

ROLE TRANSITION EXPERIENCES OF NEWLY GRADUATED NURSING STUDENTS (NURSING INTERNEE); A QUANTITATIVE CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY AT MMC MARDAN

Absheen Rahman^{*1}, Asad Ullah², Zuhra Shakir³, Marwa Gohar⁴, Muhammad Ismail⁵, Naveed Ullah Khan⁶, Humaid Ullah Anwar⁷

^{*1,2,3,4,5,7,8} Medical Teaching Institute, College of Nursing, Bacha Khan Medical College, Mardan, Pakistan
⁶Lecturer in Emergency Care Technology, Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat, KPK

¹absheenrahman270@gmail.com, ²asadullah652002@gmail.com, ³zuhrajabeen2024@gmail.com, ⁴marwagohar2018@gmail.com, ⁵ismailkn8890@gmail.com, ⁶naveed.bhai.9.com@gmail.com, ⁸humaidkhan033@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: *

Absheen Rahman

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17786927>

Received
09 October 2025

Accepted
10 November 2025

Published
29 November 2025

ABSTRACT

Background: The transition from academic training to independent clinical practice, which is frequently characterized by reality shock and increased emotional and professional demands, presents substantial challenges for recently graduated nurses. This shift is acknowledged as a crucial factor in determining competence, retention, and long-term job satisfaction on a global scale.

Objectives: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the role transition experiences of nursing interns at Mardan Medical Complex Hospital in Mardan, Pakistan.

Methodology: 137 recently graduated nursing students were chosen by convenient sampling using a descriptive cross-sectional design. A self-modified questionnaire that was adapted from earlier research was used to collect the data, and a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.75 confirmed internal consistency. Non-parametric tests were used because the normality assessment using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests revealed p -values < 0.001 , indicating a non-normal data distribution.

Results: According to the findings, the majority of participants were male, between the ages of 24 and 26, single, and had CGPAs between 3.0 and 3.5. The majority of respondents agreed they received sufficient orientation, acquired the necessary clinical skills, effectively prioritized patient care, and felt competent in patient education, all of which contributed to positive overall perceptions of clinical competency and organizational readiness. Despite the fact that 40.1% of participants reported feeling stressed during the transition, they expressed strong confidence in their ability to make moral decisions, communicate effectively across disciplines, and be prepared to the transition program. There were no significant gender differences in competency ($U = 1957.0$, $p = 0.766$) or organizational skills ($U = 1840.5$, $p = 0.401$) according to Mann-Whitney U -tests, and there was no significant association between CGPA and competency ($H = 2.222$, $p = 0.528$) or management skills ($H = 3.808$, $p = 0.283$) according to Kruskal-Wallis tests.

Conclusion: These results imply that nursing interns generally believe they are clinically competent and organizationally prepared, supported by structured orientation and teamwork, even though they are under stress. According to the study's findings, although role transition is still difficult, new nurses may find it easier and feel more confident if mentorship, clinical support systems, and organized orientation programs are strengthened.

INTRODUCTION

Newly graduated nurses experience some of the highest turnover rates within the healthcare

workforce, which further intensifies the global nursing shortage. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the international demand for healthcare professionals will continue to rise through 2030, making the retention of newly graduated nurses (NGNs) increasingly important (1). However, despite the growing need for nurses, healthcare institutions remain cautious about recruiting NGNs due to concerns regarding their clinical readiness, competence, and ability to adapt to professional roles(2).

Clinical experience is a fundamental pillar of nursing education, yet many newly graduated Nursing Students (Nursing Internees) struggle to integrate into real hospital environments. This challenge is often described as “reality shock,” a concept referring to the difficulties students face when transitioning from theoretical classroom learning to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of clinical practice. This transition exposes students to high-pressure situations—such as responding to patient needs, navigating mentor and supervisor expectations, working under strict time limits, and engaging in interprofessional communication all of which can affect their learning, performance, and emotional well-being (3,4).

Several studies have explored the nature of this transition. One study identified recurring themes among nursing students, including facing unbearable realities of clinical work, recognizing the gap between theory and practice, and experiencing fear of professional inadequacy (5,6). These themes highlight the emotional vulnerability students feel during their early clinical exposures, often resulting in uncertainty about their competence and professional identity. Support from educators and clinical mentors plays a major role in reducing transition-related stress. Students who perceive greater trust, encouragement, and supportive supervision from faculty experience significantly lower levels of reality shock and develop a stronger professional self-concept (7). Supportive learning environments—characterized by constructive feedback, psychological reassurance, and accessible mentorship—have been shown to ease the emotional burden associated with role transition (8).

