



Nursing students' perceptions of the qualities of clinical instructors in a public university in Jordan: A qualitative study

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Abstract

Background: Nursing clinical education is a key to developing nursing students' knowledge, skills, and competencies. Few studies have attempted to explore students' perceptions regarding the qualities of effective clinical instructors.

Objective: The current study aims to explore nursing students' perceptions of effective clinical instructors' qualities in Jordan.

Methods: A qualitative exploratory approach was used to deepen our understanding of nursing students' perceptions of effective clinical instructors' qualities. A total of 21 nursing students were involved, and data were collected from June to August 2023. Data were analyzed using the thematic analysis approach.

Results: The thematic analysis revealed two main themes. The first theme was professional qualities, comprising four subthemes: professional knowledge and experience, acting as a role model, performing as a caring one, and assembling effective communication. The second theme was building a good rapport. The findings demonstrated that clinical instructor qualities impacted how students perceived their teaching effectiveness, and they identified professional knowledge and competence as crucial qualities of an effective clinical instructor. It was acknowledged that caring behaviors and effective communication skills were essential behavioral attributes for clinical instructors.

Conclusion: Nursing students have valued particular characteristics of effective clinical instructors. These characteristics were knowledge, caring, relationships, role models, and communication. Further research is needed to validate the study's findings.

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Keywords

Jordan, clinical instructor; qualitative research; nursing; perception; students; public university; communication; interpersonal relations

Background

Clinical experience is essential to nursing as an applied discipline. It is internationally agreed that clinical nursing education plays a vital role in acquiring the fundamental nursing competencies required for professional practice (Hashemiparast et al., 2019; Labrague et al., 2020; Panda et al., 2021). Nursing education requires adequate clinical rotations to build practical skills and apply academic concepts (Hababeh & Lalithabai, 2020; Salifu et al., 2022). This will help nursing students achieve the required proficiencies and enhance their professional potential (Bawadi et al., 2019; Vizcaya-Moreno et al., 2018). In this context, Panda et al. (2021) emphasized the significance of clinical learning, which is a crucial part of nursing education programs and plays a major role in developing professional competencies and integrating theoretical and practical learning experiences.

The clinical learning environment (CLE) emerges as a predominant arena where nursing students dedicate a significant portion of their clinical training (AlShammari et al., 2023; Ghasemi et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). These fields are vital to enhancing patient care and bolstering students' confidence as future nurses, ultimately affecting their learning outcomes (Nordquist et al., 2019; Woo & Li, 2020). Evidence suggests that highly competent clinical instructors (CIs) become indispensable in ensuring effective clinical teaching for nursing students and achieving the desired outcomes (Collier, 2018; Widiyaningsih et al., 2019). Instructors are the most significant individuals who help students acquire the necessary caring skills in a clinical setting; they devote their time to guiding small groups of students in specific clinical settings, ensuring they achieve learning objectives (Durgun Ozan et al., 2020), consequently facilitating students' progress and preparing them to meet entry-level practice competencies

based on the qualities of clinical instructors (Soroush et al., 2021).

Effective CI has been highlighted in the literature as crucial to nursing students' development of critical thinking and nursing skills (Williams et al., 2021). These instructors impart essential skills for healthcare environments and instill confidence and competence in providing high-quality patient care (Inocian et al., 2022; Soroush et al., 2021). Numerous studies also point out particular characteristics that are essential for CIs. Research has revealed the importance of supportive interactions, interpersonal relationships, and effective teaching (AlMekkawi et al., 2020; Collier, 2018). Nursing students' experience with effective CI characteristics provides insights for improving clinical instruction and bridging teaching gaps (Hababeh & Lalithabai, 2020).

