Adaptation of Nurse Interns in Acute Hospital Care Practice and their Demographic Features: A Correlation Study

Farhan Alshammari[a], Petelyne Pangket[b], Jordan Llego[c], Eddieson Pasayan[d], Ferdinand Gonzales[e], [a,b,c,d,e]University of Hail, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Email: [a]dr.farhan2015@gmail.com, [b]turabea20132014@gmail.com, [c]llegojordan@gmail.com, [d]eddspasayan@gmail.com [e]ferdinandgonzales03@gmail.com

The internship program is a period of transition that enhances the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of aspiring nurses. It serves as a training venue for nurse interns in adapting to clinical situations. This study aimed to determine the relationship that exists in the level of adaptation of nurse interns in acute care hospital practice and their demographic features. It employed a descriptive correlational study with the participation of eighty-two nurse interns who were about to complete the internship program from the University of Hail City, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A two-part questionnaire tool was utilised, with the first part covering the demographic features of respondents and the second part adapted Casey-Fink Readiness for the practice survey tool. The questionnaire was validated by five experts, and 15 nurse interns who were not part of the actual group of respondents answered it for reliability testing, utilising the Cronbach alpha. The overall adaptation level of nurse interns in hospital practice is slightly able to adapt. There is no significant difference between the level of adaptation of nurse interns in acute care hospital practice when grouped according to age. However, there is a significant difference between the level of adaptation and their GPA and type of program. It was concluded that nurse interns from the bridging program and those with high-grade point average appear to have a higher level of adaptation in acute care hospital practice than those in the regular program and those with low-grade point average.

Key words: *Transition, internship program, practical skills, clinical setting, hospital activities.*

Introduction

The clinical learning through internship program is a period of transition that enhances the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of nursing interns (Bjerknes & Bjork, 2012). It allows nurse aspirants to perform duties and responsibilities independently under the direct supervision of the nursing staff. A well-tailored clinical environment is vital during the transition period of the nurse interns (Papathanasiou, Tsaras & Sarafis, 2014) as this is the period of preparing them to become competent professionals (Missen, McKenna & Beauchamp, 2014). In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), educational institutions require nurse interns to complete a twelve-month internship program as a pre-requisite for the release of a license number by the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties (SCHS, 2014) to practice as a professional or registered nurse.

Our review of literature on nursing practice in the KSA reveals that there are no substantial studies on exploring the adaptation of nursing interns on hospital practice, thus, this study is conducted to fill the gap in the literature. Although scholars have unveiled the preparation of nurse interns for the transition in the workplace (Kropkowski & Most, 2008), an investigation on the perception of the nurse interns as regards their self-efficacy in the hospital area (Aboshaiqah, et al. 2018), and study on the perceptions of nurse interns on role transition (Gaundan & Mohammadnezhad, 2018) none of these quantify the socio-demographic profile of the nurse interns predicting requisites to adaptation. The descriptive correlation study of Aboshaiqah et al. has pointed out that gender, length of internship, and area of training affects the views of the Saudi nurse interns on self-efficacy. However, this is limited by some factors that are not included, for example, age, previous work experience, type of program, and grade point average. Reports on the transition period in adapting the work environment in the hospital practice are said to be the time of significant pressure (Missen et al. the 2014; Kowalski & Cross, 2010), and this can lead to limited learning and adjustment. Indeed, transition and adaptation can be more understood and generalised using the socio-demographic factor.

In this current study, nursing interns are defined as those students who finished a 4-year program Bachelor of Science in Nursing. This research aims to determine the level of adaptation of nursing interns in acute care hospital practical skills such as clinical problem solving, learning techniques, gaining a professional identity, and trials and tribulation. Furthermore, it aims to find the difference that exists in the level of adaptation of nurse interns in acute care hospital practice and their demographic features. The result can serve as a significant guide for the nurse interns in adapting to transition according to their demographic characteristics while contributing significantly to the enhancement of the nursing internship program.

Methodology

This study employed descriptive correlation analysis to determine if there is a relationship that exists on the level of adaptation of nursing interns in acute care hospital practice and their demographics features. It was conducted at the University of Hail City, North-western part of the KSA where a four-year program Bachelor of Science in Nursing is offered. Eighty-two nurse interns who were about to complete the internship program voluntarily participated in the study.

The questionnaire method was utilised in this study. The first part covers the demographic features of respondents that include age, sex, previous work experience, type of program, and grade point average and the second part is adapted Casey-Fink Readiness for the practice survey tool. The questionnaire was subjected for validity by five experts, three of which are with doctoral degree practicing as an instructor in the College of Nursing. All five experts agreed that the questionnaire is highly valid with 4.5 combined mean. The researchers also subjected the instrument for a reliability test using the Cronbach alpha. Fifteen nurse interns, who were not part of the actual data gathering, answered the questionnaire for reliability test and it resulted in a score of 0.91.

