

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH

# Role transition among baccalaureate nursing students at Umm Al Qura University

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Role transition involves concerted efforts to optimize the transformation of the nursing students into practice nurses with an outstanding experience. Nursing students have different expectations and perceptions towards the role transition process. Graduate nurses lack the competence and sufficient preparation for the ever-changing professional nursing practice. The study purposed to assess the role transition of baccalaureate nursing students from the Umm Al Qura University.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study design was used to gather insights from a simple random sample (n = 102) of baccalaureate nursing students from Umm Al Qura University. Data were collected using an electronic self-administered questionnaire from year four and interns nursing students at Umm Al Qura University.

**Results:** Results indicate that baccalaureate nursing students define role transition as role preparation, role competence, support, and organization. The three elements reveal different personal and organizational factors contributing to the assumption of new roles as registered nurses. Role preparation entails the provision of course content, management skills, teamwork, and multidisciplinary care. Role competence comprised the attainment of fundamental skills while nursing students expected to receive support from the healthcare organizations and the university.

**Conclusions:** Role transition encompasses role preparation, role competence, support, and organization for the nursing students. Future studies should investigate the contributing factors to the feedback process between the nursing interns or final year students and the RNs or CNMs in the clinical practice during role transition.

**Key Words:** Role transition, Baccalaureate, Nursing students

## 1. BACKGROUND

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has increased efforts to enhance nursing education. The government established different bachelor's programs for nurses to create different professional pathways. The government encourages high school students to consider regular nursing program (RNP) to increase the population of nurses serving the growing KSA population.<sup>[1]</sup> The government established The National Commission for Academic Accreditation Assessment (NCAAA) in 2004 to oversee the execution of the curricu-

lum and encourage specialization in nursing courses by students.<sup>[2]</sup> Role transition is a critical component of the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties (SCHS) and Ministry of Health (MOH) efforts to optimize the transformation of the nursing students into practice nurses with outstanding experience in the Saudi health system.<sup>[2]</sup>

Graduate nurses lack the competence and sufficient preparation for the ever-changing professional nursing practice. The gaps in the curriculum, preceptorship translate into high nursing turnover within the first year of practice.<sup>[3]</sup> The nursing

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students cite challenges such as dissatisfaction with the organizational environment, pressure from colleagues, excessive workloads, and maintaining exceptional quality in the administration of treatment plans.<sup>[4]</sup> Studies have documented different challenges facing nursing students in the transition phase. For instance, Baker<sup>[5]</sup> studied practice nurses from the Al-Baha region and found different limiting factors such as workload fears, low confidence, role expectations, and orientation issue by the qualified and practicing nurses. The study further revealed the apprehensions of the nurses towards professional development and satisfaction with the organizational or nursing programs offered at the university or nursing colleges.

Alboliteeh, Magarey<sup>[6]</sup> found from 741 nurses that the organizational environment comprises inexperienced nurses, poor working conditions, low motivations and high turnover rates. preparation for nursing students for practice entails the improvement of nursing education. According to Abedi, Ogwal,<sup>[7]</sup> the nursing students and faculty from two Ugandan universities offered their perspectives on the training, scope of the nursing practice, and satisfaction. The informants further presented their views on job prospects after undertaking baccalaureate prepare nurse program. It emerged from the descriptive qualitative design that role transition was not effective to nursing students in Uganda. The students felt the nursing education failed to prepare them for workplace harmony, salary scale and proper bedside training.

Role transition's success depends on the perceptions of the students towards the process. According to Ng, Lau,<sup>[8]</sup> 24 undergraduate nursing students from a Singapore University acknowledged their role in promoting community nursing program after graduation. The exploratory qualitative design established different themes such as limited career progression, mid-life career, challenging transition, and domination by the foreign workforce. The research showed negative perceptions towards the role transition process as undergraduate nursing students felt that the community nursing industry could not eliminate potential marginalization as well as exclusion.