A study conducted by Cayir and Ulupinar (2021) declared that one of the essential elements determining the quality of higher education institutions is the qualification of their instructors. Hence, it is evident that CIs must have the required competence and qualifications to perform their roles efficiently (Nazari & Mohammadi, 2015). However, to date, while the literature provides us with a plethora of studies that focus on clinical learning in nursing (Salifu et al., 2022; Squire et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2022), few have exclusively focused on the perceived qualities of the CIs (Bawadi et al., 2019; Beiranvand et al., 2021; Cayir & Ulupinar, 2021; Hababeh & Lalithabai, 2020). Most studies have come from developing countries, and thus, their cultural and educational applicability might be questioned. This presents a dilemma for educationalists regarding the qualities that CI should have from the perspective of nursing students.

Nursing Education in Jordan

Jordan is a Middle Eastern nation with a middle-income level, covering an area of 89,342 km² and home to around 10 million people (Maaitah et al., 2019). Since the 1970s, Jordan's nursing has quickly expanded and is now regarded highly compared to other countries in the region (Maaitah et al., 2019). Over the past 20 years, Jordan's nursing education has improved due to the establishment of graduate nursing programs (Bawadi et al., 2019). It is important to note that there are 20 colleges (ten public and ten private) in Jordan that offer a BSN, with a total enrollment of about 6400 students. Nursing students in Jordan are required to complete clinical rotations in learning environments customized to their educational background as part of the four-year Bachelor of Nursing program. Beginning in the summer semester of the first year or the first semester of the second year, clinical training in various healthcare settings (hospitals) continues in Jordan until the end of the second semester of the fourth year.

In Jordan, the nursing school routinely recruits and hires experienced nurses as clinical teachers/instructors to provide instruction in the clinical context. Most CIs guide and assist nursing students in academic and clinical settings. They often work full-time at the nursing college and are responsible for instructing classes of 10–15 students in designated clinical locations per course objectives. A clinical nurse instructor plays a big part in ensuring that nursing students are competent in providing patients and families with the best care possible while maintaining safety. A clinical nurse instructor's responsibility usually includes collaboration with healthcare

teams, academic teams teaching in colleges, and students undergoing clinical training. To effectively deliver clinical education, clinical educators must possess specific qualities (Hababeh & Lalithabai, 2020).

Nursing students in Jordan must complete a certain number of clinical hours in various contexts, including community nursing practice settings, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, psychiatry, management, and medical/surgical practice settings. Most of these clinical experiences occur in hospitals, where nursing schools primarily rely on CI to teach nursing students in real-world clinical settings. Unfortunately, because of the large number of students who choose to study nursing and the shortage of clinical instructors, it has been reported that Jordan's clinical instruction is of low quality (Bawadi et al., 2019). This will address the research gap and significantly contribute to academic institutions, educators, and decision-makers by providing vital information about CI qualities in clinical nursing education. Therefore, this study aims to explore nursing students' perceptions of effective clinical instructors' qualities in Jordan.

Methods

Study Design

The objective of the current study is to explore the experiences held by nursing students regarding the compelling qualities of CIs during their clinical training. This qualitative inquiry used a qualitative exploratory approach to explore concepts and values within a diverse social group of nursing students. According to Polit and Beck (2010), this approach is considered the optimal means for such exploration.

Study Setting

The study was conducted at a southern Jordanian nursing school offering a four-year bachelor's degree. There are about 700 students enrolled in total. In their first year of the program, nursing students receive training in nursing school laboratories after completing foundation courses (such as biology and anatomy). In their second, third, and fourth years, students receive clinical training under the direction and guidance of full-time clinical instructors. Training sites are mostly found in Jordan's southern province and consist of public, private, and military hospitals.

Participants

The current study included 21 participants, who were regular nursing students, selected purposefully from the program's second-, third-, and fourth-year cohorts. The study's participant pool consisted of nursing students who satisfied the inclusion criteria, which included completing three clinical rotations for a minimum of 14 weeks per semester, practicing two days a week from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. under the supervision of full-time CIs, and expressing a willingness to participate in the study. Exclusion criteria were first-year nursing students and nursing students who refused to participate. Participants from the second, third, and fourth academic years were selected to ensure a variable range of responses for the subsequent qualitative analysis, covering a diverse range of ages. Both genders of participants were included (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011).

