

## Study of Characteristics of an effective clinical instructor from nursing students' point of view in Zahedan

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**Abstract: Introduction:** Clinical instruction is one of the most important parts of the educational process, because much of the professional learning is going to be completed through clinical practice. Thus, the effectiveness of clinical instruction has been the topic of many nursing, and midwifery researches. With regard to the importance of clinical teaching, existence of fruitful characteristics and features in clinical instructors is the essential factor in achieving clinical objectives. So the aim of this study was to examine the effective characteristics of a clinical instructor from Zahedan nursing students' point of view. **Methods:** This study was a cross - sectional study, which was carried out on 165 students of nursing, midwifery, and operating room personnel of Zahedan nursing school, who were randomly selected in 2013. The tool for data collection was the questionnaire, which consisted of two parts; the first part comprised of demographic information, including age, gender, and field of study; and the second part consisted of 49 questions covering five domains of professional characteristics of the clinical instructor, communication features, personal features, teaching features, and assessment features, which was scored based seven Likert scale where seven denotes total agreement and one denotes total disagreement. To examine the content validity of the questionnaire, it was reviewed by a number of nursing and midwifery specialists at university, and necessary corrections were made, also to examine the reliability, the cronbach's alpha coefficient was used, which delivered the total reliability of the questionnaire (0.87). In order to analyze the data, the descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated by using the SPSS 18, and Excel applications. **Findings:** The results of study regarding the effective characteristics of clinical instructors from students' point of view showed that professional features of the instructor with the mean (SD)  $0.56 \pm 6.33$ , personal features with mean (SD)  $0.59 \pm 6.29$  and features of teaching with  $0.34 \pm 6.07$ , had the highest score respectively, and evaluation features with the mean and standard deviation of  $0.81 \pm 5.88$  had the lowest score. **Conclusions:** In this study, some characteristics of an effective clinical instructor were reviewed. These results could be useful for the group managers, education planners, regarding the effectiveness of educational mission and the process of teaching.

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**Key words:** Effectiveness, Clinical Instructor, Student, Nurse

### 1. Introduction

Nursing is one of the difficult jobs that as an academic discipline, presents the services to the healthy and sick people in different centers by using certain knowledge and skills. Nursing students need learning clinical skills besides the acquisition of knowledge during their academic training; therefore, nursing is a practical profession and clinical training will form the majority of its undergraduate educational course (13). The quality of clinical experience or education of the students has been identified as one of the most important factors affecting the quality of nursing education (14). Even it is called the heart of the nursing professional education (15).

To this effect, the clinical instruction is one of the most important parts of the educational process, because much of the learning process is completed in a clinical setting. Therefore, the effectiveness of clinical instruction has been the title of a lot of nursing and midwifery researches (1). More than 50 percent of the time of the nursing students is spent in clinical

practice which plays an important role in forming and learning of their professional values, norms and attitudes (2). Even some experts regard clinical instruction among the most important components of the professional education (3). The complex process of learning in clinical settings depends greatly on the type of learner's experience in clinical practice and currently training centers focused heavily on improvement and promotion of factors associated with. One of the most important elements in this regard, is the instructor and his/her ability for turning experience into preparedness and its more understanding and learning (5). Clinical Instructor is a crucial and significant part in programming, and acquiring clinical experience which is the basic element in providing favorable conditions for the realization of clinical education, because it can compensate the shortcomings and deficiencies of educational facilities or it can turn the best conditions to an unattractive educational atmosphere due to inability in creating suitable emotional communication or knowledge deficiency (10). Typically, the characteristics of the

teachers in the classroom have been the focus of many researchers; from the past two decades, the effectiveness of nursing instructors has always been of interest to the researchers and scholars as an important factor in clinical education (9). While some researchers are also looking into this question that what kind of characteristics, instructors should have in order to be effective, follow the desired goals, facilitate students' learning (4). The clinical instructor works supportively by offering his/her experiences and suitable corrective feedback to the students and by active presence as a source of confidence and courage, and restoring order and discipline. He/she is also a factor for setting effective communication between student and patient, student and physician, causing taking responsibility and effective learning of academic and clinical skills of trainees, as well as the reduction of fear and anxiety (9). On the other hand, students can also evaluate his/her strengths and weaknesses from various perspectives of science, morality and behavior (11). Therefore, this issue attracted the attention of nursing investigators and clinical instructor, and is considered the most important factor in ensuring the quality of clinical training (15, 14, 13). It is clear that these teachers should have the required competence and ability to perform effectively their role (16); since only a qualified clinical instructor will be able to train competent students (17). Irby has been stated characteristics for an effective clinical teachers: the knowledge about the subject, the aid seekers or patients, strengths and weaknesses of students, teaching general principles as to enable the students' attention, general principles of teaching, such as activating students, drawing their attention, connecting theoretical with practical training, recognizing individual needs of students and practical relevance, providing feedback and evaluation, and the ability to case-based teaching in a way that help students' thinking, interpreting, and decision making (5). Some other characteristics, such as having enthusiasm, providing the perfect atmosphere for learning, learning style, selecting appropriate teaching methods, effective use of feedback, being objective and fair, being informed, presenting skills, linking theory with practice, having knowledge of basic science and expertise, having interpersonal skills, having technical skills such as clinical examination, clinical judgment, such as patient's management and physicians' ability to evaluate himself as an instructor and physician are considered important features of an instructor (6). The characteristics of an effective clinical instructor are different in various researches, for example, quoted from Morgan and Knox, the most effective clinical instructor is the person who has the exalted personality in order to reduce the anxiety of

