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Perceptions of Role Transition: Understanding Intern Nursing Students' Insights During Their Internship

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Abstract:

Background: Role transition is a critical phase for intern nursing students, marking the shift from academic learning to professional practice. This period is pivotal in shaping their professional identity, which influences their future careers in nursing. ***Aim***: The study aimed to assess the perceptions of intern nursing students regarding their roles during the internship year. ***Methods***: A descriptive design was employed, with the study conducted at the Faculty of Nursing, Modern University for Technology and Information. ***Tools***: one tools was used for data collection: the Modified Perceptions and Expectations of Role Transition Questionnaire ***Results***: The findings revealed that a majority of intern nursing students perceived their role transition during the internship year positively. ***Conclusion***: The study concludes that positive role perceptions during the internship year. These findings highlight the importance of supporting intern nursing students' perception of their role transition during this transition to ensure a successful integration into the nursing profession. ***Recommendations***: Nursing faculties should implement targeted interventions to enhance role transition experiences among nursing interns. ***Further Studies***: Future research should investigate the long-term impact of role transition on professional identity and career outcomes in nursing.

Keywords: Intern Nursing Students, Role Transition, Nursing Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Internship can be a vital part of both the environment and education. During internship, students spend a designated period in professional settings to practice what they learned in schools and develop professional skills under the supervision of registered nurses. For nursing students, internships are the link between systematic education and clinical work. Therefore, the internship period may affect the development of nursing students' caring ability. So, an internship is defined as an activity in which one practices training related to a career or skill and gains experience **[1].**

Internship period is a rich and appreciated experience, as it is a massive opportunity for baccalaureate nursing students to gain practical skills as well as to relate their theoretical knowledge to real situations under the supervision of experienced and supporting preceptors. Additionally, the internship year helps the graduate nurses to develop their competencies in various care specialties **[2].**

Nursing intern student is the person who is still within the framework of formal and accountable post academic education where cognitive, attitudinal and psychomotor skills are initially mastered. In addition, intern nurses receive job-related training in good teamwork of health professionals, thus enhancing their professional skills in accordance with their job description **[3].**

The transition from nursing student to intern nurse is recognized as a period of great stress for an intern nurse. On commencing clinical practice, new graduates enter a relatively new and often challenging environment. An intern nurse has to make substantial adjustments from being students whose procedures and activities were supervised in a controlled environment to practicing somewhat independently and take a lot of responsibilities **[4].**

The intern nurses work adaption process over the first three-month period of transition included three stages: The first stage is understanding; intern nurse's knowledge and skills are inadequate to handle routine work, feelings of anxiety emerge related to fears of incompetence, and communication difficulties must be faced in the handover process. An intern nurse must work to adopt appropriate attitudes and approaches to nursing practice and support is sought from family, teachers and friends **[5].**

The second stage is acclimation; learning to care for patients independently, seeking role models, learning to adapt to night shifts, trying to identify with co-workers, and seeking support from colleagues, preceptors and head nurses. While the third stage is acceptance; managing nursing work better in terms of time and organization, feeling gradual acceptance from co-workers, restoring

personal enthusiasm for work, starting to consider other, non-work-related matters, experiencing and appreciating the support of co-workers and head nurses **[6].**

Research have proven that during transition, one-of-a-kind troubles which include tension, anxiety, fear, panic, and burnout endanger and undermine nurses' physical and mental health. Those troubles accelerate staff turnover price and bring about the alternative of skilled nurses by way of newbie ones who do not have sufficient knowledge and self-belief for running in medical settings **[7].**

Transition support will be an individualized, planned process and include quality induction and orientation to the new work context, meeting the requirements of the department's performance management Framework. Nursing educators have to prepare the students at the beginning of their internship, as many of the nursing students feel unprepared for their whole clinical training and regard this clinical learning as a stressful incident. So, nursing students need the nursing educators' attention to have a safe performance in the beginning of their career **[8].**

3.1Population and Sample

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Nursing, Modern University for Technology and Information, targeting all intern nursing students enrolled in the internship year (2022-2023). The total population consisted of 120 students, who were selected using a convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was chosen for its practicality, considering factors such as availability, ease of access, and willingness to participate. The sample size was determined based on a formula that considered a population size of 400, with a 90% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This sample size was deemed sufficient to provide reliable data for the study's objectives.

