

Gap between Theory and Practice in the Nursing Education: Perception among College of Nursing Students in Kuwait

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Abstract

Nursing education typically includes instruction in both theoretical and practical aspects of nursing, integrating classroom learning with clinical practice. The most common reasons included that the theory was about building a knowledge base while practice was about learning nursing skills. The success of an education program requires examining the extent to which the knowledge has been efficiently used in the work place to raise the quality of work performance and checking the extent to which one feels that his or her performance has improved; these factors are affected by the amount of learning transfer. This descriptive design was used to study to identify the gap between theory and practice of nursing students at the college of Nursing (PAAET), Kuwait. Totally 83 female students and 59 male students participated in this study. The study results found that, the responds of students in theory, practice and learning experience for all statements are not equally distributed. The p value corresponding to the demographic variable Gender is less than 0.05 and is significant at 5% level and hence there is significant difference between the mean theory scores of male and female students. The researchers concluded that, theory and practice gap was proven among nursing students.

Key words: Nursing education, Practice, Gap, Perception

Introduction

Nursing education encompasses the formal learning and training provided to individuals to prepare them for roles as professional nurses. The most common reasons included that the theory was about building a knowledge base while practice was

about learning nursing skills.¹ Theoretical aspects is rendered in the classroom, which provides a platform for nursing students to understand the nursing history, professionalism, the human body, diseases, and the nursing procedures. Clinical learning, on the other hand, aims to improve the clinical skills and attributes of nursing.

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The nursing curriculum emphasizes performance-based learning. Research into the effective application of knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired in nursing college to clinical practice is warranted, particularly regarding challenging areas for graduates to adapt to. A clinical learning environment offers nursing students the opportunity to apply theory into practice.² Nursing education equips students with knowledge, skills, and behaviors to meet evolving healthcare needs, drive quality improvement, handle complex care, and adapt to future challenges in health care.³

The theory-practice gap is defined as the disparity between what students learn through theoretical classroom lectures and what they encounter in the clinical setting.⁴ The biggest challenge facing nursing as an academic field is the theory-practice gap, which is a universal issue in nursing.⁵ It continues to be a critical issue affecting the preparation and competence of nursing student.⁶ The gap phenomenon is evident, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement.⁷ The theory-practice gap in emergency nursing education is shaped by factors such as student characteristics, instructor dynamics, environmental factors, cultural influences, and organizational processes, all of which collectively impact the quality-of-care services^{8,9}.

The foundation of effective nursing lies in the nursing education program and the training of nurses to develop strong nursing skills.¹⁰ The new graduate nurse must feel confident and well-prepared to effectively fulfill her role in a transformative healthcare environment.¹¹ Competency-based education (CBE) provides avenues to boost inter professional education, expand the utilization of simulation, and enhance clinical judgment.² The gap in nursing education centers around the necessity for objective measures to assess the effectiveness of high-fidelity simulation experiences in comparison to traditional clinical experiences for nursing students.¹² The use of more simulation or simple role play would tie together the theory to practice issues more effectively¹³.

Nurse educators are instrumental in diminishing the theory-practice gap by guiding students in the application of theoretical knowledge to practical situations, effectively bridging theory with practice¹⁴.

Aligning theoretical nursing approaches with clinical practices and cultivating a more innovative clinical environment can enhance learning for both instructors and students.¹⁵ The requirements and standards for nursing education varies across to meet the demand for skilled nurses¹⁶. The success of an education program requires examining the extent to which the knowledge has been efficiently used in the work place to raise the quality of work performance and checking the extent to which one feels that his or her performance has improved.

Materials and Methods

Research questions

1. What is the nature of current nursing education at the College of Nursing as theory, learning and practicing skills?
2. What is the perception of the students about the theory, learning and practice at the con, Kuwait?
3. What is the gap between the theory and nursing practice at the CON students?

Study design

A descriptive design was used to study to identify the gap between theory and practice of nursing students at the college of Nursing (PAAET), Kuwait.