Data Collection

The method of choice to gather data from participants within the study settings was focus groups. Focus group discussion was chosen as an appropriate method, as it aligns with the nature of qualitative investigations that aim to explore issues and provide answers (Mishra, 2016). Three semi-structured focus group discussions were conducted, comprising seven students each from the second, third, and fourth academic years. Data collection started in June 2023 and was completed in August 2023. All interviews were conducted in Arabic, the native language.

The two researchers responsible for data collection transcribed the interviews verbatim, then translated all transcripts to English and returned them to the study team for additional review. The researchers' selection of a nursing office as a pleasant research environment was of great help in acquiring nursing students' trust and understanding of the study's purpose and merit. Assuming the role of a moderator during data collection, the researchers initiated each session with an open-ended query using a brainstorming technique: "From your perspective, what qualities characterize an effective CI?" It is worth highlighting the researcher's conscious effort to suspend personal opinions concerning the study matter, fostering an environment wherein participants stayed attuned to research objectives. By skillfully engaging participants and adeptly steering discussion, the researcher ensured the proper management of the sessions. Each focus group occurred individually, set in a quiet ambiance, with sessions spanning between 30 and 45 minutes each. Approval from participants preceded the audio recording of each session.

It is noted that before commencing the current research, the researcher performed a pilot study with nursing students. One focus group with seven nursing students was conducted, digitally recorded, and lasted 45 to 55 minutes. In addition, the pilot focus group attempted to ensure that the questions stated in the interview guidelines were clear and easy to understand or that any modifications were needed, and finally, the effectiveness of moderator roles and the degree of involvement in the discussion.

While adhering to the initial focus group questions, the researcher demonstrated flexibility in response to unforeseen themes, effectively utilizing interview probes. Three focus group discussions were conducted, each continuing until data saturation was reached. As described by Polit and Beck (2010), this stage represents the point at which further data collection no longer yields new themes or insights. Data saturation was achieved after conducting 21 interviews, as no new information emerged beyond this point. This indicated sufficient data was collected to comprehensively address the research questions. Participants were selected based on their relevance to the study's scope, nature, data quality, design, and objectives. The investigator chose participants progressively without limiting the number of volunteers. No new insights emerged after these interviews.

The interview questions were derived from studies that covered related topics. The researchers then proceeded with the other interview questions, using probes when necessary. The following questions were: 1) "In your opinion, what are the qualities of a good clinical instructor? 2) What qualities, from your point of view, can contribute to the efficiency of a clinical

instructor? The probing questions were: 1) Can you please add more details about that? 2) Give me an example please? 3) What do you mean by that? 4) Why do you think the qualities of a good clinical instructor are essential? 5) Could you please explain more about these qualities?

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis were carried out concurrently. The qualitative data analysis software NVivo was used to examine the data from the three focus group discussions. NVivo is a tool for organizing, coding, and analyzing unstructured data types such as text, audio, video, and photos (Zamawe, 2015). A careful review process was conducted following the complete transcription of audio-recorded interviews. The transcribed data was then put into NVivo to help clarify linkages between concepts. Thematic analysis was chosen as the method of data analysis since it was appropriate for attaining the study's aims.

The subsequent analysis hinged on the thematic analysis technique, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019). Thematic analysis is a technique for developing, analyzing, and interpreting patterns across qualitative data. The process includes coding data to create themes. Both inductive and deductive approaches are included in thematic analysis. This study utilized an inductive thematic approach, a data-driven exploration method where the dataset serves as the starting point for engaging with meaning. It allows themes to emerge naturally without interfering with preconceived notions, ideas, or frameworks.

