Assessing Perception of Role Transition among Nurse Interns

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ABSTRACT

Context: Nursing roles today constitute a vast and complex system. Nurse interns need to know their future roles to facilitate and prepare them socially to work professionally and decrease the reality shock when going outside to the labor market.
Aim: This study aimed to assess the perception of role transition among nurse interns.
Methods: The study was conducted in four hospitals affiliated to Ain Shams University where nurse interns have their training, namely Ain-Shams University Hospital (5 units), El-Demerdash Hospital (2 units), Pediatrics Hospital (3 units), and Cardiovascular surgery hospital. A convenient sample of all available nurse interns who started their internship in 2018 and their total number were100. Data collections included a role perception questionnaire to assess the perception of role and role transition knowledge questionnaire to assess role transition knowledge among nurse interns.
Results: The present study revealed that most of the interns had low total roles perception, among 51% of the studied interns, and low total knowledge level regarding role transition among 70% of the studied interns.
***Conclusion*:** The study concludes a low total level of role perception amongmore than half of the studied nurse interns and a low total knowledge level of role transition among nearly three quarters. A statistically significant relationship was revealed between nurse interns' total transition knowledge score and their age, gender, and training program attendance.
The study recommended conducting a training program and continuing education for the nurse interns to promote their perceptions about their role and role transition. Further studies for studying the relationship between role transition process and stress among nurse students and assessing the clinical learning needs of nurse interns periodically are recommended. Besides, develop a training program for them to the challenges facing in clinical practice.

Keywords: Nurse interns, Perception, role transition

1. Introduction

Nursing interns are baccalaureate student nurses who start the role transition from senior student to professional nurse through an internship training program. One of the mechanisms designed and implemented to support new graduate nurses in the workplace is an internship program that most hospitals offer in various formats *(Laux & McIntosh 2011). Stevenson (2010)* defined perception as one's awareness and understanding of sensory information attained through the interplay between past experiences, one's own culture, and the interpretation of the perceived information *(Safadi et al., 2011).*

The preparation of nurse interns is an important component in the clinical experience. After preparing students in the nursing lab, the school of nursing should provide and select a suitable real clinical learning setting, so that theory and practice would complement each other in the place where students learn their technical skills. Preparation includes orientation to the clinical setting (patient, environment), communication skills, patient education, nursing management, and leadership *(Hallin & Danielson, 2010; Ali, 2010)*.

The transition from nurse students to nurse interns can be challenging and stressful for new nurses. Healthcare organizations must provide transition programs to support nurse students' perception through this vulnerable time and increase graduates' job satisfaction and retention rates *(Phillips et al., 2014)*. Role transition begins during the graduate educational program when students are socialized into the role. The transition does not complete until later in the first year of practice. Students are expected to be orientated to their new role and receive regular feedback from colleagues and line managers to facilitate and support their transition. During this transitional period, nurse interns must understand the roles they and others play and social expectations associated with others' roles *(Maten-Speksnijder et al., 2015)*.

Support during a period of transition is essential for any nurse or midwife. Transition support will be an individualized, planned process and include quality induction and orientation to the new work context, meeting

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the department's performance management framework requirements. A high level of additional support assists in a soft and positive transition to the practice setting and the new role *(Department of Health and Human Services (2010).*

Nurse interns must adapt to their new role by understanding the meaning of it correctly. Additionally, meeting and understanding nursing interns' expectations and their perception of the actual workplace may better position hospital organizations to assist the graduate nurse to adapt to their new roles *(Gonzal et al., 2019).* They have many roles, such as caregiver, manager, communicator, researcher, recorder of nursing activities, and health educator. They often assume several roles simultaneously because of changing roles, responsibilities, relationships, and knowledge; these changes derive additional or different pressures, expectations, and challenges *(Chang et al., 2017).*

2. Significance of the study

Most nurse interns are confused in the clinical setting and complain from overlapping orders from their team; this makes them restless, could not work, sometimes they leave, and not completed their assignment, which may interrupt the workflow in their assigned area. Many studies have found that students experience varying levels of apprehension about their future roles as nurses. *Chandler (2012)* found that senior students expected a problematic transition (transition shock), lacked confidence in their nursing knowledge, and were worried about assuming full patient responsibility. Moreover, *Eldeeb and Bakeer (2016)* recommended further attention to nursing interns' academic preparation to promote their perceptions about their roles.