The perceptions of limited career advancement and growth in practice imply the nursing students' expectations, as Lindberg, Carlsson<sup>[9]</sup> studied in a longitudinal study in Sweden. The 75 students found increased expectations of career progression, teamwork, increased development, and work satisfaction. Alghamdi and Baker (2020) undertook descriptive correlational research that recruited 95 participants in the Al Bahah region. The study aimed to evaluate the effect of the undergraduate orientation programs on the transition process for the new graduate nurses (NGNs). The sample

size was small to the extent of affecting the generalization of the findings to NGNs in other healthcare systems. The survey established a significant relationship between the support, communication leadership, professional and job satisfaction between the preceptors and the NGNs. However, the study noted the courses led to uncomfortable engagement with skills and roles. An integrative review by Alshawush, Hallett<sup>[10]</sup> provided different perspectives on the effect of transition programs on the NGNs as they prepared to assume professional roles. The nurses relied on the undergraduate transition programs to familiarize themselves with issues such as workplace violence, stress, and potential bullying.

According to Seth,<sup>[11]</sup> baccalaureate nursing programs should include an integral training component to prepare students for role transition well. The assertion reflected the outcomes of Crighton, Anderson,<sup>[12]</sup> who presented training through a formal placement approach. The cross-sectional study of 266 nursing students in 42 training institutions, as opposed to universities in India revealed the different forms of training for boosting career aspirations. The training covered non-technical skills, such as communication and teamwork. However, the skills acquisition depended on the students social groups and state-level characteristics. The findings reflect the views of Ferrillo and Watson<sup>[13]</sup> after they studied an intra-professional global immersion for enhancing the role formation of undergraduate nursing students. The authors evaluated a clinical immersion experience in general rather than focusing on a specific country. The findings showed the immense role of immersion in building the confidence of students in transitioning into practice after completing undergraduate education. Therefore, both local and global nursing programs should define and shape the professional role of nursing students as they transform their professional identity. The findings from the research will contribute to the international perspective of role transition from the standpoint of a developing economy such as KSA. The outcomes reveal the need for coping with the organizational challenges, personal factors and transforming the nursing programs to increase the transition rate from the undergraduate to the professional nursing practice. The study assesses the role transition of baccalaureate nursing students from the Umm Al Qura University. The study also purposed to determine organizational challenges of role transition among baccalaureate nursing students and to explore the effect of personal factors on role transition among baccalaureate nursing students at Umm Al Qura university.

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Design

The study employed cross section research design.

## 2.2 Sampling and sample size

A simple random sampling method was adopted to select the participants from the eligible baccalaureate nursing students at the colleges of nursing in Umm Al Qura University. The sample size was estimated according to the study power 80%, level of significance was set at 5%. Then, the required sample size was 179 nursing students.

The researchers included intern nursing students beginning their training year at different hospitals across Saudi Arabia and fourth-year baccalaureate nursing student. The sample included students who were looking to transition to professional practice by attending a preceptorship or mentorship program. The participants were local and foreign interns attending their final year training and nursing education at the faculty of Nursing at Umm Al Qura University. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria comprised second or third year nursing students or interns who had completed their training after graduating from the Umm Al Qura University. Students or interns from other colleges or universities other than Umm Al Qura University were excluded.

## 2.3 Procedure

Participants were recruited from Umm Al Qura University through an invitation email link. The respondents were accessible through the college of a nursing database within the Umm Al Qura University. Some of the respondents were known to the researcher. However, the knowledge of the respondents did not translate into undue influence over the participants due to the self-administered of the online questionnaires.