The researchers chose this method to focus on the subject matter and context, juxtaposing and scrutinizing participants' conversational narratives to extract verbatim meanings. The process of data collection and analysis unfolded in tandem with each session. Through sentence-by-sentence analysis, the researchers identified overarching themes within each focus group, aligning with the approach outlined by Nabolsi et al. (2012). The researchers diligently pored over the focus group material on multiple occasions to gain an intricate grasp of the phenomenon under investigation. During this iterative process, the researchers distilled and coded significant themes from the focus group discussions and observation texts. This entailed several rounds of comprehensive reading, fostering an open-coding analysis approach. The study team convened regularly to scrutinize the gathered data and initial topics and concerns.

Trustworthiness

As recommended by qualitative scholars, criteria to ensure qualitative rigor in nursing research need to be addressed (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). The criteria consist of unique components of qualitative research. These are truth-value (credibility), applicability (transferability), consistency (dependability), and neutrality (confirmability). In the current study, credibility and confirmability were ensured through constant engagement and data verification by the participants, the researcher, and three non-member experts, independently coded to assess confirmability. The research team allocated sufficient time to collect, record, and transcribe data. Three PhD members who were not on our research team examined and approved the gathered data for transferability.

Furthermore, the researcher examined the study's research area, essential information about the participants, and direct quotations for dependability. It is vital to include reflections on the researcher's own biases, assumptions, and preconceptions throughout the research process. This provides transparency and helps establish the confirmability of the findings. Member checking is an essential part of qualitative research; hence, to ensure and verify the accuracy of the data, the research team and participants work in partnership. This is supported by [Stahl and King \(2020\)](#), who mentioned that member checks are about the degree of trust one has in the person telling the tale, which has much to do with the degree of trust attributed to the telling. In the current study, the research team discusses these two issues to authenticate the data and the extracted codes, and 10 participants validated and agreed with the initial coding of each focus group.

Ethical Considerations

The Faculty of Nursing Ethics Committee at Mutah University approved the study (No. EC8/2023). The study's objectives

were communicated transparently to all participants, who gave informed consent. Participants were told that the interviews would be tape-recorded. Each participant has a code for data analysis. They were informed that the tape-recorded data would only be accessible to the researchers and used exclusively for research purposes. Participants were assured of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study after the data collection was concluded without providing a rationale. All students were assured that not participating in this study would not affect their academics. Confidentiality about participant details and information was meticulously maintained. All participants provided their written informed consent.

Results

Participants' Characteristics

Twenty-one participants from three levels of undergraduate nursing students at the Faculty of Nursing/South of Jordan participated in this study. Among all the participants, 57.1% (12) were female and 42.9% (9) were male.

Table 1 Socio-demographic profiles of nursing students participating in the study

Focus Group (FG) code	Academic Year	Gender	Grade Point Average (GPA)	Number of Clinical Rotations
FG1-P1	Second	Male	3.6	4
FG1-P2	Second	Male	3.0	4
FG1-P3	Second	Female	2.8	4
FG1-P4	Second	Female	3.1	4
FG1-P5	Second	Female	2.3	4
FG1-P6	Second	Female	2.9	4
FG1-P7	Second	Male	3.4	4
FG2-P1	Third	Female	3.7	6
FG2-P2	Third	Female	3.5	6
FG2-P3	Third	Male	2.5	6
FG2-P4	Third	Male	2.5	6
FG2-P5	Third	Male	3.3	6
FG2-P6	Third	Female	3.0	6
FG2-P7	Third	Female	2.4	6
FG3-P1	Fourth	Female	3.6	8
FG3-P2	Fourth	Male	3.6	8
FG3-P3	Fourth	Female	3.0	8
FG3-P4	Fourth	Male	2.8	8
FG3-P5	Fourth	Male	2.6	8
FG3-P6	Fourth	Female	2.7	8
FG3-P7	Fourth	Female	2.2	8

Participants were exposed to different numbers of clinical rotations (4, 6, and 8) based on their academic year (2nd, 3rd, or 4th) and various full-time CIs, respectively. The mean student's GPA is 2.97. It is worth mentioning that the GPA is applicable in most nursing schools in Jordan in a 4-point system, with a passing threshold of 2.00 out of 4. A description of the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in the study is demonstrated in [Table 1](#).

