

Opinions of Nursing Students on Professional Skills Laboratory

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Abstract: *Objective: This study was conducted to evaluate the opinions of nursing students on the Professional Skills Laboratory (PSL). Materials and Method: The sample of this descriptive study consisted of 108 first-year nursing students who took the Fundamental Nursing course and agreed to participate in the study. The study was conducted at the Nursing Department of a Faculty of Health Sciences in the Central Anatolia Region of Turkey. After obtaining the institutional permission, the data of the study were collected using a questionnaire form between June 3-5, 2016. The data were assessed using number, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Findings: The mean age of the students was 19.0±0.85. When their opinions on PSL were examined, of the students, 97.2% found the physical environment of PSL insufficient and 42.6% of them expressed “small and airless” as the reason of insufficiency. Of the students, 80.6% found the equipment used insufficient and 74.1% of them expressed “low number of equipment” as the reason of insufficiency. 45.4% of the students stated as a positive side that they had the opportunity to practice the skills and 47.3% stated as a negative side that the laboratories were “small, dark, airless”. Conclusion: According to our study findings, it was seen that nursing students found the physical background of PSL and equipment used insufficient.*

Keywords: Professional skills laboratory, nursing education, nursing student

Date of Submission: 29-11-2018

Date of acceptance: 12-12-2018

I. Introduction

The Fundamental Nursing course covers targets for cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning domains. Nursing related basic concepts, theories, principles, and methods are taught in this course (1). The course is carried out by starting with the theoretical explanation of the subject and presentation using the demonstration method in the classroom environment. After that, the skills are practiced on models in the Professional Skills Laboratory (PSL) and finally a clinical practice is performed (2,3). Psychomotor skills are taught in the PSL, which has an important place in the Fundamental Nursing course (4). These laboratories have a setting that is very similar to the hospital environment and have a controlled structure. In these laboratories, students do not have worry for harming the patient and practices which are limited in terms of experiencing in a clinical environment can be performed. Teaching is provided with teaching methods such as demonstration, role-playing using equipment such as models (2,5). PSL fills the gap between the clinical and theoretical practice. It helps students to prepare for a real hospital environment, to provide self-learning and to put the learned knowledge, skills, and attitudes into practice (6,7). It is reported that working with models that are very similar to the human body in the PSL accelerates the learning, creates a safe environment for students who have not been practiced in the clinic due to the lack of real patients, improves students' communication skills and reduces anxiety before the clinical practice (4,5). In our country, there are few studies on this subject. In these studies, it was determined that skill practices given in the laboratory and classroom were useful for students (8), that students learned better since they practiced by themselves (95.2%), and that they were satisfied with the skills training (93.7%) (6). In the quasi-experimental study conducted by Sarmasoğlu et al. (2016), the students in the control group have implemented laboratory practices on models and the students in the experimental group implemented on a standard patient/hybrid simulation. As a result of the study, it was determined that the students have not felt comfortable in the practice implemented on a standard patient (3).

It is very important for students to pay attention to the patient safety in the interventions implemented on a real patient in the hospital environment in terms of patient rights. This has increased the value of PSL and revealed the necessity for the appropriate structure and equipment in these laboratories (2,9,10). However, the PSL in our faculty is not at the desired level in terms of structure and equipment. Therefore, in our study, it was aimed to assess the opinions of nursing students on the PSL in order to ensure the improvement and reconstruction of our present PSL.

II. Materials and Method

This study which was carried out as a descriptive study to evaluate the opinions of nursing students on the PSL was conducted at the Nursing Department of a Faculty of Health Sciences in the Central Anatolia Region of Turkey between June 3-5, 2016. All students (N: 115) who studied in the first year of the nursing department and took the Fundamental Nursing course were included in the study and the study was completed with 108 students who attended the course on the days when the study was conducted and who were voluntary to participate in the study. The Fundamental Nursing course during which the basic nursing skills are taught is given in the spring semester of the first year. In our curriculum, this course was given 6 hours per week theoretically and 12 hours per week practically for 14 weeks. The skills of the two subjects to be taught on Mondays for the first 8 weeks were explained theoretically in the classroom and then the skills of each subject were practiced using the demonstration method for 4 hours in the PSL on Tuesdays. 2 lecturers were assigned in the theoretical part of the course and 8 lecturers were assigned in the practical part of the course. Each lecturer carried out the laboratory practice with an average of 16 students. After all the skills were taught in the classroom and the PSL, clinical practices were performed between 8:00-16:00 on Mondays and Tuesdays for a total of 12 days in the last 6 weeks of the semester. After obtaining a written permission from the faculty dean's office to conduct the study, the data of the study were collected on the course days in the last week of the semester using a questionnaire which was developed by the researchers in line with the literature (4,6,7,8). Students were informed about the research and their verbal consents were obtained. The questionnaire that consisted of 9 open-ended questions about the physical environment, equipment used, the time allowed, lecturer, learning environment, resources used, positive sides, negative sides, and suggestions, was given to the students. The data of the study were transferred to the computer environment and the statistical analysis was performed using number, percentage, mean and standard deviation in the SPSS package software.

III. Findings

73.1% of the students who participated in our study were female and 26.9% were male. The mean age was 19.0±0.85.

