

Perceptions of Clinical Readiness Among Nursing Intern Students: A Cross-Sectional Study

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HOW TO CITE:

Nowrah Mansour Aloudah, Mashael Theyab Alsubaie, Rawan Saad Alotaibi (2026), Perceptions of Clinical Readiness Among Nursing Intern Students: A Cross-Sectional Study
International Journal of Special Education, 41(21s), 834-844

ABSTRACT

Background: Clinical readiness stands as one of the most essential results of nursing education. It shows the ability of nursing intern students to combine the knowledge they have gained from books, clinical skills, and professional behaviors when they are in real healthcare settings. The study aimed to assess perceptions of clinical readiness among nursing intern students at King Abdulaziz National Guard Hospital in Alhasa and King Faisal University.

Methods: A quantitative cross-sectional study was carried out at King Abdulaziz National Guard Hospital, Alhasa, and King Faisal University. The study was conducted from April to December 2025, and a total of 105 nursing intern students with at least six months of internship experience were enrolled in the study. The students were chosen by a purposive sampling technique. We used an online, self-administered questionnaire for data collection, which first collected demographic information and then the Nursing Practice Readiness Scale.

Results: Among the 105 nursing intern students, most were aged 23–27 years and male. Almost half of the students had a GPA ranging from 3.76 to 4.5, and a little more than half were students at King Abdulaziz National Guard Hospital. Most of the interns were single, some had children, and most of them had more than six months of internship experience, along with different levels of exposure to the simulation lab. Clinical readiness was at a moderate level with an average score of 3.09 and a total NPRS score of 108.14. Most students reported moderate readiness (61.9%), followed by high readiness (33.3%), and a very small percentage reported low readiness (4.8%). There were no significant correlations between clinical readiness and gender, age, marital

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status, having children, or university, whereas GPA, simulation lab experience, and internship duration were significantly correlated with higher readiness.

Conclusions: The majority of nursing interns indicated moderate clinical readiness, while a smaller number showed either high or low preparedness. Readiness level didn't have a significant relationship with gender, age, marital status, or university attendance; however, it was impacted by GPA, simulation lab experience, and internship duration. Such results emphasize the importance of customizing training and providing support in order to raise interns' skills and self-assurance. Additional studies should be carried out to uncover the elements of clinical readiness that still remain to be explored and thus, get guidance on how to effectively bridge the gap between nursing education and commencement of professional practice.

Keywords: Clinical, Nursing Intern, Perceptions, Readiness, and Students.

Introduction

Traditionally, nursing students graduate from undergraduate nursing programs with a minimum level of competence to begin practice as nurses. Nursing students transitioning into practice can be overwhelmed with the responsibilities of caring for a large group of patients, as well as performing multiple leadership and management roles effectively (Alyatim et al., 2023).

New graduates and their readiness to enter the nursing profession have been debated since apprenticeship training programs were replaced by higher education institutions (Alruwaili et al, 2024). The functions that nurses perform in the clinical setting include caring for patients, communicating with them, educating them, and advocating on their behalf. In order to be assigned to a clinical site, new nurses should be able to meet all professional nursing requirements. It is also essential that they have multidimensional capabilities and characteristics to ensure the safe, high-quality delivery of nursing care (Walters et al, 2022).

The inclusion of nursing students into clinical practice has become a focus point due to the worldwide situation where the training of workers is being changed into the education of professionals with the establishment of a bachelor's degree as the main qualification of registered nurses (Anthony, 2022). Nevertheless, the differences in the entry-to-practice requirements still exist widely between countries and even within various provinces (Holch, 2022). The nursing profession in the 21st century requires practitioners who are not only technically skilled but also can apply clinical judgment and critical thinking, which are essential to the field of modern healthcare, and these should be supported by evidence-based practice (Khoshbakht-Pishkhani et al., 2024).

Clinical readiness can be described as the experience that interns have of feeling ready for various practice areas. It means that they believe in their own capacity to get going and are conscious of their talents. Preparedness for practice goes hand in hand with self-efficacy, communication,

and skill learning (Sharief et al., 2025). However, Sharief et al. (2025) reported that 81.7% of the participants in Dubai were well-equipped for clinical practices. Most interns said they were either completely or extremely well-prepared for all duties related to the treatment of difficult cases, giving holistic treatment, and taking responsibility for their education. Regarding clinical and medical knowledge, the Saudi Arabian research from 2020 found that the interpersonal skills domains had the lowest level of readiness, while holistic care had the greatest level, followed by self-directed learning (Aldosari, Prymachuk, and Cooke, 2021).