In response to growing awareness of transition shock, researchers have suggested several strategies to strengthen students’ preparedness for clinical practice. Simulation-based education, in

particular, has been recognized as an effective tool for enhancing confidence, clinical reasoning, and resilience. By providing realistic yet controlled learning scenarios, simulations help students navigate complex clinical situations before entering actual hospital settings (9). Additionally, structured orientation programs, preceptor ship models, and mentorship initiatives are commonly recommended to help students develop coping mechanisms and achieve smoother transitions into professional roles (10).

Unmanaged transition shock not only affects individual performance but may also influence team dynamics, patient safety, and long-term retention in the nursing workforce. High transition shock has been associated with increased stress, reduced clinical efficiency, and a greater likelihood of errors, underscoring the need for targeted interventions and institutional support systems (11).

METHODOLOGY:

A descriptive cross-sectional study has been conducted among newly graduated nursing students (nursing interns) at Mardan Medical Complex Hospital, Mardan, Pakistan. A convenient sampling technique was employed, and a sample size of 137 participants was determined using the Rao soft sample size calculator, considering a 5% margin of error, a 95% confidence level, and a population of 210. Newly graduated Nursing Internees were included, while undergraduate students of 1st–4th year, post-RN students, and those unwilling to participate were excluded. Data were collected using a self-Modified questionnaire taken from (1) whose reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.75. The data were analyzed in SPSS, and normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests, both yielding p -values <0.001 , indicating non-normal distribution; thus, non-parametric tests were applied.

RESULTS:

The demographic findings of the study showed that among the 137 participating Nursing Internees, the majority were between 24–26 years of age (65%), followed by 20–23 years (31.4%), while only a small proportion fell between 27–29 years (2.9%) and above 30 years (0.7%). Most of the participants were male (68.6%), whereas females accounted for 31.4%. In terms of marital

status, 86.1% were single, 13.1% were married, and only 0.7% were divorced. Regarding their living arrangements, 53.3% lived with their families while 46.7% lived away from home. Academic achievement based on CGPA revealed

that 59.1% of the participants fell within the 3.0–3.5 range, followed by 20.4% within 2.5–3.0, while 15.3% had a high CGPA of 3.5–4.0, and only 5.1% had a CGPA below 2.5.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS DATA

Variables	Frequency (%)
Age of the students	
20-23	43 (31.4%)
24-26	89 (65.0%)
27-29	4 (2.9%)
Above 30	1 (0.7%)
Gender	
Male	94 (68.6%)
Female	43 (31.4%)
Marital status	
Single	118 (86.1%)
Married	18 (13.1%)
Divorced	1 (0.7%)
Living condition	
Away from family	64 (46.7%)
With family	73 (53.3%)
Academic achievements (CGPA)	
Bad (less than 2.5)	7 (5.1%)
Less (2.5 to 3.0)	28 (20.4%)
Average (3.0 to 3.5)	81 (59.1%)
High (3.5 to 4.0)	21 (15.3%)

The distribution of responses related to clinical competency (Q1–Q5) indicated that for orientation and communication, 34.3% of participants agreed they received proper orientation and 18.2% strongly agreed, while 23.4% disagreed and 5.8% strongly disagreed. For information proficiency (Q2), 43.8% agreed that the information given enhanced their skills, and 11.7% strongly agreed, whereas 19.7% each reported being neutral or disagreeing. Regarding prioritization of patient care (Q3), 41.6% agreed

and 22.6% strongly agreed, with only 5.1% strongly disagreeing. Skill development (Q4) was endorsed by 43.1% who agreed and 16.8% who strongly agreed, while smaller proportions expressed disagreement. Similarly, in terms of confidence in patient education (Q5), 41.6% agreed and 22.6% strongly agreed, indicating generally positive perceptions of their ability to deliver health information.

