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PERCEIVED LEVEL OF TRANSITION SHOCK AMONG NURSING INTERNS IN PUBLIC SECTOR HOSPITALS OF LAHORE

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Abstract

Background: *Transition shock is a challenging and terrifying process including an extensive spectrum of physical, emotional, intellectual and psychological changes when newly graduated nurses work in a professional practice setting for the first time. The study aimed to explore the perceived level of transition shock among nursing interns in public sector hospitals of Lahore.*

Material and Methods: *A descriptive, cross sectional study was conducted among 247 nursing interns in public sector hospitals of Lahore. Data was collected using convenience sampling technique from December 2025 to January 2026. A pretested "Transition Shock Scale" was used for data collection, and data was analyzed with SPSS version 27 using descriptive statistics.*

Results: *The current study investigated an overall mean score of 2.79 which indicated that the nursing interns experienced a relatively moderate level of transition shock, particularly in areas related to conflict between theoretical and practical aspects, confusion regarding professional nursing values and overwhelming workload. Meanwhile, loss of social support was the dimension with the least favorable mean score.*

Conclusion: *The current study identified a moderate level of transition shock among nursing interns, primarily driven by conflicts between theory and practice. These results offer nursing managers and educators insightful information that may direct the development of nursing internship programs that help interns make smooth transitions to practice.*

INTRODUCTION:

Transition shock (TS) is defined as a challenging and terrifying process including an extensive spectrum of physical, emotional, intellectual and psychological changes when newly graduated nurses work in a professional practice setting for the first time (Duchscher, 2009; Lönn et al., 2022).

Nursing interns are nursing students participating in a clinical internship. They are crucial to mitigating the nursing human resources deficit as a vital human resource. In addition to being a crucial component of clinical education, nursing interns become ready for their intended professions as registered nurses via clinical internships (Hou et al., 2025a).

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Nursing internship is a transitional and crucial stage for becoming a registered nurse from a nursing student. According to Pakistan Nursing and Midwifery Council (PN&MC), after completing the fourth year of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree, internship program lasts for one year. Internship Program offers them opportunity to develop their skills as new nurses start their designated job (*Internship Policy*, 2021).

According to a literature, the most striking aspects of transition shock among nursing interns are conflict between theoretical and practical aspects (Chen et al., 2025), overwhelming practicum workloads (Zhao et al., 2024), disparity between personal and professional life (Ding et al., 2024), and compassion fatigue (Li et al., 2025). These challenges lead to transition shock, which is the psychological as well as physical experience of adopting to new roles, connections, responsibilities, and knowledge (Duchscher, 2009; Hampton et al., 2021; Weller-Newton et al., 2022).

During their internship, nursing interns frequently encounter several difficulties that might negatively impact career choices and lead to a waste of nursing school resources (Zhao et al., 2024). TS not only makes it challenging for nurses to adapt to their new duties, but it also reduces their level of engagement and job satisfaction and raises their turnover rate (Cao et al., 2021; Kim & Yeo, 2021; Ko & Kim, 2022). Transition shock has a substantial adverse impact on recently graduated nurse's ability for humanistic practice (Li et al., 2023).

According to several studies, nursing interns reported varied degrees of transition shock. The perceived degree of TS among nursing interns was moderate (Tang et al., 2025; Zhao et al., 2024), while nursing interns had the highest degree of transfer shock, according to (Ko & Kim, 2022).

According to pertinent studies, nursing interns may quit the profession at the completion of their clinical placement if they are failed to cope with transition shock (Cao et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021). That's why, in order to assist nursing interns in making a smooth transition from student to RN, it is crucial to comprehend the present situation and related aspects surrounding their transition shock.

The research studies on perceived level of TS among nursing interns in Pakistan are very limited, especially in Lahore city of Punjab. This study aimed to investigate the perceived level of transition shock among nursing interns in public sector hospitals of Lahore, in order to provide information that might direct the development of nursing internship programs that help interns make smooth transitions to practice.

METHODOLOGY:

A descriptive and cross sectional study was employed in seven public sector hospitals in Lahore city of Punjab, Pakistan. Participants were recruited from Government Teaching Hospital Shahdara, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Mayo Hospital, Lahore General Hospital, Jinnah Hospital, Services Hospital, and Children Hospital Lahore. Population of this study was all the nursing interns who were engaged in clinical rotations during their internship. Using Yamane's formula; n = N/1+N (e)^2, 247 was calculated as sample size while N (Known population) = 643 and e (Margin of error) = 5%. Data was collected between December 2025 and January 2026 using convenience sampling technique. Both male and female nursing interns and those who were willing to participate were included in this study.

A pretested "Transition Shock Scale" was selected to explore the perceived level of transition shock among nursing interns (Kim et al., 2017). The data collection instrument of this study consisted of a demographic part and transition shock scale. The demographic part consisted of participant's gender, age, reason to pursue major nursing, whether they want to be a nurse before internship and after internship, and whether they like nursing profession. The transition shock scale consisted of 6 subscales and 18 items. Subscales included conflict between theory and practice (having 3 items), overwhelming workload (having 4 items), loss of social support (having 2 items), shrinking relationship with co-workers (having 3 items), confusion in professional nursing values (having 4 items), and incongruity in work and personal life (having 2 items). A 4 point Likert

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scale was used to assess the perceived level of transition shock among nursing interns which included 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for agree, and 4 for strongly agree. Higher scores indicated a higher level of transition shock.

