

COMPARING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NURSE-LED CLINICAL TEACHING ROUNDS AND STANDARD POST-CONFERENCES IN ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AMONG NURSING STUDENTS IN UGANDA

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**ABSTRACT**

*Background:* Increasing health challenges in low- and middle-income countries underscore the need for nurses with effective critical thinking and clinical judgment skills. This study compares the effectiveness of nurse-led clinical teaching rounds and standard post-conferences in facilitating critical thinking skills among second-year nursing students in Uganda.

*Methods:* The study employed mixed methods with quasi-experimental non-equivalent control groups. The groups were randomly allocated to the two clinical teaching strategies. The participants' critical thinking ability was examined before and after the 16 weeks of clinical placement using the performance-based development system model. Second, the perceptions and opinions regarding the teaching strategies were explored using focus group discussions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, and qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis.

*Results:* There was a significant increase in critical thinking abilities after the 16-week placement in both teaching strategies, up to 62% and 80% for the post-conference and the nurse-led clinical teaching rounds respectively, with a  $p < 0.001$ . However, the best performance was observed with the nurse-led clinical teaching rounds group. Students who were instructed using nurse-led clinical teaching rounds consistently reflected on the teaching strategy as an interactive. In contrast, those in the post-conference reflected partly learning in the abstract.

*Conclusion:* This study demonstrates that both nurse-led and clinical post-conference teaching strategies increase the student's critical thinking ability, but there is additional importance of nurse-led teaching rounds in students' clinical placements, it enhances student engagement and dialogue about patient care with the resultant improvement in students' critical thinking.