The period of transition from a nursing internship into a professional nursing practice is a very crucial time that significantly impacts the nurses' level of clinical competence and confidence in their ability to provide care that is not only safe but high in quality as well (Aksoy, 2022). The readiness of

Methods

Study design and participants

In this cross-sectional study, a simple random sample of both public and private schools in This quantitative cross-sectional study was conducted among nursing intern students at King Abdulaziz National Guard Hospital in Alhasa and King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia. Data were collected from April to December 2025. The study population included nursing intern students who were currently enrolled in the internship program and had completed at least six months of internship training. Interns with less than six months of clinical experience were excluded. Participation was voluntary, and electronic informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection.

Data were gathered through the Nursing Practice Readiness Scale (NPRS), a self-report instrument that underwent validation by Kim and Shin (2022) and is used for the assessment of nurse student

newly graduated nurses for clinical practice is a topic that has been a subject of concern for a long time. This is because a lot of nursing interns still experience great challenges in adjusting to the requirements of independent practice even when there are well-structured internship programs (Al-Yatim, Al-Ola, and Al-Yateem, 2023). At King Abdulaziz National Guard Hospital, Alhasa, and King Faisal University, there is hardly any evidence on how nursing intern students see themselves as clinically ready and the factors that may lead to their feeling of unpreparedness during this difficult transition phase. Therefore, the study aimed to assess the perceptions of clinical readiness among nursing intern students and identify associated challenges and areas for improvement, to inform educational strategies, enhance internship programs, and support a smoother transition into professional nursing practice.

clinical readiness. The NPRS consists of 35 items that are distributed into five subscales, namely, professional attitudes, clinical judgment and nursing performance, patient-centeredness, self-regulation, and collaborative interpersonal relationships. Each question is rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The total score lies in the range of 35 to 140, with the higher score indicating a greater level of clinical readiness. The scale demonstrated excellent psychometric properties with an internal consistency reliability of Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$. The NPRS is suitable for nursing intern students and has been widely utilized in clinical education research (Jalali et al., 2024).

A simple random sample method was applied to select monitory female nursing students who are eligible to be intern nurses. The sample size needed was determined using the proportion estimation formula ($N = Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)/d^2$), where $Z = 1.96$ at a 95% confidence level, $p = 0.5$, and $d = 0.05$. The computation showed that the final sample size

of intern nurses was 105. The data collection instrument was a secure online questionnaire, which was conducted through a distribution link sent via the institutional email during the data collection period. Participant privacy and confidentiality were the highest priorities of the research, and anonymity was guaranteed at all times.

The statistical analysis was done using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29. Descriptive statistics summarized the participant demographics and NPRS scores. Other statistical tests (independent-sample t-tests, ANOVA, chi-square tests, and linear regression analysis) were used to study the relationships between clinical readiness and demographic variables. All the analyses were done on anonymized data, and the significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Study measures

The study data were collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two major sections: demographic information and clinical readiness assessment. The demographic part recorded information of the participants, such as age, marital status, having children, GPA, and clinical practice hours. The variables selected were those deemed most significant to nursing education, as well as supported by the literature to have a potential impact on clinical readiness and the transition to professional practice.

Clinical readiness was assessed using the Coaching Practice Readiness Scale (NPRS), which Kim and Shin (2022) developed. The NPRS is a validated tool that was designed to assess how prepared nursing students are for clinical practice across five different domains: professional attitudes, clinical judgment and nursing performance, patient-centeredness, self-regulation, and collaborative

interpersonal relationships. The instrument has 35 items; each one is scored on a 4-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The sum of the scores can be between 35 and 140, and the higher the scores, the higher the levels of perceived clinical readiness.

NPRS has proved to be a reliable and valid measure and has been frequently utilized in nursing education research. Here, the scale was adopted exclusively in its original state. The researchers found an excellent internal consistency reliability for the NPRS instrument with Cronbach's $\alpha=0.90$ (Jalali et al., 2024). Clinical readiness scores were computed in accordance with the original scoring instructions, thereby permitting the categorization of interns' readiness levels and making it possible to note the clinical readiness-demographic variables associations. This method made it possible to pinpoint the deficient aspects and furnish the evidence necessary for the nursing internship training program upgrade.

Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics software version 29. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic characteristics, i.e., age, marital status, having children, GPA, and clinical practice hours. Clinical readiness levels were identified from the total and subscale scores of the Nursing Practice Readiness Scale (NPRS), while the use of frequencies and percentages served to characterize the readiness levels of nursing intern students.

