

Do internship students do well in a clinical environment? A qualitative naturistic study

Fadiyah Jadid Alanazi^{1*} , Mada Huwaydi M Alenezi² , Atheer Abdullah N Alanazi³ ,
and Taif Salem R Alanazi⁴ 

Nursing College, Northern Border University, Saudi Arabia



Abstract

Background: The internship year marks the culmination of the nursing program across all Saudi universities, bridging theoretical learning and practical application. The significance of the internship year lies in the application of skills acquired during the preceding years of study. Understanding interns' experiences, identifying influences, and sharing their recommendations for best practices become crucial.

Objective: This study aimed to explore the experiences of internship students and address the challenges they encountered in a clinical environment.

Methods: A qualitative naturistic descriptive approach was employed, involving 20 purposively selected participants from internship students in two regions in Saudi Arabia. Data were collected in January 2023 through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and observation. A conventional content analysis approach was used for data analysis.

Results: Four major themes were generated: 1) Transferring Shock, 2) Self-Learning, 3) Supportive Environments, and 4) Factors Facilitating Learning. Transferring Shock comprised two subthemes: feeling lost and feeling left out.

Conclusion: Internship students acknowledged the utility of orientation and mentorship programs in advancing the practical skills of new nurses and enhancing patient safety. The findings also indicated that those with prior preparation and robust communication skills reported a positive experience. Consequently, integrating communication courses into the nursing education curriculum could be beneficial. Establishing a supportive learning environment for nursing interns is imperative to address challenges and ensure the delivery of safe and effective patient care.

Keywords


internship; nursing students; qualitative; nursing education; Saudi Arabia

*Corresponding author:

Assist Prof. Fadiyah Alanazi, PhD, RN
 Nursing College, Northern Border University,
 Saudi Arabia
 Email: fadiyah.alanazi@nbu.edu.sa

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Background

Nurses play a vital role in healthcare delivery, serving their communities in various capacities. They promote a healthy lifestyle for patients, advocate for patients, are responsible for health education, and care for underserved populations (Gatchel, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the demand for nurses to support healthcare needs (Danesh et al., 2021). However, countries worldwide are grappling with a critical shortage of hospital nurses (Oulton, 2006).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is undergoing significant national transformation through the Saudi Vision 2030. The government aims to reform the health sector to meet community demands for quality improvement and cost minimization. These demands include privatization, care expansion, and an emphasis on value for money. Given that nursing constitutes the largest medical group in hospitals and is responsible for significant care, the success of the Saudi healthcare system depends on nursing reform (Alsufyani et al., 2020). However, due to the cultural image of nurses, Saudi Arabia produces an insufficient number of nurses, making the current nursing workforce shortage a matter of concern (Aboshaqah, 2016). In the past, Saudi females typically did

not work in places that involved men and mostly worked in education.

The internship year is a mandatory final year of the bachelor's degree program for nursing students. It allows them to enhance their clinical knowledge, apply clinical thinking in various settings, and demonstrate competence in both clinical and theoretical skills. In Saudi Arabia, nursing interns play a crucial role in gaining hands-on experience and contributing to patient care. They undergo rotations in various hospital wards, including medical, surgical, pediatric, and maternity units. These rotations, lasting several weeks each, provide a well-rounded understanding of different specialties. Nursing interns commonly work in shifts, helping them adapt to the demanding nature of the profession. Responsibilities include assisting with patient assessments, administering medications, providing wound care, and offering emotional support to patients and their families. To ensure a structured and goal-oriented experience, nursing interns maintain a school logbook outlining objectives to pass each rotation. These objectives serve as a roadmap for their development as future nurses, ensuring they graduate with a comprehensive skill set and a strong foundation for their careers in the Saudi healthcare system.

As part of their internship experience, nursing students can choose a target rotation in their area of interest by the end of the year. This element of choice empowers nursing students to tailor their internship experience toward a specialization aligning with their career aspirations and passions. This flexibility allows them to explore specific nursing fields and gain deeper insights into their chosen areas of interest, enriching their learning and preparation for future roles in the Saudi healthcare system.