## 2.4 Outcome measures

The first part comprised a socio-demographic datasheet. The researchers designed the sheet to collect the relevant socio-demographic characteristics such as participants' age, level of education, and gender. The second part of the electronic survey contained questions on the baccalaureate nursing students' perceptions and expectations of role transition questionnaire developed by Doody, Tuohy.<sup>[14]</sup> The part was composed of 28 items covering three subscales of role preparation, role competence, and organization and support. The role preparation contained seven items, role competence contained eight items and the Organizational & support subscales comprised 13 items. The scale-covered the different aspects that could explain role transition for the nursing students undergoing their final internship in readiness for the professional nursing practice. Each question is scored on 5-point Likert scale. The results of 1-2 reflects low readiness for role transition, 3 means a moderate level whilst 4 – 5 indicates high level of readiness towards role transition.

## 2.5 Data analysis

Data were analysed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS) Version 22. The analysis involved descriptive statistics and a Chi-Square-based test. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate percentages and frequencies. Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) was used to estimate the statistically significant differences between the role transition and other variables such as organization and support, role competence, and preparation among undergraduate nursing students. The level of significant *p* value was considered at < .05 or less.

## 2.6 Ethical consideration

The Committee from the Faculty of Nursing at Umm Al Qura University approved the research protocol. Informed verbal consent was secured from each subject after the research provided an exhaustive explanation of the rights to refuse to participate. In addition, the study participants confidentiality was assured.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Participants socio-demographic characteristics

The study had a total number of participants of 102 nursing students ( $n = 102$ ). 71.6% (73 participants) were fourth year nursing students and 28.4% (29 participants) were nursing students interns; hence, the majority of the participants were fourth year students. Notably, all participants (100%) were Saudi nationals from Umm AlQura University. 2.9% of the study participants aged between 20-23 years and two-thirds of them aged between 21-23 years. In addition, 65.7% were female and 34.3% were male students, as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic characteristics of the study participants

Items	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age		
20	3	2.9
21	16	15.7
22	50	49.0
23	33	32.4
Gender		
Male	67	65.7
Female	35	34.3
Level of education		
Fourth year	73	71.6
Interns	29	28.4
Nationality		
Saudi	102	100
Non-Saudi	0	0

### 3.2 Role preparation

The results of Chi-square test revealed that there is an association between both the provision of opportunities to discuss the transition from student to registered nurse an expectation of the transition to be unproblematic with the level of study in the nursing program ( $\chi^2(4) \geq 13.083, p = .008$ ) and ( $\chi^2(4) \geq 10.037, p = .040$ ). In addition, the analysis reveals that the level of study is not associated with the perception of adequate preparation for nurses taking up the posts of registered nurses as well as the contribution of course content to the role of a future registered nurse. Similarly, there is no association between the level of study with the opportunities afforded to students to develop management skills as well as

those required of a registered nurse, as reported in Table 2.

### 3.3 Role competence

Table 3 shows that there is an association between nursing students competent in educating clients/patients and families regarding health issues with the level of education ( $\chi^2(4) > = 14.271, p = .006$ ). This implies that the level of study affects the knowledge that different nursing students possess towards educating the patients regarding health issues, which can be attributed to the different number of courses taken by each student towards the completion of the nursing program. Subsequently, nursing student's competency perception has a statistically significant relationship with the level of education.

**Table 2.** The study respondents answers related to the role preparation

Item	Nursing Intern					Fourth Year Nursing Students					Fourth Year		Interns		$\chi^2$	p	Level
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
1. I am adequately prepared for taking up a post as a registered nurse	3	0	9	15	2	6	13	26	24	4	3.10	1.03	3.45	1.02	7.397	.116	Moderate
2. The course content is relevant to my future role as a registered nurse	3	3	9	12	2	4	9	24	29	7	3.36	1.01	3.24	1.09	0.992	.911	Moderate
3. I am afforded the opportunity to develop the skills required of a registered nurse	5	2	3	16	3	6	11	17	31	8	3.33	1.12	3.34	1.29	5.162	.271	Moderate
4. I have had sufficient opportunities to develop management skills	2	5	6	14	2	4	17	21	24	7	3.18	1.07	3.31	1.07	2.426	.658	Moderate
5. I am afforded the opportunity to discuss the transition from student to registered nurse	5	1	10	13	0	3	16	16	29	9	3.34	1.08	3.07	1.10	13.803	.008	Moderate
6. I expect that the transition from student to registered nurse will be unproblematic	1	3	12	7	6	7	10	19	33	4	3.23	1.07	3.30	1.07	10.037	.040	Moderate