Before data gathering, the researchers obtained permission from the university to conduct data gathering from the nursing interns currently attending duties in the hospital areas. Data gathering was conducted in August 2019 with the orientation of the nurse interns on the purpose, extent of participation, and how they benefit from the study.

The data collected was organised using Microsoft excel and was processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The differences between the level of adaptation and their demographic characteristics were treated with One-way ANOVA.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of Nursing Interns according to their demographic features

Profile	Frequency (N= 82)	Percentage
Age		
21-25	45	54.90%
26-29	31	37.80%
30 and above	6	7.30%
Gender		
Male	42	51.20%
Female	40	48.80%
Previous work experience		
Staff Nurse	11	13.40%
CNE Staff	2	2.40%
Nurse Manager	6	7.30%
EMT- Paramedic	1	1.20%
No health-related experience	62	75.6%
Type of program		
Regular	75	91.40%
Bridging	7	8.60%
GPA		
2.00-2.49	18	22.00%
2.50-2.99	22	26.80%
3.00-3.49	20	24.40%
3.50-3.74	14	17.10%
3.75-3.99	8	9.80%

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents according to their profile. As to the age of the nurse interns, the majority are 21-25-year-old (54.90%), some are 26-29-year-old (37.80%), and few belong to the 30 - above year-old (7.30%). On gender, the majority are males (51.20%) and 48.80% are females. Concerning the previous work experience, more than 75.6% have no health-related work experience compared to 24.4% with hospital experience. Among those with hospital experience, 11 respondents indicated as a staff nurse, 6 as nurse manager, 2 CNE staff, and 1 as EMT-paramedic. On the type of program in which the nurse interns were enrolled, the vast majority or 91.40 percent belongs to the regular program. Only 8.60% or 7 respondents belong to the bridging program.

Table 2: The Level of Adaptation of the Nurse Interns in Acute Care Hospital according to practical skills

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Clinical Problem Solving	2.48	0.88	Slightly able to adapt
Learning Techniques	2.41	0.99	Slightly able to adapt
Professional Identity	2.60	0.87	Moderately able to adapt
Trials and Tribulation	2.40	0.85	Slightly able to adapt
Overall Adaptation	2.49	0.83	Slightly able to adapt
Legend			
1.00-1.75	Not at all able to adapt		
1.76-2.50	Slightly able to adapt		
2.51-3.25	Moderately able to adapt		
3.26-4.00	Significantly able to adapt		

Table 2 displays the level of adaptation of nurse interns in acute care hospitals. It shows that the mean scores for clinical problem solving are 2.48 (SD = 0.88), learning techniques are 2.41 (0.99), and trials and tribulation are 2.40 (0.85) which means that the nurse interns are slightly able to adapt in these practical skills. Meanwhile, professional identity has a mean score of 2.60 (SD) 0.87) which indicates that in this area, the nurse interns are moderately able to adapt. The overall adaptation level of nurse interns in hospital practice is 2.49 mean score (SD = .83) indicating that nursing interns are slightly able to adapt.

Table 3: Significant Difference between the Level of Adaptation of Nurse Interns in Acute Care Hospital Practice and their demographic features

Profile	Mean	SD	Df	Test Value	p-value	Interpretation
Age						
21-25	2.60	0.83	81	F (1.50)	0.23	Not Significant
26-30	2.29	0.80				
30 and above	2.49	0.83				
Gender						
Male	2.58	0.85	80	t (1.00)	0.32	Not Significant
Female	2.39	0.81				
Previous work experience						
Staff Nurse	2.54	0.86	81	F (1.42)	0.24	Not Significant
CNE Staff	2.35	1.20				
Nurse Manager	2.91	0.75				
EMT- Paramedic	2.80	-				
No health-related experience	2.28	0.79				
Type of program						
Regular	2.43	0.81	80	t (-2.60)	0.01	Significant
Bridging	3.25	0.67				
Grade point average (GPA)						
2.00-2.49	1.64	0.29	81	F (26.43)	0.001	Significant
2.50-2.99	2.07	0.64				
3.00-3.49	2.91	0.65				
3.50-3.74	3.25	0.58				
3.75-3.99	3.17	0.36				