B S. N o	Questions	Strongly disagree Frequency (%)	Disagree Frequency (%)	Neutral Frequency (%)	Agree Frequency (%)	Strongly agree Frequency (%)
Q1	I received proper orientation from the ward in-charge of organization and communication channels.	8 (5.8%)	32 (23.4%)	25 (18.2%)	47 (34.3%)	25 (18.2%)
Q2	The information given fosters my skills and knowledge to succeed in transitioning into the orientation program.	7 (5.1%)	27 (19.7%)	27 (19.7%)	60 (43.8%)	16 (11.7%)

Q3	On the basis of information given I can prioritize patient care efficiently.	7 (5.1 %)	20 (14.6%)	22 (16.1%)	57 (41.6%)	31 (22.6%)
Q4	I got a chance to develop the skills required in the ward/ unit.	5 (3.6%)	24 (17.5%)	26 (19.0%)	59 (43.1%)	23 (16.8%)
Q5	I feel competent to deliver health information to the patients and educating them accordingly.	7 (5.1%)	17 (12.4%)	25 (18.2%)	57 (41.6%)	31 (22.6%)

Section B Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of variables (Q1 to Q5) representing Assessment of Distribution of clinical competency.

In response to questions about management and organizational skills (Q6–Q10), 40.1% agreed that their transition was stressful and 10.2% strongly agreed, while 25.5% disagreed. For responsibility alignment (Q7), 41.6% agreed and 8% strongly agreed that their competence matched the responsibilities they were given. 24.1% disagreed. Ethical decision-making (Q8) was reported positively by 42.3% who agreed and 16.8% who

strongly agreed, with minimal strong disagreement. Effective interaction with multidisciplinary teams (Q9) was affirmed by 46% agreeing and 25.5% strongly agreeing, while only 1.5% strongly disagreed. Lastly, readiness and confidence through the transition program (Q10) were supported by 40.1% agreeing and 22.6% strongly agreeing, with lower proportions expressing disagreement.

S. No	Questions	Strongly disagree Frequency (%)	Disagree Frequency (%)	Neutral Frequency (%)	Agree Frequency (%)	Strongly agree Frequency (%)
Q6	I feel that my transition experience in the clinical area is stressful.	13 (9.5%)	35 (25.5%)	20 (14.6%)	55 (40.1%)	14 (10.2%)
Q7	The expected responsibility is matching my competence.	8 (5.8%)	33 (24.1%)	28 (20.4%)	57 (41.6%)	11 (8.0%)
Q8	I am confident in having ethical nursing decision making.	3 (2.2 %)	27 (19.7%)	26 (19.0%)	58 (42.3%)	23 (16.8%)
Q9	I can interact with multi/interdisciplinary team effectively.	2 (1.5%)	16 (11.7%)	21 (15.3%)	63 (46.0%)	35 (25.5%)
Q10	The transition program makes me ready and confident with my knowledge and skills to integrate effort into the team.	6 (4.4%)	18 (13.1%)	27 (19.7%)	55 (40.1%)	31 (22.6%)

Section B Table 2: Frequency and Percentage of variables (Q5 to Q10) representing Assessment of Distribution of Management/ Organization skills

Further analysis of composite scores showed that gender did not significantly influence clinical competency or management/organization skills, as indicated by Mann-Whitney U values of 1957.0 ($p = 0.766$) for Q1–Q5 and 1840.5 ($p = 0.401$) for Q6–Q10. Similarly, academic achievement (CGPA) showed no significant differences in competency or organizational skills, with Kruskal-Wallis H values of 2.222 ($p = 0.528$) for Q1–Q5 and 3.808 ($p = 0.283$) for Q6– Q10. Overall, the

results indicate positive perceptions of competency and organizational readiness among Nursing Internees, with no notable differences across gender or academic performance levels.

Variables	Compute Questions	Mann-Whitney U-value	P-value
Assessment of Distribution of clinical competency	Q1+Q2+Q3+Q4+Q5	1957.0	0.766
Assessment of Distribution of Management/ Organization skills	Q6+Q7+Q8+Q9+Q10	1840.5	0.401

Section B Table 3: Mann-Whitney U-test and p-value of Compute Questions (Q1 to Q10) with Gender.

Variables	Compute Questions	Kruskal-Wallis H-value	P-value
Assessment of Distribution of clinical competency	Q1+Q2+Q3+Q4+Q5	2.222	0.528
Assessment of Distribution of Management/ Organization skills	Q6+Q7+Q8+Q9+Q10	3.808	0.283

Section B Table 4: Kruskal-Wallis H-test and p-value of Compute Questions (Q1 to Q10) with Academic achievements (CGPA).

