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Nursing faculty assistants' opinions regarding the importance of standards for clinical teaching skills

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Abstract: **The advancing accountability of nurses and nurse educators requires students to develop knowledge, skills, and judgment on a continuum of focus from individual patients to the broader context of care. Aim: This study is aimed at assessing nursing faculty assistants' opinions regarding the importance of standards for clinical teaching skills. Design: A descriptive cross-sectional was used Setting: it was conducted at the Faculty of Nursing, Ain-Shams University in the different clinical departments where nursing students are trained and on a group of Nursing faculty assistants There were 23 demonstrators and 49 assistant lecturers. Tools of Data collection: Data collection tool included An opinionnaire sheet for faculty assistants was developed by the researcher based on the related literature. Results: There were high agreement of faculty assistant upon the fifteen standards. The mean percent scores of agreement ranged between 86.11 for the first standard of personal attributes and appearance, and 95.69 for the third standard of voice characteristics and 94.08 for the fourteenth criterion of evaluation and feedback skills. Meanwhile, the median scores for all criteria were 100.00 only 18.1% of them attended training in adult learning. The total agreement ranged between 86.11 % to 100.0%. Conclusion: applicability as shown by the high performance of the faculty assistants using proposed standard. Recommendations:The study recommends development and validation of clinical teaching skills standards based on these assessment findings. Faculty assistant staff should have the opportunity to discuss their clinical work, validate their decision-making, and examine clinical issues with faculty members to foster their clinical experience and help in the development of self-confidence.**

Keywords: **Clinical teaching, Skills, Standards.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The advancing accountability of nurses and nurse educators requires students to develop knowledge, skills, and judgment on a continuum of focus from individual patients to the broader context of care ***(O'Neill, 2016)***. Clinical education plays a crucial role in undergraduate nursing programs, and a poorly trained nurse may lead to lower quality healthcare ***(Lewin, 2007)***. Clinical training helps nurse student to develop professional skills and knowledge needed in life-long learning and critical thinking, to create self-confidence, and to build the ability to make decisions and to be independent ***(Lewin, 2007; Jamshidi, 2012)***. Thus, nurse students perceive their instructors their role models ***(Awad, 2015)***. The effectiveness of clinical teaching can be judged on the extent to which it produces intended learning outcomes ***(Gaberson and Oermann, 2010)***.

The challenges of clinical teaching in nursing include the traditional clinical training methods, crowded hospital wards and the density of other students. They also involve mistakes in determining the type of patients; lack of continuity in training days; lack of communication between nursing staff and faculty members; and description of student responsibilities in the patient's bedside is not specified. From the standpoint of educators, the challenges include lack of

understanding of patients of the nursing profession; inconsistency between the theoretical and practical training; conflict between educational objectives and expectations and expectations ***(Jamshidi, 2012)***.

In order to help students learn the behaviors and skills that are necessary in the increasingly complex and multifaceted nursing roles to meet the healthcare needs of a diverse multicultural society, well-educated and well-trained nursing instructors are needed ***(Tokele, 2012)***. Nonetheless, good clinical teaching is a demanding work requiring clinical instructors to be competent educators and clinical nursing experts capable of assuming legal and ethical responsibility for student learning as well as patient care. These competencies can be developed through educational preparation, faculty development opportunities and clinical setting opportunities ***(Billings, 2013)***. However, while most new clinical instructors enter the teaching field with clinical experience, they may not be prepared for or confident in clinical teaching ***(Robinson, 2015)***. Moreover, the role of the nurse teacher lacks clarity, with few studies addressing how clinical teaching behaviors of nursing faculty influence students' learning ***(Udlis, 2008; Ilgen, 2011)***. However, several national and regional situation assessments have revealed significant concerns about educational governance, institutional and educator capacity, quality and standards ***(Evans et al.., 2016)***.

AIM OF THE STUDY:

This study is aimed at assessing nursing faculty assistants' opinions regarding the importance of standards for clinical teaching skills.

2. SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Research design and setting: A descriptive cross-sectional was used in conducting this study at the Faculty of Nursing, Ain-Shams University in the different clinical departments where nursing students are trained.

Subjects: All faculty assistants working at the Faculty of Nursing, Ain-Shams University, and participating in clinical teaching during the academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 were included in the study. There were 23 demonstrators and 49 assistant lecturers.

Data collection tool: An opinionnaire sheet for faculty assistants was developed by the researcher based on the related literature (***Mahfouz, 2007; Mohamed, 2014)*** for soliciting their opinions about the importance of various criteria of standards of clinical teaching skills. It consisted of the three parts. The first part was for collection of demographic data such as age, gender, job position, pre-university education, specialty, and experience years. The second part was for assessment of the faculty assistant's experience in training and teaching, attendance of related training courses, and a self-rating sale for teaching and training abilities. The last part was for determining the importance of standard criteria from the nursing faculty assistant point of view. It covered 15 areas of importance of standards. These were personal attributes/appearance of faculty assistant (4 items with sub-items as formal, neat dress, etc.); preparation for session (4 items with sub-items as ensuring seating, lighting, etc.); voice characteristics (5 items as clear articulation, etc.); body language (9 items as facing students while speaking, etc.); personality (6 items as punctuality, open-mindedness, etc.); demonstration skills (6 items as setting goals for clinical day); facilitation skills (5 items as assisting students to apply procedures, etc.); assessment and coordination skills (6 items as assessing students' understanding of the clinical procedure, etc.); supporting skills (6 items as encouraging competent performance of students, etc.); training skills (8 items with sub-items such as guiding group discussion when needed, etc.); interpersonal relations and communication skills (10 items as accepting different students' opinions, listening carefully to students, etc.); creation of stimulating learning environment (7 items as making sure time is best used, etc.); role model (7 items as demonstrating enthusiasm for nursing, for teaching, etc.); evaluation and feedback skills (13 items with sub-items such as evaluating students' clinical performance, giving feedback, etc.); critical thinking skills (7 items as allowing students to share experiences, et.).

Each question had 3 levels of answers: "important", "uncertain", and "not important." These were respectively scored 2, 1, and 0. The scores of the items were summed-up and the total divided by the number of the items, giving a mean score, which was converted into a percent score. Means, standard deviations, medians and quartiles were computed for each domain and for the total scale. Then, for categorical analysis, the agreement upon importance was considered "agree" if the percent score was 60% or more and "disagree" if less than 60%. The tool was rigorously reviewed by a panel of experts from Medical-Surgical and Nursing Administration Nursing departments at Faculties of Nursing in Cairo, Ain-Shams, Benha, and Assiut Universities. The necessary modifications were done according to their comments and

suggestions. I was then pilot-tested on 8 faculty assistants. Modifications were done based on the pilot study results. The subjects who participated in the pilot study were not included in the main study sample. The reliability of the opinionnaire was very high with a Cronbach alpha coefficient 0.976.

Fieldwork: After securing official permissions, the researcher met with the faculty assistants, explained the aim of the study, invited them to participate, and obtained their verbal consent. They were handed the opinionnaire, with instructions regarding its filling. Each participant filled in the form and handed it back it to the researcher. Their filling-in took 25-30 minutes. The researcher checked each questionnaire sheet after being completed by each of the participants to ensure the completion of all information. This took about three months.

Administrative and ethical considerations: Permissions to carry out the study were obtained from the heads of departments based on letters were from the Faculty of Nursing, Ain-Shams University. Ethical approval was obtained from the Scientific Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Nursing at Ain-Shams University. The aim of the study and its procedures were explained to each of the faculty assistants to obtain their consent to participate. They were reassured about the anonymity and confidentiality of any collected data. The study procedures could not induce any actual or potential harms to participants.