Table 3 portrays the difference between the level of adaptation of nurse interns in acute care hospital practice and their demographic features. Through the One-way ANOVA, it was revealed that the p-value is at less than 0.05 level which is equivalent to a no significant difference between the level of adaptation of nursing interns in acute care hospital practice and their age group. This means that the level of adaptation of nurse interns in acute care hospitals is the same when grouped according to their age. In terms of gender, there is no significant difference between the level of adaptation of male (M=2.58, SD=0.85) and female (M=2.39, SD=0.81) and a score of t (80) = 1.01 and p=0.32. With a statistical value of p<0.05 level for the five groups of work [F (4, 78) = 1.42, p =0.24], there is no significant difference between the level of adaptation of nursing interns and their previous work experience. On the type of program in which the students were enrolled, there is a significant

difference between the level of adaptation of regular (M=2.43 SD=0.81) and bridging (M=3.25, SD=0.67) nurse interns since the score is t (80) = -2.60, p=0.01. Finally, it was shown that there is a significant difference between the level of adaptation of nurse interns in acute care hospital practice when their GPA is at the level of p<0.05 for the five groups [F (4, 78) = 26.43, p =0.001].

Discussion

This study intended to determine the level of adaptation of nurse interns in acute care hospitals in the following practical skills: clinical problem solving, learning techniques, gaining a professional identity, and trials and tribulation. It further aimed to determine the differences in the level of adaptation of nurse interns in acute care hospital practice and their demographic features.

The resulting analysis indicates that the level of adaptation of the nurse interns as to practical skills is "slightly able to adapt". It suggests that the nurse interns, who are considered first level nursing staff under the direct supervision of the hospital nurse, are establishing themselves in hospital activities performing like regular nurses engaged in real clinical situations. This is consistent with the findings of other researchers on the struggles of nurse interns to achieve their competencies in the clinical practice as they perform independently and act as a member of the nursing team. While struggling to fully adapt to working conditions and the environment in the clinical area, the interns are transitioning to become regular nurses. Also, encountering new experiences and real situations in the clinical area is a big transition in their chosen nursing career. (Missen, et al. 2014; Pfaff, et al. 2014). The level of adaptation of the interns may just be "slightly able to adapt" but as the internship progresses, they will likely learn how to adapt to varying clinical situations, gain valuable experience and their nursing skills sharpen.

The difference in the level of adaptation of nurse interns in acute care hospitals is found to be not significant when considering the demographic characteristics, specifically the factors of age, gender, and previous work experiences. It signifies that age and sex do not provide a significant impact on the level of adaptation from among the nurse interns. It illustrates that their abilities to adapt to acute care hospital practices are almost the same regardless of gender and age. Interestingly, only seven of the eighty-two respondents belong to the thirty and above group while seventy-five or supermajority of them are at young ages (21-29 years old). Thus, it may not be correct to say there is no significant difference in the level of adaptation of nurse interns when grouped according to age, especially so if there is no significant age gap. Another interesting point of this study is whether gender affects the adaptation level of nurse interns in the acute care hospital. In this study, the result shows that the adaptation level is almost the same for both sexes. In contrast to the study by Aboshaiqah

et al. (2019) which found the perception of nursing interns to be significantly different by gender, this current study noted that the adaptation level is not significantly different by gender. Aboshaiqah et al. (2019) noted that females were more likely confident than males to perceive that the clinical learning objectives were more important. But in terms of age, the Aboshaiqah et al. study stated no significant differences in perceived self-efficacy and importance were observed when nurse interns were group according to age group.

The difference in the level of adaptation of nurse interns in acute care hospitals is also the same when grouped according to their previous work experience. This implies that work experiences do not have considerable impact or effect on the level of adaptation of the nurse interns to acute care hospital activities. It indicates that those with no health-related experience can adapt to acute hospitals care practice in the same manner as those with experience. To ascertain this result, it would be best to look back at the distribution of experiences in the result section. Out of the eighty-two respondents, sixty-two are without health-related experience while twenty had little or limited experience. Logically, in the above case, there is no significant difference since the groups being compared are almost with the same amount of experience. So, on the other hand, to say there is a significant difference, there must have to be a considerable gap in the length or breadth of involvement of either group. As a intern, nurses are expected to have very limited experience in the different clinical areas of the hospital.

When it is based on the type of program and grade point average (GPA), the difference in the level of adaptation is found to be significant. While all the nurse interns whether from regular or bridging programs may have acquired prior knowledge and skills in their laboratory and clinical exposure during their BSN program that may have moulded them to exhibit reasonable performance in the clinical area, it may not automatically reflect the same level of adaptation. The finding in this study is consistent with the fact that bridging students had prior practice and more actual engagement in a health care institution. Bridging interns, therefore, could have better decision-making skills in the clinical area and can more easily adapt to learning demands than the regular interns. The outcome which is "a significant difference" further suggests that bridging students have been more prepared to work in the actual clinical setting than the regular internees. This result contradicts the finding in a study conducted by Zeinhom et al. (2017) in Jordan wherein the bridging and regular students have no significant differences that correspond to their clinical performances.