Emergent Themes

After dividing the resulting text from each focus group interview into meaning units, the researchers summarized, abstracted, coded, and labeled the text. Almost 45 codes were created

during the coding process. Subsequently, the codes were grouped into themes and subthemes based on their similarities. The focus group interview transcripts in this study were reviewed multiple times, which aided the researcher team in identifying meaning units. These meaning units were made up of phrases and paragraphs that shared concepts and contexts.

The inductive analysis of students' narratives about the qualities of CIs showed two main themes. The first theme was "professional qualities," which comprised four subthemes: professional knowledge and experience, acting as a role model, performing as a caring one, and assembling effective communication. The second theme was building a good rapport ([Figure 1](#)).

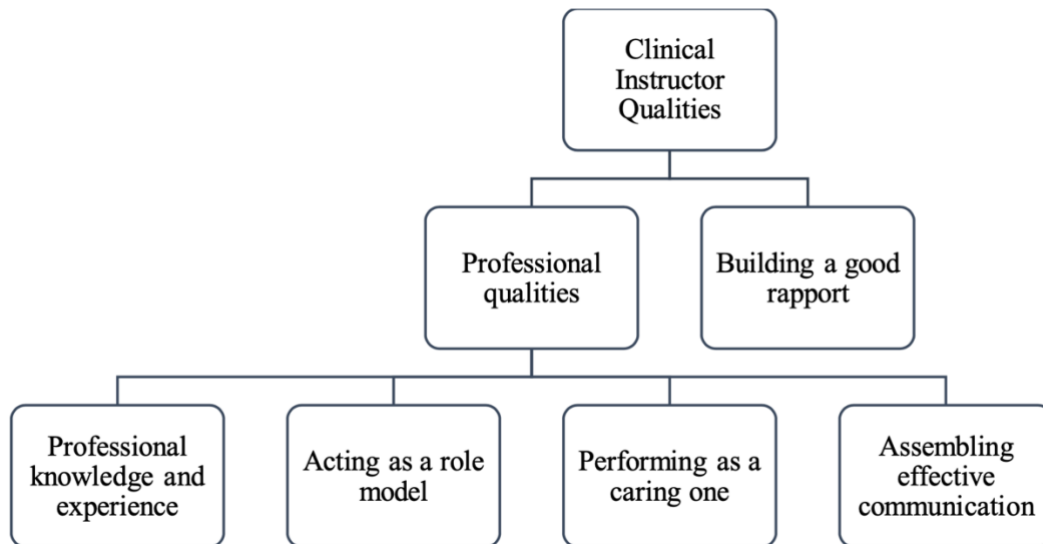


Figure 1 Emergent themes

Theme 1. Professional qualities

The first theme that emerged from the data analysis is professional qualities. Participants discussed, from their point of view, the preferred professional characteristics of CIs. A deep review of the transcripts reveals that nursing students in the three focus group discussions shared standard views about professional qualities, categorized into four subthemes.

Professional knowledge and experience

Possessing professional knowledge and expertise was identified as a key characteristic of effective CI by students. Based on participants' narratives, "a good CI" should have qualities that motivate nursing students to learn them. Nursing students believe that having enough clinical competence is one of the most essential characteristics of CI. Students value the importance of each CI's knowledge; hence, they can share it with all nursing students in various healthcare settings. In this regard, some participants commented:

'...Yes, I believe each clinical instructor must have deep knowledge of clinical area cases so they can discuss them with us and clarify our concerns [FG1-P2, FG3-P3]

All participants (n = 21) concurred that one of the essential qualities in a real clinical setting is an instructor's knowledge, which gives them confidence in group discussions and helps them to deeply comprehend the case. Nursing students, in this regard, mentioned:

'...I feel more confident when the instructor understands the case and discusses all issues about the case. They enable us to be more familiar with dealing with such cases....' [FG1-P7, FG2-P2, FG3-P6]

