



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Anticipating Internship: A Content Analysis of Nursing Students' Expectations Towards Clinical Placement Programs

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Apr 27, 2024	The purpose of this study is to deeply understand how nursing students perceive internship programs and what expectations and demands they have through it. This study is a descriptive survey research that analyzed counseling diaries recorded after counseling regarding the expectations and demands perceived by nursing students from three universities located in Seoul and Gyeonggi-do on internship programs. The analysis of interview data regarding nursing students' perceptions of hospital internships, classified into expectations towards hospital internships and demands on internship programs, resulted in a total of 89 key meanings and 15 categories. As confirmed by this research, internship programs are of significant educational importance to nursing students. Accordingly, it is necessary to have a systematic program that can positively influence nursing students to grow internally and externally during their hospital internship period.
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INTRODUCTION

The Necessity of Research

It is crucial for nursing students to acquire professionalism capable of fully performing the role of a nursing professional after graduation, by understanding the complexity of practice through nursing education and receiving adequate theoretical and clinical support to respond to clinical situations (Leufer & Cleary-Holdforth, 2020). Generally, nursing students undergo both theoretical and practical training over four years before transitioning to nurses, which includes clinical practice conducted in clinical institutions (Ayaz-Alkaya et al., 2018; Zakariya et al., 2023). However, since clinical practice is mostly observational, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ensure an appropriate level of preparedness for student nurses in the current situation (Leufer & Cleary-Holdforth, 2020). One of the challenges faced by nursing educators and leaders is not only to facilitate the retention of nurses in clinical settings but also to devise the best ways to adequately prepare nursing students, enhancing their adaptability to the clinical environment after graduation (Roush et al., 2021; Wardat et al., 2024).

Nursing education should harmonize theoretical knowledge and practical experience to enhance professionalism and field adaptability. As part of such education, internship programs are becoming an important process that combines academic learning with field experience (El et al., 2021; Jarrah et al., 2023b). The primary purpose of internships is to provide professionalism on all cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills expected to be acquired by nursing students at graduation, as well as experiences gained during their nursing education (Ciftci et al., 2020; Nazish et al., 2024).

Additionally, the main goals of internships are to ensure students can adapt to the practice and professional fields, provide experiences that build technical skills in various clinical environments, and enhance decision-making skills in real clinical settings, thereby recognizing the professional values of nursing (Ciftci et al., 2020; Tashtoush et al., 2023a).

In South Korea, it is very rare for internship programs to be included in the undergraduate curriculum, and some advanced general hospitals offer unpaid internship programs to nursing students before licensure, but these are limited to a select few students, raising concerns about disparities in field experience. According to a study in Brazil, nursing professional training should ensure the completeness of care in a complex healthcare system and perform problem-solving and management within individual and group scopes, thus emphasizing that internship programs should be developed through nursing programs to learn these skills (Esteves et al., 2019; Tashtoush et al., 2023b).

According to Wallace (2016), nursing interns reported that participation in the program exposed them to new clinical situations, helped integrate clinical knowledge and critical thinking skills, improved prioritization and time management skills, and expanded communication skills within professional teams (Wallace, 2016; Alneyadi et al., 2023b). Moreover, internship programs have been reported to be effective in enhancing the professional role of intern nurses, such as improving safe and effective practice capabilities (El et al., 2021; Alneyadi et al., 2023b).

Previous studies, including those by El et al. (2021) and Wallace (2016), have shown that internship programs for nursing students have a positive impact, contributing to the improvement of their professional competence and self-efficacy (El et al., 2021; Wallace, 2016). Additionally, the study by Ahmad E Aboshaiqah et al. (2018) focused on developing a tool to measure perceived self-efficacy gained through internships (Ahmad E Aboshaiqah et al., 2018). Furthermore, research by Hernandez et al. (2020) showed that internship programs could positively affect nurse recruitment and retention (Hernandez et al., 2020), and studies by Bahramirad et al. (2020) and Ciftci et al. (2020) demonstrated the positive impact of internships on night shifts and clinical decision-making skills of nursing interns (Bahramirad et al., 2020; Ciftci et al., 2020; Jam et al., 2010). However, such internship programs are not yet formally implemented in South Korea, leaving many nursing students without adequate clinical practice experience. This can further highlight the difficulties faced by students during the transition to nursing (Bahari et al., 2022; Jam et al., 2013). This study aims to explore the concerns and expectations related to adaptation to the clinical field and to provide a deeper understanding of the improvement of internship programs and preparation for the future role as nursing professionals. This study expects to contribute to improving the educational experience of nursing students and the development of programs for training future nursing professionals.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to deeply understand how nursing students perceive internship programs and what expectations and demands they have through it. Specifically, it aims to explore the changes and growth nursing students expect from internships, as well as their needs regarding the learning environment and support.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research plan

This study is a descriptive survey research that analyzed the content of counseling diaries recorded after counseling with nursing students from three universities located in Seoul and Gyeonggi-do, regarding their expectations and demands on internship programs.