When the opinions of the students on the PSL were examined, it was found that 97.2% found the physical environment of PSL insufficient and 42.6% of them expressed “small and airless” as the reason of insufficiency. It was found that 80.6% of the students found the equipment used insufficient and 74.1% of them expressed “low number of equipment” as the reason of insufficiency. In addition, 51.9% of the students stated that the time allowed was sufficient. 86.1% stated that the number of lecturers was sufficient. 90.7% stated that the used resources such as books, guideline were sufficient (**Table 1**).

When the opinions of the students on the PSL were examined, 45.4% stated as a positive that they had the opportunity to practice the skills. 47.3% stated as a negative side that the laboratory was “small, dark, airless”, 47.2% suggested “a big and air-conditioned PSL”.

Table 1. Assessments of students on Professional Skills Laboratory

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	n	%
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		
Sufficient	3	2.8
Insufficient	105	97.2
The Reason of Physical Environment Insufficiency		
Small and airless	46	42.6
Airless	17	15.7
Airless and dark	16	14.8
Small	16	14.8
Dark	9	8.3
EQUIPMENT		
Sufficient	21	19.4
Insufficient	87	80.6
The Reason of Equipment Insufficiency		
Low number	80	74.1
Being noncurrent	7	6.5
TIME ALLOWED		
Sufficient	56	51.9
Insufficient	52	48.1
The Reason of Time Insufficiency		
Crowded study groups	31	28.7
Short time	21	19.4
LECTURER		
Sufficient	93	86.1
Insufficient	15	13.9
The Reason of Lecturer Insufficiency		
Low number	6	5.6
Criticizing	5	4.6
Being unwilling to explain	4	3.7
RESOURCE (Book, Guideline, etc.)		
Sufficient	98	90.7
Insufficient	10	9.3
The Reason of Insufficiency		
Insufficient content	10	9.3

Table 2: Opinions of students on Professional Skills Laboratory

OPINIONS	n	%
Positive Side		
I had the opportunity to practice the skills	49	45.4
It prepares us for the clinic	28	25.9
My excitement reduced	3	2.8
Enough materials	1	0.9
No positive side	26	24.1
Negative Side		
Small, dark, airless	51	47.3
Insufficient equipment	16	14.8
Tiring	3	2.8
Bad audio system	5	4.5
No negative side	33	30.6
Suggestion		
Big and air-conditioned	51	47.2
Big, air-conditioned and sufficient equipment	35	32.4
Sufficient equipment	12	11.1
No suggestion	10	9.3
TOTAL	108	100

IV. Discussion

Nursing student nurses have very low opportunity to use all their skills in clinical practice (11). Due to the fact that the nurses who are newly graduated are specified as weak in terms of clinical practice skills in the literature (12,13), it is stated that the patient safety is at risk (14). There is a need for an equipped PSL to reduce this risk as much as possible. PSL, which does not have a good structure and equipment, prevents the desired level of learning in students and causes lack of self-confidence, inadequate performance, and the problem of transferring knowledge/skills to the clinical environment (15,16).

In our study, our students found the physical environment of PSL insufficient and stated that the reason of insufficiency was being small and airless. This finding is also parallel to the opinions of the students about the negative sides of PSL. Our university has started to admit students to the nursing department firstly in the academic year of 2012-2013, before providing the sufficient physical structure and equipment and our PSL was in a dark, windowless classroom with an insufficient air-conditioning found in the basement floor of a building of another faculty. We believe that these opinions were originated from these facts. In addition, the increase in the number of students every year causes this problem to grow even more. In a study conducted in our country, the students found the PSL insufficient for similar reasons (6).

The students thought that the number of equipment used was insufficient. This can be explained with the fact that the equipment planned for fewer students in the first year of the school could not meet the needs of the increasing number of students each year. This finding suggests us that the number of equipment used in our PSL should be increased and updated in direction with the technological developments. In the study of Mete et al., it has been similarly suggested that laboratories should be continuously updated and that simulators should be included more (17).

Our students found the number of lecturers and resources such as books sufficient. This makes us think that we had a learning environment where student anxiety was low and student motivation was high. Despite the low number of lecturers who worked with crowded student groups, it is very pleasing that the students make positive assessments about the lecturers. In a similar study, the facts that the lecturer showed behaviors appropriate to the practice steps (98.4%), that the lecturer showed motivational behaviors (82.5%), and that the lecturer could establish appropriate communication (84.1%) were positively assessed by the students (6). This supports our finding.

Our students thought that the positive side of the PSL was that they had the opportunity to practice the skills they have learned theoretically. In the study of Ewertsson et al., it was reported that students were satisfied with the repeated learning in the PSL since it prepared them for their clinical practices and that PSL was a bridge between the school and the clinical environment (18). Likewise, in the studies that investigated the simulation method in the PSL, students stated that the PSL provided an opportunity to practice their skills and prepared them for clinical practices (19,20,21).

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

PSL has an important role in preparing students to the clinical practice in the best possible way. Thus, it is important to examine how the PSL supports and enhances the learning of the students. In this study conducted in this direction, it was seen that the physical structure of the PSL in our school and the equipment used were insufficient. It will be beneficial to make the necessary improvements in the laboratory in the

direction of available resources in our school. According to our study result, it is recommended to conduct studies that continuously assess the sufficiency of PSL, which is a bridge between the classroom and hospital in the nursing education, in terms of structure and equipment and that evaluates the educational methods and strategies.

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Serpil Sü"Opinions of Nursing Students on Professional Skills Laboratory". IOSR Journal of Nursing and Health Science (IOSR-JNHS), vol. 7, no.06, 2018, pp. 66-69.