

Perceptions of Employability Skills of Newly Qualified Nursing Graduates from the University of Namibia

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Abstract

The period of transition from being a student nurse to a professional nurse remains the most traumatic and stressful period for newly qualified nursing graduates. These graduates are expected to adapt to the working environment while they are still under scrutiny to see whether they have acquired sufficient knowledge, skills and confidence to practise safe nursing care. This study aimed to determine and describe the perceptions of employers regarding the employability skills of newly qualified nursing graduates from the School of Nursing at the University of Namibia. A total of 168 nursing service managers from four public hospitals and two private hospitals were invited to participate in the study during 2019. Altogether 114 (68%) participants completed a self-administered questionnaire. The findings of this study showed a relatively low rating of 37 (32.5%) participants who had observed weak performance in the skills of newly qualified nursing graduates regarding invasive procedures and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). These skills were mostly rated as poor, fair or average. There was no association between observing poor skills with invasive procedures and the number of employees' years of experience, $\chi^2(24) \geq 24.070$, $p=0.239$. Findings in this study call for well-articulated plans from nurse educators and faculty members to implement immediate actions to address the issues highlighted in this study.

Keywords: perceptions; employers; graduates; employability; nurse manager; skills

Introduction

Globally, there are many different reasons to go to universities, such as a natural love of the course to be studied and the opportunity to experience a different way of life. Furthermore, people go to higher institutions of learning in order to improve their job opportunities—and nursing is not an exception (Low 2011). Mason, Williams, and



Cranmer (2009) claim that employability refers to the so-called “work willingness,” which means that a graduate possesses skills, knowledge and understanding that will contribute to an organisation’s goals in a creative manner. In addition, in the field of nursing, newly qualified nursing graduates need to adjust to norms and standards, and evaluate the quality of their education. As per Murray, Daly, and Stewart (2018), employability is a set of achievements, skills, understanding and personal attributes that make newly qualified nursing graduates more likely to find employment and successful in their chosen careers. These authors further reported that, despite the highly valued and good academic qualifications of a student, it is no longer enough to guarantee employment for the newly qualified nursing graduates. Employability skills are also referred to as generic skills, capabilities or key competencies (Messum et al. 2016). In Australia, there is a sense of disappointment with the product of contemporary nursing programmes, so that newly qualified nursing graduates are often described as “not possessing appropriate skills” by clinical colleagues (Roy 2016).

New healthcare professional graduates, particularly newly qualified nursing graduates, are in a very competitive environment for jobs. The highlighted dilemma for universities that offer education for healthcare professions, is that the skills and requirements for those professions are very specific and are identified within regulatory and professional standards. Therefore, in our world of economic crises, even an excellent degree from a higher institution does not guarantee a graduate’s employment (Williamson 2015). Employability skills are referred to as core skills and qualities needed in any job—also sometimes called job-readiness skills—therefore they make someone employable. Almost all managers are looking for employees with employability skills (Doyle 2018). According to Minten and Forsyth (2014), employability is the capability of a person to move independently within the labour market and to realise potential through sustainable employment.

Employers require employees to have “soft” or non-technical skills (Mansour and Dean 2016). There is a big variation between different healthcare systems in terms of patient safety and quality of care; mostly due to incompetent nurses making independent decisions regarding assessments of hospitalised patients. Healthcare delivery is becoming more complex and the current shortage of nurses is causing an increasing number of hospitals to recruit newly qualified nursing graduates into speciality areas such as the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), which needs a specialised professional (Karahan, Törüner, Abbasoğlu, and Ceylan 2012). The skills programmes of the School of Nursing and skills requirements of clinical facilities need to be consistently adjusted and strictly coordinated in order to enable the transition of newly qualified nursing graduates to the labour market (Pavelka 2014). This means that the School of Nursing should be in constant contact with hospitals that offer jobs to graduates and should know which competencies are needed for certain work positions. Employers are also expected to thoroughly define the skills and competencies required in certain positions (Pavelka 2014). The period of transition from being a student nurse to a professional nurse is a most traumatic and stressful period. While the newly qualified nursing graduates are

expected to adapt to the working environment, they are still under scrutiny to determine whether they have the required knowledge, skills and confidence (Sonmez 2016). Despite strong evidence that more education can enhance employment opportunities for individuals, unemployment remains high for newly qualified nursing graduates with advanced degrees, particularly in developing countries (Mansour and Dean 2016).

