

Lived Experiences of Newly Hired Nurses During Transition to Hospital Practice: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

The transition from nursing school to professional clinical practice is often associated with significant challenges among newly hired nurses. This qualitative study explored the lived experiences, challenges encountered, perceived preparedness, experiences with hospital support and orientation programs, and recommendations of newly hired nurses during their transition into hospital duty. Using a phenomenological research design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with newly hired nurses assigned to different hospital units. Thematic analysis was utilized to identify recurring patterns and themes from participants' responses. Findings revealed that newly hired nurses commonly experienced transition shock characterized by stress, anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and difficulty adapting to the fast-paced clinical environment. Participants reported challenges with workload management, prioritization, time management, and handling emergencies. Respondents acknowledged that hospital orientation programs and support from senior nurses and coworkers were essential factors that facilitated adjustment and confidence-building. However, participants also expressed the need for longer orientation programs, increased hands-on and simulation-based training, continuous mentorship, and emotional support systems. Despite initial struggles, newly hired nurses gradually developed resilience, adaptability, and professional confidence through experience and teamwork. The findings emphasize the importance of structured transition programs, supportive work environments, and competency-based preparation in improving the adjustment, retention, and professional growth of novice nurses. The study further highlights the need for healthcare institutions and nursing education programs to strengthen support mechanisms that promote safe practice and successful transition into the nursing profession.

Keywords: *Newly hired nurses, transition experience, clinical practice, orientation program, hospital support*

INTRODUCTION

The transition from academic learning to hospital practice is often considered one of the most challenging stages in a nurse's professional journey. Although nursing education is designed to provide students with essential knowledge and clinical exposure, many newly graduated nurses still experience difficulties when they begin working in real clinical settings. Newly hired nurses commonly encounter challenges

such as insufficient clinical competence, lack of confidence, inadequate mentorship, and difficulty adapting to high-pressure environments. These challenges may negatively affect job performance, satisfaction, and retention. Studies emphasize that structured orientation programs and effective mentorship are essential in easing this transition, enhancing competence, and improving patient outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of: age, sex, educational background, clinical experience, area assignment, and average patients handled?
2. What are the lived experiences and challenges encountered by newly hired nurses during their transition from nursing school to hospital duty?
3. How do newly hired nurses perceive their level of preparedness in performing nursing duties?
4. How do newly hired nurses describe the hospital support and orientation programs provided to them during their transition?
5. What recommendations can newly hired nurses provide to improve transition and orientation programs for future nursing staff?

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused on the gaps and challenges faced by selected newly hired nurses at Adventist Hospital Palawan. Orientation and seminars developed from this study will cater to the needs of newly hired nurses at Adventist Hospital Palawan and may not be effective in other hospitals with different challenges.

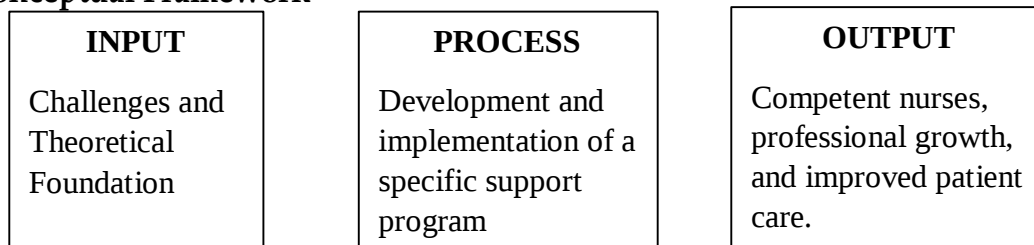
Review of Related Literatures

Nurses are widely regarded as the backbone of the healthcare system, playing a crucial role in delivering safe, effective, and patient-centered care. Because of this, they are expected to possess not only strong theoretical knowledge but also competent clinical skills and sound decision-making abilities. A study by R.-A. A. Gadin (2021), titled *"Newly Hired Nurses: Learning Needs, Challenges, Satisfaction, and Support Strategies in the Clinical Setting,"* revealed a significant relationship between clinical learning needs and the challenges encountered during the transition period. Similarly, Benner's "From Novice to Expert" theory explains that newly graduated nurses often begin their professional practice as novices, relying heavily on rules and guidance due to limited clinical experience.