**Table 3.** The study respondents answers related to the role competence

Item	Nursing Intern					Fourth Year Nursing Students					Fourth Year		Interns		$\chi^2$	p	Level
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
1. work effectively within a multi/interdisciplinary team	2	4	3	15	5	5	5	17	39	7	3.59	1.15	3.52	1.00	3.952	.413	Moderate
2. I have good time management skills	0	3	4	18	4	2	5	26	32	8	3.79	.82	3.53	.88	6.028	.197	Moderate
3. I am confident that I can successfully manage my workload	1	3	6	13	6	1	5	24	34	9	3.69	1.04	3.62	.84	2.829	.587	Moderate
4. I am proficient in prioritizing care delivery	0	2	5	17	5	0	11	21	34	7	3.86	.79	3.51	.87	3.804	.283	Moderate
5. I will feel confident delegating aspects of patient care to colleagues upon registration	0	2	7	17	3	0	10	31	28	4	3.72	.75	3.36	.79	5.335	.149	Moderate
6. I have effective interpersonal skills	0	2	6	16	5	0	3	20	41	9	3.83	.81	3.77	.72	1.064	.786	Moderate
7. I feel competent in my ability to make ethical nursing decisions	0	1	7	16	5	0	10	13	35	14	3.86	.74	3.70	.98	3.102	.541	Moderate
8. I am competent in providing relevant health information to clients/patients and families	1	2	9	15	2	1	1	24	39	8	3.52	.87	3.71	.74	2.995	.559	Moderate
9. I am competent in educating clients/patients and families regarding health issues	2	5	8	9	5	10	5	18	39	1	3.34	1.17	3.22	1.08	14.271	.006	Moderate

The results of Chi square analysis revealed that there is an association between the perception that student will be supported by the registered nurses in their respective ward/unit with the level of education ( $\chi^2(4) \geq 10.385, p = .034$ ). Similarly, the expectations of nursing students to work in an organization that has open and supportive communication channels in the ward/unit is associated with the level of students' study ( $\chi^2(4) \geq 15.773, p = .003$ ). Subsequently, nursing student level of education has a link to the perception of support and open communication in wards as a way of a successful student to registered nurse role transition. However, Table 4 reveals a number of organizational aspects that have no association to the level of study in role transition of

nursing students to registered nurses including support by the clinical nurse managers as well as receiving constructive feedback. The lack of association between the level of study and critical organization aspects is as a result of lack of appropriate nursing programs to enlighten the students of the expectations as they progress towards the transition to registered nurses given that the increased nursing students exposure to the EBP in their respective nursing units, the more aware they would be of the expectations once they have transitioned to registered nurses increased nursing students exposure to the EBP in their respective nursing units, the more aware they would be of the expectations once they have transitioned to registered nurses, as reported in Table 4.