On the one hand, as the difference in the level of adaptation of nurse interns in acute hospital care practice is statistically significant when viewed under GPA, it reflects that the higher the cumulative GPA of interns, the higher is their adaptation level. It may also be an indication that nurse interns with a high GPA have better critical thinking skills in investigating and addressing health issues of patients admitted for hospital healthcare. This is consistent with

the study by Mthimunye, et al. (2019) and Blackman, et al. (2007) which establishes GPA as a significant predictor in identifying academic performance and achievement of nursing students.

Conclusion

The overall adaptation level of nurse interns in acute hospital care practice is "slightly able to adapt". Nurse interns from the bridging program and those nurse interns with high-grade point average appear to have a higher level of adaptation in acute care hospital practice than those from the regular program.

REFERENCES

Aboshaiqah, A., Tumala, R., Patalagsa, J., Al-Khaibary, A., AL Fozan, H., Silang, J. 2019. Perceptions of Confidence among Saudi Nursing Interns during Internship Program: A Cross-sectional Study. Ann Saudi Med. 38, Issue 4. cited 2019 Oct 22]; 4:262-9. http://www.thejhs.org/text.asp?2016/4/4/262/191907.

Bjerknes, Mari Skancke, et.al. 2012. Entry into nursing: An Ethnographic Study of Newly Qualified Nurses Taking on the Nursing Role in a Hospital Setting. Published in Nursing Research and Practice 2012. DOI: 10.1155/2012/690348. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Entry-into-Nursing%3A-An-Ethnographic-Study-of-Newly-Bjerknes-Bj%C3%B8rk/75f07568c6956a8d94a7d40090fbafb5347d937b.

Blackman, Ian, et.al. 2007. Undergraduate Nurse Variables that Predict Academic Achievement and Clinical Competence in Nursing. International Education Journal, 2007, 8(2), 222-236. ISSN 1443-1475 © 2007 Shannon Research Press. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ834246.pdf.

Gaundan D, Mohammadnezhad M. 2018. Intern-Nurses' Perception on Transition at Labasa Hospital, Fiji: A YZĂůŝłĂƟvĞ Study. J Nurs Health Stud Vol.3:No.1:2. https://ideas.repec.org/a/arp/ijohms/2018p158-164.html.

Kowalski S[1], Cross CL. 2010. Preliminary Outcomes of a Local Residency Programme for New Graduate Registered Nurses. Nurs Manag. 2010 Jan;18(1):96-104. DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2834.2009.01056.x. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20465735.

Kropkowski LR[1], Most R.2008. Set for Success: Nurse "Externs". Nurs Manage. 2008 Jul;39(7):8-9. doi: 10.1097/01.NUMA.0000326559.08673.8b. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18698282.

Missen K[1], McKenna L, Beauchamp. 2014. The Satisfaction of Newly Graduated Nurses Enrolled in Transition-to-Practice Programmes in their First Year of Employment: A Systematic Review. AJ Adv Nurs. 2014 Nov;70(11):2419-33. DOI: 10.1111/jan.12464. Epub 2014 Jul 2. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24989716.

Mthimunye, k., et.al. 2019. Predictors of Academic Performance, Success and Retention amongst Undergraduate Nursing Students: A Systematic Review. South African Journal of Higher Education Volume 33 | Number 1 | 2019 | pages 200–220. https://journals.co.za/docserver/fulltext/high_v33_n1_a13.pdf?expires=1576879152&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=0B41880448A7A1CDA8B5C760A6DC6947.

Papathanasiou IV, Tsaras K, Sarafis P. 2014. Views and Perceptions of Nursing Students on their Clinical Learning Environment: Teaching and Learning. Nurse Educ Today. 2014 Jan;34(1):57-60. DOI: 10.1016/j.nedt.2013.02.007. Epub 2013 Mar 6. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23481172.

Pfaff, K., et.al. 2014. Exploring New Graduate Nurse Confidence in Interprofessional Collaboration: A Mixed-method Study. Int J Nurs Stud 51:1142-1152. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24486164.

Saudi Commission for Health Sciences. 2014. Guideline of Professional Classification and Registration for Health Practitioners. https://www.scfhs.org.sa/en/registration/ClassAndRegister/Reregister/Documents/Professional%20Classification%20manual%20for%20Health%20Practitioners.pdf.

Zeinhom, Manal, et.al.2017. Nursing Students' Satisfaction with Their Clinical Experiences. International Journal of Nursing and Health Science 2017; 4(2): ISSN: 2381-4888. http://www.openscienceonline.com/journal/ijnhs.