Perceiving Psychological Empowerment and Its Relationship to Clinical Competence and Professional Values among Nursing Intern Students

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Abstract

Background: Nursing is a profession requiring prolonged training and a formal qualification. Therefore, nurse interns are expected to display competent and skillful behaviors in alignment with their profession. **Aim**: This study aimed to investigate the relationships between psychological empowerment, clinical competence and professional value among nursing intern students. **Research design:** A cross-sectional descriptive design was utilized. **Subjects:** a sample of 289 nursing intern students affiliated with the government and private Hospitals during the academic year 2019/2020. Data were collected from June to Augustus. **Tools:** Self- administered questionnaire which consisted of four tools: Personal and job characteristics of the participants, psychological empowerment scale, clinical competence scale and professional value scale. **Results:** Two-third of nursing intern students perceived psychological empowerment as a good level in both training hospitals and the total mean score of the psychological empowerment variable was 42.69±3.045 The highest mean scores for the "Meaning" dimension and "Impact" dimension was the lowest mean score of all psychological empowerment dimensions. More than half of the nursing intern students had a high level of total clinical competency in both training hospitals. The highest mean score of clinical competence was related to work role while the lowest mean score was related to ensuring quality subscale. The highest percent of the studied nursing intern students had a good perception level toward total professional values in the Governmental hospital and Private hospitals and the total mean score was (89.98±8.567), (94.31±6.939) respectively. **Conclusions**: There was a statistically significant positive correlation between the total psychological empowerment score, clinical competence, and professional values scores among nursing intern students. **Recommendations:** It is recommended to nursing colleges should provide a good relationship between faculty and training hospital staff and preparation of nursing intern students through a well-organized program, especially the part of the clinical experience. And continuous supervision and appraisal interviews should be conducted with nursing intern students through daily, weekly discussions and at the end of clinical experience by her immediate supervisor to discuss her performance to learn more, develop her knowledge and skills.

Introduction

Nursing interns are nursing students who hold a baccalaureate degree and begin the transition from senior student to professional nurse through an internship program. Transitioning from a student to a skilled nurse is a stressful experience due to the increased responsibility and accountability for newly graduated nurses. Where the nurse applies, enhances, and increases existing knowledge and acquires competency (knowledge, skills, and attitudes)

applicable to nursing practice in a clinical situation **(Aldeeb et al., 2016).**

Training is an essential stage, while nursing students are fresh and as transparent materials. The internship is a real opportunity for students to apply their insights to this current reality. Not only will the experience help them develop their skills needed for work but working on real projects for a real organization will also give them the personal capabilities that they have to work in a viable way with others, confidence, and trust in their capabilities **(Laux, and Intosh,2011).** The internship is defined as a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory acquired in the classroom with practical application and skill development in a professional environment **(Hora et al., 2017).**

Clinical practice environments are a substantial part of nurses' education and developing clinical competence as it forms the nursing students' professional role, behavior, attitudes, and values and nursing students apply theory into practice in clinical practice settings **(Flott and Linden, 2016).** Nursing students need highly specialized competencies to accurately identify patient cases, predict and transact with problems that may occur during nursing care **(Khatiban and Sangestani, 2014).**

Competence is a fundamental component of nursing care and plays an important role in the quality of services provided by nurses. Competence is a set of knowledge, skills, attitude, values, and abilities that increase efficiency and effectiveness in professional work environments **(Karami et al., 2017).** Clinical competency includes general competencies such as; management and communication skills, professional skills, group performance, and ability to provide

primary and specialized health care services, and specific competencies such as; assessment of the quality of care, implementation of specific processes, performance monitoring, and ability to monitor health and disease **(Ghanbari et al.,2017).**

In general, clinical competence is the priority and aim of the nursing profession, because the quality of care depends on the clinical competence of nurses **(Manoochehri et al., 2015).** A nursing competency includes the ability to fulfill a nursing role or task, integrate knowledge and skill into practice, and to develop expertise and develop competence in a workplace environment that can be enabled through empowering factors **(Müller, 2013).**

More recently, the concept of empowerment has had a major impact on the management and nursing profession. Nursing faces challenges in developing psychological empowerment through discipline. These challenges are the result of a history of professional subservience and being an underdeveloped resource in the healthcare system **(Thuss, 2014).**

Psychological empowerment means how a person views themselves in the workplace and the degree to which a person can be able to shape their role at work **(Syech et al., 2015).** Psychological empowerment expresses the feeling of power and self-esteem as well as the ability to have control over the work environment **(Sak et aL., 2017).**

As indicated by Spreitzer psychological empowerment has four dimensions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact **(Spreitzer, 1995).** Meaning includes compatibility between the needs of an individual's role at work and one's beliefs, values, and behaviors. Competence refers to the self-

efficacy of an individual's work or belief in an individual's ability to skillfully perform work activities. Self-determination refers to a sense of choice in initiating and organizing one's actions, and it reflects a person's sense of independence or the decision regarding the initiation and continuation of the behavior and work processes, and the impact is the degree to which one can influence the strategic, managerial or operational results at work (**Meng et al.,2016**).

According to Kanter's theory, empowered nursing students in the clinical learning environment might have confidence in their internship task-related abilities; have a feeling of control over their internship work, which in turn, enhances their learning outcomes and competence (**Livsey, 2009**).

Nowadays the nurses must have knowledge and awareness concerning professional values as standards to provide safe and high-quality ethical care. Professional values are the primary standards that any profession must-have. Lack of knowledge regarding the importance of professional values makes it harder for the nurses to take decisions in case of any ethical issue (**Sharif et al., 2018**).

Professional values are values acquire during socialization into nursing from codes of ethics, nursing experiences, teachers, and peers, The process of learning the professional values is started from the student's entering the university and to the workplace (**Altun, 2018**).