Inferential statistical methods were applied to investigate the connection between clinical readiness and certain demographic variables. The Chi-square tests served to evaluate the relationships of associations between categorical variables. At the same time, independent-sample t-tests and one-

way ANOVA were utilized to determine the variation in the mean readiness scores between different groups. In order to determine the most significant predictors of clinical readiness among other demographic factors, a linear regression analysis was carried out. The statistical significance of the results was considered at the level of $p < 0.05$ for all statistical tests.

Before the analysis, missing data were checked, and we found very few, so we only used the cases that had complete data for the final analysis. To protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants, all data were pooled and analyzed at the group level only. The study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Approval No. 00000165525). The study was conducted in strict compliance with ethical principles, and an electronic informed consent was obtained from each participant after they had been fully informed about the study's aim, methods, and their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Results

The primary aim of the study was to evaluate the clinical preparedness of nursing intern students and explore whether there was a correlation between clinical readiness and demographic and academic factors such as age, marital status, GPA, and clinical practice hours. The findings reveal the overall level of readiness and identify the areas that require improvement to ease the transition to professional nursing practice.

Statistical Techniques for Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29. They used descriptive statistics to summarize descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize participants' demographic and academic characteristics and describe levels of clinical readiness. The K-test, independent sample t-tests, and ANOVA were used to test associations between the demographic variables and the clinical readiness scores. Linear regression was used to explore the significant predictors of clinical readiness. The level of statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of nursing intern students (N = 105)

Variable	Category	n	%
Age group (years)	18–22	27	25.7
	23–27	77	73.3
	28–32	1	1.0
Gender	Female	80	76.2
	Male	25	23.8
CUM GPA	2-2.75	4	3.8
	2.76-3.75	28	26.7
	3.76-4.5	48	45.7
	Above 4.5	25	23.8
University	King Faisal University	49	46.7
	King Abdulaziz National Guard Hospital	56	53.3

Marital status	Single	77	73.3
	Married	25	23.8
	Divorced	3	2.85
Have children	Yes	11	10.5
	No	94	89.5
Simulation lab time	4 hours	17	16.2
	5–10 hours	27	25.7
	11–19 hours	27	25.7
	≥20 hours	34	32.4
Internship duration	Less than 6 months	15	14.3
	6 months	22	21.0
	More than 6 months	43	41.0
	1 year- finished	25	23.8

Table 1 shows that most of the nursing interns were 23- 27 years old (73.3%), and 76.2% of them were males. Almost half of the participants (45.7%) had a cumulative GPA of 3.76 4.5, and just a little more than half (53.3%) were enrolled at King Abdulaziz National Guard Hospital for Health Sciences. When it comes to marital status, 73.3% of the nursing intern students were single, 23.8% were married, 2.85% were divorced, and only 10.5% of

them had children. As for their experience with simulation labs, 32.4% had ≥20 hours, followed by 25.7% with 5- 10 hours, 11-19 hours (each), and 16.2% with 4 hours. Most of the interns had been in the internship program for more than 6 months (41%), then those who had completed 1 year (23.8%), 6 months (21%), and less than 6 months (14.3%).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of clinical readiness scores

Variable	Mean ± SD	Minimum	Maximum
Clinical readiness (mean score, 1–4)	3.09 ± 0.40	2.03	4.00
Clinical readiness (total score, 35–140)	108.14 ± 13.99	71	140

Table 2 showed that the nursing interns felt that their clinical readiness was at a moderate level. Their overall mean rating was 3.09 ± 0.40 , on the 1- 4 Likert scale, in which the range of their scores was 2.03 to 4.00. The total score on the NPRS was 108.14 ± 13.99 out of 140, with the lowest and

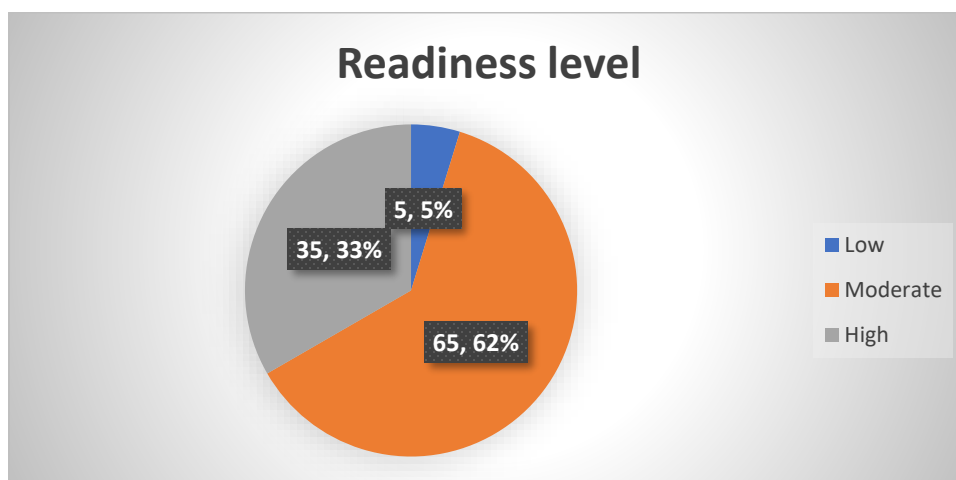
highest scores being 71 to 140, respectively. Overall, these results indicate that interns, on average, feel quite prepared for clinical practice; however, there is some divergence in the level of readiness among them.