The Saudi Council for Health Specialties requires this year as a prerequisite for career engagement. Students must work under the direct supervision of a college in any accredited hospital offering training courses for a whole year. The nursing faculty should receive student evaluations after each rotation, and the certificate is awarded upon successful completion of the internship. Nursing students face numerous challenges when entering the clinical setting for the first time. The internship year is a practice-based profession, and the practical teaching strategy is clinical nursing education to prepare nurses for their clinical experience (Alkarani, 2022; Kaphagawani & Useh, 2013).

A well-designed training program during the internship year can address the nurse shortage. Studies indicate that the nurse turnover rate is critically high in their first years of clinical experience due to a lack of preparation, training, and stress from difficult clinical learning conditions (Alkarani, 2022; Kaphagawani & Useh, 2013). The quality of learning in a healthcare setting depends on various factors, such as instructors, students, medical staff working in clinics, and the environment. Clinical education may not achieve the desired level when one or more of these factors are weak (Nabolsi et al., 2012). This situation can make prospective nursing students feel incompetent and anxious. Researchers found that negative clinical interactions and experiences have a more substantial effect on students' attitudes and confidence in the clinical environment than positive ones (Algoos & Peters, 2012).

Therefore, addressing internship students' challenges is critical for retention rates. Additionally, understanding interns' experiences is essential to assist their preparation for clinical experience and develop appropriate training strategies. Our study aims to explore the experiences of internship students and address the challenges they face in a clinical environment. The research question is "What are the experiences of internship students during their first practice in a clinical environment and its related aspects?"

Methods

Study Design

A qualitative naturalistic inquiry design was employed. The naturalistic approach aims to describe and understand the nature of the experience observed by researchers within a group of people in a cultural context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researchers sought to explore the experience of internship students through close and direct observation to generate rich descriptive data. Naturalistic Inquiry is particularly suitable when there is limited information about the phenomena under study, as in this study. The study design is grounded in the five axioms Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified for descriptive

qualitative studies and contributes to the logical understanding within the naturalistic inquiry paradigm.

Study Setting

The study was conducted in Saudi hospitals in the northern and middle regions of Saudi Arabia. Four different governmental hospitals were selected for recruitment in this study based on their easy access and approval for conducting the research. The researchers had prior experience working at these sites as supervisors of interns, thus being familiar with the sites and having links to the participants.

Samples/Participants

The study population comprises internship students in Saudi Arabia. Purposive sampling was employed, and participants were required to have at least three months or more of internship experience, ensuring they had a basic understanding of the nursing role. Participants' selection continued until data saturation was reached. Both males and females were included in the inclusion criteria, and interns who had not completed their internship were selected to ensure a fresh recall of their experiences.

Data Collection

After obtaining study approval, the researchers gathered participants' contact information from the hospital where they were employed, deliberately selecting interns based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Contact information was provided via email during the sample recruitment process, and once participants were identified, meetings were scheduled at mutually agreed-upon times. Data were collected in January 2023, utilizing focused group discussions (FGDs) with nursing interns to understand the phenomenon better. Participants encouraged each other to speak up in these discussions, fostering an environment where they could share their experiences and challenges in a group setting.

The opening question aimed to build rapport and make participants comfortable speaking. Subsequent questions explored their experiences in the clinical setting. Semi-structured questions, as seen in Table 1, were developed by the researchers, and a pilot study was conducted with one participant to validate the clarity of the questions.

Table 1 Interview questions for exploring the experiences of internship students in a clinical environment

Semi-structured questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How long have you been working as an intern? ▪ In which region of Saudi Arabia is your internship located? ▪ Why did you choose nursing as a profession? ▪ What were your expectations for your internship before starting? ▪ Can you share your experiences during your internship? ▪ Recognizing the differences between being a student and an intern, what helped you adapt to the new role? ▪ How did your university prepare you for your internship? ▪ Did the difficulties you encountered during your internship affect your learning, and if so, how did you handle them? ▪ How did you maintain a positive outlook during your internship, and what contributed to that positivity? ▪ Do you envision yourself enjoying work in a clinical setting in the future? ▪ What suggestions do you have to improve the overall internship experience?