Professional values are standards of behavior for performance that provide a framework for appraising beliefs and attitudes that influence behavior (**Akram, 2017**). Values are crucial factors of what motivates and rewards nurses (**Blais and Hayes, 2019**). Moreover, Professional values often lead to the development of personal values (**Fernández et al., 2019**). These values act as the guide in performing the ethical behaviors in providing safe care and act as the predictors of care quality and job satisfaction, motivation, organizational attachment, and work commitment (**Erkus and Dinc, 2018**).

Nursing interns' perspectives on professional values influence their approach to applying professional values in their future profession (**Bang et al., 2019**). Nursing educators need additional awareness of nursing students' perspectives on the importance of professional values as a basis to use more effective methods for applying professional values. Therefore, nursing educators can educate graduates who are ready for decision-making and can effectively deal with daily ethical challenges. Nursing educators' and students' awareness of professional nursing values is important for preparing nurses to provide care of patients ethically and professionally (**Clark, 2016**). Nursing students should acquire a strong commitment to professional values while also gaining deep content knowledge to be capable of offering excellent care (**López-Pereira et al., 2017**).

Significance of the Study

Clinical competence has been considered a difficult problem in the nursing profession and the assessment of clinical competency has always been a key component of clinical education for health professionals, therefore nursing students must develop clinical knowledge, skills, and attitudes for professional practice, and nursing educators must assess students' basic skills in preparation for clinical practice (**Park et al.,2016**).

Consequently, nursing interns who are future caregivers must be evaluated in a way that makes the care they provide effective and reliable **(Abbasi et al., 2017).**

In light of the tremendous increase in accelerated nursing programs targeted for enrollment, it is important to assess the competencies that are essential for the professional role of nursing students and indicating factors affecting the clinical competence of student nurses to prepare them for future professional duties **(Bifftu et al .,2019).** The development of nursing students' professional values starts as one enters the nursing training institution and continues even after completion of training and becomes consolidated through the lived experiences of the nurse as a professional **(Jiménez-López et a., 2016).** Additionally, a review of the literature did not yield any studies on the relationship between psychological empowerment and clinical competence, and professional value among nursing intern students on the other. Accordingly, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between relationships between psychological empowerment, clinical competence, and professional value among nursing intern students.

Aim of the Study

The study aimed to investigate the relationships between psychological empowerment, clinical competence and professional value among Nursing Interns.

Research questions

1- What are the psychological empowerment levels as perceived by intern students?
2- What are the intern students ' perceptions of their levels of clinical competence?

3- What are the professional values levels among intern students?
4- Is there a relation between psychological empowerment, clinical competence, and professional values among intern students?

Subjects and Methods

The present study was carried out through

- **Technical design.**
- **Operational design.**
- **Administration design.**
- **Statistical design.**

Technical design

The technical design includes; the settings, subjects, and tools for data collection used in the study.

Research Setting:

The study was conducted at the medical and surgical departments at Benha University Hospital (Government Hospital) where intern students were trained. These departments were as follow: Medical departments consisted of (intensive care unit, coronary care unit, kidney, dialysis units; adult and pediatric and premature unit) surgical departments consisted of (operating rooms; general operating, emergency unit; department and operating room and labor and cesarean section). And also was conducted at Private Hospitals such as (German Saudi Hospital, The medical complex Sekk Haded Masr Hospital, Elaraby Hospital, Eden Hospital, Mahad Naser Hospital and Elnozha Hospital).

A cross-sectional correlation research design was utilized with a sample of 289 government and Private Hospitals during the academic year 2019/2020. Data were collected from

June to Augustus affiliated to Government Hospital and Private Hospitals during the academic year 2019/2020.

The sample of this study consisted of convenience nursing interns at the academic year 2019/ 2020 from Benha University, who had the following inclusion criteria, available at the time of data collection, accepted to participate in the study and having months of the internship year. The total number was (422) nursing intern students, the final number was 289.

Research Design

A cross-sectional correlation research design was used in conducting this study

Subjects

A convenience sample of nursing intern students who were enrolled in internship year within the academic year 2019-2020.The total number was (422) intern students but (28) intern students were excluded from the sample size caused by their modification at the pilot study. Thus the final sample was (289): 189 from Benha governmental Hospital and 100 intern students from private Hospitals.

Inclusion Criteria

Included available nursing intern students enrolled in internship year within the academic year 2019-2020, accept to participate in this study and consisted of male and female, and nursing interns who spent internship period at least six months.

Exclusion Criteria

Intern students (28) selected randomly for the pilot study to test the

relevance and applicability of the study tool.

Tools of data collection:

The tools used to collect the data for this study were a self-administered questionnaire which divided into four sections which are personal and job characteristics for the participants, psychological empowerment scale, and nursing intern clinical competence scale, and professional value scale.

Section (1): Personal and Job Characteristics for the Participants: This part was developed by the researcher and includes data related to the personal and job characteristics of the studied sample such as age, gender, marital status, residence, department, graduation level, previous graduation level, training courses, have you ever worked while studying and no year worked.

Section (2): Psychological Empowerment Scale: The psychological empowerment scale (PES) was developed by **Spreitzer** [13] it used to measure nursing interns ' psychological empowerment. The scale had 12 items grouped into four dimensions: meaning (3 items), competence (3items), self-determination (3 items), and impact (3 items).

Scoring System

The scale was based on a 5-point Likert scale Scores were allocated as follows (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=not sure, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). Higher scores indicated higher levels of psychological empowerment. These scores were converted into a percent score

-Good levels of psychological empowerment ranged from >75% = > 45 score.

-Average levels of psychological empowerment ranged from 60 -75% = 45-36 score.

-Poor Levels of psychological empowerment ranged from < 60 = <36score.