Statistical analysis: Data entry and statistical analysis were done using SPSS 20.0 statistical software package. Data were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages for qualitative variables, and means and standard deviations and medians and interquartile ranges for quantitative variables. Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated to assess the reliability of the developed scale through its internal consistency. Qualitative categorical variables were compared using chi-square test. Whenever the expected values in one or more of the cells in a 2x2 tables was less than 5, Fisher exact test was used instead. In larger than 2x2 cross-tables, no test could be applied whenever the expected value in 10% or more of the cells was less than 5. Statistical significance was considered at p-value <0.05.

3. RESULTS

The study sample involved 72 faculty assistant staff whose age ranged between 23 and 50 years, with median 34.0 as shown in Table 1. Approximately three-fourth of them (73.6%) had a master degree in addition to their bachelor degree. Their experience years ranged between less than one to eighteen years, with median 8.5 years.

Table 2 shows that around two-thirds of the faculty assistant staff attended training courses in presentation skills, teaching, and clinical training. However, only 18.1% of them attended training in adult learning. As for their teaching experience, the median number of oral presentation during the last year was 4.0, with a median number of 16.0 attendants. On the other hand, the median number of training sessions during the last year was 0.0, with a median number of 0.0 attendants.

As regards faculty assistant staff's self-rating of their teaching/training abilities, Table 3 shows that around two-thirds of them rated themselves high in all tested abilities. The only exceptions were related to the abilities of conducting a problem solving session (37.5%) and administering a seminar (52.8%).

Table 4 indicates very high percent scores of faculty assistant staff agreement upon the fifteen standards. The mean percent scores of agreement ranged between 86.11 for the first standard of personal attributes and appearance, and 95.69 for the third standard of voice characteristics and 94.08 for the fourteenth criterion of evaluation and feedback skills. Meanwhile, the median scores for all criteria were 100.00 indicating that at least one-half of the sample agreed upon them. The only exception was for the first of personal attributes and appearance, which had a median score of 87.50. Overall, the median total percent score was 99.19.

As illustrated in Figure 1, 87.5% of the faculty staff members expressed their agreement upon the total standards.

Table 5 shows statistically significant relations between faculty assistant staff opinions about the importance of the proposed standards and their experience years (p=0.03), and their attendance of training courses in teaching (p=0.01) and in clinical training (p=0.01). It is noticed that those having 10 or more years of experience, and who had attended training courses in teaching or clinical training had high agreement upon the importance of these standards.

Table 6 indicates the presence of statistically significant relations between faculty assistant staff opinions about the importance of the proposed standards and their self-rated abilities of giving oral presentation (p=0.003), of conducting one-to-one clinical teaching session (p=0.01) and of conducting group clinical teaching session (p<0.001). As the table shows, those rating themselves high in these abilities had higher agreement upon the importance of these standards.

4. DISCUSSION

The study assessed faculty assistant staff's opinions about the importance of standards for clinical training and teaching. In total, a great majority of the assistant faculty staff members agreed upon the importance of standards. The median percent score was as high 99.19, indicating that at least one-half of the sample have almost total agreement upon all the standards areas and their related items. This was quite important in the development of the standard based on actual needs and persuasion of its actual consumers, i.e. the nursing educators. The findings indicate a real need for such standards in order to improve the clinical training of nursing students. The importance of such standards has been outlined in a study in the United States dealing with the preparation of nurse educators for their roles in teaching and training ***(Harper et al., 2017)***.

The practical experience in training among the faculty assistant staff in the current study was evaluated not only by their experience years, but also by the training activities they practiced such as oral presentations and clinical training sessions. The findings revealed that one-half or more of them had at least four oral presentation during the last year, with at least 16 attendants. Conversely, at least one-half of them had not conducted any training sessions during the last year. The findings indicate that these faculty assistant staff are more experienced in theoretical rather than in practical training. In congruence with this, a study carried out in Singapore on medical and nursing educators revealed that oral presentations were among the competencies rated as the most important ***(Goh et al., 2015)***.

