

Struggling Through Transition: The Lived Experiences of Novice Clinical Instructors in Nursing Education

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ABSTRACT

The transition from clinical nursing practice to academic teaching presents significant professional and personal challenges for novice clinical instructors. This study explored the lived experiences of novice clinical instructors transitioning to academic teaching in a selected private nursing school in Tagum City. A qualitative descriptive phenomenological design was employed involving nine novice clinical instructors with less than three years of teaching experience who were purposively selected. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method. Four major themes emerged: (1) Challenges in Transitioning from Clinical Practice to Academia, (2) Adjusting to New Responsibilities and Developing Teaching Competence, (3) Development of Professional Identity and Fulfillment, and (4) Evolving Perception of Being a Clinical Instructor. Participants initially struggled with role transition, teaching responsibilities, communication, technology use, and student supervision but gradually developed competence through mentoring, continuous learning, and reflective practice. As the study was conducted at a single private nursing school, the findings may not be generalizable to other settings. The study highlights the importance of structured orientation, mentoring, and continuous faculty development programs to support novice clinical instructors and strengthen nursing education.

Keywords: *Clinical instructors, lived experiences, nursing education, transition to teaching, professional identity, faculty development*

INTRODUCTION

The shortage of qualified nursing faculty has led many nursing schools to recruit experienced clinicians as clinical instructors. Despite their clinical expertise, novice clinical instructors often experience difficulties transitioning to academic teaching due to limited preparation in pedagogy, classroom management, student assessment, educational technology, and professional communication (Brower et al., 2022). These challenges may affect their confidence, teaching effectiveness, and professional development. Therefore, there is a need to better understand the lived experiences of novice clinical instructors during their transition into nursing education.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the lived experiences of novice clinical instructors as they transitioned from clinical nursing practice to academic teaching in a selected private nursing school in Tagum City. Specifically, it examined their transition challenges, adaptive strategies, professional growth, and the implications of these experiences for faculty orientation, mentoring, and professional development.

Scope and Delimitations

The study was limited to novice clinical instructors with less than three years of teaching experience in a selected private nursing school in Tagum City. It examined their lived

experiences during the transition to academic teaching. Findings are context-specific and may not generalize to novice clinical instructors at other institutions.

Review of Related Literatures

Previous studies indicate that novice clinical instructors commonly experience challenges in role transition, pedagogy, workload, communication, and organizational support (Brower et al., 2022; Laari et al., 2023; Magtagñob et al., 2025). Structured orientation, mentoring, and faculty development have been shown to enhance teaching competence, professional identity, and successful transition into academic teaching (Soroush et al., 2021). However, qualitative evidence describing the lived experiences of novice clinical instructors in the Philippine setting remains limited (Evangelista & Bautista, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Benner's Novice-to-Expert Theory (Williams, 2023), Organizational Support Theory (Ow, 2023), and Humanistic Learning Theory (Meriam & Abdeslam, 2024). These theories explain how experience, mentoring, continuous learning, and organizational support facilitate novice clinical instructors' transition to academic teaching.

Conceptual Framework

The study assumes that novice clinical instructors' lived experiences are shaped by individual adaptation and organizational support, leading to the development of teaching competence, professional identity, confidence, and effectiveness during the transition to academic teaching.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of novice clinical instructors as they transitioned from clinical nursing practice to academic teaching. The study focused on understanding participants' challenges, adaptive strategies, and professional growth through their personal experiences.

Research Design

A qualitative descriptive phenomenological design was used because it enabled an in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attributed to their transition into academic teaching. The study employed purposive sampling to select novice clinical instructors with direct experience of the phenomenon under investigation.

Research Steps

The researcher secured institutional approval, recruited eligible participants, obtained informed consent, and conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step phenomenological method to identify significant statements, formulate meanings, and generate emerging themes.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

Purposive sampling was utilized to select nine novice clinical instructors with less than three years of teaching experience from a selected private nursing school in Tagum City. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 30 to 60 minutes and were audio-recorded with participants' permission before transcription and analysis.

Data Analysis Methods

Interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step phenomenological method, a widely used approach in descriptive phenomenological research

(Sundler et al., 2021; Elliott & Timulak, 2021). Significant statements were identified, meanings were formulated, themes were developed, and member checking was conducted to ensure credibility.