3. Aim of the study

This study aimed to assess the perception of role transition among nurse interns.

4. Subjects & Methods

4.1. Research Design

A Descriptive study design was used in carrying out this study. Descriptive research is a type of research that describes a population situation or phenomena that is being studied. It focuses on how, when, and where questions of research problem rather than how *(Nieswiadomy, 2008).*

4.2. Study setting

The study was conducted in the Faculty of Nursing, Ain Shams University, and the related assigned clinical settings in four hospitals affiliated to Ain-Shams University, where nurse interns have their training, namely, Ain-Shams University Hospital (5 units), El-Demerdash Hospital (2 units), Pediatrics Hospital (3 units), Cardiovascular hospital **(**4 units).

4.3. Subjects

A convenient sample of all available nurse interns who started their internship in the year 2018. The subjects consisted of 100 nurse interns out of 160 who are enrolled in Ain Shams University hospitals. The remaining 60 nurse interns were trained in private hospitals. Nurse intern distribution in different hospitals was according to their rotation plan in the units.

4.4. Tools of data collection

Two tools were used for data collection.

4.4.1. Role Perception Questionnaire

This tool was adopted from *Soliman (2012).* It was intended to assess the role perception level of the nurse interns. It included two parts:

Part 1 aimed at collecting personal characteristics of the nurse interns such as age, gender, marital status, and education before enrollment in the faculty.

Part 2 aimed at assessing the role perception level of nurse interns. It consisted of 91 items grouped into six main dimensions:

- Role as a caregiver:
  - Role as a nursing care planner (4 items)
  - Role as a nursing care provider:
    - Performing nursing activities (13 items)
    - Performing technical procedures (13 items)
    - Performing nursing activities in surgical units and operation room (14 items).
    - Performing nursing activities in hemodialysis unit (7 items).
    - Performing nursing activities in the premature unit (8 items).
  - Role as a nursing care evaluator (2 items).
- Role as a health educator (7 items).
- Role as a communicator (6 items).
- Role in the documentation of nursing activities (6 items).
- Role as a manager (9 items).
- Role as a researcher (2 items).

Scoring system

The scoring system ranged from 1 for “agree” and zero for "disagree." The total score was summed up for each dimension, and the overall score gave the intern perception of their role. The scores were converted into percent scores. The subject perception level was considered high if the percent score was above 75%, moderate level if the percent score ranged from 60% to 75%, and low level of perception if the percent scoreless than 60%.

4.4.2. Role Transition Knowledge Questionnaire

The researcher developed this tool based on related literature review *Chang and Daly (2017); Duchscher (2008)*. It consists of (23) closed-ended questions. These questions are classified into thirteen multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and ten true and false questions.

These questions are grouped into eight main dimensions, namely concept of role (2 questions), and role perception (2 questions); reality shock, its phases and actions to recover (5 questions); concept and major factors of successful role transition (4 questions); the concept of role expectation (3 questions); nursing intern' caregiver role

(2 questions); nursing intern manager and health educator (2 questions); nursing interns' recording role (1 question); and challenges facing nurse interns (2 questions).

Scoring system: For each knowledge question, a score of "2" was given for a correct answer and "1" for an incorrect one. The total knowledge score was calculated by summing up the score of 23 questions for a maximum score of 46. Mean and standard deviation was calculated then converted into a mean percent. The subject knowledge was considered a high level of knowledge if the percent score was above 75%, moderate level of knowledge if the percent score ranged from 60% to 75%, and low level of knowledge if the percent score was less than 60%.

4.5. Procedures

The operation design for this study includes the preparatory phase, the pilot study, and the fieldwork.

The preparatory phase started from the beginning of May 2018 till the end of August 2018. It covered four months. The researcher revised a review of national, international, current, and past related literature and using textbooks, articles, journals, and thesis concerning the topic of the study. Based on this review, the researcher developed the role and role transition knowledge questionnaires and prepared them in the preliminary form.