Subjects and data collection method

The data for this study were collected from counseling sessions conducted from November 1, 2023, to January 31, 2024, involving a total of 53 nursing students' perceptions about their expectations of internship programs. After excluding the counseling contents of 2 students due to ambiguity, the analysis finally included the counseling contents of 51 students. The data were analyzed using Patton's (2001) content analysis method. This method involves identifying important themes and categories from the original data, grouping together concepts that are identical or have similar meanings based on sentences and phrases as units of analysis, and then constructing a category system to organize and simplify complex data into meaningful themes or categories. Two researchers, both of whom have taken qualitative research methodology courses at the graduate level and have multiple experiences in qualitative research, participated in the data analysis. Initially, in the data preparation and selection phase, the contents of counseling from 50 students were repeatedly read to mark significant meanings and extract relevant sentences or phrases. In the data analysis phase, contents with identical or similar meanings were grouped together into 89 sub-categories. In the naming and generalization phase, these were further classified into 15 major categories.

Research instrument

To understand the expectations of nursing students regarding internship programs, the researchers developed a tool based on previous studies and literature, comprising three questions: "What do you want to learn from the hospital internship?", "What do you think are the expected effects of the hospital internship?", and "What do you think are the demands for the hospital internship program?" The validity of this tool was verified over three sessions by two nursing professors and one humanities professor.

Data analysis method

This study focused on exploring the expectations of nursing students towards internship programs and used a systematic and objective method known as content analysis, as described by Krippendorff (2004), with the aim of describing content, systematically categorizing it, and examining the content of recorded information.

The analysis of categories involved the researchers marking content that appropriately reflected the research objectives from the collected data, repeatedly reading through the content, and extracting it through review and discussion among researchers. Participants provided multiple overlapping responses to each question, and the content recorded by the participants was categorized into the same category if they had the same meaning or similar expressions. Each category was analyzed using quantitative analysis techniques of content analysis method in terms of frequency and percentage for each question. A coding frame was developed through a pilot study to code relevant content.

For all items, preliminary practice was conducted until the reliability among researchers reached a level of 90% or higher before proceeding to actual coding. During the coding process, any ambiguous

or problematic areas were discussed under the supervision of the lead researcher to narrow down opinions, with the principle of reliability measurement among coders serving as the criterion. To analyze validity and enhance reliability, 20 questionnaires per item were selected to conduct a consistency survey, and any discrepancies were marked for later review and classification after confirmation and agreement. The reliability among analysts was measured using Holsti's method (Krippendorff, 2004), with three researchers calculating it for four questions, showing an average reliability of 97%. The validation of the categorized categorization in this study was based on the premise that validity in content analysis is meaningful when it is recognized as valuable by academic peers, and in this case, the validation of the categorized categorization was conducted by two nursing professors and one humanities professor.

RESEARCH RESULTS

General Characteristics of the Subjects

The general characteristics of the subjects in this study are as follows (Table 1). There were a total of 51 subjects, with 27 (53%) aged between 22 and 25 years, and 24 (47%) aged between 25 and 30 years. Regarding their academic year, 16 (31%) were in their second year, 25 (49%) were in their third year, and 10 (20%) were in their fourth year. By gender, 6 (12%) were male students, and 45 (88%) were female students. Concerning employment worries, 41 (80%) had concerns, while 10 (20%) did not. The most common confidants for employment concerns were classmates, with 27 (53%) responses, followed by none 10 (20%), friends 8 (16%), and family 6 (12%). Meanwhile, 41 (80%) had no experience in counseling for adaptation to hospital employment, more than the 10 (20%) who did. Regarding whether adaptation counseling for hospital employment was helpful, the most common response was 'average' with 8 (80%), followed by 'very helpful' with 2 (20%), and 'not helpful' with 0 (0%).