A study conducted by Naanda (2018) revealed that, in general, most employers require workers with the following key employability skills: communication, technology, teamwork, problem-solving skills and improving own learning and skills. On completion of the nursing training, newly qualified nursing graduates are expected to be competent, innovative, capable of independent decision-making and taking responsibility for the provision of healthcare (Motsa and Malesela 2018). As a result, the assumption is that newly qualified nursing graduates are ready and competent to be deployed to clinics and other healthcare facilities (Motsa and Malesela 2018).

Problem Statement

Training is meant to prepare nurses for a future in nursing care. They are to be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to enable them to perform nursing care with dedication, compassion and as per their scope of practice. The University of Namibia is the premier institution of higher education in the country, which graduates large numbers of professional nurses each year. However, it has been observed that some newly qualified nursing graduates (trained at the University of Namibia) are lacking the necessary skills and attitudes and are not able to perform/deliver nursing care as required (MoHSS 2010; MoHSS 2013). Consequently, newly qualified nursing graduates do not perform good nursing care (MoHSS 2010; MoHSS 2013). Lacking such skills and correct attitudes has the potential to negatively impact the care that is rendered to patients and this is likely to tarnish the image of the training institution and that of the nursing profession in general. This state of affairs is likely to create a situation where the public will lose trust and confidence in the nursing profession in respect of healthcare delivery. Nursing graduates from the School of Nursing are employed in all sectors of the community. A significant percentage is also practising in the private sector, and it is reasonable to assume that this tendency will increase. Although all nurses—whether from the private or public sector—are regulated by the same regulatory body, there are subtle differences in the interpretation of the scope of practice. This might imply that the private sector may have specific perceptions on the skills required from newly qualified nursing graduates, and may also assess them with these perceptions in mind. The researcher is not aware of any study conducted on the perceptions of the employers regarding the employability skills of newly qualified nursing graduates from the School of Nursing at the University of Namibia. Empirical evidence in this regard is needed to assist stakeholders in finding a common solution to the problem. This study was undertaken to determine and describe these perceptions.

Research Questions

The above phenomenon has led to the formulation of the research questions:

- What are the perceptions of employees regarding the employability skills of newly qualified nursing graduates from the School of Nursing at the University of Namibia?
- What are the recommendations to inform the School of Nursing on ways in which to improve the employability skills of newly qualified nursing graduates at the University of Namibia?

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to determine and describe perceptions of employers regarding the employability skills of newly qualified nursing graduates from the School of Nursing at the University of Namibia.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

- Determine the perceptions of the employers regarding the employability skills of newly qualified nursing graduates from the School of Nursing at the University of Namibia.
- Compare the perceptions of employers' years of experience regarding the employability of newly qualified registered nurses from the School of Nursing at the University of Namibia.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

This research was a cross-sectional study and employed a quantitative descriptive approach. The advantage of a quantitative approach is that the larger sample sizes used in quantitative research often make conclusions from the data generated to be generalised (Brink, Van der Walt, and Van Rensburg 2018). This study was also descriptive, as the perceptions of employers are described.

Settings

The study was carried out in four public hospitals and two private hospitals. The identified public hospitals for this study were: Rundu Intermediate Hospital; Intermediate Hospital Oshakati; Katutura Intermediate Hospital; and Windhoek National Referral Hospital. The identified private hospitals for this study were: Roman Catholic Hospital and Medi Clinic Private Hospital. The selected hospitals were selected because they are perceived to be recruiting a large number of newly graduate registered nurses annually.

Study Population and Sampling Strategy

This study population comprised all nursing managers or unit heads working at the four public hospitals and two private hospitals. The target groups were all nursing managers or unit heads from the identified hospitals. The participants were randomly selected from the list of nurse managers, as well as nurses in charge of different units. This study consisted of 132 nurse managers from four public sector hospitals and 36 nurse managers from two private sector hospitals, giving a total population of $n=168$.