Participants were given the option to communicate in either Arabic or English. To ensure the accuracy and authenticity of their experiences, the researchers were proficient in both languages. Professional translation from Arabic to English was engaged to preserve participants' genuine experiences while making findings accessible to a broader audience. Most participants were proficient in English and preferred to communicate in that language.

All interviews were audio recorded for data tracking, with a trusted service used for transcription. Interviews concluded when participants felt they had adequately explained their experiences. After each interview, researchers saved field notes and reflection journals. Interview and FGD durations ranged from 20 to 45 minutes.

Observations of internship students were conducted by the internship supervisor in the clinical area to enhance data reliability and gain a better understanding of this unique phenomenon. The first author, serving as the internship supervisor, contributed to constructing knowledge and utilized triangulation in data collection through three methods, incorporating the perspective of internship students experiencing the phenomena. Observations were documented daily in a reflection journal. Researchers provided rich information and continued interviewing participants until data saturation was achieved, supported by direct observations. Non-verbal and emotional expressions were recorded during interviews, focused group discussions, and observations. Researchers documented any biases during interviews to ensure reflexivity. Three of the researchers were internship students during the data collection period.

Data Analysis

A conventional content analysis approach was employed to analyze the result data. The researchers adhered to the coding guidelines discussed by [Renz et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Hsieh and Shannon \(2005\)](#). In this approach, researchers immersed themselves in the data, allowing new insights to emerge. The data were read repeatedly, and ten codes were derived by highlighting fundamental thoughts. The researchers employed the cutting, sorting, and naming themes process for data coding and analysis. They read the data word-for-word, identifying codes using different colors to capture the exact words conveying primary thoughts. Subsequently, the key was sorted into themes based on their relationships, and emergent themes were used to organize and group codes into meaningful clusters.

Conventional content analysis allows direct information from study participants without imposing preconceived themes. The researchers highlighted and linked direct observation notes to related themes, reviewing any field notes throughout the analysis and documenting critical information. The Microsoft Excel program was utilized to group similar codes into categories of similar concepts and create a visual page. Categories were grouped from related content and meaning into emerging themes. The Microsoft Excel program collected the themes based on their relationship to the data. Two researchers conducted the data analysis, and all researchers reviewed the analysis. The researchers adhered to reporting guidelines for qualitative research (COREQ) to complete this study report ([Tong et al., 2007](#)).

Trustworthiness

Member-checking was employed to enhance the study's rigor. Researchers interacted with each participant to verify and examine the validity and accuracy of the data, ensuring that the results reflected their experiences. Participants confirmed that the study results aligned with their experiences, and no additional comments were received from them. Researchers maintained field notes and an audit trail to document the ideas, actions, or decisions in the study procedure, ensuring that they would not impact the study's results and affirming that the findings were reflective of the participants' experience. The first author demonstrated experience in qualitative research. Researchers adhered to the criteria outlined by [Lincoln and Guba \(1985\)](#) regarding credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to uphold trustworthiness. Triangulation was utilized in the data collected through individual interviews, FGDs, and observation to understand the phenomenon under study comprehensively.

Ethical Consideration

The Northern Border University Scientific Research Ethics Committee (reference number: HAP-09-A-043) approved the study. Prior to interviews, written consent and permission to record were obtained from participants. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were requested to use pseudonyms to represent themselves, upholding their rights and safeguarding their privacy. Researchers protected the data using a password-protected computer to store all data, including consent forms, audio recordings, verbatim transcripts, field notes, and reflective journals. The identities of participants' data were kept separately and securely. Access to audio recordings was restricted to researchers and the hired transcriptionist company.

Results

Participants Characteristics

Data reached saturation on 20 internship students. The participants comprised four males and sixteen females, with ages ranging between 22 and 23 years old. Thirteen participants were from the north, and seven were from the middle region of Saudi Arabia. All participants had more than three months of experience in clinical practice. The majority were single ([Table 2](#)).