Face and content validity of the role perception questionnaire and the role transition knowledge questionnaire were assessed by five experts from two faculties of nursing, two professors in nursing administration from Cairo University, three professors in nursing administration from Ain Shams University. The experts judged the tool for comprehensiveness, accuracy, and clarity in the language (face validity), and they judged the importance of items to be included in the tools (content validity). Based on their recommendations, correction, addition, or omission of some items were done. The role transition knowledge questionnaire was tested for its internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. It was 0.866, and the perception questionnaire was 0.916.

A pilot study was carried out on 10% (10) nurse interns of the main study sample. The pilot served to test the clarity and applicability of the tools. It assessed the feasibility of the research process and the clarity of the knowledge questionnaire and determined the time needed for filling in the questionnaire, which was 30-35 minutes. Data obtained from the pilot study were analyzed, and no modifications were done. So, those participants were included in the study subjects.

The actual fieldwork of the study continued for four months, from October 2018 to January 2019.

The researcher met nurse interns to explain the purpose and nature of the study. Then the researcher distributed data collection tools (role perception questionnaire and role transition knowledge questionnaire) to the study subjects to assess their knowledge and perception related to their roles. The researcher was present during this process to give necessary instructions. Each nurse intern took approximately 30-35 minutes to answer the questionnaires and handed them back to the researcher.

Official permission to carry out the study was obtained from medical and nursing directors of the hospitals. It was done by issuing letters from the Faculty of Nursing clarifying the aim of the study to the hospital directors. Confidentiality of information was ensured, and data collection forms were anonymous.

The protocol was approved by the Scientific Research Ethical Committee in the Faculty of Nursing at Ain Shams University before the study. The researcher explained the aim of the study to all officials and all study participants. The participant was reassured that any obtained information would be confidential and used only for research, that subject has the right to choose to participate or not in the study and withdraw at any time. The study maneuvers had no actual or potential harm on the participant. The study beneficence was clear in the improvement of the performance of nurse interns, which would reflect positively on their ability to apply it correctly.

4.6. Data analysis

Data entry and statistical analysis were done using (SPSS) version 20 Statistical Package for Social Science. Data collected from the studied sample was reviewed, coded, and entered using the computer software PC. Data were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, percentages for non-numerical data, and mean, the standard deviation for parametric numerical data. T-test was used to determine if there are significant differences between the two groups. F test is used to compare two variances. However, the f-statistic is used in various tests, including regression analysis, the Chow test, and the Scheffe test. The significance level was considered at $p \leq 0.05$ and highly significant at $P < 0.01$.

5. Results

Table 1 shows that slightly more than two-thirds (69.0%) of the study sample had an age range between 22-24 years old with a mean age of 23.07±0.92. Moreover, slightly less than three quarters (73.0%) were females, and 72.0% of them were singles. Also, 71.0% of the study sample had general secondary education, and the majority (84.0%) of them did not attend training programs regarding role and role transition.

Table 2 demonstrates that only 17% of nurse interns had a high total roles perception level, 51% had low role perception, and 32% had moderate role perception. This table also shows the highest perception of the roles was lowly perceived particularly regarding their role as caregiver 53%, communicator 48%, documentation role 43%, manager 39%, and researcher 51%.

Table 3 illustrates that the mean scores of nurse interns regarding the role transition knowledge items were low.

Table 4 reveals that only 7.0% of nurse interns had a high total knowledge level regarding their role transition and 70% of them had low total knowledge regarding role transition.

Table 5 shows a non-statistically significant relation between nurse interns' total roles perception score and their socio-demographic characteristics.

Table 6 shows a statistically significant relationship between nurse interns' total transition knowledge score and their age, gender. Furthermore, there was a highly statistically significant relation between nurse interns' total transition knowledge score and their training program attendance.

Table (1): Frequency and percentage distribution of study sample demographic characteristic (n= 100).