Nursing Students' Perception of Hospital Internships

The content analysis of interview data regarding nursing students' perceptions of hospital internships, classified into expectations and demands for the internship program, resulted in a total of 89 key meanings and 15 categories. The specific results are as follows:

Expectations of nursing students towards hospital internships

The expectations of nursing students towards hospital internships were confirmed in 12 categories and 71 key meanings. The analyzed categories include 'Improvement in the perception of the difference between theory and practice', 'Awareness of the lack of learning experience and practical skills', 'Relieving the burden of important career choices', 'Perception of extending clinical experience through the link between theory and practice', 'Recognition of enhancing practical abilities and professionalism', 'Enhancing confidence in future employment and on-site application ability based on self-understanding', 'Perception of improving job satisfaction by bridging the gap between theory and practice', 'Strengthening the sense of responsibility towards the nursing profession as true nurses', 'Expectation of reduced organizational departure and enhanced job stability through career decisions based on self-assurance', 'Recognition of the need for the introduction and significance of internships', 'Confidence boost for a successful internship training', 'Overcoming linguistic and technical difficulties after hospital employment' (Table 2).

Participants most frequently mentioned the 'Improvement in the perception of the difference between theory and practical application', with 98% (50 participants) recognizing this, which was categorized as 'Improvement in the perception of the difference between theory and practice'.

The second category is 'Improvement in the lack of practical experience' and 'Improvement in the limitations and boundaries as a student', accounting for 82.3% (42 participants). This was categorized as 'Awareness of the lack of learning experience and practical skills'.

The third category involves 'Alleviating concerns about field experience and hospital selection', 'Easing the burden related to employment', 'The importance of pre-employment experience and relieving its burden', 'The importance of experience and alleviating pre-emptive worries', 'Pre-emptive worries and preparation strategies', 'Motivation and fear alleviation after employment', 'Preparation for uncertainty after employment and mental readiness', 'The importance of course selection and aptitude review', 'Resolving uncertainty about career decisions', and 'The desire to minimize failure', with 72.5% (37 participants). This was categorized as 'Relieving the burden of important career choices'.

The fourth category includes 'Application of knowledge learned in school to the field', 'Expansion of learning experiences', 'Gaining real experience in the field', 'Applying actual procedures to patients', 'Diverse job experiences', 'Improvement of practical skills through various cases', 'Interaction experiences with various patients', 'Understanding of experiences and systems in internships', 'Understanding of workflow', with 58.8% (30 participants). This was categorized as 'Perception of extending clinical experience through the link between theory and practice'.

The fifth category is 'Enhancement of professionalism', 'Utilization and enhancement of professional knowledge', 'Improvement of basic nursing competencies', 'Understanding the role of nurses with environmental changes', 'Utilization of professional knowledge, manuals, and EMR', 'Experience in various nursing activities beyond vital checks', 'Enhancement of medication administration and injection skills', 'Improvement of team nursing and job-related abilities', 'Collaboration and communication with medical staff', 'Enhanced ability to handle emergency situations', 'Performing the role of a nurse in emergency situations', 'Interest and competency enhancement in specific nursing areas', with 54.9% (28 participants). This was categorized as 'Recognition of enhancing practical abilities and professionalism'.

The sixth category includes 'Filling the lack of competencies', 'Gaining experience and confidence for employment', 'Evaluating job fit through internships', 'Concretizing career plans through internships', 'Concretizing and enhancing adaptability of career plans according to course selection', with 43.1% (22 participants). This was categorized as 'Enhancing confidence in future employment and on-site application ability based on self-understanding'.

The seventh category involves 'Adapting to the difference between theory and field', 'Relieving tension and adapting to the field through internships', 'Enhancement of practical experience and adaptability', 'Enhancement of professionalism and job satisfaction through internships', with 39.2% (20 participants). This was categorized as 'Perception of improving job satisfaction by bridging the gap between theory and practice'.

The eighth category is 'Strengthening of practical experience and responsibility', 'Responsibility and willingness towards patients', 'Challenges and responsibilities as a nurse', 'Self-growth and assurance in the job', 'Providing safe medical services through enhancement of professionalism', with 35.2% (18 participants). This was categorized as 'Strengthening the sense of responsibility towards the nursing profession as true nurses'.

The ninth category includes 'Assurance about one's career path', 'Confidence in career choice and employment after graduation', 'Enhancement of resilience against failure and the long-term effect of experience', 'Reduction of resignation rates through enhanced field adaptability', 'Continuous job

performance through enhanced stress coping abilities', with 31.3% (18 participants). This was categorized as 'Expectation of reduced organizational departure and enhanced job stability through career decisions based on self-assurance'.