Section (3): Clinical competence scale

The self-reported clinical competence of the respondents was assessed using the Nurse Competence Scale (NCS) was developed by **Meretoja et al** [29]. The NCS is composed of 73 items distributed across seven categories: 'helping role' (seven items), 'teaching-coaching' (16 items), 'diagnostic functions' (seven items), 'managing situations' (eight items), 'therapeutic interventions' (10 items), 'ensuring quality' (six items) and 'work role' (19 items).

Scoring System

To measure the competence level, a five-point Likert scale (1: never, 2: rarely, 3: sometimes, 4: most of the time, and 5: always) was used for scoring each item. According to the total score of the questionnaire, the nurses interns' competency was measured as low: <219, moderate: 219-273, and high competence: >273, respectively.

Section (4): professional value scale

Nursing Professional Values Scale-Revised (NPVS-R) was developed by **Weis and Schank** [30] to assess nursing interns' level of professional value. The scale had 26 items and consists of five dimensions as following: Caring (9 items), Professionalism (4 items), Trust (5 items), Justice (3 items), Activism (5 items).

Scoring System

The subjects' response was rated on a five-point Likert scale. Scores were allocated as follows: not important (1) mark, somewhat important (2) mark, not sure (3) mark, important (4) mark, very important (5) mark. The lowest score is 26 and the highest score is 130. High scores indicate high professional values. These scores were converted into a percent score.

-The scores of more than 75 % were considered good professional nursing value. = > 97 score.

-While 60% -75% were considered average professional nursing value. = -78-79 score.

- Less than 60% were considered poor professional nursing value= < 78 score (**Hoseini, Parvan, Zamanzadeh, 2012).**

Operational design:

The operational design includes the preparatory phase, content validity, reliability, pilot study and fieldwork.

• Preparatory phase:

It was included reviewing of related literature and theoretical knowledge of various aspects of the study using books, articles, and the internet's periodicals and magazines to develop tools for data collection.

• Validity and reliability:

Content Validity

A bilingual group of five experts was selected to test the content and face validity of the tools. Necessary modifications and removal of some questions were done to reach the final valid version of the tools. The tools were considered valid from the experts' perspective.

Reliability

The tools were tested for reliability by measuring their internal consistency using Cranach's alpha coefficient method. This turned to be ($\alpha = 0.89$) for nursing interns Psychological empowerment tool I; ($\alpha=.87$) for nursing interns tool clinical competency tool II and ($\alpha= 0.85$) for nursing interns professional values tool III. This indicates a high degree of reliability for the study tools.

Ethical Considerations

Written approval to carry out the study was obtained from the faculty dean and nursing director at Benha University Hospital and private Hospitals. Permission was attained from all Participants of the study after explanation of the study purpose, with making assurance on the anonymity of them and that their information will be secured and only used for the research purpose. Also, they had the right to withdraw from the study. This was followed by their agreement on participation in the study.

Pilot Study:

A pilot study was conducted to assess the tools' clarity and applicability. It has also served in estimating the time needed for filling the questionnaires. It was done on 10% of the total subjects, (28) nursing interns (18 from Benha University Hospital and 10 from private

Hospitals. The time needed for filling each questionnaire related to nursing interns was 20-25 minutes for a nursing intern's psychological empowerment, clinical competency, and professional values scale. Also, the time needed for filling nursing. Some questions unrelated to subjects were excluded, some questions were added or refined, also necessary adjustment and modification were done and the final form was developed.

Fieldwork:

Written official approval to conduct this research was obtained from the faculty dean of Nursing that was taken and delivered to the director of Government Hospital and private Hospitals, to obtain their agreement to conduct the study after explaining its purpose. Informed consent was obtained from selected nursing interns and the aim of the study was explained to them. The data collection took about two months from the beginning of **June (2020)** to the end of **Augustus (2020)** covering three months. The data was gathered from nursing interns at the end of the internship year (June 2020) to ensure sufficient adequate socialization of nursing interns to work setting, providing more time for rotation through different clinical units. Moreover, at this time, the nursing interns would be more capable of eliciting problems that faced them during the internship year by using an appropriate structure questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed during nursing interns' work hours (morning and afternoon shifts) at the available hospital and faculty classroom, after two or three hours of her beginning shift and took one nursing interns from each clinical unit to avoid patient care interruption.

- **Administrative Design:**

Written official approval to conduct this research was obtained from the faculty dean of Nursing that was taken and delivered to the director of Governmental Hospital and Private Hospitals, to obtain their agreement to conduct the study after explaining its purpose

- **Statistical Analysis**

A compatible personal computer was used to store and analyzed data. The Statistical Package for Social Studies (SPSS), version 22 was used. Descriptive statistics were applied such as Frequency, percentage distribution; mean and standard deviation. A comparison was performed using the chi-square test. Correlation between variables was evaluated using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r). Significance was adopted at p<0.05 for the interpretation of the results of tests of significance.

Results

Table 1 shows that two-thirds of the studied subjects (65.4) training at Government Hospital and the majority of them (77.5%) their age were from 20<22, and (72.7%) working in medical departments. While the highest percentages of studied subjects (52.6) were female and not married (65.7%). As regard graduation level (40.5 % & 32.2%) had a very good and excellent level. According to residence the highest percentage (62.0%) of nursing interns from rural. As regard, the number of the year worked (43.0 %; 42.5%) of students had one to three years of experience. Also that there is a highly statistically significant difference between the two Hospitals regarding material status, residence, previous graduation level and year worked.

Table 2: Showed the mean score of studied nursing intern students regarding their psychological empowerment in the study settings. There were no statistically significant differences between studied nursing interns in different hospitals regarding meaning, competence, and impact and only statistically significant differences regarding self-determination. And the highest mean score of psychological empowerment items was the meaning dimension. Otherwise, Impact was the lowest mean score of all psychological empowerment dimensions in the study setting.

