4% fourth class of nursing students were surveyed. The mean scores of clinical learning environment and academic motivation were $66.7 \pm 8.7$ and $68 \pm 10.9$, respectively. There was a statistically significant difference between the scales ($r = 0.254$, $p < 0.05$).

*Conclusion:* One of the prerequisites for the training of qualified students is to provide nursing students with a qualified clinical environment. It was found that nursing students' academic motivation increased as the quality of their clinical learning environment improved.

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## Introduction

Q3 Nursing is a practice based discipline [1]. Nursing education is a process that needs to make observations and comments, and it requires the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and skills [2]. During the educational process, nursing students practice various methods and techniques while preparing for their future duties. Because nursing is a practical profession, clinical practice follows theoretical knowledge and laboratory and clinical practice [2–4]. Clinical practice is unavoidable and is the most important part of professional nursing education.

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This part of the education is a significant experience for nursing students [5]. The education provided during clinical practice helps students acquire professional skills, critical thinking and knowledge that will be necessary for them to learn throughout their lives, and helps them to be able to make independent nursing decisions. Students need to be in health care settings with healthy or ill individuals to be able to transfer knowledge that they have acquired into practice [2,3].

The factors that influence academic success are different for every student; however one of the major predictors for academic achievement for both male and female students is academic motivation [6–8]. Academic motivation is defined as the production of the energy that is required for academic studies [9]. Motivation is an important key in the training field. Intelligence is not the only predictor of academic achievement and retention for nursing students. To reach the specific goal in nursing education and to achieve of qualified education, academic motivation is important. A student who is not high motivation is not ready for learning. Parallel to this, if there is not important reason that would promote learning the student does not improve the interest for learning [10,11].

Motivation is classified as intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation which is based on the ''self-determination theory'' that was developed by Deci and Ryan in 1985 [12]. According to intrinsic motivation, the main reason in performing a specific homework is the individual's pleasure and satisfaction. Intrinsic is not possible under the condition of control and repression because self-determination is necessary for intrinsic motivation [13]. In the case of extrinsic motivation, the individual performs a duty or activity to get important results for him or herself or for extrinsic award [14]. Amotivated individual is referred to someone who has not received any motivation for performing his/her activities and thus from doing any kind of activity. Amotivation is somewhat like the concept of ''learned helplessness'' [15].

The main purpose of this study is based on the relationship of the quality of the clinical learning environment to nursing students' academic motivation. The clinical learning environment is an interactive network of forces influencing student learning outcomes in the clinical setting [5,16], and while ward-based, hospital learning environments remain fundamental, multidimensional milieus for nurse education, a study conducted by Chan [17] has indicated that not all practice settings are able to provide student nurses with positive clinical learning environments. Recent studies have employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques to measure the quality of clinical learning environments by the use of evaluation scales, supervision instruments and phenomenological approaches [3,4,16,18]. Chan [17] developed the *Clinical Learning Environment Inventory* (CLEI) tool that explored intrinsic factors (i.e. innovation, personalization, satisfaction, task orientation, involvement). Several studies have found a meaningful relationships between academic motivation and learning outcomes (i.e. school grades, effort, satisfaction with academic activities, etc.) [19,11,20–22]. In accordance with earlier studies, even though there are studies regarding the clinical learning environment and academic motivation, a study that explores the effect of clinical learning environment on nursing students' academic motivation has not been found in the literature.

## Materials and methods

### Aim

This study was an attempt to find the answers to the following the questions:

- How do nursing students evaluate their clinical learning environment?
- How do clinical practices affect nursing students' academic motivation?

### Study setting and design

A descriptive survey design was used to explore the relationship of clinical learning environment to nursing students' academic motivation. Participants were all second, third and fourth year undergraduate students in the Bachelor of Nursing Science Degree at the University of Giresun. One hundred and twenty-seven (127) nursing students were enrolled in this study. In this study, sampling was not used and the research population consisted only of students.

### Instruments

The data was collected by researchers using the demographic form for students, 'Clinical Learning Environment Scale' and 'Academic Motivation Scale'. The demographic form included socio-demographic characteristics of the students (i.e. age, gender, class, high school graduated, reason for choosing nursing as a profession, the expectations of nursing students in the clinical practice, etc.). *The Clinical Learning Environment Scale* was developed by Dunn and Burnett in 1995 [18] and its validity and reliability in a Turkish setting was tested by Sarı in 2001 [23]. Cronbach's alpha value of the scale is 0.82. This scale consists of 20 items (i.e. item 1: Nursing students learn more from other nursing students on the unit than from the nursing staff, item 4: Nursing students are expected to obey Registered Nurses' instructions without asking questions, item 9: I'm happy with the experience I have had on this ward, item 14: Nursing care is individualized for each patient on this unit, item 18: This experience has made me more eager to become a Registered Nurse, item 22: The patients' needs really are given first priority). The scale is a 5-point Likert type. 5; strongly agree 4; agree 3; neither agree nor disagree 2; disagree 1, strongly disagree. The highest possible score is 110 and the lowest possibly score is 22 in this scale. The increase in the total number of points indicates that students have found the clinical learning environment to be appropriate.

*The Academic Motivation Scale* was developed in Turkey by Bozanoglu in 2004 [9]. Cronbach's alpha value of the scale is 0.87. This scale consists of 20 items (i.e. item 2: Everything I learned causes more curiosity, item 4: I'm not interested in those taught in school, item 7: When I have a choice I usually choose homework that is bother for me, item 10: I would like to work on the issues that are more difficult, item 12: I always liked to work in new and different issues, item 15: I would like to help others with something I learned, item 17: I try so much