The tenth category is 'Growth and satisfaction', 'Providing more opportunities and experiences to students', 'The importance of growth and experience through internships', 'The usefulness of experiences through internships', 'The necessity and demand for the introduction of internships', with 29.4% (15 participants). This was categorized as 'Recognition of the need for the introduction and significance of internships'.

The eleventh category includes 'Confidence in performing internships', 'Overcoming difficulties during internship challenges and performance', 'Participation and achievement of goals in internships', with 17.6% (9 participants). This was categorized as 'Confidence boost for a successful internship training'.

The twelfth category involves 'Anxiety and difficulties with language and professional terminology', 'Linguistic difficulties and technical incompetence', 'Expectations and anxiety about starting internships and practical experiences', 'Emotional hardship and worries about interpersonal relationships', 'Overcoming experiences and difficulties in internships', 'Communication and support in challenging situations', 'Adaptation and role establishment in the field', with 15.6% (8 participants). This was categorized as 'Overcoming linguistic and technical difficulties after hospital employment'.

Demands for hospital internship programs

The demands of nursing students for hospital internship programs were identified in 3 categories and 18 key meanings. The analyzed categories include 'Demands regarding the operation of internships', 'Demands for mentoring and counseling systems', and 'Demands for support and environment from universities and training institutions' (Table 3).

The first key meaning involves 'Timing and duration of the internship', 'Costs and salaries during internships', 'Consideration of night shifts and allowances for independent experience', 'Internship under faculty guidance', 'Practical experience and hospital selection', with 86.2% (44 participants) recognizing these issues, which were categorized as 'Demands regarding the operation of internships'.

The second category includes 'The importance of individual mentoring', 'Building intimacy through individual mentoring', 'One-on-one mentoring after theoretical and practical training', 'Comfortable atmosphere for feedback after work', 'Appropriate feedback and direction for learning', 'Immediate and non-emotional feedback', with 62.7% (32 participants). This was categorized as 'Demands for mentoring and counseling systems'.

The third category involves 'Student support and creation of a flexible educational environment by the university', 'Flexible support and student welfare by the university', 'Feedback and counseling system by the university', 'Cost support and education by the university and hospital', 'Concerns about education and support by the hospital', 'Demands related to costs and benefits by the hospital', with 29.4% (15 participants). This was categorized as 'Demands for support and environment from universities and training institutions'.

Table 1: General characteristics (N=51)

Characteristics	Categories	n(%)
Age	22 -25	27(53%)
	25 -30	24(47%)
Academic Year	2	16(31%)
	3	25(49%)
	4	10(20%)
Sex	men	6(12%)
	wowan	45(88%)
Experience of Concerns About Hospital Employment	Yes	41(80%)
	No	10(20%)
Confidant for Employment Concerns	Classmates	27(53%)
	Family	6(12%)
	Friends	8(16%)
	None	10(20%)
Experience in Counseling for Adaptation to Hospital Employment	Yes	10(20%)
	No	41(80%)
Whether the Counseling for Adaptation to Hospital Employment Helpful or not	Very helpful	41(80%)
	Average	10(20%)
	Not helpful	-

Table 2: Expectations of nursing students regarding hospital internships (N=51)

Theme	Key meaning	n	(%)
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Improvement in the perception of the difference between theory and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improvement in the recognition of the difference between theory and practice Improvement in the recognition of the difference between theory and the field -Improvement in the difference between theory and practice -Improvement in the difference between theory and the field -Improvement in the difference between school education and clinical practice -Improvement in the difference between school education and practice 	50	98
Awareness of the lack of learning experience and practical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improvement in the lack of practical experience -Improvement in the limitations and boundaries as a student 	42	82.3
Relieving the burden of important career choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Alleviation of concerns about field experience and hospital selection -Easing the burden related to employment -The importance and burden of pre-employment experience -The importance of experience and alleviating pre-emptive worries -Pre-emptive worries and preparation strategies -Motivation and fear alleviation after employment -Preparation for uncertainty after employment and mental readiness -The importance of course selection and aptitude review -Resolving uncertainty about career decisions -The will to minimize failure 	37	72.5
Perception of extending clinical experience through the link between theory and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Application of knowledge learned in school to the field -Expansion of learning experiences -Gaining real experience in the field -Applying actual procedures to patients -Diverse job experiences -Improvement of practical skills through various cases -Interaction experiences with various patients -Understanding of experiences and systems in internships -Understanding of workflow 	30	58.8