According to the present study results, the score of agreement upon importance among faculty assistant staff was highest for the standard related to voice characteristics. The results showed a majority agreement upon the importance of all its criteria, particularly concerning voice clarity or good articulation. This is of extreme importance since the English language is used in training at various faculties of nursing in Egypt. As it is not the mother tongue of trainers or students, good articulation is of great importance for good understanding. In line with this, ***Sessa et al. (2015)*** in a study in Italy mentioned that oral presentation is considered as one of the most sought after skills by companies and professional organizations and program accreditation agencies. It requires good verbal communication, including appropriate voice characteristics.

Another equally important criterion, based on the opinions of the faculty assistant staff, was the one related to evaluation and feedback skills. It had the second highest mean score among the fifteen areas of standards. Its items emphasized the importance of providing constructive feedback about performance to students, and accurate documentation of students' evaluation. In congruence with the importance of feedback evaluation, ***Hunter (2016)*** in a study in Rhode Island reported that incorporating reflective feedback strategies in clinical learning promotes meaningful learning, which will strengthen the capabilities of students and better prepare them for the complexities they will face in clinical practice.

At the other extreme, the standard area that had the lowest mean score of agreement among the faculty assistant staff of the present study was that of personal attributes and appearance. Nonetheless, all faculty assistant staff agreed upon the importance of having neat and formal dress. In agreement with this, a study in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia revealed that the educators' attributes related to performance such as being expert in the subject were valued more by students compared to their personality attributes such as dressing appropriately ***(Al-Mohaimeed and Khan, 2014)***.

Similarly, the standard of critical thinking skills had the second lowest mean agreement among the faculty assistant staff of the present study. Although the majority of them agreed upon the importance of all its items, the importance of asking vital questions to stimulate student critical thinking and upon the use of small group discussion during clinical practice was undermined. This could be attributed to their lack of experience and training in critical thinking. In fact, only less the one-fifth of them had training in adult learning. This is a significant shortcoming in their training and preparation for their teaching profession as adult learning is quite different and needs different approaches when compared with teaching in schools. In agreement with this, a study in the United States found that nursing educators seldom apply the principles of adult learning while teaching their students ***(Curran, 2014)***. In agreement with this, a study in Australia found that

problem solving and critical thinking skills were the most deficient of the essential nursing skills among nurses ***(Missen et al., 2016)***. Additionally, the notion of critical thinking could have many different definitions and approaches in teaching and evaluation as stressed by ***Von Colln-Appling and Giuliano (2017)***.

The present study faculty assistant staff agreement upon the importance of the standard area of role model came third in lowest ranking of scores, with lower importance given to issues such as exhibiting sensitivity to patients and to students.. This is an alarming finding since it is extremely important that the clinical trainer embed this attribute in students so that in the future career they can be able to show respect and empathy to their patients as well as their peers. In congruence with this, a study in Pakistan ***(Haider et al., 2016)*** reported that role models facilitate student learning and assist in the development of professional identity. The students perceived teaching and facilitating learning, patient care and continuing professional development, communication and professionalism as the most important attributes of a role model.

Concerning the factors that could influence faculty assistant staff opinions about the importance of the standards, the present study identified statistically significant relations with certain of their characteristics such as experience and training. Thus, the results showed that having attended training in teaching or clinical training is associated with higher agreement upon the importance of these standards. This underscores the value of training courses in realizing the importance of and the need for clinical teaching skills standards, which is in congruence with ***Birnbaum et al. (2017)*** in a study in Canada.

