

## A Comparative Study on Effective Clinical Instruction: The Millennial Generation's Perspective

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** This study aimed to determine learners' perceptions of the characteristics of an effective clinical instructor and the determining factors for that perception. **Materials and Methods:** This study used a quantitative-cross sectional design. The participants of this study were 100 nursing students obtained from convenience sampling. These students were enrolled in the College of Nursing of the University of Hail in the first semester of 2019-2020. Data was collected from January to April 2020. **Results:** The majority of students identified "skillful" as the most important characteristic ( $x=4.26$ ;  $SD= 3.86$ ), followed by "good communicator" ( $x=4.15$ ;  $SD=3.77$ ), and "approachable" and "skillful," both with means of 4.05( $SD= 4.30$ ). A significant difference was found in gender ( $t$  value-2.497;  $p<.0.014$ ) but not year level ( $t$  value= 1.010;  $p> 0.315$ ). Conversely, ANOVA results found no significant differences in age ( $f$ -value= 2.095;  $p>.05$ ), marital status ( $f$ -value=0.393;  $p> 0.676$ ), and the amount of exposure per week ( $f$ -value= 2.894;  $p>0.060$ ). **Conclusion:** Skillful emerged as the most important characteristic of an effective clinical instructor. Moreover, the female learners seemed to have a different requirement of an effective teacher (e.g. positive behavior). This information is imperative for school authorities to find ways to meet learners' expectations. Meeting the needs and expectations of the learners can serve as a valuable indicator for the facilitator's effectiveness.

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**Keywords:** Effective Clinical Instructor, Characteristics, Perspective

## **Introduction**

Clinical instructors play an essential role in preparing future nurses to be competent in the clinical setting (Niederriter et al., 2017) and provide nurses with an opportunity to assess their role as clinicians (Tanner, 2005). Indeed, instructors spend most of their time facilitating the translation of classroom theory into actual practice. Under pressure in such an environment, a facilitator can potentially limit or thwart the development of the learners (e.g., multiple roles, academic pressures). While a clinical instructor is faced with multiple roles in the clinical setting, work-life balance is necessary for continued success (Pasayan, et al., 2014). Indeed, the effectiveness of a clinical instructor is often affected by stressful situations. This puts them under the microscopic lens of the learners' evaluation. In fact, an earlier interrogation found that learners' assessment served as a barometer for the improvement of teaching skills (Madhavanprabhakaran et al., 2013).

A good teacher possesses teaching skills, communication skills, and other effective characteristics (e.g. approachable, skilful) (Gignac-Caille & Oermann, 2001) that can empower learners. To Jouybari and Sanagoo (2009), an effective clinical instructor has systematic and concrete abilities, a code of ethics, and management abilities. Earlier studies exploring characteristics of effective clinical instruction, however, resulted in different perspectives. For example, in an integrative literature review, it was put forward that approachability was the most important characteristic (Collier, 2018). The study of Tang, Choy, and Chaing (2005) evaluated the parameters of instruction (e.g., individual traits, interpersonal skills, professional competence, and teaching ability) to improve learning and found instructor behaviour towards learners was essential determinant between effective and ineffective facilitator. It was also noted that clinical instructors need to be able to prioritize environments that are favourable to critical thinking and inquiry (Parsh, 2010). In a qualitative study by Nazari and Mohammadi (2015), they concluded that a clinical instructor must have "five major characteristics: the ability to establish communication, educational qualifications, clinical competence, scholarly knowledge and academic status" (p. 22). While the literature found diverse concepts of what constitutes an effective clinical instructor, the concept must be contextualized locally in order to consider continuous improvement. In fact, Buchel and Edwards (2005) do not believe that a consensus has been reached on the ideal characteristics of an effective clinical instructor.

