

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT AND CLINICAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS

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Abstract

Background:

Part-time employment among undergraduate nursing students is a growing trend due to financial and personal needs. While employment may provide life skills and financial support, it can potentially interfere with academic and clinical learning especially the development of essential clinical skills.

Aim:

The study aimed to determine the association between part-time employment and clinical skill development among undergraduate nursing students in Swat, Pakistan.

Methods:

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in various nursing colleges in Swat. A total of 260 students were selected from a population of 700 using proportionate stratified random sampling. The sample size was calculated using the Raosoft calculator. Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising demographic data, employment status, and a clinical skill self-assessment tool. The data collection spanned four weeks, and analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27. Chi-square tests were used to assess associations, with significance set at $p < 0.05$.

Results:

Among the respondents, 44.6% were employed part-time, and 55.4% were not. A significant association was found between employment status and self-reported clinical skills ($\chi^2 = 18.92$, $p < 0.001$). Students not engaged in part-time work reported higher levels of clinical competence (40.3%) compared to those who were employed (15.5%).

Conclusion:

The study found that part-time employment may hinder the clinical skill development of undergraduate nursing students. Nursing institutions should provide academic support and counseling to help students balance employment and learning effectively.

INTRODUCTION

Part-time employment can be defined as paying work the students do during their education with the minimal number of hours per week (Verulava & Jorbenadze, 2022). As nursing is a practice-placed discipline, developing clinical skills requires obtaining the necessary practical competencies ensuring safe and effective practice, which entail patient assessment, communication skills, medication administration, and critical thinking skills (Joy & McSweeney-Flaherty, 2022). Undergraduate nursing students an undergraduate nursing student is an individual enrolled in a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program, who is required to manage academic, clinical, and occasionally work demands. It is important to understand the impact of part-time employment on their clinical competence to enhance their academic and professional success (Blackburn, 2024).

Part-time work among nursing students is becoming very common all over the world, as the cost of education and the cost of living continues to rise. Research has revealed that as many as 60 to 80 % of nursing trainees are part-time employees during their training (Fangonil-Gagalang et al., 2023). Many students in South Asia have to work part-time due to economic needs and family issues. Although working could help students learn to better manage their time and be exposed to real-life situations, there are still doubts about the possible adverse consequence of a job on their academic focus and skills in clinical environments. The commonness of this shared responsibility deserves an exploration of the impact it has on the practical training and clinical preparedness of students (Pérez & Urrejola-Contreras, 2024).

A number of studies have argued that part-time employment may have a negative and positive implication on clinical performance among nursing students. On the one hand, working in healthcare facilities can be a great introduction to clinical practices, collaboration, and working with patients thus supporting classroom and laboratory studies (Wang et al., 2024). Conversely, those with long work hours or non-clinical jobs might feel fatigued, have less study time, and be more stressed, and these aspects might negatively affect their learning

experiences and performance during the clinical placements. This effect can depend on the type of work, the number of working hours, and coping strategies of the student (Verulava & Jorbenadze, 2022).

Acquisition of clinical skill in undergraduate nursing programs is a formalized and sequential process demanding close attention, reflective learning, as well as mentorship in the clinical experience rotations. Objective, structured clinical examinations (OSCEs), real-life assessment and preceptor feedback are some typical examples of assessing clinical competence (Wise et al., 2022). Obligations of part-time jobs can override the time and energy students dedicate to such learning opportunities. The effect on patient safety and future professional performance becomes more at stake when the development of clinical skills becomes impaired. It is imperative to question the effect of part-time employment on clinical learning (Hobenu et al., 2025).

Although working in healthcare facilities has made some students feel more confident and more communicative, others struggle to focus on numerous tasks and are experiencing emotional burnout. According to a study conducted Lynch (2022), nursing students who work at least 16 hours weekly have an increased probability of lower clinical performance and being unsatisfied in the field of study. On the other hand, though, specific and part-time employment can solidify professional identity and improve learning when purposeful towards academic aims. This intricacy explains why further research must explore the particular character and setting of employment towards clinical proficiencies (Knight et al., 2021).

