ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Perceptions of Nursing Students about Learning Environment

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To evaluate the perceptions of nursing students about learning environment at University of Lahore.
Study Design: A quantitative descriptive cross sectional study.
Place and Duration of Study: This study was conducted in Lahore School of Nursing (LSN), The University of Lahore from September 2019 to February 2020.
Materials and Methods: Sample size of BSN (Bachelor of Science of Nursing) and Post-RN BS Nursing students was 110. An adopted DREEM (Dundee Ready Educational Environment Measure) questionnaire was used to collect data regarding perceptions of nursing students about learning environment at their institution. The data was analyzed by SPSS version 21 and t- test was used to determine the significant difference in male and female score.
Results: The mean score for DREEM was 126.97 out of 200 with standard deviation of 43.703 and overall, 62.3 %. The male students' score (130.72) was higher than female's score 126.05 ($p<0.05$).
Conclusion: Nursing students at the University of Lahore have overall positive perceptions about the learning environment at their institution.

Key Words: Dreem, Evaluation, Learning Environment, Nursing Students, Perceptions.

Introduction

Learning environment refers to the different physical environments, backgrounds, and communities where students are studying. A favorable learning environment enhances the learning of students at their institutions. Education is affected significantly by the current educational environment and system which fosters the understanding and acquisition of knowledge. The educational environment refers to various surroundings, backgrounds, cultures, and settings where students' learning starts.[1] Education is a process of learning or acquiring of knowledge, skills, principles, beliefs and habits.[2] It is a conscious and thoughtful effort to create an environment of education and learning to cultivate the capacity for learner to have discipline, temperament, moral character which is required for them and society.[3] The educational environment is necessary for students to achieve desired learning outcomes. The competence level of students at their educational institution represents their learning environment. Evaluation of learning environment in a professional school promotes quality improvement and creativity.[4] Educational environment is a platform in which the learner learns within the organization and gain knowledge.[5] Many studies have been conducted in India, Nigeria, Sudan, Iran, and South Africa in different medical disciplines to evaluate students' perception about learning environment. A few studies have been conducted in Pakistan to evaluate nursing students' view regarding learning environment but related to other factors which are not enough to describe nursing students' views about learning environment. To achieve effective and successful learning there is a need to create of a supportive environment to facilitate learning design and implement interventions and to promote the better learning environment.

A study found that using a blended learning approach or hybrid method study would lead nursing students to improve professional skills and excellence in education.[6] Medical education climate assessment systematically measures what is going on or how things are. It is a method to evaluate the environment of the educational practice of school. It also offers a thorough, inclusive, regular, and complete picture of the overall situation in the learning process.[7] Positive understanding of the learning atmosphere means students are going to

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learn good implementations and accomplish their learning outcomes.[8]

The objective of this study was to evaluate the perceptions of nursing students about learning environment at University of Lahore.

Materials and Methods

The design of this study was quantitative descriptive cross sectional to evaluate nursing students' perception about learning environment. This study was conducted in the University of Lahore in the time of 6 months. The nursing students of BSN and Post-RN BS Nursing (n=110) were included by convenient sampling.

An adopted 50 item validated Dreem questionnaire, (UOD) University of Dundee in 1997 was used to collect data on Likert scale for the evaluation of nursing students' perception about learning environment. Permission was taken from the ethical committee of the University of Lahore. All the rules and regulations followed established by the ethical committee of Lahore School of Nursing, The University of Lahore in conducting this research and all the rights of the research respondents were respected. The students at Lahore School of Nursing (BSN and Post-RN) were included only and who were willing to participate in this study. The students of other departments were not participants of this study. I collected the data from students by distributing the questionnaire among nursing students at University of Lahore.

The parametric data was analyzed by SPSS version 21 and t- test was used to determine the significant difference in male and female score.

Results

Table I: Demographics of the Students of BSN & BSN Post-RN (N= 110)

Demographic data		Frequency	Percentages (%)
Gender	Male	19	17.3
	Female	91	82.7
Age group	18-22	65	59.1
	22-26	29	26.4
	26-30	15	13.6
	30 and above	1	0.9
Marital status	Married	26	23.6
	Unmarried	84	76.4

Academic program	BSN	80	72.7
	BSN Post-RN	30	27.3
Academic year	1st year	27	24.5
	2nd year	53	48.2
	3rd year	18	16.4
	4th year	12	10.9
Semester	2nd	27	24.5
	3rd	30	27.3
	4th	23	20.9
	6th	18	16.4
	8th	12	10.9

RN = Registereed Nurse

The demographic data is presented in table I. 19 (17.3%) of the participants were male and 91 (82.7) were female. The (72.7%) n=80 of respondents were from BSN Post-RN and (27.3%) n=30 respondents were from BSN. The greater number of the respondents were among the age of 18 and 22 (59.1%) n=65. The second highest proportion 26.4% of age of the participants was 22- 26 years. 13.6 % (15) of the respondents were 26-30 years of age and 0.9 % (n=1) of respondents were at the age of 30 years and above. 76.4 % (n=84) of the participants were unmarried and 23.6 % (n=26) were married. 27.3 % (n=30) of BSN students and 72.7% (n=80) of BSN Post-RN students joined this study.