<p>Recognition of enhancing practical abilities and professionalism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enhancement of professionalism -Utilization and enhancement of professional knowledge -Improvement of basic nursing competencies -Understanding the nurse's role with environmental changes -Utilization of professional knowledge, manuals, and EMR -Experience in various nursing activities beyond vital checks -Enhancement of medication administration and injection skills -Improvement of team nursing and job-related abilities -Collaboration and communication with medical staff -Enhanced ability to handle emergency situations -Performing the role of a nurse in emergency situations -Interest and competency enhancement in specific nursing areas 	<p>28</p>	<p>54.9</p>
<p>Enhancing confidence in future employment and on-site application ability based on self-understanding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Filling the lack of competencies -Gaining experience and confidence for employment -Evaluating job fit through internships Concretizing career plans through internships -Concretizing and enhancing adaptability of career plans according to course selection 	<p>22</p>	<p>43.1</p>
<p>Perception of improving job satisfaction by bridging the gap between theory and practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Adapting to the difference between theory and the field -Relieving tension and adapting to the field through internships -Enhancement of practical experience and adaptability -Enhancement of professionalism and job satisfaction through internships 	<p>20</p>	<p>39.2</p>
<p>Strengthening the sense of responsibility towards the nursing profession as true nurses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strengthening of practical experience and responsibility -Responsibility and willingness towards patients -Challenges and responsibilities as a nurse -Self-growth and assurance in the job -Providing safe medical services through the enhancement of professionalism 	<p>18</p>	<p>35.2</p>

<p>Expectation of reduced organizational departure and enhanced job stability through career decisions based on self-assurance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assurance about one's career path -Confidence in career choice and employment after graduation -Enhancement of resilience against failure and the long-term effect of experience -Reduction of resignation rates through enhanced field adaptability -Continuous job performance through enhanced stress coping abilities 	<p>16</p>	<p>31.3</p>
<p>Recognition of the need for the introduction and significance of internships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Growth and satisfaction -Providing more opportunities and experiences to students -The importance of growth and experience through internships -The usefulness of experiences through internships -The necessity and demand for the introduction of internships 	<p>15</p>	<p>29.4</p>
<p>Confidence boost for a successful internship training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Confidence in performing internships -Overcoming difficulties during internship challenges and performance -Participation and achievement of goals in internships 	<p>9</p>	<p>17.6</p>
<p>Overcoming linguistic and technical difficulties after hospital employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Anxiety and difficulties with language and professional terminology -Linguistic difficulties and technical incompetence -Expectations and anxiety about starting internships and practical experiences -Emotional hardship and worries about interpersonal relationships -Overcoming experiences and difficulties in internships -Communication and support in challenging situations -Adaptation and role establishment in the field 	<p>8</p>	<p>15.6</p>

*Multiple responses were allowed

Table 3: Demands for hospital internship programs (N=51)

Theme	Key meaning	n	(%)
<p>Demands regarding the operation of internships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Timing and duration of the internship -Costs and salaries during internships -Consideration for night shifts and allowances -Gaining independent experience -Internship under faculty guidance -Practical experience and hospital selection 	<p>44</p>	<p>86.2</p>

Demands for mentoring and counseling systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The importance of individual mentoring -Building intimacy through individual mentoring -One-on-one mentoring after theoretical and practical training -Comfortable atmosphere for feedback after work -Appropriate feedback and direction for learning -Immediate and non-emotional feedback 	32	62.7
Demands for support and environment from universities and training institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Student support and the creation of a flexible educational environment by the university -Flexible support and student welfare by the university -Feedback and counseling system by the university -Cost support and education by the university and hospital -Concerns about education and support by the hospital -Demands related to costs and benefits by the hospital 	15	29.4

*Multiple responses were allowed

DISCUSSION

In the clinical nursing field, there is a demand for nurses who are proficient in clinical practice to provide high-quality nursing services and enhance work efficiency. Hospitals are developing various strategies to secure excellent nursing staff, and internship programs are gaining attention as a means to produce nurses skilled in clinical practice.

This study revealed that 40 nursing students (81%) are concerned about employment in the clinical field, especially the high level of stress experienced by those without prior practical experience or information at the beginning of their clinical practice. These findings are similar to those of Oh et al. (2016), which discussed the stress related to authoritative field atmospheres, rejection from nursing subjects, repetitive tasks, and the heavy burden of hospital field employment. Therefore, enhancing positive perceptions and converting negative perceptions about the clinical field through internship programs may help reduce stress and improve adaptability to the clinical environment. Providing specific and long-term education related to internship programs can also offer accurate information about the clinical field, reducing prejudices.

