

Graduate Nurses' Perception of The Undergraduate Nursing Education in Nigeria: Case Study of Rivers State

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Abstract

Nursing education has undergone a transformation from being Diploma- based to Degree- based in the past few decades. This change has led to a shift from training to education in the preparation of the nurse accompanied by paradigm shift from school education to university education in nursing. This study assessed graduate nurses' perception of the undergraduate nursing education in Nigeria: Case study of Rivers State. Descriptive survey design was adopted in carrying out this research. The study was steered using four objectives of the study and four research questions. The population of the study was 200 graduate nurses in University of Port Harcourt Teaching hospital, (UPTH), with a sample size of 126 which was randomly selected. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire with a reliability of 0.72. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions. The results of the study revealed among others that 106 (84.1%) of respondents perceived that their institutions adequately prepared them to practice nursing in work areas. They have adequate level of self-confidence in caring for patients without supervision, $M=3.8$, $SD= 0.33$. Study concludes that respondents had good perception of the undergraduate nursing education. Recommendations includes that nurses should practice to the full potential of their education to benchmark the global standard.

Keywords: Graduate, Education, Nursing, Perception, undergraduate.

Background

The philosophy of the nursing programs is derived from statements about health, quality of life, achievement of potential by the individual, the environment, health, nursing practice and education of nurses. The goal of nursing is to promote the highest quality of nursing care for the individual, families and significant persons and the community. In the past,

nursing education was focused on learning practical skills. Students were being taught basic skills during their educational programs. The role of the educator was to demonstrate nursing skills to accelerate learning due to the events of the century that led to increased nursing need such as world war I. this is referred to as the apprenticeship training style where students spent most of their training in the hospital which made them

an integral part of the hospital's life, gained extensive clinical experience in familiar settings and became central to nursing workforce.

However, Nursing education has undergone a transformation from being diploma-based to degree based in the past few decades. This change has led to a shift from training to education in the preparation of nurse accompanied by paradigm shift from school education to University education in nursing (Gideon et al., 2020). Historically nurses have consistently demonstrated the ability to enhance their knowledge and expertise and in recent times they played leading roles in educating patients, families and communities. Currently educators have shifted towards standardization of nursing practice; they now focus on teaching nurses advanced skills and keeping high standards of practice. They facilitate students' understanding and ability to meet the competencies for nursing practice to maintain quality care that meets contemporary societal needs, competence has been directly linked to employability.

Nurse educators now teach students how to be a nurse rather than doing nursing. Therefore all nursing education must embrace the need to change, seeing that nursing education is dynamic reflection of new understanding evolving from both research and empirical evidence. The core skills of nursing profession remain the foundation pillars even when application is based on new findings. Change is inherent, and expected in the nursing profession in an ongoing basis as new medications, technologies, treatments insights are added to the knowledge base of nursing. In spite of these, evidences that the knowledge and the skills they acquired during their undergraduate studies seems not to be sufficient to prepare them for work as was found reflecting in their reports especially those working in the intensive care unit, (ICU).

Undergraduate nursing education prepares students to become registered nurses, (RN), registered midwives (RM), and registered community/public health nurses (RC/PHN) by providing theoretical and practical training and education. Becoming a confident and competent health care professional at the end of the undergraduate nursing programme is one of the aims of this programme. It also aims at developing students' critical thinking skills, clinical performance and knowledge of nursing care. It applies: theoretical training where students learn about the theory and principles of nursing care; practical training which exposes students to gain hands-on experience through clinical rotations and other activities; soft skills which enables students to develop skills like communication, teamwork, critical thinking, confidence and situational awareness (Widad & Abdella, 2022) and interdisciplinary education where students learn from a variety of disciplines including health sciences. Also, active learning methods are used in undergraduate nursing education. Students interact with materials through activities and conversations, which can improve critical thinking and clinical performance (Kalu et al., 2023). Furthermore, simulation-based learning is used where students use simulations to learn and practice nursing skills, (Larri & Dube, 2017).

The practice of Nursing is directed towards meeting the healthcare needs of individuals, families and communities throughout their lifespan. Graduate nurses are nurses who successfully graduated from the five (5) year undergraduate Nursing degree program in the university, and also qualified and registered with the governing body of nursing profession to practice as Nurses. They are expected to have adequate knowledge, clinical reasoning skills, personal attribute and high standard of ethical and professional practice required to perform the task expected of a competent nurse in real life situation (Mohamad et al., 2020).