Furthermore, the current study revealed higher agreement upon the importance of standards among the faculty assistant staff who had ten or more years of experience, and those who had high self-rating of own abilities of giving oral presentation, conducting one-to-one clinical teaching session, and conducting group clinical teaching session. The findings highlight the positive effect of actual practice and experience on the ability of the faculty assistant staff to identify the important criteria of clinical teaching skills standards. They are in congruence with the results of a study of Thai nurse educators where past-experience was an influential factor ***(Thungjaroenkul et al., 2016)***.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The nursing faculty assistants in the present study have a high agreement upon the importance of setting standards for clinical training and teaching. This is particularly evident regarding voice characteristics, and training and evaluation and feedback skills. Their agreement is related to their previous training and experience. The study recommends development and validation of clinical teaching skills standards based on these assessment findings. Faculty assistant staff should have the opportunity to discuss their clinical work, validate their decision-making, and examine clinical issues with faculty members to foster their clinical experience and help in the development of self-confidence. Further research is proposed to examine the effect of the application of standards on students' satisfaction.

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APPENDICES-A

List of Table:

Table 1: Socio-demographic and job characteristics of faculty assistant staff in the study sample (n=72)

	Frequency	Percent
Age:		
<40	38	52.8
40+	34	47.2
Range	23.0-50.0	
Mean±SD	35.2±6.0	
Median	34.0	
Qualification:		
Bachelor	19	26.4
Master	53	73.6
Experience years:		
<10	9	54.2
10+	33	45.8
Range	<1.0-18.0	
Mean±SD	8.0±5.1	
Median	8.5	

Table 2: Training and teaching experience of faculty assistant staff in the study sample (n=72)

	Frequency	Percent
Attended courses in:		
Presentation skills	49	68.1
Teaching	45	62.5
Clinical training	45	62.5
Adult learning	13	18.1
Total courses attended:		
Range	0-4	
Mean±SD	2.1±1.1	
Median	2.0	
No. of oral presentations (last year):		
Range	0-50	
Mean±SD	8.1±11.2	
Median	4.0	
No. of attendants oral presentations (last year):		
Range	0-700	
Mean±SD	41.2±89.0	
Median	16.0	

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No. of clinical training sessions (last year):	
Range	0-50
Mean±SD	5.9±10.2
Median	0.0
No. of attendants clinical training sessions (last year):	
Range	0-100
Mean±SD	14.8±26.1
Median	0.0

Table 3: Self-rating of teaching/training abilities as reported by faculty assistant staff in the study sample (n=72)

Rate your ability in each of the following	High		Average		Low	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Giving an oral presentation	49	68.1	19	26.4	4	5.6
Conducting a problem-solving session	27	37.5	43	59.7	2	2.8
Administering a small group discussion	47	65.3	22	30.6	3	4.2
Conducting one to one clinical teaching session	45	62.5	24	33.3	3	4.2
Conducting group clinical teaching session	50	69.4	19	26.4	3	4.2
Administering a seminar	38	52.8	28	38.9	6	8.3

Table 4: Scores of opinions about importance of standards as reported by faculty assistant staff in the study sample (n=72)

Standards	Importance score (max=100)				
	Mean	SD	Median	Quartiles	
				1st	3rd
1. Personal attributes/Appearance of faculty assistant	86.11	13.32	87.50	79.17	95.83
2. Preparation for session	91.28	16.81	100.00	94.44	100.00
3. Voice characteristics	95.69	10.98	100.00	100.00	100.00
4. Body language	93.52	11.50	100.00	88.89	100.00
5. Personality	92.86	14.63	100.00	92.86	100.00
6. Demonstration skills	91.90	18.23	100.00	100.00	100.00
7. Facilitation skills	93.75	15.24	100.00	100.00	100.00
8. Assessment and coordination skills	93.29	16.65	100.00	100.00	100.00
9. Supporting skills	93.63	15.42	100.00	100.00	100.00
10. Training skills	94.20	10.47	100.00	93.38	100.00
11. Interpersonal relations and communication skills	92.85	14.26	100.00	98.75	100.00
12. Creation of stimulating learning environment	92.16	16.31	100.00	98.21	100.00
13. Role model	90.97	19.33	100.00	100.00	100.00
14. Evaluation and feedback skills	94.08	13.99	100.00	97.06	100.00
15. Critical Thinking Skills	90.67	19.54	100.00	100.00	100.00
Total	93.14	11.19	99.19	90.93	100.00