**Table 4.** The study respondents answers related to the support and organization

Item	Nursing Intern					Fourth Year Nursing Students					Fourth Year		Interns		$\chi^2$	p	Level
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
1. I will be supported by the registered nurses in the ward/unit	3	1	4	11	10	1	1	24	34	13	3.78	.80	3.83	1.26	10.385	.034	Moderate
2. I will be supported by the Clinical Nurse Managers [CNM] in the ward/unit	1	1	11	12	4	2	3	22	35	11	3.68	.88	3.59	.91	0.665	.956	Moderate
3. I will be supported by the multidisciplinary team	0	3	7	10	9	3	1	26	31	12	3.66	.92	3.86	.99	8.777	.067	Moderate
4. I will receive constructive feedback from registered nurses on the ward/unit	1	3	7	15	3	0	2	16	45	10	3.86	.67	3.55	.95	5.542	.236	Moderate
5. I will receive constructive feedback from the Clinical Nurse Mangers [CNM]	6	9	5	9	0	9	8	23	30	3	3.14	1.08	2.59	1.15	9.285	.054	Moderate
6. My contribution to the nursing team will be valued	4	5	4	11	5	5	7	22	31	8	3.41	1.04	3.28	1.33	5.089	.278	Moderate
7. My contribution to the multidisciplinary team will be valued	1	3	7	11	7	4	3	30	30	6	3.42	.91	3.69	1.07	7.370	.118	Moderate
8. I will be facilitated to introduce new evidence-based initiatives	3	2	7	12	5	5	9	30	26	3	3.18	.95	3.48	1.18	7.285	.122	Moderate
9. I will feel respected	4	0	8	14	3	5	2	18	33	15	3.70	1.05	3.41	1.15	3.265	.514	Moderate
10. There will be open and supportive communication channels in the ward/unit where I work	1	0	7	11	10	1	1	26	41	4	3.63	.68	4.00	.96	15.773	.003	Moderate
11. There will be open and supportive communication channels in the hospital/organization where I work	0	3	9	12	5	0	5	24	42	5	3.56	.67	3.66	.90	7.728	.052	Moderate
12. Working hours will be flexible	2	8	9	7	3	2	9	23	24	5	3.42	.90	3.03	1.12	6.738	.150	Moderate

**3.4 Non-parametric correlation among preparation, support and organization, and competence**

The data below shows the non-parametric correlation between role preparation, role competency, support and orga-

nization, and student level of study. Evidently, there was a moderate positive correlation between role preparation and role competence ( $r = 0.340, p = .000$ ). Similarity, support and organization is moderately positively correlated to role

preparation ( $r = 0.309, p = .000$ ). Support and organization as revealed in Table 5. are positively correlated to competence ( $r = 0.487, p = .000$ ),

**Table 5.** The correlation analysis of the main study variables

		Correlations				
		Preparation	Competence	Support and organization	5. Student's level of education	
Spearman's rho	Preparation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.340**	.309**	-.087
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.002	.384
		N	102	102	102	102
	Competence	Correlation Coefficient	.340**	1.000	.487**	-.173
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.081
		N	102	102	102	102
	Support And organization	Correlation Coefficient	.309**	.487**	1.000	.038
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000		.701
		N	102	102	102	102
	5. Student's level of education	Correlation Coefficient	-.087	-.173	.038	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.384	.081	.701	
		N	102	102	102	102

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Role preparation

The findings revealed overall role preparation for the nursing interns and final year students queried in the study. Nursing interns require adequate preparation for the taking up active role as RNs. The final year nursing students receive proper preparation for their roles too. The preparation reflects the findings of Foster, Ooms<sup>[15]</sup> on creating the best experience for the nursing interns or the final year nursing students to create a smooth transition to the nursing practice. Nursing interns experience a greater advantage in role preparation than the fourth-year nursing students due to the integration of different clinical placement experiences. The experience may be in the form of mentorship or preceptorship from the experienced RNs or CNMs. Overall, role preparation involves different role players including the nurse educators offering the support, encouragement, and supervision besides guiding the nursing students in their pursuit for registration or certification. Wu, Enskär<sup>[16]</sup> insisted on the preparation of the nursing students for the demanding clinical practice through lecturer involvement as opposed to relying on the healthcare environment to provide them with the skills. Consequently, role preparation creates room for feedback, reflection, and continuous clinical assessment of the nursing students as

they cement their skills in the practice.