Theoretical and Framework

Benner's 5-stage novice-to-expert theory was used as nurses develop knowledge through research and clinical experience. The 5 levels of nursing experience are novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. The study also used Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which states that by observing and imitating, people can acquire behavior, reactions, and attitudes.

Conceptual Framework



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a qualitative phenomenological design with purposive sampling and employed semi-structured interviews to explore the lived experiences of newly hired nurses.

Research Steps

The study was conducted at Adventist Hospital Palawan among newly hired nurses from various clinical units, using semi-structured interviews to explore their transition experiences.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The study utilized non-probability purposive sampling. Participants were selected based on specific inclusion criteria, particularly being newly hired nurses with direct experience in transitioning from academic to clinical practice. The primary data collection tool was a semi-structured interview guide.

Data Analysis Methods

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis within an interpretivist framework. Interview transcripts were reviewed, coded, and grouped into themes and sub-themes to interpret the lived experiences and perceptions of newly hired nurses during their transition period.

Research Hypotheses and Validation

The interview guide was validated by the adviser and panel members, and the study ensured credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study upheld ethical principles by obtaining informed consent and ensuring participants' anonymity, confidentiality, and comfort throughout the interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of: age, sex, educational background, clinical experience, area assignment, and average patients handled?

Most respondents were 23-year-old female BSN graduates who entered the workforce shortly after graduation and licensure. The majority had only RLE and internship experience, with few having prior exposure to healthcare work. Most were assigned to Medical-Surgical wards, which require strong critical thinking and multitasking skills. Additionally, the majority handled six to eight patients per shift, indicating the heavy workload commonly experienced by newly hired nurses.

SOP 2. What are the lived experiences and challenges encountered by newly hired nurses during their transition from nursing school to hospital duty?

Theme 1: Transition Shock and Reality Gap

Subtheme: Emotional Distress and Anxiety

Theme 2: Difficulty in Managing Workload and Responsibilities

Subtheme: Time Management and Prioritization

Theme 3: Lack of Confidence in Emergency and Critical Situations

Subtheme: Dependence on Senior Nurses and Teamwork

Theme 4: Growth, Adaptation, and Professional Development

SOP 3. How do newly hired nurses perceive their level of preparedness in performing nursing duties?

Theme 1: Partial Preparedness Through Theoretical Knowledge

Theme 2: Insufficient Preparation for Real Clinical Practice

Subtheme: Lack of Exposure to Emergency and Ward Routines

SOP 4. How do newly hired nurses describe the hospital support and orientation programs provided to them during their transition?

Theme 1: Structured Orientation as a Foundation for Confidence

Theme 2: Supportive Colleagues and Preceptors as Sources of Security

Theme 3: Insufficient Practical Exposure During Orientation

Theme 4: Need for Continuous Guidance Beyond Initial Training

SOP 5. What recommendations can newly hired nurses provide to improve transition and orientation programs for future nursing staff?

Theme 1: Extending and Enhancing Orientation Programs

Theme 2: Strengthening Mentorship and Peer Support

Theme 3: Providing More Hands-on and Simulation-Based Training

Theme 4: Promoting Emotional and Mental Support Systems

SUMMARY

The findings revealed that newly hired nurses commonly experience a difficult and emotionally demanding transition from nursing school to professional clinical practice. Most participants described their first months in the hospital as overwhelming and stressful, echoing the concept of “transition shock”. A major challenge identified was the pervasive anxiety during the early days of employment. Furthermore, managing workload emerged as a significant hurdle. Respondents struggled with multitasking, documentation, and medication administration while caring for multiple patients. Those in high-acuity units, such as the Emergency Room, described intense physical and mental fatigue.

CONCLUSIONS

Orientation programs, guidance from senior nurses, supportive coworkers, and mentorship were seen as valuable factors that helped lessen fear and improve confidence. Participants emphasized the need for continuous mentorship and emotional support even after the orientation period. Overall, the study concluded that newly hired nurses need strong institutional support, effective orientation programs, ongoing guidance, and practical learning opportunities to transition successfully into professional nursing practice. Providing a supportive and encouraging work environment can help improve their confidence, competence, job satisfaction, and long-term retention in the nursing profession.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that hospital administrators implement a standardized 4–8-week orientation program for newly hired nurses. Newly hired nurses should actively engage in orientation, simulation training, and

continuing education to enhance competence and confidence. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct quantitative studies examining the effects of orientation programs on nurse retention, competency, and patient safety outcomes.

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