students in clinical practice (10), and also it is stated in the study of Salemi and Pazande citing from Benor and Leviyof and some other studies that an effective instructor should have effective and professional teaching skills (12), and some researches recall the quality of their interpersonal relationships as the most important characteristic of instructors' effectiveness (9).

Also, Sloan has investigated the features of effective instructors from the viewpoints of 312 Medical Students of Yazd and concluded that from students' point of view, the effective characteristics of teachers would be more relationship with students, be a positive model, encouraging connection and good organizing of activities (7). Furthermore, the study over view points of Medical students of Yazd Shahid Sadoghi specified that in general the most important characteristics of a good teacher is student's respect, having knowledge of the subject taught, having a lesson plan, having religious beliefs and observing justice (18). Since the 1990s, the effectiveness of nursing instructors has always been of interest to the researchers and scholars. Some of the studies have been conducted on the characteristics of effective teachers, and the quality of their interpersonal relationships had been regarded as the most important characteristic of effective teachers (19).

As the nursing schools are always trying to improve their educational plans, and these plans are based on this assumption that courses and teaching atmosphere, train competency and efficiency in different aspects of theory and practice, and as the students as consumers of educational services have direct and straightforward connection with this process grow, they are the best source for detection of clinical education problems. Because, despite the passage of many years of training nursing students in Zahedan, the characteristics of clinical instructor have not been largely assessed; therefore, this study was performed with the purpose of to determine the characteristics of effective clinical instructor from perspectives of nursing students in Zahedan in 2013.

#### **Materials and Methods**

This study is a cross - sectional descriptive study, which carried out on 165 students of third and fourth year of nursing, midwifery and operating room personnel of Zahedan nursing school in 2013. The collection of data was carried out in person by visiting the respective students' university, and the qualified students were randomly asked to provide answers to the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part related to the personal information, including age, sex, and course of study. And the second part consisted of 49 questions covering five domains of professional characteristics of the clinical instructor (9 questions), communication features (8 questions),

personal features (16 questions), teaching features (9 questions), and assessment features (7 questions), which was scored based seven Likert scale where seven denotes total agreement, and one denotes total disagreement. To examine the content validity of the questionnaire, it was reviewed by a number of nursing and midwifery specialists at university and necessary corrections were made, also to examine the reliability, the cronbach's alpha coefficient was used, which delivered the total reliability of the questionnaire (0.87) and for each sub-item the following results were obtained: professional features of the instructor (0.84), communication features (0.79), personal features (0.81), teaching features (0.83), and assessment features (0.88). Also the validity and reliability of this questionnaire were confirmed in Sokhandani study (2013). In order to analyze the data, the descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated by using the

SPSS 18, and Excel applications.

### Findings

In this study, the opinions of 165 students of nursing, midwifery and operating room personnel were studied with an average age of 21.34 years. Percentage of nursing students was 44.2%, midwives 29.2%, and operating room 26.6%. Also 32.12% of the students were male and 67.88% were female. The average score of characteristics of the effective clinical teacher from students' point of view was  $6.17 \pm 0.86$ . With regard to the different scopes of an effective clinical instructor, the professional features of the instructor with an average of  $6.33 \pm 0.56$  had the highest score, and the assessment features with an average of  $5.88 \pm 0.81$  had the lowest score. Table 1 shows the average and standard deviation of clinical instructors' characteristics.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Characteristics of an Effective Clinical Instructor from Students' Point of View

Clinical characteristics	Mean and Standard Deviation
Professional feature of the Instructor	$6.33 \pm 0.56$
Personal feature	$6.29 \pm 0.59$
Teaching feature	$6.07 \pm 0.34$
Communication feature	$5.96 \pm 0.76$
Assessment feature	$5.88 \pm 0.81$
Total	$6.17 \pm 0.86$

With regard to average scores of 49 characteristics of an effective clinical instructor, the highest score goes to "being reliable" item as one of the personal features with an average of  $6.79 \pm 0.49$  and the lowest score belongs to attention to the cultural features

item as one of the communication features with an average of  $5.19 \pm 0.49$ . Tables 2 and 3 show the highest and lowest scores related to characteristics of an effective clinical instructor.