The highest expectation among nursing students regarding hospital internships was the improvement in the perception of the difference between theory and practice, confirmed by 50 students (98%). The participants looked forward to the opportunity to enhance their competencies by overcoming the gap between theory and practice through the internship process. This aligns with the findings of Sim (2018), which emphasized the importance of verifying the alignment between theoretical knowledge and practical application during the internship. Therefore, considering the significance of internships from an educational perspective, it is crucial to organize systematic programs that allow nursing students to enhance their competencies during their hospital internships.

Secondly, 42 participants (82.3%) recognized the need for improvement in learning experiences and practical skills. They clearly felt a lack of learning experience and practical skills in the clinical field, which is consistent with Kim (2012), where the limitations of one's learning capabilities and practical skills were identified. Given the nature of nursing education, which requires a strong link between theory and practice, nursing students need education that enables the application of theoretical

knowledge in real-life settings. Throughout the four-year curriculum that integrates theory and practice, nursing students should learn various knowledge, attitudes, and roles required of nurses.

Thirdly, 37 participants (72.5%) recognized the alleviation of the burden associated with important career choices. The study by Hwang Hye-Min (2018) confirmed that the burden of becoming a nurse during nursing education was alleviated through internship programs, similar to the findings of this study. Hwang's research showed that internships helped nursing students feel proud of their major and alleviated career-related stress. Experiencing various hospital cultures during internships positively influenced their image of nurses and hospitals, and provided an opportunity to reflect on the meaning and image of nursing. Thus, hospital internships should offer nursing students opportunities for self-development and growth, helping them solve problems in difficult situations and cope with new challenges.

In addition, there was a recognition of the expansion of clinical experience through the connection between theory and practice, an enhanced perception of practical skills and professionalism, confidence in future employment and field adaptability based on self-understanding, and an improvement in job satisfaction due to the resolution of the gap between theory and practice. There was a strengthened sense of responsibility towards the nursing profession as true nurses, a decrease in organizational departure and an increase in job stability based on self-assured career decisions, an awareness of the necessity and meaning of internships, and an enhanced confidence in successful internship training. These research findings do not coincide with previous studies, making them difficult to compare, but they suggest that the perceptions of nursing students require more in-depth research to be reflected in the development of internship programs.

Regarding the requirements for hospital internship programs, the participants in this study showed a high level of awareness (86.2% of 44 respondents) about the internship operation methods, including the start time and duration of internships, costs and salaries, and perceptions regarding practical experiences and hospital selection. The internship experience is an important program that helps nursing students get closer to the nursing field, and as such, nursing students should explore ways to alleviate employment information shortages, lack of qualifications and skills, lack of interview skills, and decision-making difficulties through various employment support programs operated at the university level (Park & Lee, 2015). Additionally, universities need to consider scheduling to actively involve students in internship programs and help them design concrete plans for their futures.

This study is significant as it confirms that internship programs can help grow excellent prospective nurses by identifying the expectations and requirements of nursing students for hospital internship programs. Many studies to date have emphasized the importance of clinical practice education. However, as internship programs provide education related to the practice of the desired profession based on evidence, the internship experience significantly impacts employment (Smith, 2006). In this regard, the results of this study can serve as foundational data for the development of internship programs and subsequent research aimed at training excellent nurses.

Based on these findings, the study suggests conducting qualitative research on the internship experiences of nursing students and exploring specific ways to enhance the effectiveness of internships.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to provide foundational data for the development of internship programs for nursing students by examining their perceptions of internship programs. The results revealed

nursing students' expectations for hospital internships, including improvements in the perception of the gap between theory and practice, enhancements in a learning experience and practical skills, relief from the pressure of making significant career choices, enhanced recognition of the expansion of clinical experience through the connection between theory and practice, strengthened practical skills and professionalism, increased confidence in future employment and field adaptability based on self-understanding, improved job satisfaction due to the resolution of the gap between theory and practice, strengthened sense of responsibility towards the nursing profession, decreased organizational departure and increased job stability based on self-assured career decisions, awareness of the necessity and meaning of internships, and enhanced confidence in successful internship training. The study also identified requirements for hospital internship programs, including demands for internship operation methods, mentoring and counseling systems, and support and environments from universities and training institutions. As the findings suggest, internship programs are educationally significant for nursing students, necessitating systematic programs that positively impact their internal and external growth during their hospital internship period.

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