Figure 1: It showed that, was a good level of total psychological empowerment (64.0%) at Private Hospitals, and had an average level (15.9%) at Governmental hospital.

Table 3: As indicated from this table there were no statistically significant differences between the study settings except teaching-coaching' managing situations and ensuring quality. And work role dimension had the highest mean score in two study settings. Otherwise, ensuring quality dimension was the lowest mean score of all clinical competency dimensions in the study setting.

Figure 2: It showed that, was a high level of total clinical competency (52.0%) at Private Hospitals and had an average level (20.6%) at Governmental hospital.

Figure3: It showed that, was a good level of total professional values (62.0%) at Private Hospitals and had a poor level (11.0%) at professional values.

Table 4: As indicated from this table there was a highly statistically significant difference between

perspectives of nursing intern students training in Governmental and Private Hospitals regarding nursing professional values. Moreover, both nursing interns' students rated the values directly related to trust, caring, and justice had the highest mean scores and the most important at two study settings.

Table 5: Displayed that there was a highly significant positive correlation between clinical competency and psychological empowerment and between clinical competency and professional values (r= 0.255, r= 0.321). While there was a positive correlation between psychological empowerment and professional values with a statistically significant difference (r= 0.115).

Table (1): Frequency distribution of studied nursing intern students regarding personal and work characteristics (n=289)

Characteristics	Government Hospital (n=189)		Private Hospitals (n=100)		Total (n=289)		X^2	p-value
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
Age								
From 20 < 22	161	85.2	92	92.0	253	77.5	2.78	.095
From 22 ≥ 24	28	14.8	8	8.0	36	12.5		
Departments								
Medical	57	30.2	22	22.0	79	72.7	2.19	.139
Surgical	132	69.8	78	78.0	210	27.3		
Gender								
Male	88	46.6	49	49.0	137	47.4	0.15	.693
Female	101	53.4	51	51.0	152	52.6		
Marital Status								
Married	47	24.9	52	52.0	99	34.3	21.37	.000**
Not married	142	75.1	48	48.0	190	65.7		
Graduation level								
Excellent	40	21.2	53	53.0	93	32.2	51.85	.000**
Very good	106	56.1	11	11.0	117	40.5		
Good	28	14.8	10	10.0	38	13.1		
Satisfactory	15	7.9	26	26.0	41	14.2		
Residence								
Urban	76	40.2	34	34.0	110	38.0	1.07	.301
Rural	113	59.8	66	66.0	179	62.0		
Have you ever worked while studying								
Yes	79	41.8	35	35.0	114	39.4	1.26	.261
No	110	58.2	65	65.0	175	60.6		
No year worked								
One year	94	49.7	29	29.0	123	42.5	18.33	.000
2-3 year	64	33.9	60	60.0	124	43.0		
More than 3 year	31	16.4	11	11.0	42	14.5		

Table (2): Mean score of studied nursing intern students regarding their psychological empowerment at the study settings (n=289)

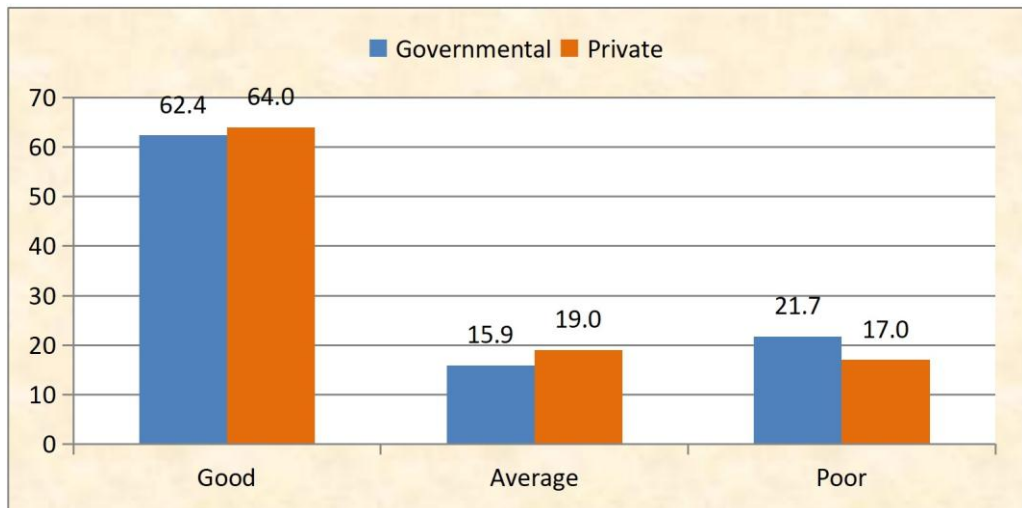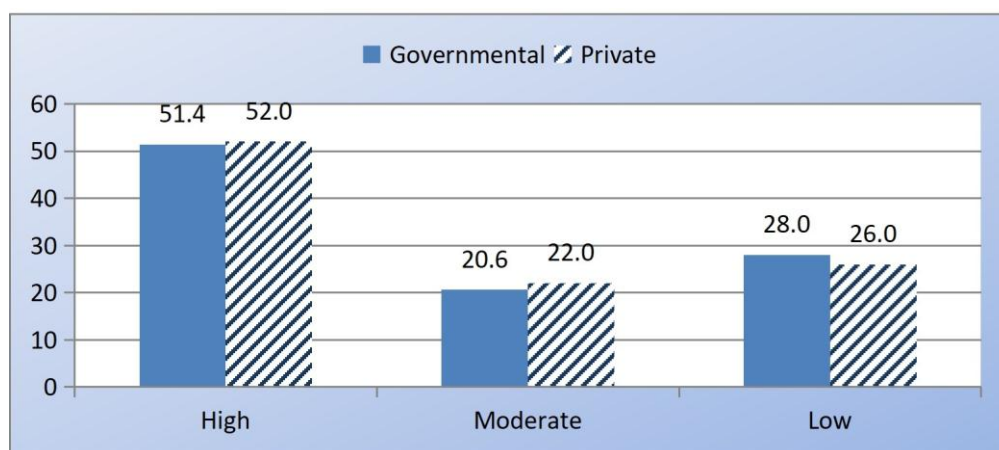| Psychological empowerment dimensions	Max	Total (289)		Percent score	Governmental Hospital (189)		Private Hospitals (100)		t	p-value
		Mean	**± SD**		**Mean**	**±SD**	**Mean**	**±SD**		
Meaning	14	12.34	1.52	88.2%	12.26	1.63	12.50	1.27	1.38	.16
			2		6	5	0	5	1	9
Competence	15	11.85	1.39	79.0%	11.79	1.55	11.88	1.29	.515	.60
			0		9	2	8	9		7
Self-determination	14	10.36	1.45	74.0%	10.17	1.59	10.71	1.08	3.37	.00
			8		7	3	1	5	2	1
Impact	13	8.14	1.72	62.6%	8.16	1.65	8.09	1.85	.347	.72
			4			3		9		9
Total psychological empowerment score	50	42.69	3.04	85.4%	42.48	3.35	43.09	2.31	1.80	.07
			5			3		9	8	2