Table 2: The most important characteristics of an effective clinical instructor from students' point of view

Characteristics of a clinical instructor	Mean and standard deviation
Being reliable	$6.79 \pm 0.49$
To be fair	$6.52 \pm 0.72$
Having good moral	$6.48 \pm 0.64$
To be ordered and disciplined	$6.26 \pm 0.56$
Good teaching method	$6.18 \pm 0.44$
Familiarity of students with rules and regulations	$6.17 \pm 0.66$
Having energy	$6.12 \pm 0.52$
Suitable learning environment	$6.10 \pm 0.71$
Honest work	$6.07 \pm 0.40$

Table 3: The least important characteristics of an effective clinical instructor from students' point of view

Characteristics of a clinical instructor	Mean and Standard deviation
Enjoying work with students	$5.31 \pm 0.57$
Having positive insight	$5.29 \pm 0.82$
Easy access of student to teacher	$5.26 \pm 0.49$
Objective observance of student's performance	$5.21 \pm 0.54$
Attention to cultural specification of the students	$5.19 \pm 0.49$

## Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the present study showed that the total average score of the characteristics of an effective clinical instructor from students' point of view is  $6.17 \pm 0.86$ . The results of the research showed that the average score of the characteristics of an effective clinical instructor from students' point of view was high and the features mentioned in the questionnaire, were approved by the students. In the study of specific features, the professional characteristics of the clinical instructor with an average of  $6.33 \pm 0.56$  had the highest score. To the extent that the effective of an instructor has been attributed to the suitable atmosphere, a comfort environment, having scientific knowledge and skills, familiarity with clinical skills, ability to perform different procedures and also his right judgment; these findings are consistent with the results of some other studies (9,21).

The second high score of a clinical instructor has been given to personal characteristics with the mean and standard deviation of  $6.29 \pm 0.59$ , which relates to having loyalty, taking responsibility in doing activities, having the passion, enjoy working with students, being reliable and credible and .... This finding is consistent with the findings of Satarzadeh and colleagues (22), with regard to enjoy working with students, method of communication, and having knowledge and experience.

The third high score of a clinical instructor has been given to the teaching characteristics as one of the features of an effective clinical instructor with the mean and standard deviation of  $6.07 \pm 0.34$ , which relates to the motivating and encouraging the students to professional and educational topics, the emphasis on teaching concepts, attention to learning styles, student support and accurate and comprehensive answering to students' questions. The findings of this study are in consistent with Kirschlikng (23) findings, which considered such factors as having knowledge and experience, using appropriate teaching methods, communication practices, and utilization of personal experiences effective and also consistent with many other findings of the other studies (24).

The fourth high score has been given to the communicative and interpersonal characteristics as one of the features of an effective clinical instructor with the mean and standard deviation of  $5.96 \pm 0.76$ , which relates to attention to high interpersonal skills, the use of suitable feedback techniques in interpersonal communication, attention to the cultural characteristics of students and also having a positive attitude towards the students. This finding is also consistent with the study of Lee et al. (24), Alavi and Abedi (9), and Pazandeh and colleagues (21) which emphasis on the communication features. But the

lowest score of an effective clinical instructor has been assigned to the evaluation feature with the mean and standard deviation of  $5.88 \pm 0.81$ . In the regard, the items like objective observation of the student performance, not humiliating students in front of others, in time reward and punishment of the students were surveyed. The obtained results were consistent with the findings of the Alavi and Abedi (9) and Pazandeh et al, (2006).

According to Tables 2 and 3, The most important and the least important features of an effective clinical instructor were found. The important ones are reliability, fairness, also having good moral. With regard to the independency, individual and social self-centeredness and also maturity of the students, they consider the most important feature for a clinical instructor, personal relationship and moral and personality issues of the instructor who is likely and foreseeable with the growing condition of the students. But enjoy working with students, having a positive attitude and easy access of the student to the teacher has lower importance for an effective clinical instructor from students' point of view. It seems that students do not feel so much need having access to the teacher due to their ability to learn and having unique learning styles and, therefore this feature has got lower importance.

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