Items	Nurse interns (100)	
	Frequency	Percent
Age		
<22	3	3.0
22-24	69	69.0
>24	28	28.0
Mean ± SD	23.07±0.92	
Range	21-25	
Gender		
Male	27	27.0
Female	73	73.0
Marital status		
Single	72	72.0
Married	28	28.0
Previous education before enrollment in the faculty		
General secondary education	71	71.0
Nursing teaching institution	29	29.0
Training programs		
Yes	16	16.0
No	84	84.0

Table (2): Frequency and percentage distribution of nurse interns' total role perception (n= 100).

Dimensions of roles perception	Levels of roles perception	No	%
	Low	53	53.0
Total role as a caregiver	**Moderate**	29	29.0
	High	18	18.0
	Low	34	34.0
Total role as a health educator	**Moderate**	35	35.0
	High	31	31.0
	Low	48	48.0
Total role as a communicator	**Moderate**	27	27.0
	High	25	25.0
	Low	43	43.0
Total role in documentation (recording and reporting)	**Moderate**	30	30.0
	High	27	27.0
	Low	39	39.0
Total role as a manager	**Moderate**	38	38.0
	High	23	23.0
	Low	51	51.0
Total role as a researcher	**Moderate**	0	0.0
	High	49	49.0
	Low	51	51.0
Total roles perception	**Moderate**	32	32.0
	High	17	17.0

Table (3): Nurse interns' mean knowledge score regarding role transition (n= 100).

Items	Number of items	Mean±SD
Concept of role	2	1.29±0.46
Concept of role perception	2	3.34±0.62
Reality shock, its phases, and action to recover.	5	5.73±1.04
Concept and major factor of successful role transition	4	5.59±0.85
Concept of role expectations	3	3.45±0.80
Nursing interns' caregiver role	2	2.34±0.62
Nursing interns' manager and health educator role	2	2.38±0.65
Nursing interns' recording role	1	1.31±0.46
Challenges facing nurse interns	2	1.25±0.46
Total knowledge regarding role transition	23	26.65±4.25

Table (4): Frequency and percentage distribution of nurse interns' total knowledge regarding role transition.

Total levels of knowledge regarding tole transition	No	%
Low	70	70.0
Moderate	23	23.0
High	7	7.0

Table (5): Relation between total nurse interns' roles perception score and their socio-demographic characteristics (n= 100).

Socio-demographic characteristics	Total roles perception score		F/t	P
	No. = 100	Mean ± SD		
Age				
<22	3	122.68±14.31114		
22-23	69	126.54±16.44853	1.45	>0.05
24-25	28	113.00±4.58258		
Gender				
Male	27	123.37±17.71820	0.002	>0.05
Female	73	123.51±13.81738		
Marital status				
Single	72	122.49±14.25620	1.13	>0.05
Married	28	126.00±16.36392		
Previous Education				
General secondary education	71	122.76±14.16481	0.55	>0.05
Nursing teaching institution	29	125.21±16.62696		
Training programs				
Yes	16	124.33±14.65945	1.78	>0.05
No	84	118.94±15.66512		

Table (6): Relation between nurse interns' total transition knowledge score and their socio-demographic characteristics (n= 100).

Socio-demographic characteristics	Total knowledge score		F/t	P
	No. = 100	Mean ± SD		
Age				
<22	3	25.97±3.85002		
22-23	69	28.25±4.87340	3.03	<0.05
24-25	28	27.33±4.04145		
Gender				
Male	27	25.41±3.61896	3.23	<0.05
Female	73	27.11±4.39242		
Marital status				
Single	72	26.46±4.14164	0.52	>0.05
Married	28	27.14±4.55188		
Previous Education				
General secondary education	71	26.51±4.15030	0.61	>0.05
Nursing teaching institution	29	27.00±4.53557		
Training programs				
Yes	16	25.98±3.74480	15.08	<0.000
No	84	30.19±5.06253		

6. Discussion

Transition is a period of learning, adjustment, and socialization, when the nurse applies, consolidates, and increases their existing knowledge, gaining competence (knowledge, skills, and attitude) that applies to the nursing practice of the clinical setting or patient population in which they are expected to perform *(Patterson et al., 2010)*. This study aimed to assess the perception of role transition among nurse interns.