DISCUSSION:

The findings of this study provide important insights into the role transition experiences of Nursing Internees at MMC Mardan. The demographic profile showed that most participants were young, single, and academically competent, which aligns with the expected characteristics of newly graduated nurses entering clinical practice. The gender distribution, dominated by males (68.6%), reflects the shifting enrollment patterns within nursing institutions in Pakistan. Despite differences in gender or academic achievement, the analysis showed no significant effects on clinical competency or management skills, indicating that transition experiences were relatively uniform across groups. Overall, the study revealed positive perceptions of clinical competency, particularly in areas such as prioritization of care, confidence in patient education, and skill development. A large proportion agreed or strongly agreed that information provided during orientation enhanced their skills, while many felt competent in delivering patient education. This aligns with previous studies showing that final clinical practicums and structured orientations help prepare students for their professional roles (12). The finding that most Nursing Internees felt they

had the opportunity to develop required clinical skills also supports (13), who described that while some interns experience anxiety due to unmastered skills, structured clinical exposure enhances performance when appropriately implemented.

Despite positive competency perceptions, a considerable proportion of participants (40.1%) reported that their transition was stressful, consistent with literature describing transition shock as a universal phenomenon among new graduates (14)(15). As noted by (16), newly graduated nurses often experience moderate levels of transition shock, especially in the first year of practice, due to limited clinical experience and a sudden shift in responsibilities. The agreement among respondents that responsibilities matched their competence suggests that MMC Mardan provided reasonable role expectations, which is supported by (17), who found that newly graduated nurses possess a good level of professional competence but still require continuous support

Furthermore, high confidence levels in ethical decision-making and interaction with interdisciplinary teams demonstrate progressive development of professional identity. This aligns with (18), which highlighted that structured

reflection, trust, and supportive environments enhance professional development. The strong agreement in teamwork competencies also reflects the importance of mentorship and collaborative environments, as cited in (FF), where lack of support contributes to turnover intention.

The finding that gender and CGPA had no significant influence on competency or leadership skills reinforces (19), which emphasized that workforce shortages and environmental factors play a more critical role in shaping expectations than academic performance alone. This suggests that transition experiences are more influenced by organizational culture than by personal or academic background.

In relation to (20), the participants' positive perceptions of readiness and confidence support the notion that transition is an evolutionary and transformative process. MMC Mardan structured orientation and team integration efforts appear to have played a role in helping interns adjust to the demands of clinical practice. However, similar to (21), some stress and feelings of inadequacy were still evident, indicating that although the transition is manageable, it remains emotionally challenging.

Overall, the results support the broader literature suggesting that while newly graduated nurses often struggle with stress, role ambiguity, and lack of confidence, supportive educational and clinical environments significantly improve their transition outcomes. Strengthened mentorship, structured orientation, ongoing supervision, and reflective opportunities may further reduce transition shock and enhance the readiness of future Nursing Internees as they move into professional roles.

CONCLUSION:

According to the study's findings, recently graduated MMC Mardan nursing interns generally view their transition into clinical practice favorably, especially in terms of clinical competency, patient care prioritization, communication, and skill development. Despite experiencing a significant amount of stress during the transition period, they nevertheless showed confidence in their ability to make moral decisions, collaborate with others, and be prepared to fit in with clinical settings. The lack of notable variations between genders and academic achievement indicates that organizational support, rather than personal traits, shapes transition experiences. As new graduates enter professional nursing roles, strengthening

mentorship structures, enhancing orientation programs, and guaranteeing ongoing supervision may lessen transition-related stress and further boost their confidence and readiness.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In order to better assist recently graduated nursing interns as they transition into clinical practice, it is advised that nursing schools and healthcare facilities enhance their structured orientation programs. During the first few months of clinical exposure, clinical units should implement formal mentorship and preceptorship models to offer ongoing direction, criticism, and emotional support. To boost confidence and lessen transition shock, internship programs should incorporate regular workshops on stress management, communication techniques, moral decision-making, and teamwork. Hospital management should make sure that interns' clinical responsibilities match their level of competence and progressively advance as their abilities grow. In order to foster professional development and improve self-awareness, debriefings and reflective practice sessions should be promoted. It is advised to conduct more research to examine long-term transition outcomes and to pinpoint organizational elements that affect internship experiences in various clinical settings in Pakistan.

REFERENCES:

1. Safiyamasoudobaid Σ , Habsi A, Mohammed H, Hamdia K, Khamis M. Role Transition Experiences of Newly Graduated Nursing Students in Oman-a Cross-Sectional Study. *Int J Early Child Spec Educ (INT-JECSE)* [Internet]. 2022;14(August):2317-28. Available from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/362508005>
2. Paul S, Kumar S. Perception of Role Change and Challenges Identified during Internship by Nursing Interns. *Nurs J India*. 2024;CXV(06):267-70.
3. Cui F, Jin Y, Wang R, Zhang J, Jin C, Xu F, et al. Exploring nursing students' reality shock and professional behavioral development in clinical practice: a hermeneutic phenomenological study. *Front Med*. 2025;12(March):1-13.