Sampling

This study was conducted at the College of Nursing-Kuwait, which has the distinction of being the only educational facility in the country which offers an Associate Degree of Nursing (ADN) and Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees. The ADN program consists of five academic semesters. They are from different nationalities. 80% of the college population come from ADN program and 20% of students from BSN program. Therefore, researcher have excluded the BSN program from this study.

The study was conducted at the first semester of 2019-2020 academic year. Totally 83 students participated. Only the advanced group to focus and evaluate the gap between theory and practice in this study.

Tools used

Data was gathered through two main tools:

- A. The first tool was developed by researchers, and included variables related to the student's socio-demographic data (sex, age, social status, level of education, if work or no and number of years of study in the college).
- B. The second tool was adopted from Safina et al. (2015) & Mahmoud (2014). It is by English language translation and back translation done to be in Arabic language to be sure the understanding the questions by students and some modifications done by researchers. This tool included four axes:
 - a. learning experience-11 statements
 - b. Practice-15 statements,
 - c. Theory-7 statements,
 - d. Gap between theory and practice-15 statements.

This tool was based on the Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree), which awarded five degrees to the answer 'strongly agree', four degrees to 'agree', while the answer 'neutral' was granted three degrees, the answer 'disagree' two degrees, and finally 'strongly disagree' one degree.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted among 5% of the main study sample to test the clarity and validity of the study tools, and members involved in the pilot study were excluded from the study samples.

Ethical consideration

Ethical approval for the research study was successfully obtained from the authorized personnel, PAAET, Kuwait on 12/09/2019. Also, all the participants gave a signed written informed consent to participate in the study before answering the questionnaire. Moreover, they were informed that the results would be published anonymously.

Data Collection Method

Once permission was taken from the authorized person and the subject signed the consent form to participate in the study, Data was obtained from 83 female and 59 male level 3,4and 5 students of the Associate Degree of Nursing Program at the College of Nursing. They enrolled during the first semester of 2019-2020. The questionnaires were administered in the classroom setting under the investigator's supervision. The average time taken to fill all the tools were three weeks, from 1st November to 21 November 2019.

Results

The results of this study are divided into three sections.

Table 1. Distribution of gender of the study subjects (n=142)

S. No.	Demographic Variable	Class	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	59	41.5%
		Female	83	58.5%
2	Age (in years)	20-25	134	94.4%
		26-30	6	4.2%
		31-40	2	1.4%
3	Marital Status	Single	129	90.8%
		Married	11	7.7%
		Divorce/widow	2	1.4%
4	Educational Level	Finished high school	139	97.9%
		intermediate education/ nursing institute	3	2.1%
5	Job status	Yes	19	13.4%
		No	123	86.6%
6	Disease	Yes	7	4.9%
		No	135	95.1%

Table 1 shows that the majority (58.5%) of the subjects were male and 41.5 % of the subjects were female. Mostly 94.4% of the samples were aged from 20 to 25 years, regarding marital status 90.8% of them were single. The results shows that, vast majority (97.9%) of the total study samples finished high school and 86.6% of the total study samples were

employed currently. About presence of disease vast majority (95.1%) of them had no disease.

Section 1: "What is the nature of nursing education at the College of Nursing as theory, learning and practicing skills?"

