
A Surgical Approach of Mentorship: Staff Nurses' Lived Experiences with Nursing Students in a Public Hospital Setting

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Abstract -This qualitative study aimed to explore and gain in-depth understanding of the experiences of nurses in dealing with student nurses using Husserl's phenomenological approach and Collaizi's method of qualitative data analysis. Purposive sampling was used to select six nurses from a public hospital in Cebu. A series of semi-structured interviews were done for data gathering until data saturation was reached. Their experience relates to the phases of perioperative nursing which yielded three essential themes: Pre-Op: Self Preparation, Intra-Op; Teaching and Learning, and Post-Op: Nursing Hope. The first essential theme, Pre-Op: Self Preparation, refers to the preparation done by these nurses to themselves before interacting with student nurses. This preparation includes mental conditioning, knowledge review and skills reassessment. Intra-Op: Teaching and Learning, the second essential theme, highlights the nursing view dealing with student nurses as a chance for them to teach and mentor, just like the actual operation that adjusts, to help them develop into the greatest nurses they can be. The last theme, Post-Op: Nursing Hope, relates to the hopes of the nurses towards student nurses. In addition to providing excellent patient care, nurses aspire to develop and mentor student nurses, passing down the knowledge and empathy necessary for success in their future positions. This hope includes for them to learn from their mistakes and to become the best version of themselves. The findings reveal that nurses who interacted with student nurses relate their experience as a perioperative process in a surgical approach. Preparing themselves, implementing what they prepared for, and hoping for the best after the encounter.

Keywords: Mentorship, Staff Nurses, Nursing Students.

Introduction

Clinical duties are crucial for student nurses to apply their academic knowledge and skills in realistic settings, hone their practical abilities, and cultivate a professional demeanor. Staff nurses play a key part in this process because they serve as mentors, supervisors, and role models. Additionally, effective teaching and training are essential in the field of nursing education as it increases the quality of clinical education, patient safety, and enhances role preparation and job

satisfaction. Staff nurses have a huge responsibility not just to foster their patience but also in teaching and mentoring nursing students. This includes, among other factors, the absence of formal training in preceptorship. A significant number of staff nurses lack professional training in pedagogy, mentorship, or preceptorship, despite the expectation to instruct and assess student nurses. Research indicates that inadequate organized preparation in educational methodologies might adversely affect nurse confidence and the quality of student learning experiences (Omer et al., 2016; Heffernan et al., 2009). In the absence of this basis, nurses may find it challenging to adequately perform their twin functions as caregivers and mentors.

Furthermore, the substantial workload and restricted time for mentorship among staff nurses have been corroborated by local research that identify analogous issues. Due to limited staffing and funding, public hospitals in the Philippines usually have high nurse-to-patient ratios, placing a great deal of demand on nurses to balance patient care with teaching duties. Research suggests that these demands on staff nurses' time limit their ability to mentor and supervise student nurses, which in turn impacts the quality of clinical education and learning (Lagrada & Ulep, 2016; Lorenzo et al., 2020). This limitation may hinder opportunities for skill transfer and professional development for both student nurses and their mentors, due to inadequate time for meaningful interactions and comprehensive oversight.

Burnout and work-related stress are prevalent among nurses in Cebu City, Philippines' public hospitals, particularly when they're tasked with mentoring student nurses in addition to providing direct patient care. Increased number of patients and the added responsibilities of mentoring and teaching lead nurses to become more overwhelmed and emotionally exhausted, which lowers their motivation, job satisfaction, and effectiveness as clinical instructors (Ramos & Reyes, 2018; delos Santos, 2021). The high levels of stress in Cebu's medical facilities make it difficult for nurses to carry out their caring and teaching responsibilities, which jeopardizes both the general well-being of the staff and the standard of student learning.

As previously stated, these difficulties highlight how crucial it is to give nurses which are responsible for supervising student nurses proper preceptorship training, acceptable workloads, and institutional help. Therefore, the goal of this study is to assess staff nurses' readiness to serve as both clinical caregivers and mentors to student nurses in a regional public hospital. The aim of this study is to use these insights to recommend specific measures that can improve clinical learning outcomes for student nurses, staff nurses' development as professionals, and mentorship experience. A collaborative and effective teaching-training environment in public hospitals is supported by an evidence-based framework, which will ultimately enhance the nursing workforce and improve the standard of healthcare service delivery.

