

Exploring the Lived Experiences of Newly Hired Radiologic Technologists Transitioning from Hyflex Learning to Clinical Practice from a Selected Level II Private Hospital in Cauayan City, Isabela: A Basis for Enhancing Onboarding Training Programs

Mae Criska Joy C. Dela Merced, Dr. Erwin M. Faller, Dr. Joel John A. Dela Merced

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-8136-7976>¹, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8269-7304>²,

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1459-5274>³

St. Bernadette of Lourdes College^{1,2,3}

mdelamerced@sbhc.edu.ph¹ efaller@sbhc.edu.ph² jdelamerced@sbhc.edu.ph³

ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of newly hired radiologic technologists who completed their education through a hybrid flexible learning program and later moved into real clinical practice at the hospital. A qualitative phenomenological design was used in the study, with an open-ended, semi-structured interview guide as the primary data-collection tool. A total of nine participants whose profiles aligned with the inclusion criteria were asked to share their experiences of the transition from academe to the workplace. Their answers were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six phase thematic analysis, through the process, six themes has emerged, it includes (1) Navigating the transition from hybrid flexible learning to clinical practice, (2) Professional growth through clinical exposure, (3) Managing emotional and psychological challenges, (4) Overcoming clinical practice challenges, (5) Strengthening clinical readiness through experiential learning and, and (6) Establishing structured support systems for new radiologic technologists. The study's findings show that onboarding programs must be strengthened to address both the technical and emotional needs of radiologic technologists. Institutions' investment in hospital and departmental orientations, modality-specific training, simulation-based skills workshops, structured mentorship programs, competency assessment and evaluation, continuous feedback and monitoring are recommended by the participants to ensure that new radiologic technologists are competent, confident, and compassionate in their roles because proper onboarding training programs properly set them up for responsibilities that an allied health care worker will face.

Keywords: Hybrid Flexible Learning, clinical transition, newly hired radiologic technologists, clinical readiness, onboarding training program

INTRODUCTION

Radiologic technologists are allied health professionals responsible for performing diagnostic and therapeutic imaging procedures while ensuring the safe use of radiation. Their profession requires strong theoretical knowledge and extensive hands-on clinical training to develop competencies in patient positioning, imaging procedures, equipment operation, and radiation safety. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted radiologic technology education by shifting traditional face-to-face instruction to the Hybrid-Flexible (HyFlex) learning model. Although HyFlex allowed students to continue their education through online and limited face-to-face classes, it was less effective in developing the practical clinical competencies required

in radiologic technology, resulting in reduced hands-on experience and difficulties applying theoretical knowledge in clinical settings (Cheng et al., 2023; Tay et al., 2020; Alontaga et al., 2024).

While HyFlex learning provided flexibility and accessibility, studies have reported gaps in clinical exposure that affected graduates' confidence, competence, and readiness for professional practice (Abuzaid et al., 2023; Bohatyrets et al., 2020; Cerbito et al., 2020). As newly hired radiologic technologists transitioned into clinical practice, many faced challenges adapting to real-world healthcare environments due to limited practical training. This study explored their lived experiences, focusing on their transition, challenges, coping strategies, and recommendations. The findings served as the basis for developing an enhanced onboarding training program to better prepare newly hired radiologic technologists for safe, confident, and competent clinical practice.

Statement of the Problem

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of newly hired Radiologic Technologists in transitioning from HyFlex learning to clinical practice?
2. What challenges do newly hired Radiologic Technologists encounter during their transition from HyFlex learning to clinical practice?
3. What are the recommendations of newly hired Radiologic Technologists for enhancing onboarding training programs based on their experiences?
4. What is the best plan to enhance the onboarding training program of Radiologic Technologists in clinical practice?

Scope and Limitations

The participants included newly hired radiologic technologists who graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Radiologic Technology, passed the Radiologic Technology Licensure Examination, and transitioned from HyFlex learning to clinical practice. The study is limited to a small sample of HyFlex graduates, which may not be representative of all newly hired radiologic technologists. Differences in clinical exposure and reliance on self-reported experiences may also affect the consistency and generalizability of the findings.

Review of Related Literature

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted radiologic technology education by reducing clinical training and shifting learning online. Although students developed resilience and self-directed learning skills, many experienced lower clinical preparedness, increased stress, and limited interaction with peers and instructors, highlighting the need for stronger academic and clinical support (Elshami et al., 2022).