Research Instrument and Data Collection Procedures

A self-administered questionnaire was developed in consultation with lecturers in the department of nursing. This questionnaire was used to collect information from respondents. The research instrument was prepared in English, consisting of four sections. Section A of the questionnaire covered socio-demographic data; Section B focused on professional conduct; Section C touched on practical skills; and Section D covered aspects of managerial skills. The format of the questionnaire was based on an ordinal rating scale, ranging from 1–5, with a score of 1 being the least desirable and a score of 5 the most desirable. The focus of the questionnaire was thus on the perceptions of the stakeholders as employers of successful graduates. The questionnaire was distributed by the researcher during the period of October 2019.

Data Analysis

The study determines the perception of employers regarding the employability of newly qualified nursing graduates from the School of Nursing at the University of Namibia by asking respondents to rate the professional conduct, practical skills, and management skills of newly qualified nursing graduates, as observed by the employers. Data analysis was performed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages and means) were derived. The questions were coded in the SPSS program; data were cleaned, compared and contrasted (Langford 2008). Reference characteristics were compared among groups with chi-square tests.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (SoNREC 07/2018) and the Ministry of Health and Social Services (GS 2019) before data collection. Nurse managers were informed that they were free to not answer. They gave written consent for participation in the study after the purpose and significance of the study had been explained to them. Ethical principles were adhered to throughout the study to protect the rights, dignity and safety of participants. Participation in the study was voluntary; they were free to withdraw from the study before submission of a filled questionnaire, and the questionnaires were anonymous and unidentifiable after submission.

Results

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristic of participants (n=114)

Characteristics	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	84	73.7
	Male	29	25.4
	Non-respondent	1	.9
	Total	114	100.0
Age	18–20	1	.9
	21–24	5	4.4
	25–29	23	20.2
	30–34	25	21.9
	35+	60	52.6
	Total	114	100.0
Rank	Chief registered nurse	1	.9
	Principal registered nurse	2	1.8
	Senior registered nurse	35	30.7
	Registered nurse	75	65.8
	Non-respondent	1	.9
	Total	114	100.0
Department	Outpatient	16	14.0
	Inpatient	52	45.6
	Maternity	14	12.3
	Psychiatric	8	7.0
	Other specify	22	19.3
	Non-respondent	2	1.8
	Total	114	100.0
Years of Experience	2 years	24	21.1
	3 years	12	10.5
	4 years	4	3.5
	5 years and above	73	64.0
	Non-respondent	1	.9
	Total	114	100.0

According to table 1, females 73.7% (n=84) participated more than males 25.4% (n=29), with only one who did not respond. Across the age range of 18–20 there was one 0.9% (n=1) respondent; 21–24 were 4.4% (n=5); 25–29 were 20.2% (n=23); 30–34 were 21.9% (n=25); and 35+ were 52.6% (n=60), out of (n=114). Participants were ranked as chief registered nurse 0.9% (n=1); principal registered nurse 1.8% (n=2); senior registered nurse 30.7% (n=30); registered nurse 65.8% (n=75); and there was one non-respondent 0.9% (n=1), out of (n=114). Regarding departments, outpatients were 14% (n=16); inpatients 45.6% (n=52); maternity 12.3% (n=14); psychiatric 7% (n=8); others 19.3% (n=22); and two non-respondents 1.8% (n=2), out of (n=114). Participants' years of experience were considered too, where 2 years of experience were 21.1% (n=24); 3 years were 10.5% (n=12); 4 years 3.5% (n=4); 5 years and above were 64% (n=73)' and there was one non-respondent 0.9% (n=1), out of (n=114).

Table 2: Perceptions of employees on newly qualified nursing graduates' professional conduct at the workplace (n=114)

Characteristics	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Punctuality	Poor	6	5.3
	Fair	16	14.0
	Average	32	28.1
	Good	41	36.0
	Excellent	16	14.0
	Non-respondent	3	2.6
	Total	114	100.0
Dress code	Poor	9	7.9
	Fair	13	11.4
	Average	30	26.3
	Good	49	43.0
	Excellent	11	9.6
	Non-respondent	2	1.8
	Total	114	100.0
Respectful	Poor	11	9.6
	Fair	16	14.0
	Average	22	19.3
	Good	40	35.1
	Excellent	23	20.2
	Non-respondent	2	1.8
	Total	114	100.0
Towards Patients/Clients	Poor	4	3.5
	Fair	18	15.8
	Average	28	24.6
	Good	46	40.4
	Excellent	17	14.9
	Non-respondent	1	.9
	Total	114	100.0
Respectful towards Colleagues	Poor	7	6.1
	Fair	18	15.8
	Average	24	21.1
	Good	49	43.0
	Excellent	16	14.0
	Total	114	100.0