Methods and Materials

The researchers will be utilizing a phenomenological qualitative approach, which aims to understand a phenomenon as discerned by human awareness or consciousness. Collaizi's Method of Qualitative Analysis (1978, as cited in Shosha, 2012) will be employed as the process for data analysis to uncover the phenomenon experienced by nurses dealing with nursing students. This method consists of a distinctive seven-step process: (1) Familiarization, (2) Identification of Significant Statements and Phrases, (3) Formulation of Meaning, (4) Clustering of Themes, (5)

Development of an In-depth Description, (6) Production of Fundamental Structure, and (7) Validation of Findings.

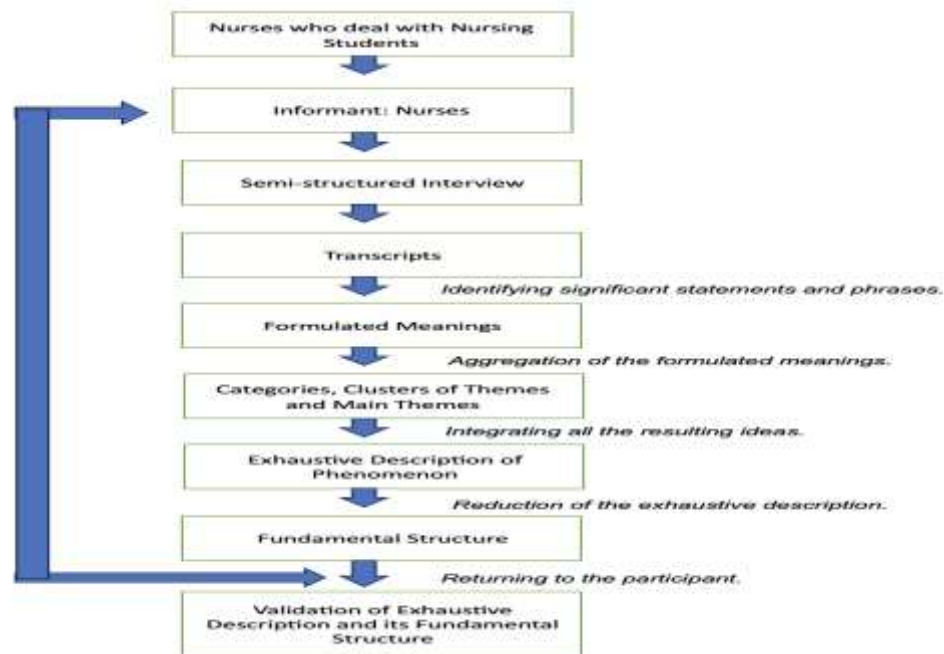


Figure 1.0

Figure 1 shows the flow of activities that was followed in this study. The phenomenon of nurses dealing with nursing students in the clinical area will be explored. A semi-structured interview will be utilized to extract the informant's lived experience. The first step is familiarization where the researcher reads through all the nurses' accounts multiple times. Every transcribed one-on-one interview will be extensively read to develop a sense of familiarity with the phenomenon and obtain a general understanding of the entire content. Secondly, the identification of significant statements by the nurses during the interview will be highlighted and reviewed by the researcher. Such statements will be documented on a separate sheet showing the numbers of their pages and lines. Next, formulation of meanings relevant to the phenomenon, where significant statements will be extracted to be considered and reviewed. Each meaning contemplates a comprehensive description. The prepared meaning will be sorted into categories. These categories will be sorted into clusters of themes. The next step is to develop an in-depth description. The researcher will incorporate the results of the analysis into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study. Next is the production of fundamental structure, the exhaustive description will be condensed to a short statement that captures the aspects essential to rid of redundant, misused or overestimated descriptions and ambiguous structures that may weaken the description, and reduction of findings took place. This helps to emphasize the fundamental structure. This also aids in the formation of clear relationships between theme clusters and their extracted themes. Lastly, the researcher will validate to the informants the result of the study by comparing the researcher's descriptive results with their actual experience. This step will be done using a validation tool.

The study will be conducted in one of the regional public hospitals designated as a teaching-training institution in Cebu City, Philippines. This hospital sits at 1,500 bed capacity catering patients to both Cebu City and Cebu province. It aims to encourage rapid, effective, and high-quality healthcare. To improve and enhance research and training to create a highly skilled team that shares fundamental principles to receive accreditation and recognition. to guarantee service sustainability and availability by supplying suitable, sufficient, and high-quality resources.