Perception is a way of viewing, regarding or interpreting something. It can also be the ability to see something through the senses which may be at variance with others. Undergraduate nursing education is the process by which known information, knowledge and skills of nursing are taught and demonstrated to the nursing students at the university so that they will learn the new knowledge, skills and apply them effectively (Bednarz et al., 2017). Thus, undergraduate nursing education provides a basic core of knowledge in the behavioural, social and biological science as well as nursing theory and application of clinical skills to assist the individual, family and communities achieve a positive state of health. Nursing education is to provide an education that is flexible, progressive and sensitive to the changing needs of the individual, family and community, teaching students how to be a nurse rather than doing nursing.

The demands of 21st century healthcare services will continue to test the nursing profession's ability to maintain quality care that meets contemporary societal need. Keating (2011) observed that nursing profession is being revolutionized by factors such as population demographics and technology trends, noting that it is an exciting time in the nursing practice. The drift is to educate future nurses in such a way that prepares them to handle appropriately needs of the individual, population and community. The needs of the population sway the curriculum/education and in turn this influences the nurse and the population that she/he serves.

This study seeks to determine the graduate nurses' perception of the theoretical knowledge and the clinical skills acquired during their undergraduate periods, were they adequate to enable them function effectively to offer quality care considering the fact that the society is faced with various challenges and nurses must be adequately prepared to effectively intervene in these problems in the society.

Methodology

Research Design

The descriptive survey study design was used, it involves collection of data from a large sample of a given population; it describes certain events, features or variables of the sample as they appear to the researcher at a particular period of the study. Descriptive study design major concern is to observe and describe phenomena as they naturally occur. This study use this design to accurately document observed features or characteristics of graduate nurses' perception towards their undergraduate nursing education/experiences.

Study Area

The study was carried out at university of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital (UPTH), Rivers State. Rivers State is among the 36 states of Nigeria, with a population of 5,198,716; however, using a population growth rate of 3.4, the state has an estimated projected population of 7,809,035 in 2018 which makes it the 6th most populous state in the country, (National population commission, 2006; Laari & Dube, 2017). It has a Latitude of 4°59'N" and Longitude of 6°49'39"E". the state is located within the South-South geopolitical zone of the country, with 23 local government areas (LGA). It is bounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean, to the North by Imo and Abia states, to the East by Akwa Ibom State and to the West by Bayelsa and Delta State.

Population for the Study

Population of study was all graduate nurses (200) working in the UPTH, Rivers state formed the population for this study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Population sampling involves selection of a subset of individuals that is a representative of a statistical population to estimate characteristics of the whole population. This subset of individuals is the people that actually participate in the study. Sampling is necessary because it is impossible to test every single individual in the population. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select 126 respondents. This sampling technique was used because the population is heterogenous with varying levels like: Nursing officer I, (NO I), Senior Nursing Officers, (SNO).

Instruments for Data Collection

The instrument for the study was a self-structured questionnaire. Which was divided into sections based on the specific objectives.

Validity of Instrument

Validity is a measure of the extent to which a measuring instrument measures what it is supposed to measure so that a meaningful inference can be made from a respondent's feedback. Both face and content validity of the instrument were ascertained.

Reliability of the Instrument

Test-retest was used to ensure the reliability of the instrument. Thirteen (13) copies of the questionnaire which represent 10% of sample size were administered to and collected from graduate nurses from River State University Teaching Hospital, (RSUTH) because it shares similar characteristics with UPTH and was selected health care settings for the study; this is to avoid bias. Two weeks later, same exercise was repeated on the same group of respondents, their responses were statistically calculated using the product-moment coefficient of correlation to obtain the reliability coefficient 0.72, which was suitable to determine the reliability of the instrument in obtaining data from the study.

Methods of Data Analysis

Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 statistical software was used for data entry, editing and analysis. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages while chi square (χ^2) used to establish statistical relationships between the variables.

Ethical Consideration

An approval letter was obtained from the ethics committee of UPTH after fulfilling their necessary protocols. Additionally, respondents' consent was obtained and they were assured of their confidentiality. Also, anonymity was maintained by non inclusion of identifiable items in the questionnaire.

Result

Table 1: Summary of frequency and percentages on the perception that school prepared the nurses were adequately prepared to work competently.

Do you feel that your school prepared you well enough to work as nurse?	Frequency	Percent
No	20	15.9
Yes	106	84.1
Total	126	100.0

The result from Table 1 shows the summary of frequency and percentages on the feeling that school prepared the nurses adequately to practice as nurse. It shows that the 84.1% feel that their school prepared them well enough to work as nurse whereas only 15.9% do not.