Table 2 displays data about newly qualified nursing graduates' professional conduct at work. Most newly qualified nursing graduates are punctual, with a good response of 36% (n=41), and a poor response recorded as 5.3% (n=6). Under dress code, newly qualified nursing graduates scored well, as 43% (n=49) was recorded. Only 7.9% (n=9) recorded poor dress code, the rest were average and excellent. Out of (n=114), 35.1% (n=40) were found to be respectful graduates and only 9.6% (n=11) scored poor on respect, while others were average and excellent.

Table 3: Perceptions of employees on newly qualified nursing graduates' practical skills at the workplace (n=114)

Characteristics	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Comfort and hygiene	Poor	5	4.4
	Fair	13	11.4
	Average	33	28.9
	Good	43	37.7
	Excellent	11	9.6
	Non-respondent	9	7.9
	Total	114	100.0
Obtain accurate vital signs	Poor	2	1.8
	Fair	12	10.5
	Average	26	22.8
	Good	43	37.7
	Excellent	27	23.7
	Non-respondent	4	3.5
	Total	114	100.0
Invasive procedures	Poor	9	7.9
	Fair	25	21.9
	Average	37	32.5
	Good	31	27.2
	Excellent	7	6.1
	Non-respondent	5	4.4
	Total	114	100.0
Patient assessment	Poor	8	7.0
	Fair	17	14.9
	Average	35	30.7
	Good	43	37.7
	Excellent	7	6.1
	Non-respondent	4	3.5
	Total	114	100.0
Obtaining blood sample	Poor	10	8.8
	Fair	11	9.6
	Average	33	28.9
	Good	34	29.8
	Excellent	17	14.9
	Non-respondent	8	7.0
	Total	114	100.0
CPR	Poor	26	23.0
	chief	28	24.8
	Average	37	32.7
	Good	18	15.9
	Excellent	4	3.5
	Total	113	100.0

Table 3 presents the perceptions of the employees on newly qualified nursing graduates' practical skills at workplace: 37.7% (n=43) were good at comfort and hygiene, while 4.4% (n=5) were poor; 11.4% (n=13) were fair; 28.9% (n=33) were average; and 9.6% (n=11) were excellent, with 7.9% (n=9) non-respondents, out of (n=114). Good graduates 37.7% (n=43) were able to obtain accurate vital signs, only a few 1.2% (n=2) could not, and the rest were fair, average or excellent. An average number of the graduates 32.5% (n=37) were able to perform invasive procedures such as intravenous lines, urinary catheters, and naso-gastric tubes. However, 7.9% (n=9) were poor at doing these, with the rest falling under fair, good or excellent. Most graduates were perceived to be good at patient assessments 37.7% (n=43). However, 7% (n=8) were recorded as poor, and the rest were fair, average or excellent. It was found that most newly qualified nursing graduates 29.8% (n=34) were good at obtaining blood samples, followed by an average score of 28.9% (n=33), and poor at 8.8% (n=10), with the rest being fair or excellent. Under cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), only an average number of 32.7% (n=37) were able to perform CPR, and only a few 3.5% (n=4) were excellent in this procedure.