Table II. Analysis of Different Items of DREEM Questionnaire

Students' perception of learning (SPOL)	Mean	S.D
1. I am stimulated to join during teaching periods	2.83	1.012
2. Teaching is motivating	2.78	.980
3. Teaching is always student-centered	2.90	1.022
4. Teaching also helps to improve competency	2.64	0.974
5. Teaching is often well-dedicated	2.42	0.817
6. Teaching is helpful to grow confidence	2.35	0.861
7. Teaching time is set to good use	2.35	0.749
8. Teaching is over-emphasizing the actual learning	2.40	0.792
9. I'm clear about the educational goals of my course	3.27	1.241
10. Teaching method is encouraging me to become energetic learner	2.64	1.064
11. Long-term learning focused more on short-term learning	2.55	1.028
12. Teaching is too teacher-centric	2.49	0.965
Total mean score 31.62 Max subscale sum 48		
Students' perception of teachers (SPoT)		
13. Teachers are good knowledgeable	2.45	0.842

14. Teachers adopt a patient-centered consultation approach	2.55	0.842
15. Teachers mock the students	2.53	0.738
16. Teachers are good authoritarian	2.39	0.755
17. Teachers are good at communicating with patients	2.63	0.956
18. Teachers are good at giving feedback to the students	3.08	1.150
19. Teachers give positive criticism here	2.77	0.853
20. Teachers give strong examples	3.29	1.078
21. The teachers often get irritated during teaching	2.76	1.157
22. The teachers are well-organized before teaching sessions	2.77	1.155
23. The teachers get irritated by the students	2.49	1.073
Total mean score 29.71 Max subscale score 44		
Students' academic self-perception (SASP)		
24. Learning plans which worked for me before I keep workingfor me now	2.25	0.706
25. I am self-assured of my passing the year	2.07	0.483
26. I feel myself organized for my occupation	2.01	0.479
27. The work of the last year has been well prepared for the work of this year	1.95	0.446
28. I can remember everything that I need	2.00	0.469
29. Through my profession I have learnt a lot about sympathy	2.02	0.488
30. I have developed my problem-solving skills here	2.05	0.626
31. A lot of what I need to learn seems to be related to a profession in healthcare	2.07	0.554
Total mean score 16.42 Max subscale score 32		
Students' perceptions of atmosphere (SPoA)		
32. During ward teaching the atmosphere is relaxed	2.87	1.150
33. The school is good time-tabled	2.12	0.586
34. Cheating is a problematic issue at this school	1.85	0.764
35. During lectures the environment is comfortable	3.11	1.152
36. There are chances for me to improve my personal competencies	2.97	1.079
37. I feel socially relaxed in class	3.04	1.100
38. During class/seminars or tutorials the atmosphere is comfortable	2.93	1.081
39. I get the disappointing experience	2.83	1.140
40. I can focus well	2.73	1.074
41. The pleasure of the course is more significant than stress	2.68	1.083
42. As a learner the atmosphere encourages me	2.72	1.059
43. I feel capable myself that I can asking the questions I wish	3.06	1.094

Total mean score 32.91 Max subscale score 48		
Students' social self- perception (SSSP)		
44. Students who feel stressed have a good maintenance system here	3.05	1.053
45. I feel exhausted to love the course	2.43	0.851
46. I get bored in this course rarely	2.42	0.892
47. In this course I have good colleagues	2.11	0.580
48. I have a good social life	2.04	0.487
49. I rarely feel alone	2.09	0.567
50. My accommodation is pleasurable	2.17	0.556
Total mean score 16.31 Max subscale score 28		

Table II shows the descriptive analysis of individual items in accordance with subscale given in appendix 1 (Subscale for Interpretation given by McAleer and Roff). This study's results revealed that students at Lahore School of Nursing believed that cheating was problematic in their department (1.85) which is indicated by the interpretation of subscale scoring for SPoA, that atmosphere is terrible and there are problems in the atmosphere, the work of last year was a good training for the work of present year (1.95). There are items which show high mean score showing that students are clear about the learning goals of their course (3.27), teachers are worthy at giving feedback to their students (3.08), teachers give clear examples (3.29), atmosphere is comfortable in lectures (3.11), students feel socially relaxed in the classes (3.04), they feel capable for questioning (3.06), and students who are stressed have a good support system (3.05).