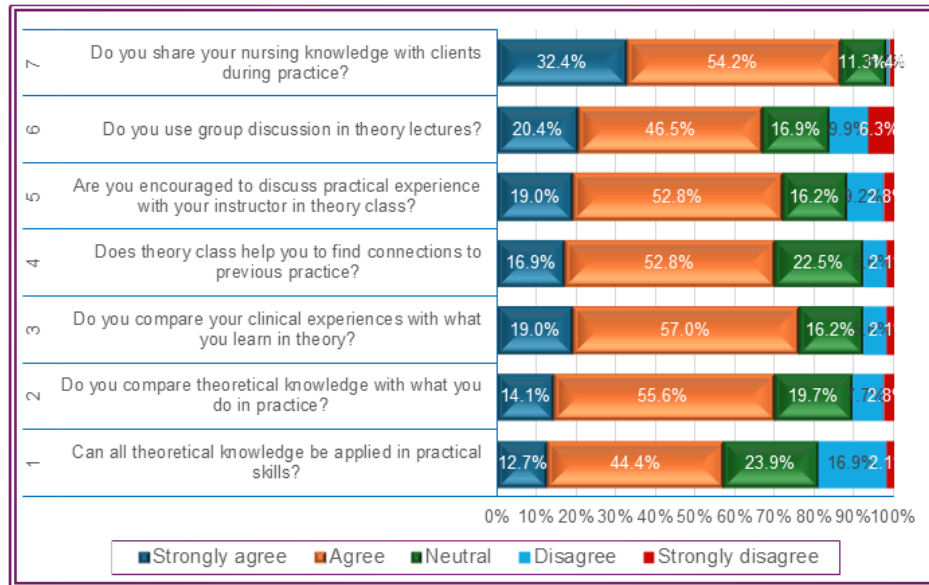


Figure 1. Testing whether the responds for the statements of "Theory" are equally distributed or not

From the above figure 1, the p values corresponding to the statements are less than 0.01 and are highly significant at 1% level and hence the

researcher can say that the responds of students for all statements are not equally distributed.

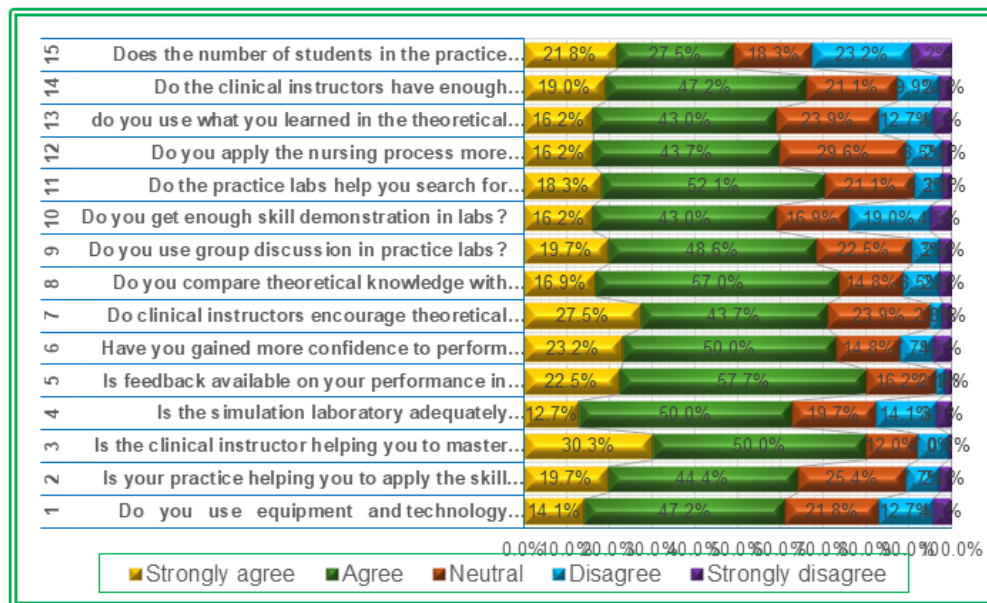


Figure 2. Testing whether the responds for the statements of "Practice" are equally distributed or not

From the above figure 2, the p values corresponding to the statements are less than 0.01 and are highly significant at 1% level and hence the

researcher can say that the responds of students for all statements are not equally distributed.