Figure 1: Percentage level of total psychological empowerment among nursing intern students at the studied settings (n=289)

Table (3): Mean score of studied nursing intern students regarding their clinical competency at the study settings (n=289)

Clinical competency dimensions	Max	Total (289)		Percent score	Governmental hospital (189)		Private hospitals (100)		t	p-value
		Mean	± SD		Mean	±SD	Mean	±SD		
Helping role	34	25.61	6.036	75.3%	24.65	5.13	26.66	6.367	2.725	.007
Teaching-coaching	69	53.61	6.008	77.7%	50.89	6.449	55.78	3.199	8.614	.000
Diagnostic functions	33	25.99	3.863	78.7%	26.06	3.541	25.84	4.424	.437	.663
Managing situations	37	27.15	5.112	73.4%	28.07	4.859	25.41	5.150	4.334	.000
Therapeutic interventions	41	33.62	3.357	82.0%	33.60	3.558	33.64	2.956	0.092	.926
Ensuring quality	26	16.80	3.617	64.6%	15.86	4.095	17.49	2.13	4.279	.000
work role	84	71.18	9.937	84.7%	71.19	9.515	71.13	10.739	0.112	.911
Total clinical competency score	277	249.88	13.278	90.2%	249.37	13.794	250.83	12.255	0.889	.375

* < 0.05 statistical significant   ****** < 0.001 high statistical significant

Figure 2: Percentage level of total clinical competency among nursing intern students at the studied settings (n=289).
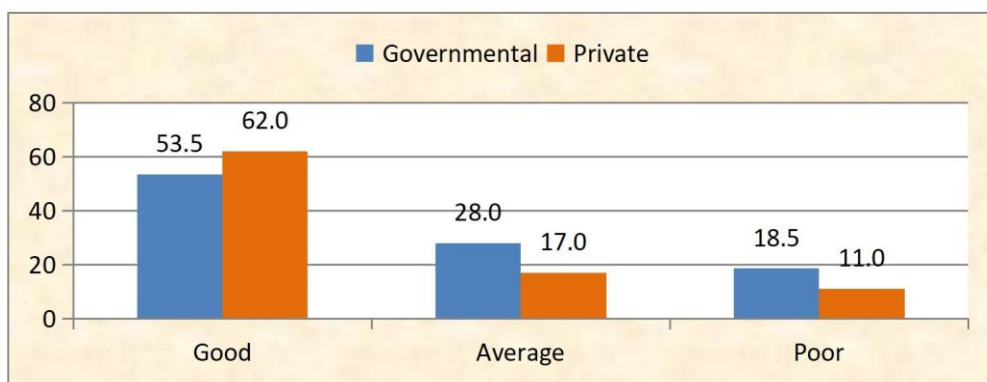
Figure 3: Percentage level of total professional values among nursing intern students at the studied settings (n=289)

Table (4): Mean score of studied nursing intern students regarding their professional values at the study settings (n=289)

Professional values dimensions	Max	Total (289)		Percent score	Governmental Hospital (189)		Private Hospitals (100)		t	p-value
		Mean	± SD		Mean	±SD	Mean	±SD		
Caring	40	33.21	3.028	83.0%	32.82	3.267	34.02	2.363	3.339	.001
Professionalism	20	13.84	4.096	69.2%	13.65	4.264	14.21	3.749	1.150	.251
Trust	24	20.26	2.317	84.4%	20.09	2.220	20.59	2.468	1.763	.079
Justice	14	11.02	877	78.7%	10.72	667	11.57	3.176	2.277	.024
Activism	19	12.07	2.420	63.5%	11.62	2.414	13.02	2.207	4.472	.000
Total professional values score	110	91.48	8.289	83.2%	89.98	8.567	94.31	6.939	4.350	110

* < 0.05 statistical significant   ****** < 0.001 high statistical significant

Table (5): Correlation coefficient between studied variable among studied subject

Variables	Psychological empowerment		Clinical competency		Professional values	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Total psychological empowerment score	1		0.255	0.000**	0.115	0.05*
Total clinical competency score	0.255	0.000**	1		0.321	0.000**
Total professional values score	0.115	0.05*	0.321	0.000**	1	

* < 0.05 statistical significant   ****** < 0.001 high statistical significant

Discussion

Clinical competence is a key element of nurse students' transition to professionalism, as their learning environments must allow them with suitable settings and meaningful situations that strengthen their clinical competencies **(Flott, and Linden, 2016).** Students need competence in handling

health promotion and guidelines, advocacy, decision-making, communication skills, and cooperation with a healthy work team, other people, and families. They have to progress their work practices using evidence-based knowledge and decision-making efficacy to maintain safe care **(European Federation of Nurses Association Competency Framework, 2015).** Nurse training is one of the most important stages of the nursing degree program as it helps institute the nursing profession. Nursing students should take classroom theory into real-life practice. At some point in nursing education, textbooks, lectures, laboratories, and clinical all concentrate on the internship experience. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the relationship between psychological empowerment, clinical competence, and professional value among nursing intern students.

