

Article

The most valued characteristic of clinical instructors perceived by nursing students: An integrative literature review

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ABSTRACT

Clinical teaching effectiveness has been a topic of interest in nursing education over the last few decades. An effective clinical teaching guided by clinical instructors intends to create high, updated core clinical competencies and link them with theoretical knowledge of nursing students. Clinical instructors, thus, are seen as one of the key parts in nursing education. This study aimed to expand the most recent integrative literature review on the topic of the most valued characteristic of clinical instructors perceived by nursing students which was conducted by Angela Dawn Collier in 2017. Similar with hers, an integrative literature review was also employed in this study. 13 related literature published from 2018 up to February 2021 were integrated reviewed and synthesized. It was found that personality trait was the most valued characteristic of nursing clinical instructors. This finding also means that knowing their instructor have good personality was the highest expectation of the students. A scientific implication of this finding is that more studies are always needed to reconceptualize or expand this topic. Practically, well-defined expectations of nursing students in clinical settings should always be explored.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing health care environments, nursing students, who will be involved in the environment once accomplishing their education, are expected to have high, updated core clinical competency and theoretical knowledge (Dahlke et al., 2012; Tanda & Denham, 2009). This requirement makes clinical instructors being one of the pivotal components in nursing education (Banan & Elsharkawy, 2017, p. 186). The clinical

instructors provide a learning environment where theoretical knowledge is linked to practical skills (Becker & Neuwirth, 2002). It is also highlighted that clinical instructors guide students in clinical skills laboratories to integrate the knowledge acquired in the classroom into clinical practices through measured simulations (Hewitt-Thompson et al., 2016, p. 21). That way, the knowledge and skills possessed by the students can be properly applied when

they are involved in increasingly complex workforce environments as novice nurses (Tanda & Denham, 2009, p. 140).

Given the important role played by clinical instructors, the quality of clinical instructors' characteristics is of the utmost essential. A competent clinical instructor provides a model to successful students (Hewitt-Thompson et al., 2016, p. 21). That is, as students modelling their behaviour from those of clinical instructors, the clinical instructors are demanded to show good characteristics during the transfer process of knowledges and skills in clinical laboratories (McCallum et al., 2016, p. 11).

In the literature, the effective characteristics of the instructors needed in clinical settings have been important topics of studies for many years. Back to 1987, in the study of Mogan and Knox, an instrument of Nursing Clinical Teaching Effectiveness Inventory (NCTEI) was developed to identify the most important characteristic of 'best' from 'worst' clinical instructors. It was found that being a good role model is perceived by participants of the study to be the most valued characteristic of clinical instructors.

Based on the Mogan and Knox's work, Collier (2017) did systematic literature review from 1985 to 2017 on clinical teaching effectiveness and found three dominant themes associated with the characteristics of an effective nursing clinical instructors, including the competency, ability to form interpersonal relationships, and desired personality traits. It was also found that the ability to develop interpersonal relationships is the most valued characteristic of clinical instructors perceived by nursing students participated in the study.

Despite the fact that many attempts have been made by scholars in exploring the issue of clinical teaching effectiveness, it must always be borne in mind that

extensive and extended works are always required in response to the ongoing empirical and theoretical needs. This also means that continuously studies conducted to gain better understanding of what constitutes the most valued characteristic of clinical instructors from the perspective of nursing students are always needed. Empirically, knowing the opinions of students as the main element of education can be effective in improving the education. In this study, the most recent integrative literature review on the most valued characteristic of clinical instructors perceived by nursing students probed by Collier (2017) is expanded. A more concise understanding of this issue generated from this study is intended for the constantly development of body of knowledge and the adjustments between practical needs and nursing education. Based on this justification, the research question guiding this study is that 'what is the most valued characteristic of clinical instructors perceived by nursing students?'

