

Lived Experiences of Nursing Preceptors in Their Roles and Responsibilities: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to describe the lived experiences of nursing preceptors in managing their dual roles as both clinical providers and educators for newly hired nurses. A qualitative descriptive phenomenological design was used. Nine (9) nursing preceptors were interviewed using a purposive sampling strategy. The data were obtained by conducting semi-structured in-person interviews and analyzed using Colaizzi's Seven-Step Descriptive Phenomenological Method. Ethical standards were maintained, and trustworthiness was ensured for this study. Five themes emerged from the analysis: (1) embracing the responsibility of becoming a nursing preceptor, (2) balancing patient safety with the learning needs of newly hired nurses, (3) developing adaptive teaching strategies in complex clinical environments, (4) experiencing personal and professional growth through the preceptor role, and (5) sustaining effective preceptorship through institutional support, continuous learning, and compassionate mentorship. These results indicate that nursing preceptorship encompasses teaching, mentorship, and leadership functions beyond merely role modeling to facilitate successful transition and development of nursing graduates. Adaptive teaching, well-developed clinical judgment, and administrative backing were also highlighted as essential components for successful preceptorship and optimal patient care. It is concluded that the nursing profession needs to continue improving preceptorship models by focusing on planned preceptor preparation, professional development, and administrative support to strengthen preceptors' capabilities and enhance the successful orientation of newly hired nurses.

Keywords: Nursing preceptors, lived experiences, roles and responsibilities.

INTRODUCTION

Preceptorship is widely viewed as a practical approach to strengthen newly hired nurses' competence, professional development, and retention within healthcare institutions. A nurse preceptor is a registered nurse who helps the newly hired nurse by acting as a teacher, support, and evaluator all at the same time. The possible benefits of integrating structured preceptorship into clinical work have gained strong attention recently, because past research suggests a positive relationship with clinical safety, teaching effectiveness, and an easier transition experience for newly hired nurses.

Statement of the Problem

This research study aimed to examine nursing preceptors' real-world experiences in fulfilling their dual role as clinicians and educators.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

How do nursing preceptors describe their experiences in managing their dual role as clinicians and educators in guiding newly hired nurses?

Scope and Delimitations

The objective of this study is to examine the lived experiences of nursing preceptors who hold dual roles (clinician and educator) within the Philippine healthcare system, even if it feels like a lot to carry at once. The main objective is to understand how they meet their professional role expectations, the coping strategies they use when difficulties show up, and how institutional policies shape their day-to-day work in a tertiary hospital in Marikina. This research will provide a fuller picture of the current implementation and of what they perceive as the real success of preceptorship through semi-structured, in-depth, in-person interviews. These interviews will be conducted with nine (9) registered nurses who are officially assigned as preceptors from 2024 to 2026, with at least one (1) preceptee handled.

This study excluded registered nurses who have less than six (6) months of experience as a nurse preceptor. Also, the study did not include the viewpoints of preceptees or newly hired nurses, since the focus is really on the preceptors only.

Review of Related Literature

The use of preceptorship in education, particularly in clinical nursing courses, has turned into a noticeable area of interest in recent years. International literature shows that when educators include structured, competency-focused elements into clinical classes, there are often meaningful gains in clinical supervision quality and teaching confidence (Davis, 2024). In the local Philippine context, related research suggests that preceptorship is frequently practiced, but not standardized, which can end up creating what participants describe as dilemma-like workload pressure, role confusion, and stress, usually because there are no clear formal preparation and no strong, structural support systems in place (Caesar & Franco, 2023). Overall, studies in the local context have demonstrated that preceptorship is largely practice-based, dual-role, and non-standardized.

Theoretical Framework

Patricia Benner's Novice to Expert Theory, Sister Callista Roy's Adaptation Model, and Rochester's Nursing Core Competency framework were used as theoretical frameworks to analyze qualitative data on the progression, adaptation, and competency development of nursing preceptors in the Philippines

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research study examined the lived experiences of nursing preceptors in managing their dual roles as clinicians and educators in a tertiary hospital in Marikina, Philippines.

Research Design

This qualitative phenomenological research design was used to investigate a shared phenomenon. It explored and described the firsthand experiences of nursing preceptors in fulfilling their role and responsibilities as clinicians and educators.

Research Steps

After conducting a thorough evaluation of the existing literature, the research design was meticulously developed to align with the aims of the study and the specific environment of a Philippine tertiary healthcare setting. The research utilized qualitative data gathering techniques, including a researcher-made, expert-validated, semi-structured interview with a Grand Tour question. The purpose of these methods was to gather detailed and comprehensive information about the experiences and perspectives of preceptors regarding their dual clinical-educator tasks.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The data collection commenced after securing clearance from the Institutional Ethics Committee and the Hospital Nursing Office. Semi-structured interviews with nine (9) eligible nursing preceptors were conducted voluntarily, and semi-structured, audio-recorded interviews lasting 10 to 20 minutes were conducted individually in a private space with participants' informed consent.

Data Analysis Methods

The transcribed interviews were analyzed using Colaizzi's Seven-Step Descriptive Phenomenological Method that uncovered the depth of the nursing preceptors' experiences. The transcripts were repeatedly read, significant statements regarding roles and coping mechanisms were extracted, and organized into clusters of themes. Finally, member checking was conducted with the participants to validate that the themes identified were their true lived experiences.

Research Hypotheses and Validation

Furthermore, their coping mechanisms and adaptation modes seemed to enhance over time through experience, as demonstrated by their capacity to articulate success strategies and manage clinical workloads alongside professional development goals.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical protocols by obtaining secured informed consent from all participants before data collection and ensured full transparency regarding the study's scope and objectives. Participant autonomy was safeguarded by absolute anonymity and confidentiality, alongside the right to voluntarily withdraw from the research at any juncture without penalty. Furthermore, ethical responsibility extended into the interpretive phase, where meticulous care was taken to accurately, objectively, and respectfully represent the authentic lived experience of the participants within the final analysis and reporting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Grand Tour Question: How do nursing preceptors describe their experiences in managing their dual role as clinicians and educators in guiding newly hired nurses?

Qualitative research conducted in a tertiary hospital in the Philippines revealed issues raised by nursing preceptors in the context of their experience and described by applying

Colaizzi's method of phenomenology. The conclusions stem from the relationship of the study findings to the research questions or goals.

Enhanced Engagement: Preceptors demonstrated elevated levels of professional commitment during shifts but faced prominent dual-role conflicts. Although preceptors were challenged by the interactive demands of patient safety and clinical teaching, they adapted with different teaching styles to cope with the demands of their role and responsibility.

CONCLUSIONS

- The preceptors showed higher tension in the clinical area when they were put into specific teaching duties, but without a formalized competency setup or a consistent reward framework. Because of that, they tended to lean on personal experience, as well as peer assistance, to get through their daily tasks. The coping strategy traits seem to fit well with heavy, high-pressure workloads, and this helps preceptors carry more responsibility for patient safety while also keeping their drive for nursing education. In addition, the preceptorship approach made the environment feel more cooperative, so peers were more likely to get involved, and that supports a better view of professional growth. In short, our results point to structured training, plus clear policy backing, as a promising way to reduce role burnout and, at the same time, strengthen the nursing preceptors, especially in the Philippines, in terms of deeper understanding and practical capability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are suggested: Furthermore, continuous monitoring and refinement of the preceptor training frameworks, shaped by preceptor input and institutional policy measures, will ensure that clinical teaching remains a helpful influence on new-hired nurse transition and patient care safety in the Philippines.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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