The current study revealed that two-thirds of the studied subjects (65.4) training at Government Hospital and the majority of them (77.5%) their age were from 20<22, and (72.7%) working in Medical departments. While the highest percentages of studied subjects (52.6) were female and not married (65.7%). As regard graduation level (40.5 % & 32.2%) had a very good and excellent level. According to residence the highest percentage (62.0%) of nursing interns from rural. As regard, the number of the year worked (43.0 %; 42.5%) of students had one to three years of experience. Also that there is a highly statistically significant difference between the two Hospitals regarding material status, residence, previous graduation level and year worked.

The present study findings, as regarding the intern nursing students' perception of their levels of psychological empowerment, the present study indicated that two-third of intern nurses' perceived psychological empowerment as a good level in both training hospitals. From the researchers' point of view; this due to the fact that trained nurses feels more independent and confident. The private hospitals as a clinical placement with high independence in performing nursing skills, and staff cooperation to facilitate learning opportunities improve students' psychological empowerment level at that place.

This result similar **to Mohamed et al., (2017)** who studied the relationship between psychological empowerment, emotional intelligence, and professional behavior among nursing intern students revealed the majority of the nurse interns had a high psychological empowerment level. Also, **(Kuokkanen et al., 2016)** reported that newly graduated nurses assessed their empowerment fairly high. Conversely, **(Azizi et al., 2020)** concluded that the psychological empowerment of nursing and midwifery students was at a moderate level.

Concerning psychological empowerment dimensions, the present study findings displayed that the four dimensions of psychological empowerment were ranked as Meaning, Competence, Self-determination, and Impact from the highest to the lowest mean score.

From the researchers' point of view; Meaning is related to the amount of importance and caring people feel about their work. The results indicated that the nursing interns value their work and find meaning in what they do. Also, Meaning is highly perceived by the nursing intern students due to the shared standard, beliefs, and values in the training year for students of the faculty of nursing which made performing a task or mission more meaningful to them. So, nursing intern

students having high perceptions of meaning in their work, and the outcomes from providing patient care, energizes interns' students to do their best.

DiNapoli et al., (2016) reported that the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment yielded the most significant subscales score. Besides**, (Duff, 2016)**reported that the high level of psychological empowerment suggests that newly graduated nurses find their work meaningful, with competence rated the lowest score of the four psychological empowerment dimensions.

The present study showed that the least level perception was of the dimensions of Impact and Self-determination respectively. This is mainly due to the difference in the degree of autonomy and due to the limited degree or no of decision-making autonomy that is experienced by students which affect their perception about themselves when their work is concerned and also their traits, behaviors, and skills. Also, the lowest mean scores are related to impact. This may be related to the fact that Nursing Interns are less knowledgeable and experienced, which makes their influence in their hospital setting weak and ineffective for them.

While the nurses' interns have a high degree of self-determination autonomy at Private hospitals than at Governmental hospital and there are statistically significant differences regarding the Self-determination dimension. From the researchers' point of view; the Private hospital has good quality preparation for interns' nurses, especially when on any nursing activities; they were regularly receiving good feedback from senior nurses associated with their strengths and weaknesses as well as their clinical tutors who were well

organized and provide good counseling opportunities to interns' nurses.

In the same line **Royan et al., (2017)** in a systematic review in Iran reported that the order of four dimensions was the autonomy was the lowest dimension of psychological empowerment of Iranian nurses**. (Brown and Crookes, 2016)** explained that nursing students see themselves and are seen by professionals as lacking preparation and autonomy. In addition **Hossny et al .,(2015)**found that the lowest mean score was related to impact dimension as reported by newly graduated nurses in different health care sectors at Assiut and this might be related to newly graduated nurses at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy, less experienced, and less effect in their workplace. **Alonso and Topa, (2018)** mentioned that psychological empowerment involves the way an individual thinks and perceives control over a work process within a given context. **Thomson et al., (2017)** highlights the importance of students supported during the internship to refine their clinical skills and to assist them in the transition to the registered practitioners.

Clinical competency assessment has always been a major component of health professionals' clinical education **(López-Pereira and Arango-Bayer, 2017).** The present study findings, as regarding the intern nursing students' perception of their levels of clinical competence, more than half of the nurses' intern had a high level of total clinical competency in both hospitals.

From the researchers' point of view; the intern nursing students seemed to have great trust in their level of competence at the time of training at hospitals. This may be attributed to the

quality of clinical teaching effectiveness training that the students received and the high-fidelity clinical simulation equipment at the faculty and quality of the undergraduate program, better educational facilities, and organizing of educational processes. Further, this result may be due to the quality of clinical training and instructors' close observation of students' performance in the clinical area. And also, nursing intern students have perceived their level of competence to high competency that can be related to their self‑ efficacy to use their skills.

