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Research Brief

The Effect of Formative Capstone Simulation Scenarios on Novice Nursing Students' Anxiety and Self-Confidence Related to Initial Clinical Practicum

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KEYWORDS

simulation;
standardized patients;
anxiety;
self-confidence;
initial clinical
practicum

Abstract

Background: Clinical practicum is an anxiety-producing experience for nursing students. When students experience anxiety, competence, confidence, and patient safety are affected. However, there is limited empirical support for teaching strategies to address the anxiety related to clinical for nursing students within the nursing education literature.

Method: Ninety-five sophomore baccalaureate nursing students participated in the study. The Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory and Nursing Anxiety and Self-Confidence with Clinical Decision-Making Scale were used to assess students' anxiety and self-confidence immediately before and immediately following formative capstone simulation scenarios with standardized patients.

Results: State anxiety and anxiety related to clinical decision making were significantly lower following formative capstone simulation scenarios ($p < .001$), and self-confidence related to clinical decision making was significantly higher following formative capstone simulation scenarios ($p < .001$).

Conclusion: Formative capstone simulation scenarios are an effective method to reduce anxiety for novice students prior to entering the clinical setting. Further research is needed to enhance the generalizability of these findings.

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Background

Although nursing students look forward to their first clinical experience, they often express apprehension prior to entering an actual patient care setting where they will

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interact with real patients while synthesizing all previously learned nursing knowledge and skills. Despite adequate preparation throughout fundamental nursing courses through theory and laboratory experiences, learning within the clinical environment is frequently cited by students as

Key Points

- Initial clinical practicum is an anxiety-producing experience for nursing students.
- There is limited empirical support for teaching strategies to address nursing students' anxiety related to clinical.
- Formative capstone simulation scenarios are an effective teaching method to decrease anxiety related to initial clinical practicum and increase self-confidence related to clinical decision making.

extremely anxiety producing, more so than education in the classroom or simulation laboratory (Levett-Jones, Pitt, Courtney-Pratt, Harbrow, & Rossiter, 2015; Moscaritolo, 2009). Students have indicated that entering the clinical setting for the first time, making errors, performing skills on real patients, interacting with health care professionals, feeling incompetent, and being evaluated by faculty are major concerns (Gorostidi et al., 2007; Levett-Jones et al., 2015; Moscaritolo, 2009; Sharif & Masoumi, 2005). The anxiety caused by these experiences can lessen skill performance (Cheung & Au, 2011; Dearmon et al., 2013), which, within the clinical setting, can ultimately affect patient safety.

Experience and competence promote a decrease in anxiety and stress (Gorostidi et al., 2007). Consequently, the more opportunities nursing students have to practice skills, gain experience, and foster competence prior to working in the clinical setting, the more prepared they will be when beginning clinical practicum. Augmented preparation, therefore, will increase their confidence and lessen their anxiety. Simulation offers an opportunity for nursing students to gain this critical experience in a realistic setting prior to working with actual patients within the clinical setting.

Dearmon et al. (2013) identified that cognitive understanding and self-confidence can be enhanced by engaging in simulation prior to beginning clinical practicum that may subsequently lessen perceived anxiety on entering the clinical setting. In 2014, Khalaila identified that anxiety related to clinical practicum is decreased by participation in simulation experiences during initial clinical practicum (Khalaila, 2014). Gore, Hunt, Parker, and Raines (2011) found that student anxiety decreased significantly following a preclinical simulation using low-fidelity manikins compared with following standard educational practices without preclinical simulation. Moreover, Bremner, Aduddell, and Amason (2008) found that high-fidelity

simulation prior to initial clinical practicum decreased anxiety more than standard laboratory experiences. Furthermore, the use of both high-fidelity simulation and standardized patients (SPs) prior to mental health clinical practicum decreased student anxiety related to communicating with mentally ill patients (Kameg, Szpak, Cline, & Mcdermott, 2014; Szpak & Kameg, 2013). There are no published studies exploring the effect of preclinical simulations with SPs on nursing student anxiety related to initial clinical practicum.

Formative capstone simulation scenarios were implemented into an Essentials of Nursing Practice course to provide sophomore baccalaureate nursing students the opportunity to assimilate nursing content and psychomotor skills from the first two year of the nursing curriculum prior to entering their initial clinical practicum (Ross, Bruderle, Meakim, Willens, & Holmwood, 2016). The purpose of this research was to determine the effect of formative capstone simulation scenarios on sophomore baccalaureate nursing students' anxiety related to initial clinical practicum and anxiety and self-confidence related to clinical decision making prior to entering initial clinical practicum.

Methods

Sample

Participants in this study were a convenience sample of second-semester sophomore undergraduate baccalaureate nursing students enrolled in Essentials of Nursing Practice laboratory course in a traditional four-year baccalaureate nursing program in a mid-sized, private, Catholic University in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. A total of 95 participants consented to participate in the study. Of these, 95.8% were women and 4.2% were men. All the participants were either 19 or 20 years old. The majority were Caucasian (84.2%) with the other 15.8% identifying as African-American (2.1%), Asian (7.4%), Hispanic (3.2%), or some combination of ethnicity (3.2%).

Instrumentation

Two instruments were utilized to collect data in this study. The Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) State Form Y was used to assess participants' current state anxiety related to initial clinical practicum. Use of the STAI was purchased for this study. The STAI is a 20-item questionnaire in which participants rate their level of agreement with each statement on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much so). A review of psychometric testing of the STAI indicated that the STAI Form Y has good internal consistency reliability (mean $\alpha = 0.92$) (Barnes, Harp, & Jung, 2002).

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