Table 4: Perceptions regarding newly qualified nursing graduates' managerial skills at the workplace (n=114)

Characteristics	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Efficient time management	Poor	7	6.1
	Fair	21	18.4
	Average	34	29.8
	Good	41	36.0
	Excellent	11	9.6
	Total	114	100.0
Delegation abilities	Poor	12	10.5
	Fair	21	18.4
	Average	39	34.2
	Good	26	22.8
	Excellent	15	13.2
	Non-respondent	1	.9
	Total	114	100.0
Organisational abilities	Poor	12	10.5
	Fair	22	19.3
	Average	38	33.3
	Good	35	30.7
	Excellent	7	6.1
	Total	114	100.0
Team work efforts	Poor	8	7.0
	Fair	18	15.8
	Average	27	23.7
	Good	36	31.6
	Excellent	25	21.9
	Total	114	100.0

According to table 4 on newly qualified nursing graduates' managerial skills at the work place, the majority 36% (n=41) were regarded as good at efficient time management, and the least 6.1% (n=7) were poor at it, with the rest scored as fair, average or excellent. On delegation abilities, the average of 34.2% (n=39) knew how, while 10.5% (N=12) were recorded to be poor, the remaining were fair, good or excellent. Under organisational abilities, the average of 33.3% (n=38) knew how, followed by good at 30.7% (n=35), but only a few 6.1% (n=7) were excellent, and the rest were fair or poor. About 31.6% (n=36) of graduates were good at team work efforts, followed by an average of 23.7% (N=27), excellent at 21.9% (n=25), fair at 25.8% (n=18), as well as those who were poor at team work effort 7% (n=8).

The chi-square tests the independence of the various responses from the employers' perceptions of employability skills of newly qualified nursing graduates from the School of Nursing at the University of Namibia. Table 5 below shows the results determining the proposed explanatory variation in the outcome variables.

Table 5: Chi-Squares tests of association: (Cross tabulations)				
Cross tabulation	Chi-square value	n	df	p-value
Perception: overall professional conduct of newly qualified nursing graduates in your unit under the following headings? Punctuality	Pearson Chi-Square (52.067a)	114	20	0.000
	Likelihood Ratio (25.525)	114	20	0.182
Perception: overall professional conduct of newly qualified nursing graduates in your unit under the following headings? Dressing code	Pearson Chi-Square (74.955a)	114	20	0.000
	Likelihood Ratio (27.996)	114	20	0.110
Perception: overall professional conduct of newly qualified nursing graduates in your unit under the following headings? Respectful	Pearson Chi-Square (74.934a)	114	20	0.000
	Likelihood Ratio (31.155)	114	20	0.053
Perception: overall professional conduct of newly qualified nursing graduates in your unit under the following headings? Towards patients/clients	Pearson Chi-Square (20.240a)	114	20	0.443
	Likelihood Ratio (21.073)	114	20	0.393
Perception: overall professional conduct of newly qualified nursing graduates in your unit under the following headings? Respectful towards colleagues	Pearson Chi-Square (10.972a)	114	16	0.811
	Likelihood Ratio (11.704)	114	16	0.764
Perception: overall practical skills of newly qualified nursing graduates in your unit. Provision of optimum comfort and hygiene care	Pearson Chi-Square (25.312a)	114	20	0.190
	Likelihood Ratio (21.975)	114	20	0.342
Perception: overall practical skills of newly qualified nursing graduates in your unit. Obtaining accurate vital signs	Pearson Chi-Square (14.842a)	114	20	0.785
	Likelihood Ratio (13.815)	114	20	0.840
Perception: overall practical skills of newly qualified nursing graduates in your unit. Skills with invasive procedures (intravenous lines, urinary catheters, naso-gastric tubes)	Pearson Chi-Square (24.070a)	114	20	0.239
	Likelihood Ratio (22.945)	114	20	0.292
Perception of the overall practical skills of newly qualified nursing graduates. Patient assessment	Pearson Chi-Square (20.956a)	114	20	0.400
	Likelihood Ratio (16.278)	114	20	0.699
Perception of the overall practical skills of newly qualified nursing graduates. Obtaining blood samples	Pearson Chi-Square (38.179a)	114	24	0.033
	Likelihood Ratio (32.283)	114	24	0.120

Perception of the overall practical skills of newly qualified nursing graduates. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)	Pearson Chi-Square (21.574a)	113	16	0.158
	Likelihood Ratio (20.436)	113	16	0.201
Perception of the overall managerial skills of newly qualified nursing graduates. Efficient time management	Pearson Chi-Square (11.397a)	114	16	0.784
	Likelihood Ratio (13.369)	114	16	0.646
Perception of the overall managerial skills of newly qualified nursing graduates. Delegation abilities	Pearson Chi-Square (13.195a)	114	20	0.869
	Likelihood Ratio (15.378)	114	20	0.754
Perception of the overall managerial skills of newly graduates. Organisational abilities	Pearson Chi-Square (22.663a)	114	16	0.123
	Likelihood Ratio (27.351)	114	16	0.038
Perception of the overall managerial skills of newly graduates. Team work efforts	Pearson Chi-Square (21.731a)	114	16	0.152
	Likelihood Ratio (24.628)	114	16	0.077