Another major concern raised by nursing faculty is that students may not be able to use clinical learning experiences when they are overburdened. Withdrawal during rotations, decreased vigilance, and a lack of face time with mentors may impede mastering skills. Moreover, clinical educators have to acknowledge the socioeconomic dynamics of students and offer advice can handle competing demands (Lönn et al., 2023). With this knowledge, nursing programs will be able to provide students with requirements to attain both academic and

financial objectives without having to neglect clinical competency as part-time work affects clinical development (Nabolsi et al., 2021).

This paper thus aims to investigate the connection between part-time work and the improvement of clinical skills among undergraduate students in nursing. The research seeks to establish the extent to which part-time work benefits or adversely affects the clinical performance of the students and the effects of various working patterns on this relationship. This association aims to offer insights into policy and curriculum development in nursing education, which will facilitate the best support of students, both academically and in terms of practice.

Methodology

It was carried out in different nursing colleges in Swat KPK, with the aim of studying the relationship between part-time work and clinical skills development in undergraduate students in nursing. The study was conducted using a descriptive cross-sectional research design to collect quantitative data by using a structured questionnaire to ask participants.

The intended population was represented by around 700 undergraduate nursing students who were enrolled in various nursing colleges within the Swat region. The Raosoft sample size calculator was used to compute the sample size with a confidence level of 95%, a margin of error of 5%, and a response distribution of 50 %. The minimum sample size calculated based on these parameters is 248 students. The final sample of 260 students was taken, based on proportionate stratified random sampling of each of the participating colleges, to guarantee reliability and take into consideration the likelihood of non-responses.

Participants were expected to meet one or more of the following inclusion criteria: be students in the second, third, or final semester of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree program, have participated in at least one clinical experience, and voluntarily be agreeable to participate in the study. The study excluded students on long leave, those whose records were not complete, or those who declined to sign an informed consent form.

Data Collection

The researchers have volunteered to collect data in the form of a self-administered focalized (Adopted) questionnaire to generate information in three distinct categories: demographic background, part-time job aspects (including working hours, occupational category, and working environment), and clinical competency development measured through a self-evaluation tool using a Likert-scale based instrument against core nursing competency constructs. The questionnaire was pre-tested on a small number of students to obtain clarity and reliability and the appropriate revisions were carried out.

Data collection period took four weeks with faculty coordinators to make accessibility to students easy. The research was ethically cleared by the Institutional Review Boards in the respective colleges, and all the participants gave written informed consent before the data was collected. Participant anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained.

Data Analysis

Data were entered and analyzed using SPSS version 27. Participant characteristics and responses were also summarized with descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Chi-square tests and was used to examine the association between part-time jobs and the development of clinical skills. The absolute level of significance was less than 0.05.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Zalan College of Nursing SWAT before the study commenced. All participants were provided with detailed information regarding the purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and risks associated with the study. **Written informed consent** was obtained from each participant, ensuring voluntary participation.

Results and Analysis

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The majority of participants (50.8%) were between the ages of 22–25 years, followed by 40.0% aged

18-21, and 9.2% above 25 years. Most of the respondents were male (80.8%), while females made up 19.2% of the sample. Regarding academic level, 36.2% were in their 3rd year, 33.8% in their

final year, and 30.0% in their 2nd year of study. This distribution ensured representation across all academic levels.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n = 260)

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age Group (years)		
18-21	104	40.0%
22-25	132	50.8%
>25	24	9.2%
Gender		
Male	210	80.8%
Female	50	19.2%
Year of Study		
2nd Year	78	30.0%
3rd Year	94	36.2%
Final Year	88	33.8%

Part-Time Employment Status of Participants

Among the participants, 44.6% were engaged in part-time employment, while 55.4% were not employed. Of those working part-time, the majority (51.8%) worked 8 hours or less per week, 44.8%

worked between 9-12 hours, and only 3.4% worked more than 12 hours weekly. This indicates that most employed students balanced limited working hours alongside their academic commitments.