The pandemic greatly reduced clinical training opportunities, leading to limited hands-on experience, delayed learning, and lower practical competence. These findings emphasize the need for resilient educational strategies such as blended learning and simulation (Ofori-Manteaw et al., 2022).

Simulation-based training improved students' technical skills, confidence, and radiation

safety knowledge during limited clinical placements. While it cannot replace real patient experience, it effectively supplements clinical education (Zhang et al., 2023).

Distance and HyFlex learning maintained educational continuity and increased flexibility during the pandemic. However, challenges in student engagement, hands-on learning, and technology support remained (Lopez, 2023).

Structured onboarding programs improve newly hired radiologic technologists' confidence, competence, and transition into clinical practice through orientation, mentorship, and training. Hybrid onboarding proved especially effective during the COVID-19 pandemic (Tay et al., 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory explains how newly hired radiologic technologists transform their perspectives by reflecting on the gap between HyFlex learning and real clinical practice, helping them adapt and develop professionally. *Schlossberg's Transition Theory* explains how newly hired radiologic technologists adjust to clinical practice through personal resilience, institutional support, mentorship, and effective coping strategies. *Lave and Wenger's Situated Learning Theory* explains that clinical competence and professional identity are developed through hands-on practice, collaboration with experienced radiologic technologists, and mentorship within the clinical environment.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of newly hired radiologic technologists as they transitioned from HyFlex learning to clinical practice. It aimed to understand their challenges and recommendations as a basis for enhancing onboarding training programs.

Research Steps

Individual interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed thematically to identify participants' challenges, coping strategies, and support systems. The findings will guide hospitals in improving onboarding programs for newly hired radiologic technologists transitioning from HyFlex learning to clinical practice.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

Purposive sampling selected nine newly hired radiologic technologists who transitioned from HyFlex learning to clinical practice. Data were collected through 30–45-minute semi-structured interviews, audio-recorded with consent, and handled confidentially in accordance with ethical guidelines and the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Data Analysis Methods

The study used thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke, which involved a systematic six-phase process: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up the results. This allowed the researcher to identify common patterns and experiences shared by the participants. The development of codes and themes focused on the respondents' meaningful insights and

was analyzed to form the basis for recommendations aimed at enhancing the hospital's onboarding training programs.

Research Validation

A semi-structured interview guide was developed and validated to explore the lived experiences of newly hired radiologic technologists transitioning from HyFlex learning to clinical practice. The instrument underwent expert review by the research adviser, a radiologist, a hospital-based clinical instructor, and a research specialist, followed by revisions and pilot testing with one eligible participant outside the study sample to ensure its validity, reliability, and alignment with the study objectives.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical principles by obtaining the necessary approvals, securing informed consent, and ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity of all participants. The researcher maintained neutrality during interviews to minimize bias, securely stored all audio recordings and transcripts, and upheld the participants' dignity, rights, and welfare throughout the research process while ensuring that all data were collected and documented with honesty, transparency, and integrity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1. What are the lived experiences of newly hired Radiologic Technologists in transitioning from HyFlex learning to clinical practice?

The findings revealed that newly hired radiologic technologists experienced a challenging transition from HyFlex learning to clinical practice. While HyFlex learning provided a strong theoretical foundation and digital learning skills, participants described a noticeable gap between classroom learning and the realities of hospital practice. They also reported that professional growth gradually developed through continuous clinical exposure, allowing them to build confidence, competence, and professional identity.

SOP 2. What challenges do newly hired Radiologic Technologists encounter during their transition from HyFlex learning to clinical practice?

The findings revealed that newly hired radiologic technologists encountered both emotional and practical challenges during their transition into clinical practice. Participants experienced anxiety, self-doubt, and performance pressure while also struggling with technical skills, patient interactions, and adapting to the fast-paced clinical environment. These experiences emphasized the need for structured guidance and continuous support during the transition period.

SOP 3. What are the recommendations of newly hired Radiologic Technologists for enhancing onboarding training programs based on their experiences?

The findings revealed that participants recommended strengthening onboarding programs by providing more experiential learning opportunities and structured institutional support. They emphasized the importance of simulation-based training, increased clinical exposure, mentorship, continuous feedback, and supervised practice to improve confidence, competence, and readiness for clinical work.

SOP 4. What is the best plan to enhance the onboarding training program of Radiologic Technologists in clinical practice?