Role preparation involves nursing colleges and universities offering the right course content to the students in readiness for their future roles as RNs in the active care environment. The outcomes further cement the importance of nursing interns in engaging the appropriate course content to overcome the challenges of assuming new responsibilities in different healthcare environments. The observations align with the views of Alghamdi and Baker (2020) on the creation and administration of the undergraduate nursing program that prepare nursing students for the challenging practice. The course content should shape professional skills, communication leadership, support, and overall anticipation of an exciting clinical practice by guiding the learning through different scenarios. The course contents build the anticipation for nursing career after formal registration and eases the role transition when the nursing students assume different practice roles.

### 4.2 Role competence

The study confirms the association between the nursing students' role competence and readiness to take different roles after internship and fourth year coursework. The nursing students attend nursing programs that improve their familiarity

with different facets of healthcare. According to Aboshaiqah (2016), role competence entails the demonstration of skills and knowledge about the delivery of quality nursing care to different patients. The role transition period involves the engagement of the nursing students with the real-life work experiences alongside simulated exercises in the final year or during the internship period. therefore, a teaching strategy and mentorship for entry into the clinical setting is essential for the nursing students. The experience shapes students' enhancement of the nursing competencies, which then underscore their survival in the changing dynamics of the nursing care practice. role competence designates the overall clinical competence gained by the nursing students through internship or involvement in the nursing programs in the HEIs. Overall, improving the nursing education and the internship program prepares the nursing students for the role transition because they understand the nursing practice well. Role competence underlines the administration of patient care through constructive exercises and experiences.

The nursing interns and fourth year nursing students seeking RN roles undergo the nursing programs and acquire skills of working effectively in multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary teams. The skill of working in multi or interdisciplinary teams matters more to the nursing interns than the undergraduate nursing students who have not completed their nursing courses. However, AlThiga, Mohidin<sup>[17]</sup> argues that the teamwork and communication skills gained through internship depend on the role played by the faculty as well as the experienced nursing staff offering mentorship or preceptorship. Therefore, preparing for practice demands that nursing students or interns understand the different contexts through which they can gain their skills including working with experienced professionals with in-depth understanding of the healthcare environment. The nursing students gain the ultimate skills of working with different teams in preparation for practice when faculty understands the value of educational preparation as well as the development of clinical practice within the actual clinical environment. Nursing students understand the importance of transition in building competencies for clinical assessment and evaluation through formal education programs, support systems, and handling different workloads as emphasized by Strouse, Nickerson.<sup>[18]</sup>

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revealed different aspects of support and organization in readiness for role transition. The nursing student expect support from RNs in the wards or units when they assume new roles within active care settings irrespective of their level of study at the university. The baccalaureate nursing students further expect support from the CNMs in the ward or units as they cement their skills as interns in readiness for their RN roles. Findings indicate anticipation of support from a multidisciplinary team as the nursing students settle in their nursing practice roles.

The support may come in the form of orientation, mentorship, or preceptorship. The support and organizational framework prompt the baccalaureate nursing students to anticipate constructive feedback from the RNS or CNMs in the actual nursing practice. Baccalaureate nursing students expect to complete their roles by contributing to recognizable input to their nursing teams. The contribution should be felt valuable within the context of a multidisciplinary team. The findings indicate the expectations of evidence-based practice (EBP) as the nursing interns or fourth-year nursing students anticipate new roles within the nursing care practice. Respect is a critical expectation and a demonstration of the support from the healthcare organization to the nursing students undergoing role transition. The baccalaureate nursing students hope to receive or experience supportive communication in the wards or units as they transition through the new roles and navigate different organizational challenges.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The support from the healthcare organization, flexible working hours, and orientation are invaluable to the role transition of the nurse interns or fourth-year nursing students. The study purposed to explore the understanding of role transition and the effort by the nursing students or nursing interns to seek new roles as RNs within t clinical practice. The fourth-year nursing students and nursing interns confirm the valuable process of transitioning into the nursing practice irrespective of age, gender, and nationality. However, a nursing student should attain the requisite number of credits to consider any transition into the clinical practice under a mentorship, preceptorship, or orientation program.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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