Questionnaire was distributed online among participants. Participants were informed of its objectives, and consent was obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity was considered and maintained during collection, analysis and interpretation of data. The separate codes were given to individual response for data analysis. All collected data was entered in laptop and analysis was done by using SPSS version 27. Frequency, percentage and mean were used for data analysis using descriptive statistics.

RESULTS:

The study revealed that majority of participants was female 204 (82.6%) with 20-25 years of age group 208 (84.2%). The study also investigated that the main reason to choose major nursing was self-decision 104 (42.1%). A clear majority of participants 215 (87%) reported that they wanted to be a nurse before internship, 159 (64.4%) reported that they want to be a nurse after internship and 161 (65.2%) participants reported they like nursing profession as shown in the table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of participants: (n= 247)

Variable		n	%
Participant's Gender:	Male	43	17.4
	female	204	82.6
Participant's Age:	20-25 years	208	84.2
	26-30 years	39	15.8
Reason to pursue major nursing	Self-decision	104	42.1
	School adjustment	1	0.4
	Parents' request	68	27.5
	Others recommendation	74	30
Did you want to be a nurse before nursing internship?	Yes	215	87
	No	20	8.1
	Unclear	12	4.9
Do you want to be a nurse after nursing internship?	Yes	159	64.4
	No	37	15
	Unclear	51	20.6
Whether like nursing profession?	Yes	161	65.2
	No	42	17
	Unclear	44	17.8

The current study investigated an overall mean score of 2.79 out of 4.00 which indicated that the nursing interns experienced a relatively moderate level of transition shock, particularly in areas related to conflict between theoretical and practical aspects (Mean=2.94), confusion regarding values of professional nursing (2.86) and overwhelming practicum workload (2.76). Meanwhile, loss of social support was the dimension with the least favorable mean score (2.70) as shown in the table 2.

Table 2. Transition shock among nursing interns: (n= 247)

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Conflict between theoretical and practical aspects	1	4	2.94
Confusion regarding professional nursing values	1	4	2.86

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Overwhelming workload	1	4	2.76
Shrinking relationship with co-workers	1	4	2.72
Incongruity in work and personal life	1	4	2.72
Loss of social support	1	4	2.71
Overall mean			**2.79**

DISCUSSION:

The current study explored the perceived level of transition shock (TS) among nursing interns in public sector hospitals of Lahore, Pakistan. The study demonstrated that nursing interns witnessed relatively moderate level of TS by reporting an overall mean score of 2.79. These results are higher than the previous study by Zhao et al. (2024) that investigated an overall mean score of 2.27 and not congruent (lower) with earlier investigation by Liu et al. (2026) that reported severe TS among nursing interns. These results offer nursing managers and educators insightful information that may direct the development of nursing internship programs that help interns make smooth transitions to practice.

Descriptive analysis showed the highest contributing domain was conflict between theoretical and practical aspects which was consistent with previous studies where the domain with the highest levels of TS was conflict between theoretical and practical aspects (Cao et al., 2021); Chen et al. (2025); (Kim & Kim, 2021). According to a prior qualitative study, the discrepancy between what they studied and how they actually provided nursing care caused nursing interns to experience more transition shock. Nursing interns may lack the confidence to care for patients because of the major disparities between what they learn in school and in the clinical setting Ko and Kim (2022).

Accordingly, it was advocated that a spectrum of training methods, including the case study approach and creating virtual wards, be used to lessen the TS experienced by nursing interns Graf et al. (2020). Additionally, nursing administrators and educators should focus on enhancing the clinical knowledge and skills of nursing interns in order to better prepare them for their professional roles Allen et al. (2022).

Moreover, confusion in professional nursing values was the domain with the second highest mean score after conflict between theoretical and practical aspects which is not in line with the earlier study by Chen et al. (2025); (Ding et al., 2024) that reported overwhelming workload as the domain with the second highest mean score. Nursing managers ought to direct attention to high transition shock since it may negatively impact the transfer to the position of a professional nurse, reduce job efficiency, and deplete psychological resources Hou et al. (2025b). This cross-sectional study was limited to selected hospitals in Lahore and self-reported data may affect the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, to further understand transition shock over time, future research should take consideration of longitudinal designs and involve larger sample from other hospitals throughout Pakistan to generalize its findings.

CONCLUSION:

The current study explored a moderate level of transition shock perceived by nursing interns in public sector hospitals of Lahore, primarily driven by conflicts between theory and practice. These findings underscore an urgent need for enhanced clinical mentorship and tailored orientation programs to bridge the discrepancy between academic education and clinical reality. These results offer nursing managers and educators insightful information that may direct the development of nursing internship programs that help interns make smooth transitions to practice.

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