The study's findings served as the basis for developing the Proposed Enhanced Onboarding Training Program for New Radiologic Technologists. The proposed program addresses the identified gaps in clinical preparedness by incorporating structured orientation, simulation-based skills training, supervised clinical exposure, mentorship, peer integration, modality rotations, and continuous evaluation. These interventions aim to facilitate a smoother transition from HyFlex learning to clinical practice while improving the competence, confidence, and professional development of newly hired radiologic technologists.

SUMMARY

This qualitative study conducted among newly hired radiologic technologists from a selected Level II private hospital in Cauayan City, Isabela revealed that transitioning from HyFlex learning to clinical practice was both challenging and transformative. Participants experienced gaps between theoretical knowledge and real-world clinical practice, requiring them to develop confidence, competence, critical thinking, and professional identity through direct patient care and continuous clinical exposure. They also encountered emotional and practical challenges, including anxiety, self-doubt, limited hands-on experience, and difficulties adapting to the fast-paced hospital environment. To address these challenges, participants recommended strengthening onboarding programs through simulation-based training, increased clinical exposure, structured mentorship, continuous feedback, and supervised practice. These findings served as the basis for developing the Proposed Enhanced Onboarding Training Program, aimed at improving clinical preparedness, facilitating workplace adaptation, and supporting professional growth.

CONCLUSIONS

The qualitative phenomenological study revealed that newly hired radiologic technologists faced a challenging transition from HyFlex learning to clinical practice due to gaps in hands-on skills, confidence, and workplace readiness. Participants emphasized the importance of experiential learning, mentorship, simulation-based training, and structured onboarding. Based on these findings, an Enhanced Onboarding Training Program was developed to improve clinical preparedness and support a successful transition into practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Hospitals are encouraged to strengthen onboarding programs by incorporating simulation-based training, structured mentorship, modality-specific clinical exposure, and continuous evaluation to better prepare graduates for clinical practice. Future researchers are encouraged to include larger and more diverse samples from different hospitals and compare HyFlex and traditionally trained graduates to further validate the findings. The proposed Enhanced Onboarding Training Program may also be adopted or adapted by healthcare institutions as a guide for improving clinical preparedness, professional competence, and quality patient care.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researcher sincerely expresses her heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the completion of this study, especially to her advisers, panel members, SBLC and Graduate School, Cauayan Medical Specialists Hospital Radiology Department, and the newly hired radiologic technologists who participated in the research. She also extends her appreciation to her family, friends, colleagues, clinical instructors, and boyfriend for their unwavering love, encouragement, prayers, and support throughout this journey. Above all, she offers her deepest thanks and praise to the Lord Jesus Christ for His guidance, wisdom, strength, and countless blessings that made this achievement possible.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

The audio recordings were transcribed with the assistance of Riverside.ai and were subsequently reviewed and verified by the researcher for accuracy. No AI tools were used to collect data, and all academic work and interpretations are solely the responsibility of the authors.

REFERENCES

- Cerbito, A. F., Gonzales, K. P. J., & Lapastora, E. (2020). Learning preferences and competencies of radiologic technology interns on general radiography. *IOER International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 2(4), 186–198. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4437857>
- Elshami, W., Akudjedu, T. N., Abuzaid, M., David, R., McConnell, J., & Stewart, S. (2022). The radiography students' perspective of the impact of COVID-19 on education and training internationally: A cross-sectional survey of the UK Devolved Nations (UKDN) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). *Radiography*, 28(Supplement 1), S50–S58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.radi.2021.09.004>
- Kasita, R. E. N., Daniels, E. R., & Karera, A. (2023). Preparedness to assume professional roles: Experiences of recently qualified radiographers: A qualitative study. *Journal of Medical Radiation Sciences*, 70(3), 262–269. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jmrs.690>
- Lopez, P. D. (2025). Navigating the digital shift in radiologic technology education: Distance learning and its implications: A narrative literature review. *Journal of Medical Imaging and Radiation Sciences*, 56(4), 101895. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmir.2025.101895>
- Ofori-Manteaw, B. B., Abonu, G. E., Kyei, K. A., Acheampong, B. O., & Anim-Sampong, S. (2022). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on clinical radiography education: Perspective of students and educators from a low resource setting. *Journal of Medical Imaging and Radiation Sciences*, 53(1), 51–57. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmir.2021.11.002>