Similar to the results of this study **Ubas-Sumagasyay and Oducado, (2020)** indicated that new graduate nurses had a high level of self-reported competency. Also, this result goes in the same line with **Faraji et al., (2019)** who reported that nearly 64 % of the nurses had a good clinical competency level. Also, **Adib Hajbaghery and Eshraghi Arani, (2018)** concluded that about two-thirds of nurses had good and excellent clinical competence. Also, these results agree with the study by **Albagawi et al., (2019)** indicated that the nursing students had a high overall level of clinical competence. And **Notarnicola et al., (2018)** reported that nursing students achieved a good level of competencies.

While the results of the present study contrary to the study by **Bifftu et al.,(2016)** examined the clinical competence of nursing students in northwest Ethiopia and reported that more than half of the undergraduate nursing students perceive themselves as incompetent. Moreover, In contrast with this study **Soroush et al., (2016)** researchers in Iran and other countries also examined nurses 'competence through self-assessment methods and the results of their studies were moderate.

Another important finding of the current study demonstrated that the highest mean score of clinical competence present was related to work role and therapeutic interventions subscales respectively while the lowest mean score present was related to ensuring quality and managing situations subscales respectively and the total mean score of the studied subject regarding clinical competence was higher in Private Hospitals than Governmental Hospital. There were no statistically significant differences between the study settings regarding clinical competence subscales except with teaching-coaching' managing situations and ensuring quality dimensions.

From the researchers' point of view; these findings could be attributed to the fact that college interns are mentored throughout their training period with highly qualified trainers who prepare the trainees to efficiently provide comprehensive nursing care to their patients. Preceptors act as professional role models and are therefore responsible for displaying a positive attitude toward the nursing profession and the patients while providing acceptable levels of conduct. They also facilitate the smooth transition of nurse interns into the field of clinical nursing practice by informing and helping them to understand social, psychological, religious, and cultural aspects related to nursing.

Also, from the researchers' point of view, the high level of clinical competency of internship students in private hospitals is a result of these hospitals activating training orientation programs at the beginning of the internship period for students to prepare the new nurses for their specific units to facilitate their transition from university to the practical environment. **Faraz,(2016)** explained that there is a wide range of

clinical competence and levels of confidence in the daily practice of recent graduating nurses due to the varied personal supervision and types of orientation education.

This result is in agreement with a study by **Alnajjar et al ., (2019)** found that most interns perceived themselves to be most competent in the subscale of work role and most interns used the competencies related to a working role more frequently than any other subscales of competence. In addition **Jiménez et al., (2016)** reported that regarding the seven factors of the NCS; the highest mean score present was related to 'work role, managing situations, and therapeutic interventions'. In the same line of the findings of our study with **Namadi-Vosoughi et al.,(2014)** who reported that the early graduated nurses were the least scored domain was the competence in management and leadership. Also**,(Meretoja, et al .,2004)** reported that the lowest score was related to the use of quality assurance. In addition,(**Kalantary et al ., 2016)** reported that the component of "quality assurance" was at the lowest level among nurses.

Values in nursing and healthcare today are important because it influences an array of care and practice outcomes, including patient safety, person-centered quality nursing care, career development, job satisfaction, organization ethical climate, self-esteem and ethical confidence of nursing students **(Elliottm,2017).**

Another most important result in the current study detected that more than half of intern nursing students' perception of their levels of professional values had a good perception level toward total professional values in the Governmental hospital and nearly two-third of intern

nurses' perceived professional values as a good level in Private hospitals and the present study showed that the highest mean scores of professional values in both training hospitals. From the researchers' point of view; the high mean score of the professional values of the intern nursing students indicated high awareness and perception of the importance of professional values from the students' perspective. And this is because students while in training are guided by the ethics of the profession and believed they are professionals and members of the profession.

In the same line, the present findings are consistent with the results **of Arries,(2020)** who found that nursing students had overall high scores on professional values and show that they regard professional values as very important. Also**, Ozyazicioglu et al., (2018)** determined that the professional values scale scores of the student nurses were at a good level. In addition, **Alkaya et al., (2018)** conducted a study with American and Turkish nursing students and found that the total mean professional values scores of the American and Turkish nursing students were high. Also**, Poorchangizi et al., (2019)** showed that the mean score of the students' professional values was at a high level of importance. And, **Abdullah and Chong, (2019)** reported that Indonesian nursing students acquired a high level of professional values.

The present study showed that the highest mean scores of professional values among intern nursing students in the two types of training hospitals were related to the trust, caring and justice dimensions respectively.

From the researchers' point of view, the high scores of the trust dimension elements in the current study

indicated that our participants were aware of and greatly appreciated the social status of their profession. The caring items are often considered as the nursing students' most fundamental commitments and deal with concern for the patient. The Justice domain was rated as the third important dimension from the perspective of nursing interns at both hospitals. The justice domain reflected the nursing students' duty to provide equitable care to all patients. In this respect, studies in other countries have reported similar results **(Weis and Schank, 2009; Poorchangizi et al., 2019).**

The present findings are congruent with the results of **Arries,(2020)** who reported that nursing students ranked professional values related to Trust, Caring, and Justice as 'most important'. Besides **Parchebafieh et al ., (2020)** reported that improving the performance of students regarding patient care, which led to an increase in the trust of the patient, the trainer, and the nursing staff in the student's performance, which increased the student's passion for nursing care and the continuous improvement and development of his performance.

In the same line **Jasemi et al .,(2020)** revealed that among the dimensions of adherence to professional values, nursing students placed greater importance on the trust dimension, also, revealed that the caring dimension was the second-highest scored dimension of adherence to professional values. Providing professional patient care is among the nurses' codes of ethics so that nurses are expected to provide respectful and effective care to their clients without any prejudice. In addition **(Sharif et al ., 2018)** found that the value of caring scored highest on the scale which comprised that all the students provided

care as the most important professional value.