Additionally, the informants of the study are staff nurses working in various departments in the institution who directly interact with student nurses. To ensure trustworthiness involves relying on informants' information and limiting biases, the informants should prioritize obtaining informed consent, should always treat the respondents with the utmost respect, protect their privacy and confidentiality, researcher should always be cautious with deception, distribute risk and benefits fairly and lastly protect the respondents from harm.

Results and Discussion

The researchers were able to extract three essential themes collected through interviews. Essential themes are aspects of the stated experience that can't be modified without losing their significance. They are patterns that emerge from all the informants' knowledge and are crucial to the description of the experience of nurses in dealing with student nurses. These themes relate to the nurses' role in an operation: pre-, intra-, and post-. The essential themes are supported by subthemes, which are groups of significant statements.

The identified essential themes are: (1) Pre-Op: Self Preparation, (2) Intra-Op: Teaching and Mentoring, and (3) Post-Op: Nursing Hope.

Table 1. Themes and Subthemes of the Study

Theme	Subtheme
Theme 1: Pre-Op – Self Preparation	Mental Conditioning
	Knowledge Review
	Skills Reassessment
Theme 2: Intra-Op – Teaching and Mentoring	Improving Knowledge
	Upskilling
	Shaping Compassion
Theme 3: Post-Op – Nursing Hope	Learning from Mistakes
	The Best Version

Theme 1: Pre-Op: Self Preparation

The period preceding surgery is known as pre-op. Its meaning is "before operation" (Bell & O'Grady, 2017). Assuring mental clarity, emotional stability, and physical preparedness during this time requires self-preparation (Lee & Lee, 2014). When preparing to scrub in for an operation, nurses take a comprehensive approach. By preparing, they can be emotionally stable, physically prepared, and mentally focused, guaranteeing that they can carry out their responsibilities

precisely, efficiently handle any issues, and contribute to a safe and productive surgical environment.

This phase of operation pertains to the nurses preparing themselves to deal with the student nurses in the clinical setting. To make sure they give student nurses accurate, evidence-based information and assistance, nurses thoroughly evaluate their knowledge and abilities. (Flarey, 2024). These preparations reflect the subthemes: (1) Mental Conditioning, (2) Knowledge Review, (3) Skills Reassessment.

Subtheme 1.1: Mental Conditioning

Training nurses in mental health self-care techniques may be a helpful strategy for nurses joining hospital departments, who especially encounter nursing students. (Bernburg, Gronerberg, & Mache, 2020). The process of building the psychological fortitude and emotional preparedness necessary for the demanding nature of healthcare practice is known as the "mental conditioning" of nurses. The informants stated that before meeting the nursing students, they make sure to change their perspective to one of optimism. This mental change enables them to approach their teaching and mentoring responsibilities with composure and concentration, creating a positive and encouraging learning atmosphere for the pupils.

"I remember feeling so overwhelmed the first time I had to guide a student nurse. I knew I had to adjust my mindset. Before entering the ward, I took deep breaths, reminded myself to be patient, and envisioned a productive day. It worked. By mentally conditioning myself to see student nurses as eager learners rather than extra responsibilities, I became more engaged and effective in my teaching."

Subtheme 2: Knowledge Review

Knowledge is a power source for nurses; it immediately affects their capacity to deliver safe, effective, and compassionate care. (Bonsall, 2011). Clinical expertise, scientific comprehension, critical thinking abilities, and real-world experience are all included in nursing knowledge. Nurses carefully review their knowledge to ensure they provide student nurses with accurate, evidence-based information and support (Flarey, 2024).

The next generation of healthcare workers is greatly influenced by nurses and their dedication to continuously evaluating their knowledge guarantees that student nurses are given the most current and pertinent information. Nurses can give student nurses precise, evidence-based advice that matches the most recent standards in patient care by regularly evaluating best practices and current evidence.

"Before my shift, I often review key nursing concepts, especially those related to patient care and medication administration. I know that at any moment, a student nurse may ask me something, and I want to be sure that my answers are accurate and helpful. I once had a student ask about rare medication's side effects, and because I had reviewed it the night before, I was able to provide a precise and confident answer. That moment reaffirmed to me why knowledge review is so important."