II. METHODS

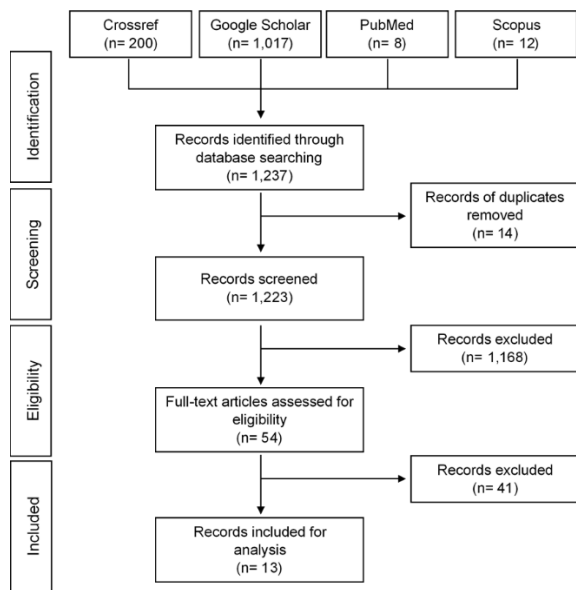
An integrative literature review was conducted in this study. The integrative literature review is a type of research methods undertaken to study, critique, and synthesize in an integrated manner representative literature related to a particular topic in order to produce new insights and summarized knowledge, which therefore offering the potentiality for generating theory (Lubbe et al., 2020; Torraco, 2005). In a similar vein, Lubbe et al. stated that the integrative literature review allows researcher to summarize the primary findings of multiple types of evidence to address a research problem which could offer a more inclusive view of a particular topic (2020).

It is also important to note that one of the aims of most integrative literature reviews conducted by scholars is to reconceptualize or expand a particular

mature topic as it continues to develop (Torraco, 2005, p. 357). This makes continuously studies to the extension of a mature topic, including clinical teaching effectiveness, is of paramount importance. This nature, therefore, allows the integrative literature review to be a type of methodology relevant conducted in clinical contexts, including in this study.

Figure 1

Integrative review chart



Source: Author's own elaboration based on Moher et al. (2009)

This study was drawn on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement as modelled by Moher et al. (2009). Figure 1 shows four levels of the integrative literature review process undertaken in this study. The first level was identification. The identification procedure began with an electronic search of related literature published from 2018 to early February 2021. To assist the search process, the 'Publish or Perish' software program was utilized. The search was limited to articles written in English and Indonesian. In the search, the search string in English applied in the keywords field of the program was as follow: ("clinical instructors" OR "clinical teachers" OR "preceptors") AND

"characteristics" AND "nursing" AND "students". Meanwhile, in Indonesian, the search string was: ("Instruktur Klinik" OR "Instruktur Keperawatan" OR "preseptor") AND "karakter" AND "keperawatan" AND "mahasiswa". The databases explored and the number of returned results were Crossref (n= 200 (English) + 0 (Indonesia)= 200), Google Scholar (n= 998 (English) + 19 (Indonesia)= 1,017), PubMed (n= 8 (English) + 0 (Indonesia)= 8), Scopus (n= 12 (English) + 0 (Indonesia)= 12). In total, 1,237 returned results were identified by the Publish or Perish software program in the form of metadata.

The identification was followed by the screening of duplicates. To assist the screening process, the 'Zotero' software program was utilized. The metadata produced by the 'Publish or Perish' software program was imported into the 'Zotero'. Duplicate items were selected and removed. Of the 1,237 items, 14 were removed, leaving 1,223 items.

The third level was the selection of the literature which were eligible to be included in this study. The selection was done by reading the title and abstract of the 1,223 literature. The inclusion criteria used were publications of empirical studies including master and doctoral theses exploring the characteristics of effective clinical instructors from the perspective of nursing students. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria were publications of empirical studies that were not specifically exploring the characteristics of effective clinical instructors from the perspective of nursing students; publications were other than empirical studies, such as books, book chapters, conference papers, and editorials; and publications that were written other than in English and Indonesian languages. After the selection, 54 records of literature met the inclusion criteria.