Table 2: Part-Time Employment Status of Participants

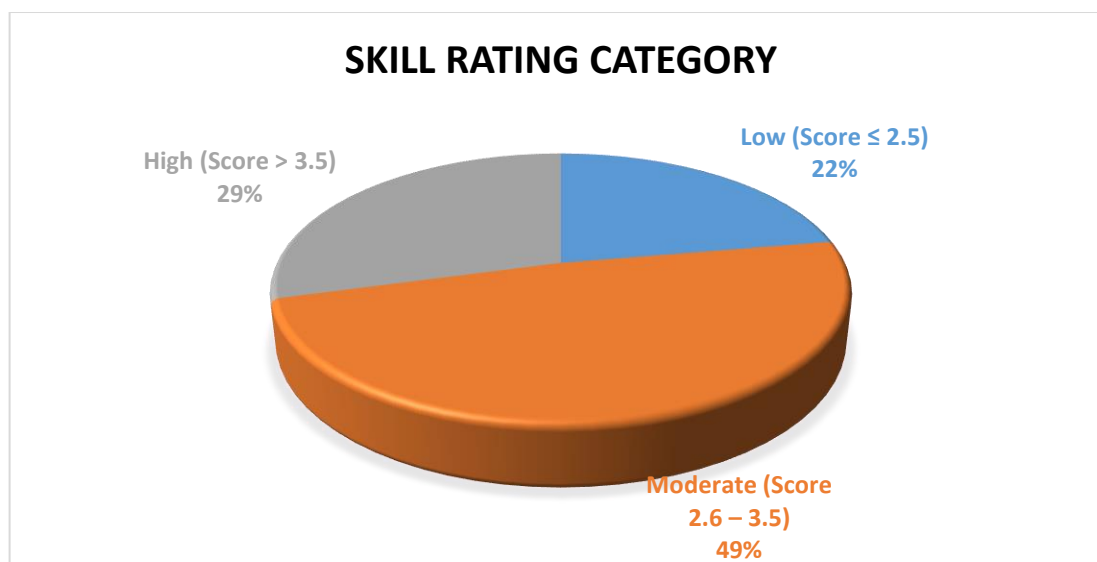
Employment Status	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Employed (Part-time)	116	44.6%
Not Employed	144	55.4%
Average Working Hours/Week (n=116)		
≤8 hours	60	51.8%
9-12 hours	52	44.8%
>12 hours	4	3.4%

Self-Reported Clinical Skill Level

The findings revealed that nearly half of the students (48.5%) rated their clinical skill development at a moderate level. About 29.2% of participants reported high clinical skills, while

22.3% perceived their skills as low. This distribution suggests variability in students' confidence and competence levels, potentially influenced by factors such as academic year and part-time employment.

Figure 1: Self-Reported Clinical Skill Level (n = 260)



Association between Part-Time Work and Clinical Skill Level

The cross-tabulation shows that among students engaged in part-time employment, 32.8% reported low clinical skills, and only 15.5% reported high skills. In contrast, among non-employed students,

just 13.9% reported low skills, while 40.3% reported high clinical skills. This suggests that part-time employment may be associated with reduced clinical skill development, whereas students without employment tend to report higher levels of clinical competence.

Table 3: Association between Part-Time Work and Clinical Skill Level

Employment Status	Low Skill	Moderate Skill	High Skill	Total (n)
Employed (n=116)	38	60	18	116
Not Employed (n=144)	20	66	58	144
Total	58	126	76	260

Chi-Square Test for Association

The chi-square analysis showed a statistically significant association between part-time employment status and clinical skill level ($\chi^2 = 18.92$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that employment

status had a meaningful impact on students reported clinical skill development. Specifically, students who were not employed were more likely to report higher clinical competence compared to those who held part-time jobs.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test for Association between Employment and Skill Development

Variable	Chi-Square (χ^2)	p-value	Interpretation
Employment Status × Clinical Skill Level	18.92	<0.001	Significant association ($p < 0.05$)

Discussion

A current study aimed at examining the relationship between part-time work and the development of clinical skills among undergraduate

nursing students in Swat, Pakistan. The results showed that the relationship was considered statistically significant, as the non-employed students indicated greater levels of clinical

competence than those who were employed. This is indicative of the fact that academic obligations and part-time employment could have an impact on the potential of nursing students in such a way that they will not be involved fully in skills acquisition when practicing during clinical training.