Table 2 Demographic characteristics of the participants

Characteristics	f	%
Age		
22-23	20	100
Gender		
Male	4	20
Female	16	80
Marital status		
Married	2	10
Single	18	90
Region		
North	13	65
Middle	7	35
Length of experience		
3-6 months	17	85
7-12 months	3	15

Analytical Findings

The participants were asked to explain their reasons for choosing nursing as a profession, detail their journey to the nursing field, share their experiences as internship students, outline their expectations for clinical practice, and discuss the challenges they encountered during their experiences. Nearly all participants chose nursing as their future career because they aspired to be a nurse, contribute to society, and uphold healthcare standards. The data analysis yielded four major themes that addressed the research question: Transferring Shock, Self-Learning, Supportive Environments, and Factors Facilitating Learning. Transferring Shock had two sub-themes: feeling lost and feeling left out (Figure 1).



Figure 1 Major themes and sub-themes of experiences of internship students in a clinical environment

Theme 1: Transferring shock

“Feeling lost” is the subtheme illustrating a participant’s uncertainty about what to practice during their clinical experience. Participants did not anticipate the reality of independent nursing practice during their internship, expecting to apply all the knowledge acquired in nursing school. Hind expressed surprise, stating, *“I did not expect that. I thought I would apply everything I learned but found it different. I also realize that patients do not need only caring.”* Ahmad shared, *“I expected to learn the actual clinical procedure that I did not learn in school... my expectation was higher than I achieved, especially since I did not get well preparation from my university.”*

Even though some students had preparation from their school, they did not foresee the workload. Arwa shared her feelings, stating, *“I had preparation from my university at the beginning of the internship; however, I was shocked by all the work I had to do.”* Ahmad explained further, *“I felt lost when I had to care for patients, and I did not know how to start with them. In my course, I had a communication lesson, but it was not enough.”* Students believe that with more than three months of experience, the feeling of being lost will be resolved. Suad mentioned, *“I believe I felt lost just because I just started; maybe after six months, maybe I will change my thoughts.”*

“Feeling left out,” the second subtheme, illustrates the feeling of not obtaining the necessary knowledge. Participants mentioned, *“Some nurses do not understand the learning process is low... the communication between staff and me was*

limited... I did not learn as I expected.” Many participants expected to learn more in the clinical area, particularly in the ICU and CCU; however, they felt left out and unable to gain hands-on experience. Saud said, *“I thought it would be better than I experienced before... some departments like CCU and ICU did not allow us hands-on experience.”* Most participants felt that the workload for nurses limited their learning time, and they perceived themselves as the least priority for nurses to provide the necessary time for learning. Omar explained, *“There was no time for the information; too much thing to learn, especially in medication... some staffs do not have time to teach us, so I felt I did not get all the information I want... and that makes me lack confidence in doing some tasks.”* Some participants felt unable to provide patient care because patients did not trust them or because of gender differences. Ahmad said, *“because I am male and dealing with a female patient was very difficult, and I felt I am not welcoming to do the care.”* Hind added, *“patients did not accept us; we felt left out and unable to practice.”* Additionally, some participants felt left out when they did not have a place to rest or stay during *“No place for prayer or break time.”*

The participants felt left out and unsupported because they were still students and lacked experience. Participants said, *“I felt the preceptor does not want to teach me because I am an interning student.”* The participants felt that some nurses were unsupportive because they were unfamiliar with the procedures. Hind said, *“Some strategies were different than what I learned; when I asked the nurses why they did it this way, they said we do not know. We came here to the department; we saw them do this, and we did the same... in fact, I have been told that this student always asks. So, I felt I was annoyed, so I kept silent and tried to Google anything I did not know.”*

During periods of direct observation, the participants had difficulty communicating with the nurses and were ashamed to ask about what they needed. Participants hesitated to interrupt the nurses with their busy time. Therefore, the participants felt lost and were not using their time precisely. Throughout the time, the interns and students learned to be involved in the work environments and adjust themselves in clinical practice.