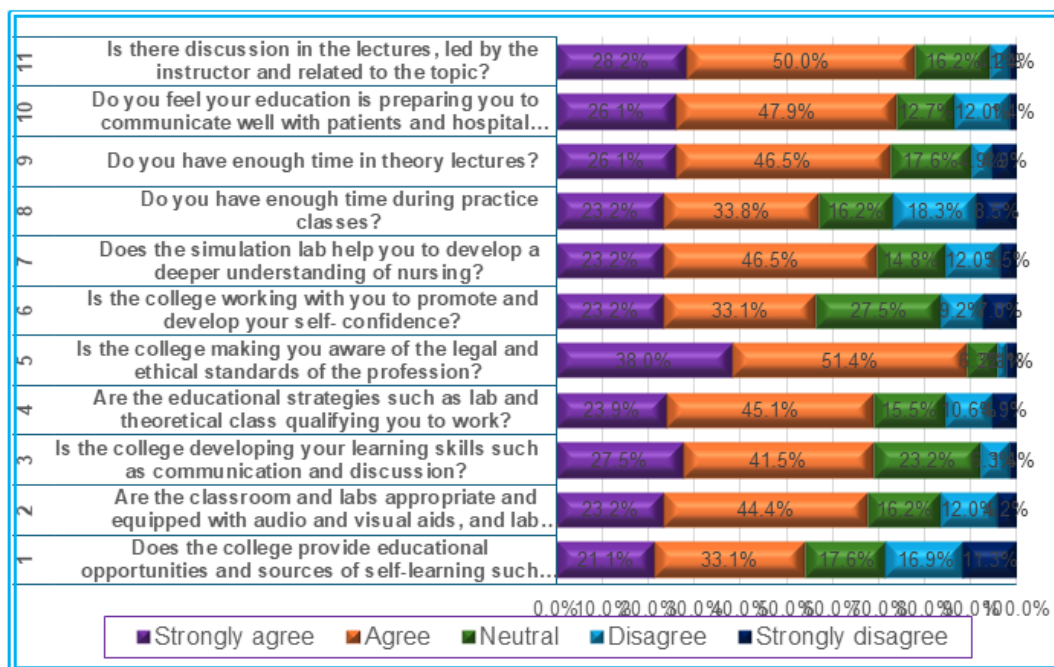


Figure 3. Testing whether the responds for the statements of “Learning experience” are equally distributed or not

From the above figure 3, the p values corresponding to the statements are less than 0.01 and are highly significant at 1% level and hence the researcher can say that the responds of students for all statements are not equally distributed.

Section 2: The second question is “What is the perception of the students about the theory , learning and practice at the CON, Kuwait?”

Table 2. Testing whether the responds for the statements of “Gap between theory and practice” are equally distributed or not.

S. No.	Statement	Number and percentage of students responded as					Mean	SD	Chi-Square	P value
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree				
1	Is there any relation between what you take in theory class and practice class?	31 21.8%	88 62.0%	15 10.6%	6 4.2%	2 1.4%	2.01	0.79	173.85	0.000**
2	Is there gap between the theoretical knowledge and clinical procedures in the wards?	28 19.7%	47 33.1%	37 26.1%	28 19.7%	2 1.4%	2.50	1.06	39.34	0.000**

Continue.....

3	Is there a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills?	18	48	37	34	5	2.72	1.07	40.32	0.000**
		12.7%	33.8%	26.1%	23.9%	3.5%				
4	Do you feel the simulation lab reflects real life in the clinic?	11	52	33	28	18	2.93	1.18	34.83	0.000**
		7.7%	36.6%	23.2%	19.7%	12.7%				
5	Do you feel the simulation lab helps you to link theoretical learning with practice?	20	74	34	9	5	2.33	0.92	109.34	0.000**
		14.1%	52.1%	23.9%	6.3%	3.5%				
6	Do discussions with the nurse educator help you find connections to previous practical experiences?	27	86	22	4	3	2.08	0.80	162.01	0.000**
		19.0%	60.6%	15.5%	2.8%	2.1%				
7	Have you learned many things in theory class with no chance to practice it in class or real situations?	35	62	28	8	9	2.25	1.09	69.20	0.000**
		24.6%	43.7%	19.7%	5.6%	6.3%				
8	Are you confused between what you learned in practice lab and at hospital?	22	41	30	34	15	2.85	1.25	14.55	0.006**
		15.5%	28.9%	21.1%	23.9%	10.6%				
9	Do you feel you cannot apply what you learn in theoretical class in clinic and practice?	23	39	27	37	16	2.89	1.28	13.07	0.011**
		16.2%	27.5%	19.0%	26.1%	11.3%				
10	Do you feel there is a difference between theory and practical class, and real clinical situations?	32	49	23	25	13	2.56	1.27	25.18	0.000**
		22.5%	34.5%	16.2%	17.6%	9.2%				
11	Is there a lack of communication between theoretical and practical teacher?	10	24	42	51	15	3.26	1.08	43.42	0.000**
		7.0%	16.9%	29.6%	35.9%	10.6%				
12	Do teachers and instructors not consider differences between students?	22	37	35	32	16	2.88	1.25	11.45	0.022**
		15.5%	26.1%	24.6%	22.5%	11.3%				

Continue.....