By actively engaging in specific activities, occasions, or situations, individuals gain experience, practical knowledge, abilities, and comprehension. Students in the current study consider CI experience to be one of the essential qualities. One participant commented on the clinical experience of a CI:

'...I believe the more the clinical instructor is experienced, the more they will be able to manage our class and be able to discuss different issues in the clinical area' [FG2-P2]

In this area, some students argued in the group that:

'Clinical instructors who joined nursing college recently have yet to gain experience in teaching. We need some help with them. They need to become more familiar with teaching and have low self-confidence' [FG1-P1, FG2-P6, FG3-P5]

The above statements imply that having knowledgeable and experienced CIs to train students is a vital requirement for enabling students to achieve clinical training objectives. However, the statement that "clinical instructors who joined nursing college recently have yet to gain experience in teaching" might raise concern about the perceived quality of training received by students from newly employed CIs.

Acting as a role model

All participants (n = 21) expressed that one of the most crucial characteristics of a good CI is acting as a role model. In the current study, nursing students considered role models helpful for their learning and highly valued their significance as one of the key qualities of CI. Nursing students in this study discussed topics that go beyond theory and practical instruction. In this context, nursing students stated:

'... as nursing students, we copy what we observe from our CI, so when he/she is dedicated to teaching, energetic, confident, and motivated, hence we work hard to become like him/her' [FG1-P5, FG2-P4, FG3-P6]

Moreover, participants in this study acknowledge the value of role modeling in supporting learning, enhancing their satisfaction in nursing school and clinical settings, and promoting their professional development. Some participants confirmed this issue and reported:

'...I was with one of the CIs working in the emergency department; his knowledge is extraordinary, he has good communication skills, and he facilitates learning. This issue inspires me to be like him in the future' [FG1-P7, FG2-P4, FG3-P3]

The data above would imply that students' perceptions of the CIs' qualities extend beyond their professional expertise to encompass their capacity to influence their goals and personal growth.

Performing as a caring one

Most nursing students ($n = 16$) who participated in the current study believed that caring behavior is one of the essential qualities that all CIs must have. To prepare nursing students for professional nursing, it is necessary to adopt caring behavior and ensure that every student grasps the essence of this idea. This is especially true when teaching nursing students in a real clinical setting. In this regard, the participants' comments:

'...all CIs must have a positive, caring atmosphere when dealing either with students or patients... I believe it is the core of nursing' [FG1-P7, FG2-P4, FG3-P2]

Another participant commented:

'... nursing is an empathic profession, and caring is the sole of it; as a student and the issue of caring should be explicitly seen in instructor behavior... this clearly what we need to learn...' [FG2-P2]

Participants in the current study emphasized the critical role of caring behavior among CIs, making it a prime factor in supporting nursing students' professional socialization.

Assembling effective communication

The fourth subtheme about professional qualities is "assembling effective communication." The majority of nursing students ($n = 15$) believed that communication skills are essential for CIs to be competent. Students' motivation and desire to learn can be increased through effective communication. Some nursing students highlighted this issue further:

'...Clinical instructors with good communication skills with students can easily manage any stressful situation, facilitate the learning process, and consequently increase our desire to learn and enjoy nursing' [FG1-P7, FG3-P2]

Participants clarified that establishing effective communication with students will help in creating a positive atmosphere and establishing trust relationships with students and, in turn, enhance students' learning, as illuminated below:

'...Effective communication with students is the most valuable characteristic of CI; they should communicate well with nursing students to gain their trust; we believe this quality must be available with each CIs; as students, we enjoy working with CI who possess such characteristics' [FG1-P6, FG3-P7]

The above quotations suggest that gaining students' trust through effective communication during clinical training is necessary for successful learning outcomes and positive experiences.