Theme 2: Self-learning

Most participants were self-motivated to teach themselves during their experience and realized that if they did not work on themselves, no one would help them. Participants tried to read online records to learn about their area and asked the department nurses if they needed help. Asma illustrated, *“I try to be more motivated and have self-learning... I must improve myself, be active, and not wait for others to teach me.”* Hood stated, *“If you did not help yourself to learn, no one would teach you... in the work environment, only if I asked about something they would answer.”* Other participants learned that if they had an issue in the department, they knew they would not stay in the same place and asked to be moved to a different department. Huda said, *“I learned that if I feel I am not welcome in the place, I will ask to change the place.”*

During periods of direct observation, the researchers noticed that participants relied on themselves to learn from their mistakes. The researchers noticed that mostly only the interns with good standing and strong leadership styles could communicate with the nurses and ask them when they needed

help. At the beginning of the internship year, the interns had limited critical thinking skills and decision-making. However, during their experience as interns, they started to build up their skills and be able to advance their practice.

Theme 3: Supportive Environments

Supportive environments, as a theme, illustrate the positive influence that comes from supportive nurses and a supportive environment. The participants explained that some nurses were supportive and tried to help the internship students as much as they could, paying back what they learned. Saud said, *"The staff helped me, and they know I am a student; they helped me with any mistakes and welcomed me into the department."* Asma was very grateful for the supportive nurses: *"The nurses were very supportive, especially if they see you very excited to work one time I made a mistake in giving medication, the nurse had supported me in this situation."* The participants explained that some nurses allowed them to have hands-on experience under their supervision and were able to practice and learn the knowledge they needed. *"I was able to have hands-on experience, and some nurses were supportive."* The participants also felt that some nurses were helpful and respectfully explained the procedure.

Most participants said their nursing school supported them with an orientation program at the beginning of the internship year. Sama said, *"The nursing school provides us with an orientation program before we start the clinical practice; however, we need preceptors for each department."* In addition, some hospitals were supportive, gave the students an orientation program, and took the students for a tour around the department on the first day. Salama stated, *"The hospital was supportive, made us feel comfortable, and gave us orientation on the first day."*

During the observation, the students who attended the orientation program were more confident and motivated to work and gain knowledge. Interns who have mentors are more comfortable engaging in the work and communicating with other healthcare professionals. Having a mentor helped the participants be more confident in their performance and be able to communicate and provide care for patients. Most nurses welcomed the students who asked to work and gave them the needed knowledge. Some nurses were asking the students to prepare the medication under their supervision. Nurses were supportive when there were fewer patients in the departments.

Theme 4: Factors Facilitate Learning

At the end of the interview, the participants were asked to provide any factors that make the experience of intern students better. One suggestion was an orientation program for all departments. Hind said, *"We really need orientation for all hospital departments, not just general orientation."* Most students are willing to have more than one advisor or preceptor to evaluate them to feel they have been treated equally. Ahmad mentioned, *"Evaluation must be from more than one preceptor to be fair with the students."* Some students show that when they communicate well with the nurses, they learn what they want; however, when they have difficulty communicating with nurses, they feel left out. Therefore, they recommend, *"Communication between interns and nurses*

must be strong to make learning more effective." In addition, high self-confidence is one of the factors that facilitate learning. One participant said, *"We must go to the patients individually with one nurse because the patient refuses if we go to them as a group. And we must go to the patients with all the power that I know what I am doing."*

Discussion

Nursing is a significant profession within the healthcare system, requiring extensive clinical knowledge. The nursing intern experience is crucial for developing nursing skills, knowledge, and attitude. Hands-on training is necessary for students to acquire the skills and abilities needed to become competent and qualified nurses. The clinical environment offers an excellent opportunity for nursing interns to apply theoretical knowledge and gain practical experience (Kaphagawani & Useh, 2013). This research aims to gain insight into the clinical experiences of nursing interns, including the challenges they face, the impact on their future as nurses, and potential areas for improvement.

Four themes were generated from the data analysis: Transferring Shock, Self-Learning, Supportive Environments, and Factors Facilitating Learning. Transferring Shock includes two subthemes: feeling lost and feeling left out.