The current study's finding reveals that more than half of the nurse interns had the lowest total roles perception level. This finding may be because nurse interns cannot apply the theory they learned during their formal education to the daily work and, as a result, find it hard to implement what they learned. Also, it may be due to a lack of standardized training and a lack of continuing education of nurse interns. This finding is congruent with *Resck and Gomes (2008),* who showed that nurses could not apply the theory they learned during their formal education to their daily work. For this reason, it is necessary to execute joint planning of the professional practice with healthcare students, professors, and nurses.

Similar findings were noted by *Velhal et al. (2013)* in their study that was carried out to assess awareness among nursing staff about their roles and responsibilities on sixty nurses in Topical National Medical College and Nair Hospital, Mumbai, India, where they found that most of the

nursing staff were not aware of their roles and responsibilities. There was an overlapping of their roles and responsibilities. This result was following *Frisch and Frisch (2006)* as they suggested that the lack of supervision, standardized training, and continuing education of staff nurses working in hospitals contributed to the shifting of their comprehensive role as providing holistic nursing care to patients. In agreement with this explanation, *AlThigaaet, et al. (2017)* indicated that nursing interns thought they were not adequately prepared with knowledge base and skills.

The present study findings show that seventy percent of nurse interns had low total knowledge regarding role transition. This result means that those nurse interns lack the opportunity to develop their nursing and administrative skills and discuss the transition from student to nurse. They are not aware of the problematic nature of the transition regarding work overload and reality shock.

This result may be because nurse interns were never prepared for their roles or allowed to practice them during their undergraduate education. Also, nurse interns had limited clinical placement experience and were rarely responsible for a full patient workload. The present study's finding agrees with *Missen et al. (2014),* who found that the subjects poorly perceived their role and were poorly prepared for role transition. In the same line with the current study finding, *Azimian et al. (2014)* found that most participants highlighted that they had not been adequately prepared for transition due to the inefficiency of the university system.

The present study results denote a statistically significant relationship between nurse interns' total transition knowledge score and their age, as the younger age group had the lowest mean score. This finding may be due to nurse interns' age positively impacting competence, especially when combined with additional training and experiences. This finding is supported by *Alkorashy and Abu Assi (2017),* who found that, as age increased, self-directed learning readiness also increased.

In addition, there was a statistically significant relationship between nurse interns' total transition knowledge score and their gender, as the female subjects had the higher mean knowledge score. This finding may relate to female nurse interns perceiving their roles more than their male counterparts because society believed that nursing career is feminine.

Hassan et al. (2018) found a statistically significant relationship between the age and gender of nurse students and total role transition's knowledge. On the other hand, *Al-Mahmoud et al. (2013)* conducted a study about assessing factors leading to role transition shock among interns and reported that male interns perceived their roles transition more than female colleagues.

In addition, the present study results show a non-statistically significant relation between nurse interns' total roles perception score and their socio-demographic characteristics. This result may be because nurse interns' socio-demographic characteristics would not account for differences in total roles perception score. This finding is consistent with *Ali and Amer (2018),* who showed that the staff nurse's actual observed practice was not affected by their working shifts or any demographic characteristics such as age or experience. However, there was a statistically significant difference in their educational level for both the expected and actual roles.

7. Conclusion

The study concludes a low total level of role perception among more than half of the studied nurse interns and a low total knowledge level of role transition among near three-.quarters of the studied nurse interns There was a statistically significant relationship between nurse interns' total transition knowledge score and their age, gender, and training program.

8. Recommendations

Based on the results of the present study following recommendations are suggested:

- Further attention to academic preparation of nursing interns to promote their perceptions about role transition.
- Developing and implementing comprehensive nurse interns' development and training programs.
- Further studies are suggested as:
  - Relationship between role transition process and stress among nurse interns.
  - Future research must be made to improve perceptions of nursing interns about role transition.
  - Assess the clinical learning needs of nurse interns periodically and develop a training program for them to the challenges they might face in clinical practice.

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