Theme 2. Building a good rapport

Further analysis of all students' interview transcripts revealed that building a good rapport is the second theme in this study. Most nursing students ($n = 19$) believe building a good rapport with healthcare providers in clinical settings is essential for CIs, facilitating their learning process. Participants explained that they need to study new cases and learn new skills, and when there are good relationships between CIs and the staff, the staff cooperates better with the students. Some participants commented:

'...Clinical instructors with a good network of relationships in the clinical area can facilitate our learning process and solve many obstacles we may have in the clinical setting; these issues are vital in nursing education. Sometimes, we need help to learn new things or discuss the case...' [FG1-P1, FG2-P6, FG3-P5]

'... to support students in the clinical areas and foster their learning and achieve the desired outcomes of clinical learning; CIs need to have a good network of relationships with managers, the key person in clinical settings, and academic staff ... This will undoubtedly resolve many conflicts that we might encounter during our training' [FG1-P4, FG2-P4, FG3-P1]

Discussion

This study explored nursing students' perceptions of CI qualities during clinical training. In this study, two main themes emerged: professional qualities and building a good rapport. Experience greatly impacts nursing education in the healthcare profession; the more experience individuals have, the more comfortable they can control and manage students (Soroush et al., 2021). The findings demonstrated that CI qualities impacted how students perceived their teaching effectiveness and identified professional knowledge and competence as crucial qualities of an effective CI. Studies in line with the present study have also reported professional knowledge and competencies as essential qualities of CI (AlMekkawi et al., 2020; Collier, 2018; Jamshidi et al., 2016).

As mentioned earlier, the data suggests that for students to meet the objectives of their clinical training, having competent and experienced CIs to teach them is essential. The claim that "clinical instructors who recently enrolled in nursing college have not yet gained experience in teaching" might raise concern about the perceived quality of training received by students from newly employed CIs.

As emphasized by nursing students, practical communication skills were regarded as a crucial behavioral trait for instructors. Previous studies also found that effective communication is a critical quality of a CI (AlMekkawi et al., 2020; Nazari & Mohammadi, 2015; Soroush et al., 2021). Research suggests that instructors with solid communication skills make the clinical learning environment appealing and enhance students' motivation (AlMekkawi et al., 2020). It was believed that effective communication was a critical behavioral characteristic of CI. In clinical settings, good communication can lessen the adverse effects of possible conflicts on students' teaching (Soroush et al., 2021). Participants stressed the importance of effective teacher-student communication, which supports students' coping skills and facilitates the learning process. This is consistent with previous studies (Nazari & Mohammadi, 2015; Soroush et al., 2021), which revealed that one quality of a skilled clinical instructor is the capacity to build efficient communication, which decreases stress, increases learning opportunities for the students, and handles potential clinical conflicts, thus enhancing clinical learning (d'Souza et al., 2015; Ghasemi et al., 2020).

Clinical experience was another attribute of CI. Various features were associated with this subtheme. The findings of this study demonstrated the value of clinical experience for CIs, supporting earlier studies that emphasized the need for CIs to have a good experience in teaching in clinical areas (Collier, 2018; Stevens & Duffy, 2017). Evidence suggests that instructors with ample experience exhibit higher self-

confidence and efficiency in accomplishing learning objectives (Hewitt-Thompson et al., 2016; Papastavrou et al., 2016). This resonates with the Persian proverb, "Experience is the mother of science." Instructors lacking sufficient experience may face doubts from students and staff about their academic standing and efficacy (Stevens & Duffy, 2017). Considering the significance of clinical education, clinical instructors should be aware of their professional tasks and attempt to improve students' acquisition of skills and knowledge that facilitate their achievement of learning outcomes.

According to nursing students' perspectives, a proficient CI can interact with students professionally, particularly by acting as a role model and practicing caring behavior. Several studies have also highlighted the importance of CI as a positive role model for their students. Previous studies support our findings and emphasize the value of CIs' experience and ability to work as role models, making clinical teaching more satisfying for students (Nazari & Mohammadi, 2015). Similarly, one study mentioned that role models have become universal among CIs (Zlotnick et al., 2016). Also, this is consistent with previous studies that stress caring relationships between CIs and nursing students, enabling students to grow as caring professionals (Allari et al., 2020). According to the study's findings, the caring behavior of CIs has been one of its vital characteristics. The findings showed a consensus among nursing students regarding this subtheme. Al-Husban et al. (2022) mentioned that nursing students believed CIs were caring rather than uncaring. Clinical instructors' caring behaviors positively impacted nursing students' caring behaviors.