Table 2: Summary of mean and standard deviation on current level of confidence in managing a patient care assignment on an adult medical/Surgical Unit

S.No.	What is your current level of confidence in managing a patient care assignment on an adult medical/Surgical	Mean	SD
1	Caring for 1 patient	3.90	0.29
2	Caring for 2 patients	3.94	0.25
3	Caring for 3 patients	3.84	0.37
4	More than 3 patients	3.56	0.67
	Grand mean	3.81	0.33

The result from Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation on current level of confidence in managing patient care assignment on an adult medical/Surgical Unit. It shows that the grand mean rating of the respondents over undergraduate nursing education programme outcome correspond with the requirements of nursing practice was 3.81, SD=0.33. Specifically, the result strongly indicated that there current level of confidence is about caring for 2 patient (M=3.94, SD=0.25). This was followed by caring for 1 patient (M=3.90, SD=0.29). The least was caring for more than 3 patients (M=3.56, SD=0.67).

Table 3: Summary of mean and standard deviation on current level of confidence in managing a patient care assignment on an adult medical/Surgical Unit

SN		Mean	SD
1	I feel confident communicating with physicians.	3.16	0.77
2	I am comfortable communicating with patients from diverse populations.	3.02	0.75
3	I am comfortable delegating tasks to the nurse assistant	2.94	0.62
4	I have difficulty prioritizing patient care needs	2.33	0.74
5	My clinical instructor/preceptor provided feedback about my readiness to assume an RN role.	3.00	0.36
6	I am confident in my ability to problem solve.	3.10	0.47
7	I feel overwhelmed by ethical issues in my patient care Responsibilities	2.48	0.67
8	I have difficulty recognizing a significant change in my patient's condition	2.19	0.64
9	I have had opportunities to practice skills and procedures more than once.	3.00	0.44
10	I am comfortable asking for help	2.83	0.64
11	I use current evidence to make clinical decisions.	2.86	0.56
12	I am comfortable communicating and coordinating care with interdisciplinary' team members.	2.78	0.71
13	Simulation has helped me feel prepared for clinical practice.	2.70	0.64
14	Writing reflective journals/logs provided insights into my own clinical decision-making skills	2.75	0.62
15	I feel comfortable knowing what to do for a dying patient	3.00	0.51
16	I am comfortable taking action to solve problems.	3.13	0.42
17	I feel comfortable identifying actual or potential safety risks to my patients.	3.10	0.39
18	I am satisfied with choosing nursing as a career.	3.62	0.49
19	I feel ready for the professional nursing role.	3.29	0.46
20	I was sufficiently prepared for Nursing roles	3.22	0.61
	Grand mean	2.92	0.26

The result from Part B of Table shows the mean and standard deviation on current level of confidence in managing a patient care assignment on an adult medical/Surgical Unit. It shows that the grand mean rating of the respondents over current level of confidence in managing a patient care assignment on an adult medical/Surgical Unit was 2.92, SD=0,26. Specifically, the respondents strongly indicated that they are satisfied with choosing nursing as a career (M=3.62, SD=0.49). This was followed by the fact that they have acquired the competence for the professional nursing role (M=3.29, SD=0.46).

Discussion of Findings

The result shows the summary of frequency and percentages on the perception that school prepared nurses adequately to practice as nurses. It shows that the 106 (84.1%) perceived that their institutions adequately prepared them to practice as nurse whereas only 20 (15.9%) do not. This is in agreement with the findings of Maitama et al, (2024) which reported that majority, 78.8% of their respondents had a good perception of their clinical nursing training. Also Baker et al. (2021) who studies the impact of graduate nurses in health sector, and found out that 25% of nurse's contributions to health sectors emanate from those with higher degrees in the profession.

The result also revealed that the mean and standard deviation on current level of competence in managing a patient care

assignment on an adult medical/Surgical Unit. It shows that the grand mean rating of the respondents over undergraduate nursing education programme outcome correspond with the requirements of nursing practice was 3.81, SD=0.33. Specifically, the result strongly indicated that their current level of confidence/competence is about caring for 2 patient (M=3.94, SD=0.25). This was followed by caring for 1 patient (M=3.90, SD=0.29). The least was caring for more than 3 patients (M=3.56, SD=0.67). This finding is in agreement with that of Seekoe (2014), which studied the experience of final-year nursing students at a public institution in the Eastern Cape province regarding their preparedness to become professional nurses. Data were analyzed using spearman's correlation coefficient. The finding of the study showed that there is a significant relationship between undergraduate nursing education and the global best practice.

Conclusion

Nursing as a profession is of great interest among healthcare practitioners and non-practitioners in most countries across the globe. The high level of knowledge and skills acquired by graduate nurses enables them to increase their level of productivity in the health sector. Findings from this study showed that majority of respondents had good perception of the undergraduate nursing programme. They exhibited high level of confidence to render quality care to the patients with

an above average of competence.

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