3.2 Data and Sources of Data

Data for this study were collected using two primary tools: the Modified Perceptions and Expectations of Role Transition Questionnaire and the Professional Identity Scale for Nursing Students (PISNS). The Modified Perceptions and Expectations of Role Transition Questionnaire, adapted from **[9]**, assessed intern nursing students' perceptions of their roles during the internship year. The PISNS was used to measure professional identity among the students, capturing factors such as professional self-image, benefit of retention, risk of turnover, and social comparison. Data collection was conducted via a Google Forms survey, which took approximately 30 to 45 minutes for participants to complete.

3.3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in the middle-range theory of transitions by Meleis and Bridges' transition model. Meleis' theory identifies the nature of transitions through their types, patterns, and properties, emphasizing the importance of support and resources in achieving healthy transitions. In contrast, Bridges' model focuses on the psychological stages individuals experience during transitions: endings, a neutral phase, and new beginnings. These theories provide a comprehensive understanding of how intern nursing students navigate the shift from student to professional nurse, and how this transition influences their development of a professional identity. The framework underscores the significance of preparation, expectation management, and support systems in facilitating a successful role transition for nursing students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology section outlines the plan and method by which the study was conducted. This includes the population and sample, data and sources of data, and the theoretical framework. The details are as follows:

3.1 Population and Sample

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Nursing, Modern University for Technology and Information, targeting intern nursing students enrolled in the internship year during the academic year 2022-2023. The entire population consisted of 120 students, making up the universe of the study. These students were selected using a convenience sampling method, which is a non-probability sampling technique. This method was chosen for its practicality, considering factors such as availability, ease of access, and willingness to participate. The sample size was determined using a statistical formula based on a population size of 400, with a 90% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This sampling strategy was considered appropriate to provide a representative and reliable sample for analyzing the relationship between role perceptions and professional identity.

The sample size was calculated by the equation of sample:

The sample size was calculated by the equation of sample:

Size, and it was 120.
That represents the students.
Population = 400 with confidence level 90%

$$n = \frac{N \times p(1-p)}{\left[\left[N-1\times\left(d^2 \div z^2\right)\right]+p(1-p)\right]}$$

n= sample size p= subject proportion
z= standard normal variation d= absolute error
N= size of population
 Type I error with significant level (α) = 0.05.
 Type II error by power test (1-B) = 95% **[10].**

3.2 Data and Sources of Data

For this study, primary data was collected from intern nursing students using two main tools: the Modified Perceptions and Expectations of Role Transition Questionnaire and the Professional Identity Scale for Nursing Students (PISNS). The data collection was carried out through an online survey distributed via Google Forms, where students were asked to provide responses to a series of statements related to their role transition experiences and professional identity. The questionnaire took approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete, and data were gathered over a period of several weeks during the Fall of 2022. The data collected provided insights into the students' perceptions of their roles.

3.3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the middle-range theory of transitions by Meleis and Bridges' transition model, which together provide a comprehensive understanding of the role transition process and its impact on professional identity. Meleis' theory describes transitions as complex, multidimensional processes involving psychological, social, and physical changes, while emphasizing the importance of support systems in achieving successful transitions. Bridges' model complements this by focusing on the psychological stages individuals go through during transitions—endings, a neutral zone, and new beginnings. These frameworks guide the study's exploration of how intern nursing students transition from being students to professionals.

Meleis' theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the types and patterns of transitions, particularly focusing on situational transitions, as nursing students move from academic settings to clinical practice. This theory highlights the role of nursing in supporting individuals through transitions to achieve a sense of mastery and well-being **[11].** Bridges' Transition Model complements this by outlining the psychological stages individuals experience during transitions: Endings, The Neutral Zone, and New Beginnings. These stages are crucial for intern nursing students as they adapt to their new roles and develop their professional identity **[12].** Social identity theory provides additional context, suggesting that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups, such as the nursing profession. As students transition to professional roles, their identification with the nursing community strengthens, which is vital for developing a robust professional identity **[13].** In general, role theory explores how individuals understand and perform the roles expected of them in specific social contexts, emphasizing the importance of clear role expectations and supportive environments in successful role transitions **[14].**

3.4Statistical tools and econometric models

This section elaborates the proper statistical/econometric/financial models which are being used to forward the study from data towards inferences. The detail of methodology is given as follows.