Table III: Global and Overall Mean Score from 110 Students

DREEM domain	Maximum score	Mean +S. D	Perception percentage
Students' perception of learning (SPoL)	48	31.62±11.505	65.8%
Students' perception of teachers (SpoT)	44	29.71±10.599	67.5%
Students' academic self-perception (SASP)	32	16.42±4.251	51.31%
Students' perceptions of atmosphere (SpoA)	48	32.91±12.362	68.5%

| Students' social self-perception (SSSP) | 28 | 16.31±4.986 | 58.3% |
| Global DREEM score | 200 | 126.97±43.703 | 62.3% |

The average score for DREEM is 126.97 out of 200 with SD of 43.703 and overall, 62.3 % (Table III), which means students think more positive and feel good about their learning environment. The average score of students' perceptions about learning was 31.62 out of 48 (65.8%) indicating a more optimistic thinking. Students' perception about teachers was 29.71 out of 44 max score (67.5%), indicating that students move in precise way or direction, students' self-perception of academic was 16.42 out of 32 (51.31%) indicates that student feel more positive. Students' perceptions about atmosphere were 32.91 out of 48 (68.5%), indicates highest good feelings. Overall average score for students' social self-perception was 16.31 out 28 (58.3%) shows that not too bad perceptions and thinking about social.

Table IV: Global and Overall Mean Score Regarding Gender

	Max subscale score	Males (n=19) Mean ±S. D	Females (n=91) Mean ±S. D	Perception percentage	
				Male	Female
Students' perception of learning (SPoL)	48	31.78±10.335	31.62±11.729	66.2%	65.8%
Students' perception of teachers (SPoT)	44	31.04±11.667	29.38±10.376	70.5%	66.8%
Students' academic self-perception (SASP)	32	17.16±4.467	16.25±4.156	53.6%	50.8%
Students' perceptions of atmosphere (SPoA)	48	34.52±12.773	32.47±12.472	71.9%	67.6%
Students' self-perception of social (SSSP)	28	16.22±5.631	16.33±4.748	57.9%	58.3%
Global DREEM score 200		130.72±44.873	126.05±43.481	64.02%	61.9%

Table IV shows that the overall mean score for males was higher than female students.

Appendix 1 (Subscale for Interpretation given by McAleer and Roff)
Students' Perception of Learning
0-12 Very Poor

13-24 Teaching is viewed negatively.
25-36 A more positive perception
37-48 Teaching highly thought of
Students' Perception of Teachers
0-11 Abysmal
12-22 In need of some retraining
23-33 Moving in the right direction.
34-44 Model Teachers
Students' academic self-perceptions
0-8 Feelings of total failure
9-16 Many negative aspects
17-24 Feeling more on the positive side.
25-32 Confident
Students' perception of atmosphere
0-12 A terrible environment
13-24 there are many issues which need changing.
25-36 A more positive atmosphere
37-48 A good feeling overall
Students' social self-perceptions
0-7 Miserable
8-14 not a nice place
15-21 not too bad
22-28 Very good socially
Perceptions of students in relation to CGPAs
All 110 students were divided into three categories according to their CGPAs. Students with CGPA >3.5 named as High achiever, between 3.0 and 3.5 named as Medium achiever and gaining CGPA < 3.0 named as Low achiever [9].
In this study 7/110 (6.4%) were higher achievers, 46/110 (41.8%) were medium achievers and 57/110 (51.8%) were low achievers. But there was no substantial change in their perceptions with different CGPAs.

Discussion
This study results show that students at Lahore school of Nursing believe that cheating is problematic in their institution (1.85) which is indicated by the interpretation of subscale scoring for SPoA that the atmosphere is terrible, training of last year was better than this year (1.95) which shows that students are clear about the learning goals of their course. Ugusman et al (2015) found that medical students' perceptions concerning educational atmosphere were more optimistic. Their results showed that scores of the students were 33.04/48, 29.68/44, 22.16/32, 33.11/48 and 17.62/28, showing that the learning or educational environment needed to be changed in future have

also been identified [10].

A study suggested that self-perceptions of the students about social interaction were positive. Perception about physical environment (63%) and perceptions about self- perception (63.5%) were not different from other three DREEM (Dundee Ready Educational Environment Measurements) factors. This shows that they had reached higher levels of intelligence because the highest scoring contributory area was educational self-perception (72.5%) [11].

Nosair, Murghani & Mostafa (2015) conducted a study which showed that the overall score was 113.4/200 (56.7%). Students of first year reported a higher overall significant level of perceptions (119.4/200) than students of second year (107.4/200) and third-year students (112.7/200), which concluded that students of first year considered their learning, academic and teaching environment to be more important than other students.

The percentage score for learning perception was substantially less for teachers' academic self-perception (52.14 with SD of 15.21 and P value <0.001), atmospheric perception was 51.21 with SD of 13.60 and P value <0.001. The social self-perception was 50.63 with SD of 13.90 P <0.010 which concluded that this institution needed change across all fields of the educational environment [12].

Learning environment has an important role to play in assessing the academic achievement and learning of students. There were 20.5/32 (64.11%) and 15.7/28 (56.36%), educational and social self-perceptions, respectively. The results suggest that medical science students generally have positive views about their learning environment, which reveals that it is necessary for course managers and teachers to make greater struggles to observe the concepts of instructional design to establish a suitable educational environment. There was no prominent relationship between CGPAs of students and their observations about learning environment [13].

Conclusion

Nursing students at the University of Lahore have overall positive perceptions about the learning environment at their institution. However, students recommend changes in all the domains of learning, such as teachers should set specific curriculum goals which provide a stress-free learning environment for students.

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