The theme of "transferring shock" represents the internship students' experience of feeling anxiety and stress due to unexpected practice in real life. This finding supports the first stage of transition shock theory by Duchscher (2009), illustrating the transition from known knowledge as a student to new practice as a new nurse. The transition theory aligns with the results of this current study, indicating that participants felt ill-prepared for the role during the first months of transitioning from a student's role to a practice role.

"Feeling lost" is the sub-theme that illustrates students feeling uncertain about what to practice and how to start. Most participants in this study were left to fend for themselves, trying to understand their role. They complained about a lack of preparation and orientation programs, leading to anxiety and decreased confidence in their clinical practice. Furthermore, the study found that nursing students lacking preparation and orientation programs had difficulty adjusting to the clinical environment, affecting their overall clinical experience. These findings align with the results of several studies conducted (Alharbi & Alhosis, 2019; Alkarani, 2022) that investigated the clinical learning experiences of nursing students in Saudi Arabia. Alkarani (2022) conducted a qualitative study exploring the experience of internship students. The study yielded similar results to the current research, indicating that students felt lost when they lacked communication with others and had ambiguous roles. Likewise, Alharbi and Alhosis (2019) discovered that nursing students without sufficient preparation and orientation held negative perceptions of their clinical experience. Consistent with our study, students who received proper preparation and orientation better understood the clinical environment, positively impacting their overall clinical experience (Alharbi & Alhosis, 2019). The researchers emphasize the need for further progress in implementing preparation and orientation programs for new internship students.

The results from this research study align with the researcher's previous study, focusing on the experience of new faculty members in the academic environment (Alanazi, 2022). Similarly, new faculty members felt lost without preparation for their roles, reflecting the results in this study where interns felt lost during their initial clinical experiences. Additionally, nursing interns reported encountering obstacles in the clinical learning environment, such as inadequate resources, overcrowding, and poor patient management, affecting their overall well-being, contributing to student stress, and influencing poor clinical performance. These findings are consistent with a previous study by Ismaile (2017), suggesting that nursing schools and healthcare organizations should provide support and resources to help nursing interns manage their stress levels and improve their internship experience.

"Feeling left out" is the second sub-theme illustrating participants feeling unimportant and unwelcome. Participants felt they had limited communication skills to interact positively with nurses, causing them to feel left out, exhausted, and isolated. This finding supports the transition theory of sociocultural development, which explains that sociocultural development increases through time experience but is limited in the first month of experience (Duchscher, 2009). Participants in this study reported difficulty communicating with healthcare professionals, significantly impacting the learning process and accelerating the feeling of being left out and lost in the clinical environment. Similarly, a study by Safan and Ebrahim (2018) revealed that nursing interns struggled with communication and teamwork during their internships, negatively affecting patient care. The study suggested that nursing schools incorporate communication and teamwork training into their curriculum to better prepare students for the clinical environment.

The second theme, "self-learning," portrays the participants' sentiments and eagerness for self-learning. This study's findings exemplify the concept of transition theory proposed by Duchscher (2009), indicating that participants harbored no doubts about their commitment to choosing nursing. They recognized the necessity to exert effort in personal development and be prepared for challenges. In this current study, participants were driven by their passion to become proficient nurses, taking the initiative to teach themselves clinical practices and seeking guidance from experienced nurses when questions arose. The interns displayed self-motivation and were willing to engage in patient care; however, they preferred having mentors to ensure the safety of the patients.

The third theme, "supportive environment," illustrates the participants' experience of being supported by nurses and the work environment. Some participants in this study felt supported by certain nurses and the overall work environment. Although this support was provided upon request, the participants valued this kindness, contributing to their socialization. The sense of being socialized and connected to others boosted the participants' confidence in their practice and fostered a feeling of belonging. This study highlights the significance of feedback and reflection in the learning process of nursing interns. Consistent with previous research (Gad, 2019), nursing interns benefit from regular feedback and support from mentors, enabling them to reflect on their practice and enhance their skills. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that

nursing interns receive ongoing feedback and opportunities for reflection.

