Nursing students' perspectives on clinical instructors' effective teaching strategies: A descriptive study

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ABSTRACT

An important factor contributing to the quality of clinical education is instructors' teaching performance. The aim of this study was to identify clinical instructors' most effective teaching strategies from nursing and midwifery students' perspectives. This was a descriptive cross-sectional study. All third- and fourth-year bachelor's nursing and midwifery students studying at the Nursing and Midwifery Faculty of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences were recruited to the study by using the census method. The study instrument consisted of a demographic questionnaire and the self-report 30-item Clinical Instructors' Effective Teaching Strategies Inventory. The SPSS v.16.0 was used for data analysis. The most effective teaching strategies of clinical instructors from nursing and midwifery students' perspectives were respectively 'treating students, clients, and colleagues with respect' and 'being eager for guiding students and manage their problems'. Clinical instructors need to be eager for education and also be able to establish effective communication with students. Empowering clinical instructors in specialized and technical aspects of clinical education seems necessary.

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Introduction

Clinical education is a fairly complex process which is affected by numerous factors (Kevin and Kendall, 2000). One of the most determining factors is the quality of clinical instructors' teaching performance (Raingruber and Bowles, 2000). The main aim of clinical education is to train students and help them acquire knowledge and skills for providing quality care to patients (Tahery et al., 2010). However, students' lack of motivation and interest has always negatively affected their learning and the quality of clinical education. Accordingly, clinical instructors need to develop and employ effective strategies for promoting students' learning and improving their clinical skills (Tang et al., 2005). Guzman et al. (2008) noted that students' perceptions of their instructors' competence is directly related to their motivation for learning (Guzman et al., 2008). Gillespie (2002) also reported that instructors' support enhances students' self-confidence, motivation

for learning, and professional development (Gillespie, 2002). Competent nursing instructors can facilitate students' learning, improve their motivation, foster their positive attitude towards the profession, increase their interest in patient care, encourage their participation in patient care activities, and maximize their academic success through providing them with constructive feedbacks and creating a supportive learning environment (Alavi and Parvin, 2008; Elcigil and Sari, 2007; Salsali, 2005).

Many studies have investigated clinical instructors' role in promoting students' learning. In a study conducted by Alavi and Abedi (2008), nursing students highlighted the important role of nursing instructors in creating a healthy learning and working environment. They also noted that instructors can facilitate students' learning through providing them with up-to-date information and strong support as well as supervising their academic performance (Alavi and Abedi, 2008). Ironside and Mcnelis (2010) conducted a nationwide survey in the United States and reported factors such as lack of quality clinical learning environments, shortage of qualified instructors, low instructor-student ratio, restrictions of the number of students, and students' exposure to different clinical settings that have different policies as the major barriers to effective clinical education (Ironside and Mcnelis, 2010). Tahery et al. (2010) also

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highlighted the important role of instructors in empowering students and facilitating their learning (Tahery et al., 2010). Cheraghi et al. (2008) also found that instructors' incompetency, nursing staffs' technical ability, and non-conduciveness of the learning environments as the main factors affecting nursing students' clinical preparation (Cheraghi et al., 2008). Moreover, Hovaida and Molavi (2008) noted that nursing students are profoundly dissatisfied with the poor quality of educations and evaluations, unclear academic standards, limited contribution to learning process, as well as the inability of educational system in promoting their independent and active learning (Hovaida and Molavi, 2008).

To the best of our knowledge, previous studies have only investigated instructors' personality traits and clinical teaching performance. Accordingly, the effective clinical teaching strategies adopted by them have remained barely known. We conducted this study to fill this gap by using students' viewpoints. Studies have confirmed the usefulness and the reasonable accuracy of student ratings for evaluating instructor's performance (Cheraghi et al., 2008; Hovaida and Molavi, 2008). Finally the researchers decided to identify whatever is considered as clinical instructors' effective teaching strategies from students' viewpoint.