Table 1. Summary of literature included for analysis

No	Title	Author (s)/ Year	Method	Finding (The most valued characteristic)
1.	Characteristics of a supportive clinical instructor in nursing training: A qualitative study	Farahani et al. (2020)	Qualitative (semi-structured interviews/content analysis)	Personal and professional competence.
2.	Clinical Teaching Effectiveness of Undergraduate Student Nurses in the United Arab Emirates	AlMekkawi et al. (2020)	Quantitative (Cross-sectional)	Personality, followed by teaching ability, interpersonal relations. The lowest valued categories were nursing competence and evaluation.
3.	Effective Teaching Behaviors of Nursing Students and Nurse Educators at University of Gondar, Northwest Ethiopia: Cross-Sectional Institution Based Study	(Biftu et al., 2018)	Quantitative (Cross-sectional descriptive study design)	The teaching ability, followed by evaluation and nursing competence.
4.	Hispanic Nursing Students' Perspectives on Student-Clinical Instructor Relationships and Learning	Brito (2020)	Qualitative (Interview)	Clinical competence, good communication skills, caring, and being patient, enthusiastic, motivational, present, and involved.
5.	Nurse trainees' perception of effective clinical instructor characteristics	Hababeh & Lalithabai (2020)	Quantitative (a cross-sectional descriptive design)	Personality, followed by interpersonal relations, Evaluation, Nursing competence, and Teaching ability
6.	Nursing Students' Perceptions of Clinical Instructor Behaviors that Affect the Development of Self-Confidence	Munawar et al. (2019)	Quantitative (A non-experimental descriptive design)	Giving positive feedback (evaluation), followed by showing confidence and trust in students, providing support and encouragement, and personal characteristics.
7.	Nursing Perceived Clinical Behaviors Students' Effective Teachers'	Mukan et al. (2021)	Quantitative (a cross-sectional approach)	Evaluation, followed by teaching ability, nursing competence, interpersonal relationship, and personal characteristics.
8.	Persepsi Mahasiswa Universitas Bangsa Harapan Tentang Pembimbing Klinik (The perceptions of Harapan Bangsa university nursing students about clinical instructor)	Sumarni & Sugiharti (2019)	Quantitative (a cross-sectional approach)	Professional competence, followed by personal characteristics, teaching ability, and interpersonal relations.
9.	Persepsi mahasiswa tentang efektivitas pembimbing klinik (Student's perceptions	Okorullah et al. (2020)	Quantitative (a cross-sectional approach)	Teaching ability (in Hasan Sadikin Hospital); interpersonal relationships (in Garut Hospital)

No	Title	Author (s)/ Year	Method	Finding (The most valued characteristic)
	about the effectiveness of clinical instructors)			
10.	<i>Preceptorship in a Nurse Practitioner Program: The Student Perspective</i>	McQueen et al. (2018)	Quantitative (A descriptive, cross-sectional design)	Being a good mentor, having positive communication skills, planning learning activities to meet individual student learning needs, and providing clear expectations and instructions.
11.	<i>Should We Be Trained to Train? Nursing Students' and Newly Qualified Nurses' Perception on Good Lecturers and Good Clinical Preceptors</i>	Martínez-Linares et al. (2019)	Exploratory, descriptive qualitative study	Having a broad career (experience), having motivation and involvement to carry out the preceptorship, and being approachable professionals who know how to organize themselves at work.
12.	<i>Student Perceptions of Clinical Instructor Characteristics Affecting Clinical Experiences</i>	Reising et al. (2018)	Mixed method (A multisite prospective, descriptive exploratory design)	Instructor knowledge and support, followed by patience, creating challenges, enthusiasm, and organization.
13.	<i>Students and teachers' perception of an effective clinical nurse teacher characteristics: A comparative study</i>	Panlican et al. (2020)	Quantitative (a descriptive comparative design)	Relationships with the student, followed by personal attributes and professional competence.

The final protocol was done through full, careful reading of the whole 54 literature to be selected and analyzed. 13 records of literature were produced in the final level, summarized in the Table 1. Of the 13 literature, 3 were qualitative, 9 were quantitative, 1 was mixed method; and 12 were journal articles and 1 was dissertation. Thematic analysis was employed to generate and synthesize themes embedded in each literature.

III. RESULT

After generating and synthesizing themes from the 13 records of literature selected, it was found that the personality trait emerged as the most valued characteristics of nursing instructors from the perspective of nursing students. Two articles explicitly indicated this most valued characteristics of nursing instructors (AlMekawi et al., 2020; Hababeh & Lalithabai, 2020). In other related studies, it was revealed that the

personal characteristic, together with other characteristics were constituted as the most valued characteristics of the clinical instructors (Brito, 2020; Farahani et al., 2020; Martínez-Linares et al., 2019; McQueen et al., 2018). For instance, in the study of McQueen et al., it was found that nursing students perceived many beneficial attributes of the preceptors, including being a good mentor, having positive communication skills, planning learning activities to meet individual student learning needs, and providing clear expectations and instructions (2018). Similarly, Farahani et al. concluded that personal and professional competence were the necessary competencies to support students (2020). Another finding emerged in this study was that the teaching ability was the second most valued characteristics for effective nurse instructors. Two studies explicitly indicated this characteristic as the most valued characteristics of the instructors