3.4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics: Used to summarize and describe the basic features of the data, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, providing an overview of the demographic characteristics and survey responses. Chi-Square Test (X^2): Used to assess the relationship between categorical variables (e.g., age, gender, education) and the students' perceptions of role transition. Significance Testing (P-values): Employed to determine the statistical significance of the results, with thresholds such as $P \leqslant 0.05$ indicating significance and $P \leqslant 0.001$ indicating high significance. Cronbach's Alpha: Used to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the survey instruments (e.g., professional identity scale), ensuring that the items within the scale are measuring the same underlying construct consistently.

Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize and describe the basic features of the collected data, focusing on variables such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions. These statistics provide an overview of the demographic characteristics and the intern nursing students' perceptions regarding their role transition and professional identity. For instance, the mean age of the participants was 23.47 years with a standard deviation of 1.23, and the majority (84.2%) were between 22 and 24 years old. The descriptive statistics also revealed that a significant proportion of students (61.7%) reported high levels of perceived role preparation and organizational support, indicating a positive outlook on their transition into professional nursing roles.

3.4.2 Data collection tools:

Role Transition Questionnaire

This tool consisted of two parts as the following:

Part I:

This part is concerned with the demographic characteristics of intern nursing students e.g. age, gender, experience, residence, and the assigned hospital.

Part II:

Modified Perceptions and Expectations of Role Transition Questionnaire. This part will be used to measure perception of role transition among intern nursing students at MTI University. It involves 28 items covering three subscales (Role preparation transition 7 items, Role competences transition 8 items, Organization and Support role transition 13 items).

Scoring System:

The students' responses are measured on a 5-point Likert-scale to indicate intern nursing students' level of agreement with each item as follows (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).

The perception of role transition was categorized into low, moderate and high as follows:

- 50 % considered a low level of self-confidence.
- 50 % - 75 % considered a moderate level of self- confidence.
- 75 % considered a high level of self-confidence.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results of Descriptive Statics of Study Variables

Table 4.1: Frequency and percentage distribution of demographic characteristics of the studied nursing students (n=120).

Items	N	%
Age		
22-24	101	84.2
>24- 27	19	15.8
Mean SD	23.47 ± 1.23	
Gender		
Female	55	45.8
Male	65	54.2
Nationality		
Egyptian	115	95.8
Nigerian	5	4.2
Education		
Secondary school	115	95.8
Institute	5	4.2
Experience		
No experience	115	95.8
2 years	2	1.7
3 years	3	2.5
Residence		
Urban	46	38.3
Rural	74	61.7
Department		
ER	6	5.0
ICU	37	30.8
CCU	7	5.8
Ward	64	53.3
OR	6	5.0

Table 4.1 displayed that 84.2% of the studied students were between 22-24 years old with mean and standard deviation were 23.47 ± 1.23. In addition, 54.2% were males, 95.8 % were Egyptians, 95.8% had secondary level education, 95.8 had no experience. Meanwhile, 61.7% come from rural areas, finally, 53.3 trained at wards.

Table 4.2: Frequency and percentage distribution of nursing students regarding role preparation (n=120).

Role preparation	SD		D		Neutral		Agree		SA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I am adequately prepared for taking up a post as a registered nurse	3	2.5	0	0	21	17.5	63	52.5	33	27.5
The academic content is relevant to my future role as a registered nurse	7	5.8	0	0	19	15.8	61	50.8	33	27.5
I am afforded the opportunity to develop the skills required of a registered nurse	8	6.7	8	6.7	13	10.8	60	50	31	25.8
I`ve given the opportunity to develop my administrative skills	4	3.3	7	5.8	8	6.7	62	51.7	39	32.5
I have had sufficient opportunities to develop management skills	8	6.7	8	6.7	13	10.8	60	50	31	25.8
I am afforded the opportunity to discuss the transition from student to registered nurse	7	5.8	0	0	19	15.8	61	50.8	33	27.5
I expect that the transition from student to registered nurse will be unproblematic	7	5.8	0	0	22	18.3	59	49.2	32	26.7

Table 4.2 clarifies that 32%, 27.5%, and 27.5% had "strongly agreed response regarding "` I`ve given the opportunity to develop my administrative skills", " The academic content is relevant to my future role as a registered nurse‘, and " I am afforded the opportunity to discuss the transition from student to registered nurse" respectively.

Table 4.3: Frequency and percentage distribution of nursing students regarding role competence. (n=120).