Conducting this study was of paramount importance as the learners are moved into web-based learning which suggests that attitudes towards learning

and interaction must be no longer the same from traditional teaching. Therefore, these learners having diverse needs require an effective teacher that meets their millennial demands such as integration of the technological tools from the facilitators. Learners' perceptions of the instructor's effectiveness (in the actual context) can advance both the learners' and instructor's performance. This study shed light on the strategic ways policymakers and school authorities can improve the performance of the clinical instructor without adding additional pressures. As such, this study aims to determine the perception of the learners on the characteristics of an effective clinical instructor as well as the determinants that can factor in to said perceptions.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Design**

This study used a quantitative-cross sectional design to determine the characteristics of an effective clinical instructor.

### ***Participants***

The participants of this study were the 100 nursing students as a result of convenience sampling. These students were enrolled in the College of Nursing of the University of Hail in their third and fourth year first semester of the 2019-2020 school year. The inclusion criteria were set to students who enrolled in the classroom and clinical courses if they wished to voluntarily participate in the study. In this study, the number of exposure of the participants was considered to which refers to the number of duty rotation that the student have had in a week. Excluded were the nursing students who were not enrolled in their clinical practice.

### ***Data Collection***

The collection of data commenced with the approval of the school authorities. Before the administration of the questionnaire, the researchers conducted an in-class orientation during the break time explaining the purpose, benefits, and rights of the participants. The informed consent documents were given to them ahead of time so they had the chance to read and decide whether they would participate. The researchers themselves administered the survey questionnaire during the students' break time of the students and collected it immediately thereafter. The students took at least 15 minutes to answer the survey questionnaire. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Hail (H-2017-012). The data collection lasted from January to February 2020

### **Questionnaire**

There are two parts of the survey questionnaire that were used in this study. Part one is the demographic profile of the participants. Part two is the actual survey questionnaire that was utilized in the study, a modified version of the Effective Clinical Instructor Characteristics Inventory (ECICI) developed by Girija et al. (2013). It includes twenty clinical teaching behaviours in which subjects was rated in terms of importance using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 4 - Very Important to 1 - Not Important.

### **Data Analysis**

Version 21 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data. Frequency and percentage values were calculated to describe the demographic data. Paired samples t-test was used to determine difference, in sex and year level. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the difference between age, marital status, and number of duty exposure.

### **Results**

Most of the respondents (45% of the total) were aged between 22-24 years. In regard to gender, 58% of the respondents were females while 42% were males. The gender distribution concurs with the overall gender distribution of the nursing students in this College of Nursing. Seventy four percent of the participants were married. Most of the students (68% of the total participants) were in their fourth year (see Table 1).

**Table 1 .Demographic Profile of the Participants**

<b>Profile</b>		<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Age range	Under 18	2	2
	18 – 21	31	31
	22 – 24	45	45
	Over 24	22	22
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Gender	Male	42	42
	Female	58	58
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Marital Status	Single	74	74
	Married	24	24
	Divorced	2	2
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Year Level	III	32	32
	IV	68	68
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of duty exposures	Two to three times	41	42
	Four to five times	21	21
	Six times and above	37	37
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Among the characteristics of an effective clinical instructor, the majority of students identified “skilful” as the most important ( $x=4.26$ ;  $SD=3.86$ ), followed by “good communicator” ( $x=4.15$ ;  $SD=3.77$ ), and “approachable” and “skilful” (both with mean responses of 4.05;  $SD=4.30$ ).

**Table 2.** Learners’ Perception on the Characteristics of an Effective Clinical Instructor

Characteristics	Mean Response	SD	Remarks
Knowledgeable	4.05	4.30	Very Important
Skilful	4.26	3.86	Very Important
Good Communicator	4.15	3.77	Very Important
Approachable	4.05	4.30	Very Important

*SD= Standard deviation*

The t-test was used to test differences on gender and year level. A significant difference was found in gender (t value-2.497;  $p < 0.014$ ) but not year level (t value= 1.010;  $p > 0.315$ ). Conversely, ANOVA results found no significant differences in age (f-value= 2.095;  $p > 0.106$ ), marital status (f-value=0.393;  $p > 0.676$ ), and number of exposures per week (f-value= 2.894;  $p > 0.060$ ).