The present study agreed with **Poorchangizi et al., (2019)** showed that the highest mean scores of professional values in related to the caring and justice domains. Also, **Abdullah and Chong, (2019)** reported that Caring was perceived as the most important professional values among Indonesian nursing students. In addition, **Bijani et al., (2017)** reported that the domain of justice was the subjects' top priority by the nursing students.

The present study showed that the lowest mean scores of professional values among intern nursing students in the two types of training hospitals were related to activism and professionalism dimensions, respectively. From the researchers 'point of view, the elements of the activism domain are not directly related to the nurses' clinical tasks, and thus, they obtained the lowest scores in the current study. In the same line, the present findings are consistent with the results of **Abdullah and Chong, (2019)** who reported that Activism was perceived as the least important professional values among Indonesian nursing students. In addition, **Bijani et al., (2017)** reported that the domain of activism was attached to the least importance by the nursing students. Also, the current result agreed with **Poorchangizi et al., (2019)** who considered activism and professionalism as the least important domains among the nurses and nursing students.

Regarding the relation between psychological empowerment, clinical competence, and professional values among nursing intern students, a positive and statistically significant correlation was found between psychological empowerment, clinical competence, and professional values among nursing interns.

The present study displayed a highly statistically significant positive correlation between intern nursing students' clinical competencies level and psychological empowerment (r= 0.255). From the researchers' point of view: This may indicate the essence of the psychological empowerment of nursing students to perform their nursing skills competently and safely, which ensures high quality of patients' care. The results of the current study were harmonious with the findings of the study investigated the senior nursing student' level of empowerment and its relation with clinical competencies by **Liao and Liu, (2016)** who reported that a strong and significant positive correlation between the empowerment level and students' clinical competencies level. Also, **Saragih and Nababan, (2018)** showed that the improvement of nursing students' clinical competency contributes to their self-confidence in carrying out tasks assigned to them. In addition, **Kuokkanen et al., (2016)** found a statistically significant positive association between newly graduated nurses' empowerment and professional competence. Also, **Numminen et al., (2017)** reported that the positive effect of newly graduated nurses' empowerment on competence development.

The results of the present study revealed the highly statistically significant positive correlation between intern nursing students' clinical competencies level and professional values (r= 0.321). This result was congruent with **Skela-Savic et al., (2017)** found that a positive statistically significant correlation for competencies expected in practice with professional values. Also, the results of the present were harmonious with **Aniruddh et al., (2020)** who studied the relationship between the professional identity and clinical Competency among nursing

students studying at the selected nursing institutes at Rajkot and indicated that a significant relation between clinical competency and professional identity among nursing students. In addition, **Aboshaiqah and Qasim, (2018)** reported a high positive correlation between clinical competence scores and performance in general, professional behavior, and core nursing skills. Also, **Tehranineshat et al .,(2020)** indicated that the more nurses are aware of professional values, the higher the quality of clinical care provided by them, which in turn leads to greater nurses' job satisfaction and their satisfaction with patient care.

The present study displayed a statistically significant positive correlation between psychological empowerment and professional values (r= 0.115). The results of the current study supported by **Peterson et al., (2014)** who reported that the students who show an adequate level of empowerment had good feelings of being valued and experienced a diversity of faculty. Finally, there was a significant positive correlation between psychological empowerment, clinical competence, and professional values among nursing interns. **Karami et al ., (2017)**noted that an increase of sufficient motivation in nurses, high quality and quantity of educational courses, and professional nursing value and interest, are the factors that may cause increased levels of clinical competency among nurses.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the current study, it can be concluded that:

The two-third of nursing intern students perceived psychological empowerment as a good level in both training hospitals. Regarding the four

dimensions of psychological empowerment were ranked as Meaning, Competence, Self-determination, and Impact from the highest to the lowest mean score.

Moreover, more than half of the nurses' intern had a high level of total clinical competency in both training hospitals. The highest mean score of clinical competence was related to work role while the lowest mean score was related to ensuring quality and the total mean score of the studied subject regarding clinical competence was higher in Private Hospitals than Governmental Hospital.

Otherwise, the highest percent of the studied nursing intern students had a good perception level toward total professional values in both training hospitals, and the highest mean scores of professional values among intern nursing students were related to the trust, caring, and justice dimensions respectively and the lowest mean scores were related to activism and professionalism dimensions, respectively.

There was a highly statistically significant positive correlation between the total psychological empowerment score, clinical competence, and professional values scores among nursing intern students.

Recommendations

The study recommended the following:

• Nursing colleges should provide a good relationship between faculty and training hospital staff and the well-organized program, especially the part of the clinical experience.

• Promote the psychological empowerment of nursing intern students by maintaining an appropriate clinical environment characterized by decentralization and organizational justice.

• Supporting nursing intern students by increasing participation in training courses and workshops to increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

• Strategies should be developed to improve the weaknesses of nursing interns in the professional values adapted to cultural, social, and religious conditions prevailing in the societies, faculties, schools, and hospitals.

• In the hospital, nurse managers should pay more attention to nurse interns' Psychological empowerment to improve professional competence with concern professional value.

• More attention to values training, especially professionalism and activism, during undergraduate education for preparing the nurses to work in today's complex healthcare.

• Strengthen the collaboration and interaction between the universities and hospitals, because clinical situations play an important role in the process of professionalization. All of these strategies can reduce the gap between the theoretical and practical knowledge of the nurses.

• Enhancing and developing the professional self-concept for students of the first stage of entering the College of Nursing, and appreciating and motivating nursing intern students towards the nursing profession and correcting their concepts as much as possible.

• Further studies about professional behavior challenge facing nursing interns.

• Conduct more comprehensive studies for exploring the gap between theory and practice in different cultures and contexts.

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