4. Salarvand S, Mousavi MS, Pournia Y. Nursing Students' Experiences of Role Transition in the Internship Program during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Heal Educ Heal Promot.* 2022;10(1):137-44.
5. Ko YJ, Kim SY. Transition Shock Experience of Nursing Students in Clinical Practice: A Phenomenological Approach. *Healthc.* 2022;10(4):1-11.
6. Xiong W, Zhu A. Psychological experience among internship nurses at different internship stages: A qualitative study. *Nurs Open.* 2023;10(1):328-36.
7. Kim JS. Relationships between reality shock, professional self-concept, and nursing students' perceived trust from nursing educators: A cross-sectional study. *Nurse Educ Today [Internet].* 2020;88(February):104369. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2020.104369>
8. Moreljwab MH, Mokhtar AMF, Idress EA, Mohamed AI, Alanazi AK, Hassan ASY, et al. Challenges and Difficulties During the Nursing Internship Program Using 5 Domains: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Adv Med Educ Pract.* 2025;16:341-55.
9. Elslemy MM, Bahgat RS, Baraka NI. Tanta Scientific Nursing Journal (Print ISSN 2314 5595) (Online ISSN 2735 5519). Eff Implement Educ Interv mother's Knowl Pract regarding Respir Probl Child with Cereb Palsy. 2023;28(1):12-30.
10. Abd Elfatah AA, Adam SM, Abrabu HM, Abd Elghafar GM. Assessing Perception of Role Transition among Nurse Interns. *Evidence-Based Nurs Res.* 2021;3(4):7.
11. Khalifa SS, Adam SM. The Effect of Transition Training Program on Nurse Interns Engagement. 2025;1-19.
12. Kaihlanen AM, Elovainio M, Haavisto E, Salminen L, Sinervo T. Final clinical practicum, transition experience and turnover intentions among newly graduated nurses: A cross sectional study. *Nurse Educ Today [Internet].* 2020;84(May 2019):104245. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2019.104245>
13. Moustafa SS, Mohamed R, Ebrahim R. Problems and Obstacles Facing Nursing Interns and Its Relation to Their Performance At Clinical Setting: A Comparative Study. *Am J Nurs Sci [Internet].* 2018;7(6):304-13. Available from: <http://www.sciencepublishinggroup.com/j/ajns>
14. Chen F, Liu Y, Wang X, Dong H. Transition shock, preceptor support and nursing competency among newly graduated registered nurses: A cross-sectional study. *Nurse Educ Today [Internet].* 2021;102:104891. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2021.104891>
15. Woo MWJ, Newman SA. The experience of transition from nursing students to newly graduated registered nurses in Singapore. *Int J Nurs Sci [Internet].* 2020;7(1):81-90. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnss.2019.11.002>
16. Tong Y, Wang T, Tong S, Tang Z, Mao L, Xu L, et al. Relationship among core competency, self-efficacy and transition shock in Chinese newly graduated nurses: a cross-sectional study. *BMJ Open.* 2024;14(4):1-10.
17. Kukkonen P, Koskinen S, Fuster-Linares P, Istomina N, Leino-Kilpi H, Löyttyniemi E, et al. The professional competence of newly graduated nurses in the transition phase as assessed by nurse managers: a descriptive cross-sectional multi-national study. *J Res Nurs.* 2025;30(3):210-29.
18. Lindblom M, Högländer J, Letterstål A, Södersved Källestedt ML, Asp M, Widarsson M. Reflection Supports Newly Graduated Nurses' Professional Development When Transitioning Into Practice. *J Clin Nurs.* 2025;34(7):2948-60.
19. Koppitz A, Spichiger F, Keller-Senn A, Bana M, Huber C, Christie D, et al. Comparison of student nurses' expectations and newly qualified nurses' experiences regarding clinical practice: A secondary analysis of a cross-sectional survey. *J Adv Nurs.* 2025;81(1):237-48.
20. Duchscher JB. A process of becoming: The stages of new nursing graduate professional role transition. *J Contin Educ Nurs.* 2008;39(10):441-50.
21. Mohammed S, Elnemr M, Mohamed G, Mostafa A, Elsayed W, Helal H. Perception of Role Transition among Intern Nurses at Menofia University. *Int J Nov Res Healthc Nurs [Internet].* 2020;7(1):71-81. Available from: www.noveltyjournals.com