Table 5 shows that: 24 cells (80.0%) have an expected count of less than 5, the minimum expected count is 03. There is a Pearson chi-square, the p-value is 52.067^a which is statistically significant at 5% level of significance based on 20 degrees of freedom and the likelihood ratio, the p-value is 25.525, statistics is 0.182 based on 20 degrees of freedom. 114 respondents were ranged from poor, fair, good and excellent.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine and describe the perceptions of employers regarding the employability skills of newly qualified nursing graduates from the School of Nursing at the University of Namibia.

Graduates' Professional Conduct at the Workplace

The fact that employers rated newly qualified nursing graduates' professional skills with very high grades, assumes that graduates meet employers' demands when they graduate and one may also claim that their professional employment skills are highly developed. Similar studies on newly qualified nursing graduates, such as the study by Donik, Pajnkihar, and Bernik (2015), found the same ratings from employers from different departments within the healthcare sector. Professional capability in nursing is seen as essential to patients' safety and satisfaction and the quality of care (Torabizadeh et al. 2019). The relatively low score obtained regarding professional related aspects is of concern. There is a need for every nurse to make a positive impact on the profession in

order to improve the image of the profession through day-to-day advocacy for patients and the nursing profession (Kotze 2010). Ethical practice is regarded as a horizontal strand running through all years of all programmes of generic nursing training (Uys and Gwele 2005). The concept of caring is eloquently described in the Florence Nightingale theory, *Notes on Nursing*, what it is and what it is not (Carrol 1992). In this theory, the aspects of comfort and hygiene are well described as nursing functions. Therefore, the score allocated to professional conduct requires reflection from the nursing faculty. Capability is a broad concept and is not limited to one domain but includes a wide range of individual abilities and characteristics. Additionally, Nayak (2018) stresses that time management is not only setting and achieving the goals, but also accomplishing them in the minimum possible time. Good time management benefits performance in several ways, including greater productivity, less stress, improved efficiency, more opportunities for professional advancement and greater opportunities to achieve career and life goals (Nayak 2018). The findings of the study affirmed that the punctuality of graduates, which is a component of time management, was rated by 78.1% as average and above. This shows an understanding by the graduates that nursing as a profession requires skills in performing different tasks during the course of the day, while coping with time limitations and pressure. This is in support of the study by Murray, Daly, and Stewart (2018), which says that punctuality, prioritising, organising, risk management and problem solving are some of the major employability skills required in newly qualified nursing graduates.

Graduates' Practical Skills at the Workplace

The main categories found to be highly performed by the newly qualified nursing graduates in terms of practice, were the provision of optimum comfort and hygiene care, obtaining accurate vital signs, obtaining blood samples, and patient assessment, which were rated by 43.8% to 61.4% of the employers as above average. Besides the attainment of accurate vital signs, the other remaining skills were all rated at 19.3% and 33.3%. Motsa and Malesela (2018) noted that newly qualified nursing graduates have limited knowledge in the provision of quality patient care; they are incompetent in clinical procedures, have a lack of confidence, and are unable to perform independently, in spite of extensive theoretical and practical training. Experienced nursing staff or employers believed that new graduates were competent in practical nursing skills, as supported by Brown and Crookes (2016). Nursing students are expected to learn many practical skills and reach a high level of clinical competence. This is in support of Hussein et al. (2017), who state that newly qualified nursing graduates exhibit a lack of practice readiness and a lack of confidence in clinical practices. Sometimes they have a high level of stress in emergency care settings. A study that analysed the influence of the undergraduate in preparation for management in nursing, found that the newly qualified nursing graduates of a public university reported difficulties in perceiving the management dimension within their work processes. Likewise, they reported difficulties in developing management competence in their professional practice (Siqueira et al. 2019).