Table 3. Levels of perceived clinical readiness among nursing interns

Readiness level	Mean score range	n	%
Low	≤ 2.50	5	4.8
Moderate	2.51–3.25	65	61.9
High	≥ 3.26	35	33.3

Table 3 highlighted that most nursing intern students felt a moderate degree of clinical readiness (61.9%), with mean scores varying between 2.51 and 3.25. Only a few interns (33.3%) indicated a high level of readiness (≥ 3.26), and a mere 4.8% of

students were at a low level of clinical readiness (≤ 2.50). It appears that the majority of interns consider themselves quite ready for clinical practice, but there is a significant group that might need extra help to become more ready.

**Figure 1: Prevalence of perceived clinical readiness among nursing interns****Table 4. Reliability analysis of the clinical readiness scale (NPRS)**

Number of items	Likert scale	Cronbach's alpha
35 items	1–4	0.953

Table 4 demonstrated that the Nursing Practice Readiness Scale (NPRS) had excellent internal consistency because it scored a Cronbach's alpha of 0.953 for all 35 items, which are rated on a 1- 4

Likert scale. This means that the scale is a very trustworthy tool to evaluate the clinical readiness of nursing intern students.

Table 5. Association between clinical readiness and demographic variables

Variable	Statistical test	F	p-value	Interpretation
Gender	Independent Sample T-test	.936	.335	Not Significant

Age group	One-Way ANOVA			Not Significant
University	Independent Sample T-test	.984	.324	Not significant
Marital status	One-Way ANOVA			Not significant
Have children	Independent Sample T-test	.002	.966	Not significant
GPA	One-Way ANOVA	6.635	.00001	Significant
Simulation lab time	One-Way ANOVA	7.69	.000	Significant
Internship duration	One-Way ANOVA	5.750	.001	Significant

P-value is not statistically significant ($P < 0.05$)

Table 5 provides the correlation between clinical readiness and the demographics of nursing intern students. Male and female students did not demonstrate any differences in their clinical readiness in this study ($p = 0.335$). Apart from the age group, university ($p = 0.324$), marital status, and being a parent ($p = 0.966$), clinical readiness only varied with cumulative GPA ($F = 6.635$, $p <$

Discussion

Our study findings demonstrated that nursing intern students, on average, perceive a moderate clinical readiness level, but an individual difference in the degree of readiness was evident. These results are consistent with a recent study that reveals the majority of nursing interns feel only moderately prepared as they move into professional practice. According to Almadani et al. (2024), nurse interns perceived themselves to be moderately prepared for clinical practice and ready for practice; however, a considerable number of them were not ready at all, pointing to the persistent difficulty in the process of converting academic knowledge to clinical competence.

Research in the Al Jouf Region of Saudi Arabia also reported that most of the intern nursing students showed moderate readiness in different areas like clinical judgment, professional attitudes, and patient-centeredness (Alruwaili, Alruwaili, and Colby. (2024). This was in line with the idea that the internship period is a crucial stage from the

0.0001), simulation lab time ($F = 7.69$, $p < 0.001$), and internship duration ($F = 5.750$, $p = 0.001$). Thus, a student's academic level, clinical practice exposure, and the extent of internship experience appear to be the key factors influencing nursing interns' confidence in their preparedness for clinical work without supervision.

"novice" to the "advanced beginner" in clinical competency development theories, where interns have basic skills but still need more experience and guidance to become highly proficient (Alshutwi, 2025).

Regarding demographic and educational factors, the data we analyzed showed that there was no significant association between clinical readiness and gender, age, university, marital status, or having children. Al-Maskari, Al Riyami, and Ghnimi. (2024) study has pointed out demographic impacts on readiness, for example, correlations between age or family responsibilities and perceived readiness. Our finding indicates that these factors might be less powerful than academic and experiential ones in the current context.