Subtheme 3: Skills Reassessment

A solid skill set in nursing cannot be replaced. This allows nurses to prepare for a variety of challenging patient circumstances that may be unpredictable (Career Insights, Nursing, 2024). In nursing education, clinical learning is crucial because it gives nursing students the tools, they need to become clinically competent (Amoo & Enyan, 2022). The main way that student nurses improve their clinical abilities is by seeing more seasoned nurses carry out various duties. Knowing that students are observing and learning from their behavior, nurses prioritize periodically reviewing and improving their own abilities (Lofgren, Walivaara, Strimback, & Linberg, 2023). This continual self-evaluation reinforces a culture of professional development and continuous improvement by guaranteeing that the skills taught to students are not only up to date-and supported by evidence but also represent best practices.

"I remember demonstrating proper wound dressing techniques while a group of students watched closely. I could feel their eyes studying my every move. That's when I realized—my technique had to be perfect because they would mimic it. It made me take a step back and reassess my own skills. If I expect them to do it right, I have to set the best example possible."

Theme 2: Intra-Op: Teaching and Mentoring

Intra-op is the time frame in which a surgical procedure is performed. Specifically, the stage that takes place prior to the patient being sent to the recovery room but following their preparation and anesthesia. (Arellano, 2019). Intra-op includes adjusting, rerouting, removing, and modifying certain bodily parts to preserve homeostasis and optimal functioning.

In line with this, nurses view dealing with student nurses as a chance for them to teach and mentor, just like the actual operation that adjusts, to help them develop into the greatest nurses they can be. To provide high-quality, safe treatment, nurses play a crucial role in helping nursing students acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the practice setting (Cusack et. al., 2020). During their professional practice, nurses who directly care for patients and engage with student nurses are encouraged to they can readily "share their craft" with students. (Henderson & Eatom, 2013).

This action by the nurses aligns with Republic Act No. 9173 known as the "Philippine Nursing Act of 2002" Article IV Section 8. This act emphasizes teaching, guiding, and supervising students in nursing education programs including the administration of nursing services in varied settings such as hospitals and clinics; undertaking consultation services; and engaging in such activities that require the utilization of knowledge and decision-making skills of a registered nurse.

This theme highlights the components that nurses want to teach the student nurses during their interactions. This includes knowledge, skills, and attitude.

Subtheme 2.1: Improving Knowledge

Nursing is often depicted as a theory-based profession because it is rooted in a rich body of knowledge that informs practice, guides decision-making, and shapes the delivery of patient care. Furthermore, establish a basis for clinical judgment (American Nurses Association, 2023).

Nurses who deal with student nurses in the clinical setting see this opportunity to share their nursing knowledge with them (Amoo & Enyan, 2022). They act as instructors, imparting the necessary nursing knowledge to student nurses. Through mentoring, they assist students apply theory to practical circumstances by sharing clinical reasoning, critical insights, and current practices.

"During one shift, a student nurse hesitated before administering medication, looking unsure. I took the opportunity to walk her through the process, explaining why it was essential to verify patient information, check for contraindications, and follow proper procedures. I could see the relief on her face as she gained confidence. That moment reminded me why I love teaching—knowledge shared is strengthened."

Subtheme 2: Upskilling

Nursing as a practice involves the application of knowledge, skills, and clinical judgment to provide care for individuals, families, and communities. A skillful nurse can enhance clinical care skills and advance patient safety and care quality (Lien et. al.,2023).

Similarly to the previous essential theme, this theme centers on the nurses seeing the chance to upskill the current skills of the student nurses. Experienced nurses help bridge the gap between theory and practice through hands-on teaching, mentorship, and guidance. In addition to imparting key clinical skills like prescription administration, patient evaluation, wound care, and emergency procedures, they also inculcate critical thinking, empathy, and effective communication. Furthermore, the performance of a return demonstration allows student nurses ready for clinical work and improves their skills (Alo, 2017).

"I remember guiding a student through her first IV insertion. She was shaking, her hands unsteady. I placed my hand over hers, gave her gentle instructions, and reassured her that she could do it. The moment she succeeded, her entire face lit up with pride. That's the beauty of upskilling—watching someone grow right before you."