**Table 3.** Differences in the Perception of the Characteristics of an Effective Clinical Instructor

Profile		Mean Response	t-value	P-value	Remarks
Gender	Male	3.91	-2.497	0.014	Significant
	Female	4.28			
Year Level	III	4.24	1.010	0.315	Not Significant
	IV	4.07			
Age range	Under 18	4.37	f-value 2.095	P-value 0.106	Remarks Not Significant
	18 – 21	4.36			
	22 – 24	3.93			
	Above 24	4.18			
Marital Status	Single	4.11	0.393	0.676	Not Significant
	Married	4.13			
	Divorced	4.60			
Number of Exposures (in a week)	1	3.99	2.894	0.060	Not Significant
	2	4.46			
	3	4.09			

## Discussion

In this present study, the learners felt that an effective clinical instructor must be skilful. One possible reason for this perception could be due

to the fact that the clinical environment is the most important venue for practicing skills, not just the classroom. The present finding disagrees with Collier (2018) who found that approachability was the most-needed characteristic for an effective clinical teacher. However, clinical skills are recurrently cited in the literature as the predominant characteristics of an effective teacher (Hanson & Stenvig, 2008). While effective teacher characteristics vary from one setting to another, teacher adjustment to the learning needs could be one of the skills to consider regardless of the setting (Alshammari et al, 2019).

Female students differed from male students in terms of their perceptions on what makes an effective teacher; women seemed to require higher standards for effective teaching. This echoes other studies where male and female perceptions varied. Ghasemia and Hashemi (2011) reported variations between male and female perceptions as women described pronunciation proficiency, teaching, and handling learners as equally essential characteristic for teachers. Other variations in gendered perception of effective teaching were related to socio-affective skills (Park & Lee, 2006) and interpersonal factors based in a clinical setting (Alshammari et al., 2020). This finding indicates a deeper investigation of female learners is required to determine what an effective teacher is to them.

Other demographic variables of the learners were not found to determine learners' expectations of ideal characteristics for an effective clinical instructor. For example, the age of the participants was non-significant; however, these results are important for use in future strategies to continuously improve the craft of the clinical instructor. One possible reason for the aforementioned finding could be due to the fact that learners see their clinical instructor as having the required competences of an effective teacher who meets their educational needs. Indeed, Knowles (1989) theorized that adult learning is more inclined to increase when applied to a real-life situation. In this context, nursing students are adult learners who seek to apply their knowledge in the actual scenario guided by an effective teacher. The age of nursing students was recently implied to be a factor to facilitate the understanding of their roles in in the clinical setting (Alshammari et al., 2020). Marital status had no significant effect on the learners' perceptions. Whether married, divorced, or unmarried, they all held the same expectation that a clinical instructor must be skilful. A previous study suggested that marital status affects personal factors such as cognition (Gao, 2012). Moreover, the literature has not fully explored the number of exposures or clinical duty per week of the nursing students. As such, this important consideration in order to determine if another investigation is worth conducting. This present finding serves as an evidence that learners' needs are diverse. It is in this context that

school authorities need to strategize to direct their clinical instructors to meet learners' needs and expectations.

### ***Study Limitations***

The core limitation of this study is its focus on self-reported perceptions which are prone to bias from a small number of participants. Such limitations may be addressed by exploring perceptions through a face-to-face focus group where discussion will increase the depth and breadth of the results. The study could also be extended to other universities.

### **Conclusion**

This study highlights 'skilfulness' as the most important characteristic for effective instruction in a clinical setting. However, female learners seemed to have different requirements for an effective teacher. This information is imperative for the school authorities to find ways to meet learners' expectations, which helps them achieve what was promised to them in an educational setting. Meeting the needs and expectations of the learners can serve as a valuable indicator for the facilitator's effectiveness.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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