13	When you practice in the ward do you feel that we do not apply all that we learn in theoretical class?	25	54	36	20	7	2.51	1.09	44.13	0.000**
		17.6%	38.0%	25.4%	14.1%	4.9%				
14	Does your clinical instructor have poor communication with you when you practice in hospital?	11	29	29	48	25	3.33	1.21	24.62	0.000**
		7.7%	20.4%	20.4%	33.8%	17.6%				
15	Does the training in practice class continue what you had already learned in theoretical class?	20	69	35	12	6	2.40	0.98	89.20	0.000**
		14.1%	48.6%	24.6%	8.5%	4.2%				

From the above table 2, the p values corresponding to the statements are less than 0.01 and are highly significant at 1% level and hence the researcher can say that the responds of students for all statements are not equally distributed.

Section 3. "What is the gap between the theory and nursing practice at the CON students?"

The demographic variable gender was associated with the Theory and learning experience among the samples at the p level less than 0.05 each. The mean values also high among the female gender. Hence, the female students have got sufficient knowledge in "Theory" and Learning experience" than the male

students. In assessing no demographic variables significant with learning experience.

The results of this study similar to a descriptive study results as majority of nursing students (88.5%) had inadequate supervision from clinical preceptors, insufficiently prepared simulation laboratory (100%) and only 50.8% of them had opportunity to practice skills during simulation sessions. Majority (67.2%) showed that summative assessment conducted at the end of the course, but they not prepared for examination (57.4%). The gap between the theoretical knowledge and the actual clinical procedures in the wards perceived by respondents (54.1%)¹⁷.

Table 3. Comparison of scores of "Gap between Theory and Practice" with respect to the various classes of demographic variables of nursing students.

S. No.	Demographic Variable	Class	N	Mean	SD	F/T value	P Value
1	Gender	Male	59	41.41	7.648	2.929	0.004**
		Female	83	38.17	5.532		
2	Age (in years)	20-25	134	39.55	6.509	0.486	0.616
		26-30	6	40.17	10.342		
		31-40	2	35.00	7.071		
3	Marital Status	Single	129	39.46	6.506	0.055	0.946
		Married	11	40.00	8.944		
		Divorce/widow	2	40.50	6.364		
4	Educational Level	Finished high school	139	39.51	6.538	-0.040	0.968
		intermediate education/nursing institute	3	39.67	13.503		

Continue.....

5	Job status	Yes	19	40.37	6.978	0.599	0.550
		No	123	39.38	6.635		
6	Disease	Yes	7	43.00	8.832	1.424	0.157
		No	135	39.33	6.525		

** - Significant at 1% level * - Significant at 5% level

In the above table 3, the p value corresponding to "Gender" is less than 0.01 and is highly significant. Hence, the female students have thought the "Gap between the Theory and Practice" is lesser than the male students that have thought. While the p values corresponding to the all other demographic variables are not significant and there is no significant mean difference.

A qualitative study exhibits the similar results by five themes which were: system inadequacies; resource constraints; challenges of the clinical learning environment; clinical placement and supervision; and nurse faculty factors. Systems inadequacy and resource constraints formed the spine of the challenges contributing to the theory-practice gap in the research setting¹⁸. A study explored the solutions to bridge the theory-practice gap in nursing education in the UAE. The study has implications for nursing education and practice within the UAE and is imperative for graduating workplace ready professional nurses within the country¹⁹.

Conclusion

The researchers found the exact gap between the theory and practice of nursing students in CON, Kuwait. It is also statistically proven that, gender has the major role in theory, practice and learning skills and gap between teaching and practice. The teaching institutions must prepare to fill the gap and gender-based attention required for that. The further research is recommended to understand the perception of the male and female students need to be studied to achieve the successful elimination of gap between theory and practice.

Conflict of interest: Nil

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