Role competence	SD		D		Neutral		Agree		SA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I expect to develop skills to work effectively within a multi/ interdisciplinary team	6	5	2	1.7	21	17.5	60	50	31	25.8

I have good time management skills	4	3.3	9	7.5	19	15.8	65	54.2	23	19.2
I am confident that I can successfully manage my workload	5	4.2	9	7.5	11	9.2	52	43.3	43	35.8
I am proficient in prioritizing care delivery	4	3.3	8		6.7	7	5.8	54	4547	39.2
I will feel confident delegating aspects of patient care to colleagues upon	0	0	3	2.5	26	21.7	61	50.8	30	25
I have effective interpersonal skills	2	1.7	4	3.3	17	14.2	59	49.2	38	31.7
I feel competent in my ability to make ethical nursing decisions	0	0	0	0	18	15	56	46.7	46	38.3
I am competent in providing relevant health information to clients/patients and families	3	2.5	3	2.5	20	16.7	64	53.3	30	25

Table 4.3 Demonstrates that 39.2%, 38.3%, and 35.8% had "strongly agreed response regarding "` I am proficient in prioritizing care delivery, " I feel competent in my ability to make ethical nursing decisions ‘, and " I am confident that I can successfully manage my workload " respectively.

Table 4.4: Frequency and percentage distribution of nursing students regarding Organization & support (n=120).

Organization & support	**SD**		**D**		**Neutral**		**Agree**		**SA**	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I will be supported by the registered nurses in the ward/unit	0	0	0	0	22	18.3	62	51.7	36	30
I will be supported by the CNM(s) in the ward /unit	0	0	4	3.3	11	9.2	51	42.5	4	3.3
I will be supported by the multidisciplinary team	7	5.8	0	0	19	15.8	61	50.8	33	27.5
I will receive constructive feedback from registered nurses on the ward/unit	0	0	3	2.5	26	21.7	61	50.8	30	25
I will receive constructive feedback from the CNM (s)	8	6.7	8	6.7	13	10.8	60	50	31	25.8
My contribution to the nursing team will be valued	0	0	0	0	18	15	56	46.7	46	38.3
My contribution to the multidisciplinary team will be valued	0	0	0	0	19	15.8	40	33.3	61	50.8
I will be facilitated to introduce new evidence-based initiatives	1	0.8	4	3.3	24	20	62	51.7	29	24.2
I will feel respected	0	0	3	2.5	26	21.7	61	50.8	30	25
There will be open and supportive communication channels in the ward/unit where I work	3	2.5	5	4.2	18	15	63	52.5	31	25.8
There will be open and supportive communication channels in the hospital / organization where I work	3	2.5	3	2.5	15	12.5	55	45.8	44	36.7
Working hours will be flexible	4	3.3	5	4.2	28	23.3	54	45	29	24.2
I will be orientated to the ward/unit	4	3.3	5	4.2	28	23.3	54	45	29	24.2

Table 4.4 states that that 50.8%, 38.3%, and 36.7% had "strongly agreed response regarding "` My contribution to the multidisciplinary will be valued, My contribution to the nursing team will be valued ‘, and " There will be open and supportive communication channels in the hospital / organization where I work" respectively.