Meanwhile, GPA, simulation lab hours, and length of internship had a significant correlation with the level of clinical readiness of the interns. Interns with higher GPAs felt ready more than the others, which is in line with the fact that academic success

leads to higher self-confidence and competence in clinical situations. Also, it is in agreement with the study made by Damiran et al. (2025) on readiness of nursing students at the undergraduate level, which, to a certain extent, reveals the association between good academic results and better preparedness from the students' perspectives, noting that a solid theoretical background can result in increased confidence in practice.

The significant relationship between simulation lab exposure and clinical readiness confirms the role of simulation-based learning in preparing nursing students for real clinical settings. This is in agreement with the findings of two research studies (AlBalawi et al., 2022; Alrashidi et al., 2023) and demonstrates that positive attitudes and higher engagement with simulation have been very much associated with improved clinical preparedness, as students highly appreciate simulation for the development of critical thinking and decision-making skills, which provide a link between classroom learning and practice. Similarly, the relationship between internship duration and readiness is in line with the longitudinal evidence suggesting that greater clinical exposure results in better practical skills and more self-confidence. Long clinical training gives the opportunity to gain cumulative experience and to handle a wider range of clinical situations, thus increasing perceived readiness (Yakoby, 2025).

Implications

The study emphasizes the very pressing issue that clinical readiness must be increased among intern nursing students, particularly those whose cumulative GPAs are low, who have had limited simulation lab experience, or who have had shorter internship durations. The absence of significant associations with gender, age, marital status, or having children indicates that it is mainly the broader educational and experiential aspects, rather than demographic characteristics, which determine

the perceived readiness of the students. To help prepare students who feel less ready for independent practice, nursing programs should focus on simulation-based learning, well-planned hands-on clinical exposure, and provide additional support. Moreover, these results suggest the necessity for policy and curriculum development to include mentoring, competency-building activities, and continuous assessment, along with further studies for the design of culturally suitable ways of improving interns' readiness, confidence, and capacity for delivering good patient care.

Limitations

The study is limited in a few ways that are worth mentioning. The cross-sectional nature of the research means that it is not possible to determine whether one factor causes another (i.e., demographic or educational factors cause clinical readiness of nursing interns). The use of a self-administered survey for data collection can only give biased results due to an overestimation or underestimation of readiness by the respondents themselves. Despite the fact that the Nursing Practice Readiness Scale (NPRS) is a validated tool, it might not accurately reflect every aspect that influences the clinical readiness of Saudi nursing students, such as those related to the local culture or environment. The study participants were only female nursing interns at King Abdulaziz National Guard Hospital and King Faisal University. Therefore, the study's findings may not apply to other schools or male interns.

Recommendations

Various recommendations are put forward to increase the level of clinical readiness in nursing student interns. First, it is suggested that nursing schools carry out periodic evaluation of the students through the implementation of a reliable measuring tool, such as the Nursing Practice Readiness Scale (NPRS), in order to spot those nursing interns who will need extra help in the near

future. Secondly, school clinical training programs shall take the form of high-quality training such as simulated labs, mentoring, and practicing under the strict supervision of which customers' only hands skills will be understood through. Teaching staff and clinical preceptors should be given proper training so as to be able to identify the learning needs of students and consequently provide guidance at the right time. Internship length and exposure to various clinical situations should also be optimized to promote professional development. Internship program quality should be

Conclusion

Clinical readiness of nursing intern students in King Abdulaziz National Guard Hospital and King Faisal University was mostly moderate. Most interns felt that they were sufficiently prepared to carry out clinical practice. Although around half of the students were highly ready, a very small number revealed low preparedness; thus, there is a variation in perceived competence. Female and male students, younger and older, married and single, from different universities and with or without children, were all equally clinically ready, and thus none of these factors were statistically significantly related to clinical readiness. On the other hand, academic performance, simulation lab exposure, and the length of internship experience were the significant factors, which imply that educational achievement as well as practical training are the two main factors that influence interns' confidence and

a top priority for policymakers and nursing education leaders, who should ensure the integration of competency-based methods in curricula. Moreover, future studies should identify the different elements that impact clinical readiness, like stress, workload, and organizational support. Besides that, researchers are advised to conduct longitudinal, multi-institutional studies, which can provide more generalizable results and offer the necessary evidence for the improvement of programs.

competence in clinical settings. These results emphasize the importance of implementing specific measures and the provision of systematic support for nursing interns to acquire the skills and confidence to practice independently and make a smooth transition to the role of a professional nurse.

Funding

The study received no financing from public, commercial, or non-profit entities.

Availability statement

The corresponding author may obtain data substantiating the study's conclusions upon a reasonable request.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this article.

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