Research Hypotheses and Validation

As a qualitative descriptive phenomenological study, no statistical hypotheses were tested. The study explored the lived experiences of novice clinical instructors transitioning from clinical practice to academic teaching. The interview guide was validated for clarity, relevance, and appropriateness, while the credibility of the findings was established through Colaizzi's seven-step phenomenological analysis and member checking.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study was limited to novice clinical instructors from one private nursing school in Tagum City; therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to other institutions. Ethical principles were observed through voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and participants' right to withdraw at any stage. The study also complied with institutional ethical requirements and the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1. How do novice clinical instructors describe their lived experiences as they transition from clinical nursing practice to academic teaching?

The study revealed four major themes that described the lived experiences of novice clinical instructors during their transition from clinical practice to academic teaching. These themes illustrate the challenges they encountered, the strategies they employed to adapt, and their professional growth as nurse educators.

Challenges in Transitioning from Clinical Practice to Academia: Participants experienced difficulties with role adjustment, increased academic responsibilities, classroom management, communication, and the use of instructional technology. The transition from providing direct patient care to facilitating student learning required significant personal and professional adjustment, resulting in initial uncertainty and anxiety.

Adjusting to New Responsibilities and Developing Teaching Competence: Participants gradually adapted to their new responsibilities through mentoring, continuous learning, observation of experienced faculty members, reflective practice, and hands-on teaching experience. These adaptive strategies strengthened their instructional competence, confidence, and ability to manage both classroom and clinical learning environments.

Development of Professional Identity and Fulfillment: Participants developed a stronger professional identity by gaining confidence in teaching, building meaningful relationships with students, and recognizing the value of mentoring future nurses. These experiences contributed to increased job satisfaction and fulfillment as nurse educators.

Evolving Perception of Being a Clinical Instructor: Participants' perceptions of teaching evolved from viewing it as a challenging transition to embracing it as a meaningful and rewarding profession. They came to appreciate their role in shaping future nurses while continuing their own professional growth and commitment to nursing education.

SUMMARY

The qualitative descriptive phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of novice clinical instructors as they transitioned from clinical nursing practice to academic teaching at a selected private nursing school in Tagum City. The findings revealed four major themes: challenges in transitioning from clinical practice to academia; adjusting to new

responsibilities and developing teaching competence; the development of professional identity and fulfillment; and evolving perceptions of being a clinical instructor. Participants experienced initial difficulties in adapting to their new teaching roles but gradually developed confidence, competence, and professional identity through continuous learning, mentoring, reflective practice, and institutional support. These findings highlight that successful transition into academic teaching is a developmental process that requires both individual commitment and organizational support to promote effective teaching and professional growth.

CONCLUSIONS

- Novice clinical instructors experience significant personal and professional challenges as they transition from clinical nursing practice to academic teaching, particularly in adapting to new instructional roles and academic responsibilities.
- Continuous learning, mentoring, reflective practice, and institutional support enable novice clinical instructors to develop teaching competence, confidence, and effective classroom and clinical teaching skills.
- The transition from clinician to educator fosters the development of professional identity and fulfillment, allowing novice clinical instructors to recognize the meaningful role they play in preparing future nursing professionals.
- Strengthening faculty orientation, mentoring programs, and continuous professional development initiatives may facilitate a smoother transition into academic teaching and enhance the quality of nursing education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen faculty orientation programs to prepare novice clinical instructors for their transition from clinical nursing practice to academic teaching through structured onboarding and role clarification.
- Establish formal mentoring and coaching programs that provide continuous guidance, peer support, and opportunities for reflective practice to enhance teaching competence and professional confidence among novice clinical instructors.
- Provide regular faculty development programs on instructional strategies, classroom and clinical teaching, student assessment, educational technology, communication skills, and curriculum implementation to strengthen teaching effectiveness.
- Foster a supportive academic environment by promoting institutional support, professional collaboration, workload management, and continuous professional development to facilitate successful transition and improve faculty retention.
- Conduct future qualitative studies involving multiple nursing schools and diverse educational settings to further explore the transition experiences of novice clinical instructors and validate the findings across different contexts.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools were utilized to assist with grammar, language refinement, organization, and formatting during the preparation of this manuscript. No AI tools were used in the conceptualization of the study, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings,

or generation of research results. All research content, interpretations, conclusions, and academic contributions remain the sole responsibility of the author.

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