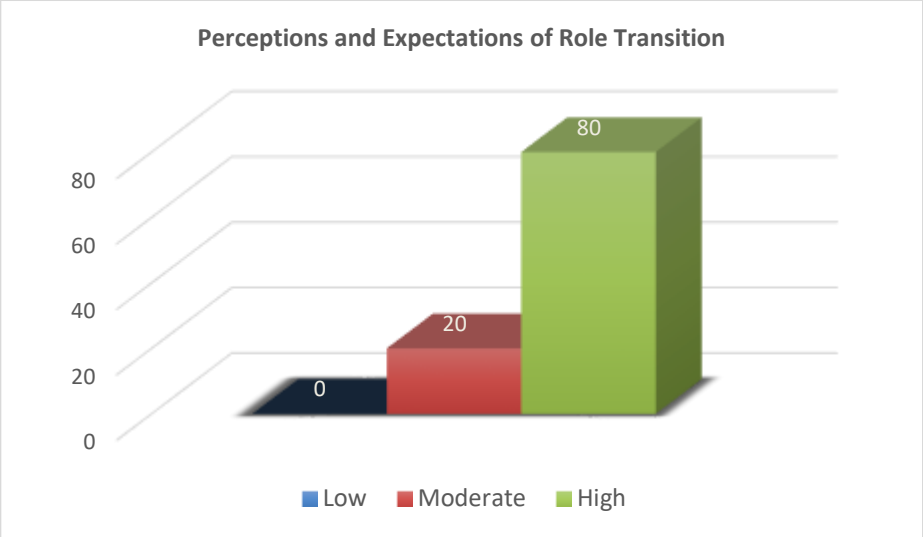


Figure (1.1): Distribution of total Perceptions and Expectations of Role Transition (n=120).
Figure (1.1) confirms that 61.7% had a high level regarding total Perceptions and Expectations of Role Transition.

DISCUSSION

The perceptions of intern nursing students regarding their role transition are shaped by various factors, including the level of preparedness provided by their educational institutions, the support from their peers and supervisors, and the work environment they enter. Effective orientation programs, mentorship, and a supportive clinical setting are essential in facilitating a smooth transition **[15].**

Understanding these perceptions is vital for educational institutions and healthcare organizations to design interventions that can mitigate the challenges faced by new nurses, enhance their competence and confidence, and ultimately improve patient care outcomes. By addressing the gaps between academic preparation and practical application, stakeholders can support nursing interns in achieving a successful and less stressful transition into their professional roles **[16].**

The current study aim was to assess role transition among intern nursing students. Also, what are the intern nursing students' perceptions regarding their roles during internship year? Moreover, this study was conducted at Nursing Faculty, (MTI) Modern University for Technology and Information, Egypt.

Regarding demographic characteristics of the studied nursing students, the current study results revealed that the majority of the students were between the ages of 22 and 24, with a mean age of 23.47 years. This age range is typical for students completing their nursing education and entering internship programs, reflecting the standard educational trajectory in nursing. These findings align with previous studies that have documented similar age distributions among nursing students and interns **[17].**

Gender distribution showed a slight male predominance, with slightly higher than the half of the students being male. This is noteworthy as nursing has traditionally been a female-dominated profession **[18].** The increasing number of males in nursing programs may indicate a positive shift towards gender diversity within the field, which can enhance team dynamics and patient care by incorporating diverse perspectives and approaches **[19].** This result is inconsistent with study by **[20],** who reported that more than three fifths of the studied nursing intern students were females while the rest were males.

Educational background data revealed that the vast majority of the students had completed secondary school, while a minimal percentage had attended from technical institute. This high percentage of secondary school graduates reflects the educational requirements for entry into nursing programs in the region. Furthermore, most of the students reported having no prior work experience, underscoring the need for comprehensive clinical training during their internships to build practical skills and confidence.

As regard the studied students' perception about role preparation the current study results revealed that slightly more than the half of students reported agreement to items felt adequately prepared for taking up a post as a registered nurse, and more than one quarter reported strongly agreeing. this reflects high positive perception about this part which exceeded three quarters of total students regarding this item. This high level of confidence is essential for ensuring that new nurses feel competent and ready to enter the workforce. On the same line, **[21],** reported that the majority of students perceived adequately prepared for taking up a post as a registered nurse after the intern year. On the other hand, **[22],** who reported that the large portion of intern students reported lower level of preparedness for future role as registered healthcare providers.

Regarding current study findings about the role preparation assessment indicate that nearly two thirds of nursing students feel highly prepared for their transition to professional roles. This high level of perceived readiness can be attributed to a well-structured curriculum that effectively integrates theoretical knowledge with practical skills. The comprehensive nature of the nursing programs ensures that students are not only equipped with the necessary clinical skills but also understand the administrative and management aspects of nursing. This holistic approach is crucial as it prepares students to handle various responsibilities they will encounter in their professional careers.

Moreover, the practical training opportunities provided to the students play a pivotal role in their preparedness. With more than the half of students agreeing and nearly one third strongly agreeing that they had sufficient opportunities to develop administrative skills, it is evident that the programs are designed to offer hands-on experience in real-world settings.

The exposure to practical scenarios helps in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and clinical practice, thereby boosting the confidence of the students. Additionally, the support systems in place, including mentorship and discussions about role transition, provide students with the necessary guidance and reassurance. This support is essential in alleviating anxiety and ensuring that students feel supported throughout their transition.