Iranian nursing education system

Today in Iran, the baccalaureate program is the basic nursing program at the academic level and is the only way leading to registration as a professional nurse. Iranian nursing education program lasts for 4 years and leads to a bachelor's degree. Nursing students begin clinical training from the second semester and this is run concurrently with theoretical courses until the end of the third year. The fourth year is allocated exclusively to clinical placement training. Nursing students are trained in teaching hospitals. In the clinical field, they are assigned to care for patients based on nursing processes. Their progress through these units has a simple to hard trend. They learn in the clinical environment under the direct guidance and supervision of a nurse instructor. There are Master of Science and PhD programs for graduates, subsequently (Farsi et al., 2010; Khomeiran and Deans, 2007; Nasrabadi et al., 2004).

Aim

The aim of this study was to identify clinical instructors' most effective teaching strategies from the perspectives of nursing and midwifery students.

Methods

This was a descriptive cross-sectional study. The study setting was the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences, Sanandaj, Iran. All third- and fourth-year bachelor's nursing and midwifery students affiliated to the study setting who were pursuing their apprenticeship or internship program were recruited to the study by using the census method. The inclusion criteria were having at least a two-week clinical apprenticeship experience in medical-surgical, psychiatric, pediatric, delivery, post-delivery, or neonatal care units as well as having the desire to participate in the study.

The study instrument comprised a demographic questionnaire and the Clinical Instructors' Effective Teaching Strategies Inventory (CIETSI). The demographic questionnaire consisted of seven questions on students' age, gender, study course, school term, residence, and ethnicity. Moreover, students' perspectives on clinical instructors' most effective teaching strategies were assessed by using the CIETSI. The CIETSI was designed and has been used in previous studies and has no subscales (Mazaheri et al., 2010). It is a 30-item self-report questionnaire. The items of the CIETSI are scored on a five-point Likert scale on which 1 stands for 'Seldom' and 5 for 'Very often'. Accordingly, the total score of the CIETSI ranges from 30 to 150. The reliability of the inventory was evaluated by assessing its internal consistency. Accordingly, twenty nursing and midwifery students were invited to complete the inventory. Then, the Cronbach's alpha was calculated which was equal to .78. We invited 127 nursing students and 70 midwifery students to fill the CIETSI. Fourteen inventories were filled incompletely and hence were excluded from the study. Finally, 158 inventories were included in the final analysis. The response rate was 80%.

Study data were managed and analyzed by using the SPSS v.16.0 software. We used descriptive statistic measures such as frequency, percent, mean, and standard deviation for describing the study data.

The Institutional Review Board of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences approved the study. All the participating students were informed about the aim of the study. Confidentiality of the students' information was ensured. We obtained an informed consent from each student.

Findings

Most of the nursing (61.3%) and midwifery (55.3%) students aged 21–22 years with a mean of 21.58 ± 2.29. About 59.5% of nursing and 78.7% of midwifery students were non-native. Most of the nursing and midwifery students (60.4% and 80.9%, respectively) lived in student dormitories. The participating nursing and midwifery students were mostly at their fourth and sixth trimester, respectively (Table 1).

Study findings revealed that clinical instructors' most effective teaching strategies from nursing students' perspectives were 'treating students, clients, and colleagues with respect' (25.2%), 'striving to promote students' independence and self-confidence' (22.5%), 'showing proficiency in care provision and clinical education' (19.8%), 'being a good role-model in dealing with clients and colleagues' (19.8%), and 'having patience for addressing students' questions and problems' (19.8%). On the other hand, midwifery students rated 'being eager for guiding students and managing their problems' (17.4%), 'providing students with verbal and non-verbal encouragements for promoting their learning' (15.2%), and 'having mastery over course content and related subjects' (15.2%) as

Table 1
Participants' demographic characteristics.

Demographic characteristics		Nursing		Midwifery	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Age (year)	19–20	27	24.3	14	29.8
	21–22	68	61.3	25	53.2
	>23	16	14.4	8	17
Gender	Female	68	61.3	47	100
	Male	43	38.7	0	0
Course	Apprenticeship	78	70.2	33	70.2
	Internship	33	29.8	14	29.8
School term	3	17	15.3	0	0
	4	24	21.6	15	31.9
	5	19	17.1	0	0
	6	18	16.2	18	38.3
	7	18	16.2	0	0
	8	15	13.5	14	29.8
Residence	Parental home	38	34.2	8	17
	Rented home	6	5.4	1	21
	Dormitory	67	60.4	38	80.9
Ethnicity	Native to Kurdistan	45	40.5	10	21.3
	Non-native	66	59.5	37	78.7