Subtheme 3: Shaping Compassion

This theme sheds light on the value of compassion in patient care and is emphasized by nurses who instruct student nurses. They assist students who relate to patients on a human level by setting an example of empathy, active listening, and emotional support. They help students build their emotional intelligence and self-awareness through talks, reflection, and mentoring, ensuring that they deliver competent and compassionate treatment.

Moreover, Compassion is the essence and the core of nursing care. It moves a nurse from providing competent care—which involves having the necessary abilities and knowledge to treat patients—to show outward concern through behaviors and actions that touch on the emotional components of the relationship (McGhee, 2022). As the healthcare team member who spends the most time with patients and their families, nurses can significantly reduce stress and adverse hospitalization experiences by using their care abilities, such as compassionate care and emotional work (Babaei, Taleghani, & Farzi, 2022).

"One day, I watched a student nurse rush through patient care, focusing solely on completing tasks. I gently pulled her aside and said, 'Take a moment to talk to your patient. They are more than just a case number.' The next day, she told me how she had a meaningful conversation with a patient and realized that nursing wasn't just about procedures—it was about people."

Theme 3: Post-Op: Nursing Hope

Postoperative care is the care you receive after a surgical procedure (Stephens, 2018). In order to lower the risk of infection and surgical complications like bleeding or respiratory problems, nurses are responsible for the provision of post-operative interventions. Nurses hope to have a timely healing, smooth recovery, and a good outcome. Hope is a central concept within the nursing literature (Antunes, Laranjeira, Querido, & Charepe, 2023).

This theme relates to the hopes of the nurses towards student nurses (Veness, 2019). In addition to providing excellent patient care, nurses aspire to develop and mentor student nurses, passing down the knowledge and empathy necessary for success in their future positions. These nurses hope that the student nurses approach each day with compassion and a sense of purpose, never forgetting that each patient is a person with their own needs and feelings. The nurses also wish to foster empathy and patience that will enable you to perform well under duress.

Subtheme 3.1: Learning from Mistakes

In general, and particularly in science, mistakes are not viewed as beneficial either. Nonetheless, there is a substantial amount of cognitive science literature that emphasizes the advantages of leveraging training mistakes to enhance learning (Edlridge, Stimac, & Vanderkolk, 2022). This sub-theme highlights the importance of nursing students learning from their mistakes. Mistakes are inevitable but this should not stop them from realizing their full potential. Ironically as it sounds, some nurses even encouraged student nurses to make calculated mistakes in order for these student nurses to grow. These nurses view mistakes that can help them develop a growth attitude, become more clear-headed, and unleash their creativity.

"One of my student nurses once gave the wrong dosage calculation, but I caught it before administration. She was devastated, but I reassured her that mistakes are learning opportunities. A week later, she double-checked every calculation meticulously. Seeing her growth, I knew that moment had shaped her into a more careful and responsible nurse."

Subtheme 2: The Best Version

It is well recognized that nurses' hope fosters both their professional inventiveness and emotional health (Yanik & Ediz, 2024). The experience made these nurses hope for the best for these student nurses. If the nurses can hope for their patients, they can too for their past selves - as student nurses. They have been in their exact same shoes years before. Being hopeful of their best version refers to the goal of becoming a nurse who exemplifies the highest standards of empathy, knowledge, and commitment to patient care. This includes going above and beyond to offer patients comprehensive support, paying close attention to their needs, and promoting their welfare in every encounter with a strong sense of professionalism and empathy.

"I see my younger self in every student nurse I teach. I hope that they become not just good nurses but the best versions of themselves—confident, skilled, and kind. One day, I'll be patient, and I want to know that I've helped shape the hands that will care for me."

Conclusion

Registered nurses play a vital role in patient care, including educating and supporting patients and their families, as well as mentoring student nurses. From the experiences of nurses working with student nurses in a Cebu public hospital, their interactions are shaped by the responsibilities of perioperative nursing, which they describe as a "surgical approach to caring." The process begins with Pre-Op: Self Preparation, where nurses prepare themselves to mentor student nurses by evaluating their knowledge and skills. This is followed by Intra-Op: Teaching and Mentoring, where nurses focus on imparting knowledge, skills, and attitudes in line with the Philippine Nursing Act. Finally, Post-Op: Nursing Hope reflects the nurses' aspirations for student nurses to develop empathy, compassion, and resilience, ensuring they are prepared for their future roles in healthcare.

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