Graduates' Managerial Skills at the Workplace

The researchers aimed to collect the employers' perceptions with regards to the newly qualified nursing graduates' managerial employability skills in order to assess if the newly qualified nursing graduates were ready to take up supervisory posts, which required them to lead. Similarly, the score obtained for managerial skills should be regarded as skills that require practice and experience, which will improve over time, provided that proper mentoring is provided. More than 70% of employers ranked the graduates' demonstration of managerial skills to be average and above average. In the context of the training of nurses for the world of work, it is known that the teaching of the management discipline in nursing is of unique relevance in the professional training for management performance, in the different levels of healthcare (Siqueira et al. 2019). The authors assure us that it is known that the teaching of management skills in undergraduate courses is not a simple task and, therefore, requires permanent efforts by both teachers and students. Thus, professional training, linked to the needs of work in the world of work, plays an important role. The results show that 32.5% (n=37) of participants reported that newly qualified nursing graduates were less competent in invasive procedures, which is similar to the findings of Motsa and Malesela (2018), who reported that newly qualified nursing graduates were found to be challenged by procedural skills, such as passing a nasogastric tube, and suctioning and removal of a central vein line, due to lack of exposure to such procedures during their training. In addition, practical skills are hands-on actions and are also referred to as psychomotor skills. Messum et al. (2016) highlight the important employability skills that are required in newly qualified nursing graduates, such as verbal communication skills, integrity and ethical conduct, time management, teamwork, priority setting, ability to work independently, organisational skills, written communication, being flexible and open minded, and networking.

Strengths and Limitations

The findings of this study are useful in clinical placement arrangements by the School of Nursing as a way to reinforce the mastery of clinical learning competence. This study provides reliable data that can be used during their (School of Nursing) curriculum review process. The insight from this study is useful in ensuring quality and a high standard of training for nursing students at the University of Namibia. Additionally, these findings enlighten the School of Nursing and the Ministry of Health and Social Services about the employability skills status of newly qualified nursing graduates from the University of Namibia, as feedback from the industry and its implications on the delivery of healthcare services to patients. This study had some limitations regarding the research instrument, as the questionnaire contained only close-ended questions. By implication, this meant participants would have limited response options. Additionally, the data source was a self-administered questionnaire by hospital nursing managers and unit managers of selected hospitals regarding their own perceptions, rather than direct observation or assessment of practices and knowledge. Participants may have interpreted questions differently when completing the questionnaires, thus the aim of

the specific question may have been lost because of how it was interpreted. Due to financial resources, it was also not practically possible to conduct the study in all hospitals, health centres and clinics in the country. This limits generalisation. There was also limited literature related to the employability skills of newly qualified nursing graduates.

Recommendations and Implications of the Study

Participants in this study strongly recommend that newly qualified nursing graduates should be given induction at the onset of employment. Additionally, newly qualified nursing graduates should be encouraged to attend in-service training on different procedures that are given to newly qualified graduates nurses—at least for a period of one year. In-service training needs to focus on ethics and patient management. Procedure manuals should be made available in units or departments for use by newly qualified nursing graduates. Training institutions should strengthen the importance of nursing ethics to ensure that trainees display the expected level of professionalism. Lectures/educators should strengthen clinical accompaniment of their students to clinical practice facilities and attend to their demonstrations, assess their knowledge and assist them where necessary. Furthermore, researchers should consider conducting a study on a comparative analysis of responses, taking the sectors (private and public) into consideration. The authors further recommend that employers and employees in clinical set-ups should adopt the normative *Model of Practical Skill Performance*, which offers a systematic understanding of practical skills performance.

Conclusion

This study found that the professional conduct of newly qualified nursing graduates was rated above average in all five professional categories of tasks ranked by the respondents. The employers or supervisors agreed that the nursing graduates were punctual, used appropriate dress code, were respectful, had good conduct towards patients/clients, and were respectful towards workmates. The main categories in which the newly qualified nursing graduates fared well, in terms of practical skills, included the provision of optimum comfort and hygiene care, obtaining accurate vital signs, obtaining blood samples, and patient assessment. Weak performance was observed in skills with invasive procedures and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), which was mostly rated as poor.

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