(Bifftu et al., 2018; Oktorullah et al., 2020). In other studies, it was constituted as the second valued characteristics by the nursing students. AlMekkawi et al. found that the students ranked the personality as the highest teaching category of the clinical instructors, followed by teaching ability and interpersonal relations, while nursing competence was the lowest scored categories (2020). Meanwhile, in the study of Mukan et al., it was showed that evaluation as the most important category of effective clinical teaching behavior, followed by teaching ability, nursing competence, interpersonal relationship, and personal characteristics (2021).

Apart from the personality trait and teaching ability, nursing students also valued other attributes of the clinical instructors as being beneficial to clinical learning. For instance, when conducting a multisite prospective, descriptive exploratory study in the Midwest, U.S, Reising et al. found that instructor knowledge and support was the highest desirable characteristics perceived by the student, followed by patience, creating challenges, enthusiasm, and organization (2018). Likewise, in the study of Sumarni & Sugiharti, the students constituted professional competence as the most valued characteristic, followed by personal characteristics, teaching ability, and interpersonal relations (2019).

IV. DISCUSSION

Based on the main finding of this study, the personality trait suggested as the most important characteristic of the clinical instructors for nursing students. Apart from the personality trait, there were also other most valued characteristics of nursing instructors from the perspective of nursing students appeared in few recent studies. The teaching ability was constituted by the students as the most valued characteristics as well, as reported by

Bifftu et al. (2018) and Oktorullah et al. (2020). Moreover, Mukan et al. (2021) and Munawar et al. (2019) also found that evaluation was perceived by the students as the best characteristic of the instructors. These findings were somewhat different with that of the study done by Collier (2017) which this study was drawn on. This also means that while the literature from 1985 to 2017 on clinical teaching effectiveness pointed out the ability to develop interpersonal relationships as the most valued characteristic of clinical instructors perceived by nursing students, in recent literature, 2018 to early February 2021, nursing students had different perception of the most valued characteristic, which was the personality trait, followed by other characteristics.

The age cohort might be the possible explanation for this difference. In the previous study, the reviewed was done in literature published between 1985 and 2017, which captured the perception of the students in that era. Their perception, of course, was shaped from their values, experiences, and dynamics in clinical settings in the period. Meanwhile, in the recent literature reviewed in this study, the students were born in different cohort with different values, experiences, and dynamics in their clinical practice. This makes they might have different opinion of the best characteristic of the instructors. As found by Farahani et al. (2020), the nursing students assumed that the clinical instructors who supported them more were calm, patience, criticizable, flexible, kind, well mannered, and charitable. This also means that the opinion of most students included in recent studies have shifted from that of the students in the previous studies.

Therefore, these results suggest that knowing their instructor have good personality is the highest expectation of the students. It might make they feel comfortable and enthusiastic in linking

the theoretical knowledge to practical skills in the clinical skills laboratories. valued characteristic of clinical instructors.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The increase in quantity and quality of literature published between 2018 and February 2021 provided justification for this study to examine and expand what constitutes as the most valued characteristic of clinical instructors perceived by nursing students. Findings reported here revealed that the personality trait was the most important characteristic of the clinical instructors for nursing students. The age cohort might be the possible explanation for the difference of the findings in this study and that of the study conducted by Collier (2017) which this study was drawn on.

This suggests that well-defined expectations of nursing students in clinical settings should always be explored. The students who are in doing clinical round should be consulted regularly to capture comprehensive feedback regarding the characteristics of the instructors that they expect. This might allow the students to gain expected knowledge and skills that are needed in increasingly complex workforce environments.

Furthermore, while the literature reviewed here have contributed to developing insight toward the most valued characteristic of clinical instructors, more future studies in these issues are always needed. For instance, a comparative study can be conducted to investigate whether there is a difference in the students' clinical performance under the supervision of clinical instructor with good personal trait with those who do not. Another correlation study is on the effect of having competent instructors/educator with a positive personality and a good interpersonal skill on the passing rate on nurses' board exam. A deeper understanding of these topics might provide better understanding on most

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BIOGRAPHY

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