According to nursing students in this study, one of the key attributes of a successful CI is having a good rapport. Successful teaching requires building strong relationships with the health team. Other studies have also reported that to achieve the goals of clinical education, qualified CI is essential to enforce cooperation and create more learning opportunities for the students (AlMekawi et al., 2020; Panda et al., 2021). Evidence shows that experienced CIs possess unique qualities, including interpersonal skills and clinical expertise, that enable them to educate students professionally (Nazari & Mohammadi, 2015). Furthermore, instructors with solid professional qualities can effectively manage potential conflicts in clinical settings and enhance student learning experiences (Stevens & Duffy, 2017). Students can maximize their learning opportunities in clinical settings when their instructor is clinically competent, as this enhances their enjoyment of the clinical learning process. Consistent with the findings of our study, nursing students demonstrated how professional qualities support and encourage them as well as control tension in clinical settings (Abdullahi et al., 2022; Beiranvand et al., 2021; Nolan & Loubier, 2018; Stevens & Duffy, 2017; Valiee et al., 2016).

Combining the above evidence, clinical instructors should proactively enhance their professional competencies to raise the overall standard of their students' clinical experiences. Inexperienced nursing instructors can use the study's insights to encourage positive student learning behaviors. Clinical nursing education will become more effective and truthful when a clinical instructor possesses specialized theoretical and clinical knowledge. This emphasizes the need to choose CIs with advanced degrees and the importance of updated

skills and knowledge to keep nursing students' theoretical and clinical knowledge current. The findings of this study will help faculty administrators plan for in-service training and continuing education, as well as focus more on the competencies the CIs should possess. Despite the available studies on the characteristics of successful CI, more research is still required in this area.

Implications of the Study

This study holds direct implications for CLs, educational institutions, and nursing students. The study offers helpful information for CLs in their efforts to develop and improve clinical practice education in nursing schools. CLs can benefit from the findings since they might enhance students' clinical learning education throughout their clinical practice. The results may also be useful for educational institutions to improve the clinical learning environment, benefiting instructors and students in pursuing nursing excellence. Nursing students' experiences can provide better guidance for enhancing nursing education programs and CLs efficacy. These results underline the reasons why nursing programs need to invest in ongoing supportive policies that bolster the role of CLs in the quality of clinical education. Globally speaking, the results may pave the way for more nursing research to improve nurse education programs and CLs' effectiveness.

Limitations and Recommendations

One major area for improvement in qualitative research is the difficulty of generalizing the findings to a broader setting, and our study is subject to this restriction. The deliberate sampling approach employed has one more drawback. While it ensured that the data was needed, this technique may cause selection bias if the selected samples do not accurately represent the entire population. Therefore, the conclusions may have limited relevance to the studied context. Thus, there is a need for further qualitative research in different settings to validate the current study findings.

Conclusion

The findings emphasized various crucial qualities of CIs, including professional knowledge and experience, acting as a role model, caring, assembling effective communication, and building a good rapport. These qualities contribute to establishing a constructive and productive clinical learning environment, which subsequently supports students in achieving their academic goals. Encouraging nursing educational institutions to incorporate these concepts into educational curricula empowers nursing instructors and enhances the quality of clinical education. This study will provide insights from students' experiences, offering valuable guidance for improving nursing education programs and selecting and developing CIs.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declared that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Authors' Contributions

RS, AA, and GAS designed, collected, analyzed the data, and drafted the manuscript. DM, HA-O, and HA re-assessed and revised the draft manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Data Availability

The data related to this research can be provided upon request.

Declaration of Use of AI in Scientific Writing

There is nothing to disclose.

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