Despite the positive outcomes, the presence of more than one third of students reporting moderate levels of preparation indicates that there is still room for improvement. Educational institutions should continuously evaluate and refine their programs to ensure that all students feel adequately prepared. This could involve enhancing feedback mechanisms to identify areas for improvement, integrating more advanced simulation experiences, and strengthening mentorship programs. This ongoing commitment to improvement will help maintain high standards in nursing education and better prepare future nurses for the demands of the healthcare industry.

On the same line, **[23],** who reported that more than the half of the studied students reported feeling highly prepared for their transition to professional roles. On the other hand, **[24],** who reported that more than the half of the studied students reported feeling not well prepared for their transition to professional roles.

As regard intern nursing students about role competence of nursing students current study results revealed positive outlook among nursing students regarding their professional skills. Nearly two fifths of intern students strongly agreed that they are proficient in prioritizing care delivery. This is a critical competence as it ensures that nurses can manage patient care effectively and efficiently, prioritizing tasks based on patient needs and urgency. On the same line, **[25],** who reported that the largest sector of students agreed that they are proficient in prioritizing care delivery.

As regard organization and support for nursing students, the figure illustrating that nearly two fifths of nursing students reported high levels of organization and support reflects the positive impact of a structured and supportive educational environment. High levels of perceived organizational support are crucial for the well-being and professional development of nursing students. This support can come in various forms, including academic guidance, mentorship, and access to resources necessary for both personal and professional growth **[26].** Studies have shown that when students feel supported, their stress levels decrease, and their ability to cope with the demands of their education increases **[27].**

On the other hand, in comparison, a study by **[28]** found that students who reported low levels of organizational support experienced higher levels of anxiety and burnout. These students often struggled with balancing their academic workload with clinical placements, indicating that insufficient support can have detrimental effects on student well-being and academic performance. Conversely, another study by **[29]** supports the findings of the current study, highlighting that strong organizational support, including clear communication channels, adequate resources, and supportive faculty, significantly enhances students' learning experiences and outcomes.

However, the results also reveal that more than one third of students did not report high levels of support, indicating that there is room for improvement. Discrepancies in the levels of support experienced by students could be due to various factors such as differences in individual needs, varying quality of mentorship, or the availability of resources. It is essential for educational institutions to continuously assess and address these gaps to ensure that all students receive the necessary support to thrive. Implementing feedback mechanisms where students can voice their concerns and suggestions can help institutions identify areas needing improvement and develop strategies to enhance organizational support.

The figure showing that more than three fifths of nursing students reported high levels of total perceptions and expectations of role transition is a strong indicator of the effectiveness of their educational programs in preparing them for professional practice. High perceptions and expectations suggest that the students feel well-prepared and confident about their transition from student to registered nurse, which is crucial for their future success in the healthcare field. This confidence can be attributed to comprehensive curricula, effective mentorship, and practical training opportunities that equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge.

The result of current study is consistent with results reported by **[30]** who reported two thirds of nursing students reported high levels of total perceptions and expectations of role transition is a strong indicator of the effectiveness of their educational programs in preparing them for professional practice. On the other hand, inconsistent with this study results, **[31]** who reported that nearly the half of the students reported low levels of total perceptions and expectations of role transition is a strong indicator of the effectiveness of their educational programs in preparing them for professional practice.

Comparatively, studies by **[32]** emphasize the importance of a supportive educational environment in shaping positive perceptions and expectations among nursing students. Their research indicates that students who perceive strong support and clear expectations from their educational institutions are more likely to transition smoothly into their professional roles. On the other hand, a study by **[33]** found that students with lower perceptions and expectations of their role transition often face increased anxiety and uncertainty, highlighting the critical need for robust support systems in nursing education.

Despite the positive findings, the remaining near to two fifths of students who did not report high levels of perceptions and expectations suggest that there is still room for improvement. Addressing this gap involves identifying the specific needs and concerns of these students through continuous feedback and engagement. Educational institutions can enhance their programs by integrating more tailored support systems, increasing access to resources, and providing more opportunities for hands-on experience. By doing so, they can ensure that all students feel equally prepared and confident in their transition to professional nursing roles.

II. Acknowledgment

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to the completion of this thesis. First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my academic advisor, [Advisor's Name], whose expertise, patience, and unwavering support have been invaluable throughout this journey. Your insightful guidance and encouragement have profoundly shaped this research.

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