The results are in line with ve Önerileri (2022) study, in which the researchers found that academic satisfaction and clinical performance were lower in students whose work exceeded 16 hours per week. Likewise, Munangatire et al. (2023), identified that working part-time and more than 15 hours per week adversely influenced the study performance and a resulting acquisition of skills among nursing students. The present study justifies the idea that employment-related time limitations and fatigue might activate constraints to the availability, energy, and focus of students when they have to learn a clinical discipline.

Conversely, the study by Farokhzadian et al. (2022) that have indicated that part-time employment might be beneficial, especially when it involves students working in healthcare center environments. As an illustration, one study by Suliman et al. (2021) revealed that the clinical exposure of nursing students to patient care and team collaboration as healthcare assistants gained early exposure, which had a positive impact on their confidence and preparedness to their clinical placements. But in the present study, the majority of the students were engaged in non-clinical activities, hence they might not have contributed to the development of practice skills and instead may conflict with academic and clinical activities.

The other factor is the kind and hours of work. Overall, the study revealed that a considerable number of employed students were those who worked less than 12 hours weekly. Although hours of work may not be inconvenient, even these minor part-time jobs may lead to stress and the lack of time to study. This is in line with the study by Leaver et al. (2022), who proposed that even slight employment can have an influence on sleep patterns, motivation, and focus of the students undergoing clinical rotations.

This is also interesting in the gender disparity of the study, where due to male dominance, the percentage of participants exceeded 80. Although

this could be a local nursing school population, it contrasts with numerous other research studies worldwide where female nursing employees form the majority. There is no clarity on whether gender moderated the impacts of employment on clinical skills, and this becomes an area that needs more research. Nevertheless, the overall pattern remained fairly similar across demographic groups, which implies that the difference existed between the employment statuses, being directly measurable and independent of gender (Al-Osaimi & Fawaz, 2022). Moreover, students in their final year had a predicted tendency to report a higher level of clinical skills, perhaps owing to an accumulated experience. The trend, however, was stronger for the non-employed students, suggesting that continuous participation in clinical training would have more productive learning results in the long run. It agrees with the theory of experiential learning, which considers immersion and reflection as essential to mastering skills, which might be hampered by external work commitments (Ghorbani et al., 2023).

Finally, this paper contributes to a series of literature that demonstrates the mixed effects of part-time employment on nursing education. Although working can be a source of revenue and can teach a person aspects of soft skills, such as time management, working can also take away needed clinical education when it is not related to that healthcare practice. These results support the importance of the nursing educators and policy initiatives to provide working students with support systems, flexible scheduling, and career counseling to work-study balance without hurting their future prospective professional growth.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It was found in this study that part-time work is substantially related to the development of clinical skills in undergraduate nursing students. The results indicated that the students not employed part-time reported a greater rate of clinical competence than the students who had continued part-time employment during school. Although working can provide some advantages including better time management, financial stability, it also undermines the clinical training availability and

concentration of students, particularly in situations where the job is unrelated to the field of healthcare or working more than is manageable. Such findings point to the significance of investigating the full repercussions of work on the academic and clinical performance of students.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed. To begin with, the nursing institutions need to facilitate the students who decide to work part-time by offering career counseling and balancing work and studies by managing their workloads. Second, the learner is advised to take part-time jobs in fields of healthcare environments, which can serve as a positive reinforcement of clinical exposure and education. Thirdly, students should ensure that faculty tracks their progress in clinical practice carefully and explains to them who is at risk of lagging behind as a result of tiredness or time limitations imposed by employment through employment. Moreover, curricular designers ought to accommodate that working students have flexible arrangements or part-time academics. Lastly, the longitudinal and interventional studies to investigate the long-term impacts of student employment on clinical skills and professional preparedness are suggested.

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