The participants in this current study felt supported due to having an orientation program at the beginning of their internship. This finding aligns with Aboshaiqah et al. (2012), where nursing students in Saudi Arabia perceived their clinical experience as positive and valuable. The study reported that students appreciated applying their theoretical knowledge in a real-life setting and engaging with patients and healthcare professionals. This aligns with the current study, where participants felt supported by nurses and applied their nursing school learning in real-life situations.

The last theme, "factors facilitating learning," suggests that one effective way for nursing interns to navigate their internship more effectively, based on the participants' recommendations, is to set clear goals before starting the internship. These goals could be regularly reviewed to ensure that the student is on track and that the internship meets their needs. This recommendation aligns with a study conducted by Ata and Abdelwahid (2019), which discovered a positive correlation between metacognitive thinking, goal orientation, and academic motivation among nursing students. Developing metacognitive thinking skills and promoting goal orientation could enhance academic motivation and ultimately improve academic performance among nursing students.

Another recommendation from the interns is to assign a mentor to each nursing intern who can provide guidance, support, and feedback throughout the internship. This finding aligns with a study by Cervera-Gasch et al. (2022), which found that tutor participation positively impacted student satisfaction and the clinical learning environment. This highlights the importance of providing supportive clinical learning environments and active mentor participation to enhance nursing students' learning experiences in primary care settings.

Furthermore, participants in the study reported difficulties in communicating with healthcare professionals, suggesting that universities and healthcare institutions need to create training programs offering hands-on instruction in communication techniques used in healthcare settings, specifically targeting nursing interns. Gutierrez-Puertas et al. (2020) found that educational interventions, such as role-playing, simulation, and communication skills training, effectively improved nursing students' communication skills. The study highlighted the need to incorporate these interventions into nursing education curriculums to enhance students' communication skills with patients. Overall, these findings emphasize the importance of providing communication skills training to nursing students to improve patient-centered care and enhance their clinical practice.

Implications for Nursing

The study's results have global implications for nursing science, research, and practice. The findings support the future development of orientation and preparation programs for internship students before they enter the clinical environment. Nursing administration can use the findings to formulate plans for improving nursing internships and establishing mentorship programs. The participants in this study expressed a need for a preceptor in their clinical environment to guide them and enhance their skills and

knowledge. The results indicate that internship students with preparation and good communication skills had a positive experience. Therefore, nursing education could benefit from this result by integrating communication courses into their study plan.

Strengths and Limitations

This study, conducted in different regions, enhances the transferability of the findings. However, a weakness lies in the study being conducted in English, with participants being native Arabic speakers. Although participants were given the choice to speak in their preferred language (Arabic or English), and some opted for English, the researchers acknowledge that the English translation may have impacted the study findings. Further research is needed to understand the best integrated strategies that enhance nursing communication skills and help nursing interns acclimate to their roles in clinical environments.

Conclusion

This study explored the experiences of nursing internship students in a clinical environment. The findings highlight the factors influencing their experiences, such as support, guidance, workload, and communication. It is crucial to provide nursing interns with a supportive learning environment that addresses these challenges to ensure they can deliver safe and effective patient care. This study emphasizes the need for additional research to explore the experiences of nursing interns in various clinical settings and identify strategies to support their learning and development.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors have declared no conflict of interest.

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Authors' Contributions

Study design [FJ, AA, & TS], data collection [MH, AA, TS, & FJ], data analysis [FJ, & MH], study supervision [FJ], manuscript writing [FJ, & MH], critical revisions for important intellectual content [FJ]. All authors approved the final version of the article to be published and were accountable for each step of the study.

Authors' Biographies

Fadiyah Jadid Alanazi, PhD, RN is an Assistant Professor at the Nursing College, Northern Border University, Saudi Arabia.

Mada Huwaydi M Alenezi, Atheer Abdullah N Alanazi, and Taif Salem R Alanazi are nursing interns at the Nursing College, Northern Border University, Saudi Arabia.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Use of AI in Scientific Writing

Nothing to declare.

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