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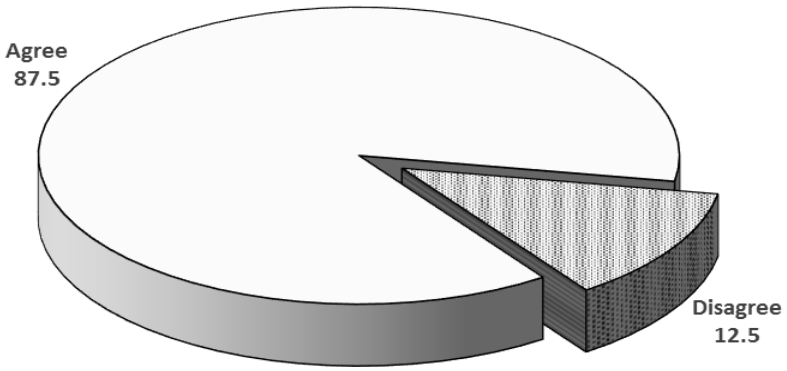

Figure 1: Total opinions of faculty assistant staff about the importance of standards (n=72).

Table 5: Relations between faculty assistant staff opinions about the importance of standards and their socio-demographic and job characteristics

	Opinions				X^2 test	p-value
	Agree		Disagree			
	No.	%	No.	%		
Age:						
<40	31	49.2	7	77.8		
40+	32	50.8	2	22.2	Fisher	0.16
Qualification:						
Bachelor	19	30.2	0	0.0		
Master	44	69.8	9	100.0	Fisher	0.10
Job position:						
Assistant lecturer	44	69.8	7	77.8		
Demonstrator	19	30.2	2	22.2	Fisher	1.00
Experience years:						
<10	31	49.2	8	88.9		
10+	32	50.8	1	11.1	Fisher	0.03*
Attended courses in:						
Presentation skills:						
No	22	34.9	1	11.1		
Yes	41	65.1	8	88.9	Fisher	0.26
Teaching:						
No	20	31.7	7	77.8		
Yes	43	68.3	2	22.2	Fisher	0.01*
Clinical training:						
No	20	31.7	7	77.8		
Yes	43	68.3	2	22.2	Fisher	0.01*
Adult learning:						
No	51	81.0	8	88.9		
Yes	12	19.0	1	11.1	Fisher	1.00

(*) Statistically significant at p<0.05

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Table 6: Relations between faculty assistant staff opinions about the importance of standards and their self-rated teaching abilities

Self-rated ability of	Opinions				X^2 test	p-value
	High		Low			
	No.	%	No.	%		
Giving an oral presentation:						
Low	2	3.2	2	22.2		
Average	14	22.2	5	55.6	11.63	0.003*
High	47	74.6	2	22.2		
Conducting a problem-solving session:						
Low	1	1.6	1	11.1		
Average	38	60.3	5	55.6	--	--
High	24	38.1	3	33.3		
Administering a small group discussion:						
Low	2	3.2	1	11.1		
Average	17	27.0	5	55.6	4.90	0.09
High	44	69.8	3	33.3		
Conducting one to one clinical teaching session:						
Low	1	1.6	2	22.2		
Average	22	34.9	2	22.2	8.51	0.01*
High	40	63.5	5	55.6		
Conducting group clinical teaching session:						
Low	0	0.0	3	33.3		
Average	16	25.4	3	33.3	23.12	<0.001*
High	47	74.6	3	33.3		
Administering a seminar:						
Low	4	6.3	2	22.2		
Average	24	38.1	4	44.4	--	--
High	35	55.6	3	33.3		

(*) Statistically significant at p<0.05 *(--) Test result not valid*