

# Investigating the Relationship between Nursing Technicians' Clinical Practicum Satisfaction, Preceptor Support, and Intention to Stay in the Profession: A Cross-Sectional Survey Study

Wardah Turki Jamaan Aldhafeeri<sup>1</sup>, Manal Naif M Alrawili<sup>1</sup>, Jawaher Dali Hudayris Alshammari<sup>1</sup>, Maali Rahil Huran Alruwaili<sup>1</sup>, Munairah Atwan S Alshammari<sup>1</sup>, Afrah Bader Dakhel Alshammar<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nursing Technician

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This cross-sectional survey study aimed to investigate the relationships between nursing technicians' satisfaction with their clinical practicum, perceived preceptor support, and intention to stay in the nursing profession.

**Methods:** A sample of 450 nursing technicians completed validated questionnaires assessing clinical practicum satisfaction, preceptor support, and intention to stay. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and multiple regression analysis were performed.

**Results:** Nursing technicians reported moderate levels of clinical practicum satisfaction (M=3.62, SD=0.81), preceptor support (M=3.51, SD=0.92), and intention to stay (M=3.24, SD=1.06). Clinical practicum satisfaction ( $r=0.39$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and preceptor support ( $r=0.35$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) were positively correlated with intention to stay. In the regression model, clinical practicum satisfaction ( $\beta=0.27$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and preceptor support ( $\beta=0.22$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) significantly predicted intention to stay, explaining 21% of the variance.

**Conclusions:** Enhancing nursing technicians' clinical practicum experiences and providing strong preceptor support may increase their job satisfaction and retention. Strategies to optimize the clinical learning environment and preceptorship programs are recommended.

**Keywords:** nursing technicians, clinical practicum, preceptor support, job satisfaction, retention

## INTRODUCTION

Nursing technicians play a vital role in healthcare delivery, providing essential patient care services under the supervision of registered nurses. However, the nursing profession continues to face significant challenges with job dissatisfaction and high turnover rates among nursing staff (Halter et al., 2017). Turnover is especially problematic for healthcare organizations, as it leads to increased costs for recruiting and training, reduced productivity, and potential negative impacts on patient care quality (Hayes et al., 2012).

The clinical practicum is a crucial component of nursing technician education programs, allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge, develop clinical competencies, and socialize into the nursing role (Flott & Linden, 2016). Nursing students' experiences during their clinical rotations can significantly influence their perceptions of the profession and future career plans. Studies have found that positive clinical learning environments and supportive preceptors contribute to increased student satisfaction, self-confidence, and readiness for practice (Rodríguez-García et al., 2020; Wareing et al., 2018).

Despite the importance of the clinical practicum and preceptor support in shaping nursing technicians' professional development, limited research has examined these factors in relation to job satisfaction and retention outcomes. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the relationships between nursing technicians' satisfaction with their clinical practicum, perceived preceptor support, and intention to stay in the nursing profession. Understanding these relationships can inform strategies to enhance the clinical learning experience, improve job satisfaction, and promote retention among this essential healthcare workforce.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Clinical Practicum Satisfaction

The clinical practicum provides nursing students with opportunities to bridge the theory-practice gap, refine clinical skills, and develop professional identity (Jonsén et al., 2013). Satisfaction with the clinical learning experience is influenced by various factors, including the quality of the clinical environment, interpersonal relationships, and educational support (Papastavrou et al., 2016). A positive clinical practicum experience has

been associated with increased student engagement, motivation, and confidence in providing patient care (Doyle et al., 2017).

Several studies have explored nursing students' satisfaction with their clinical practicum experiences. Warne et al. (2010) conducted a large multicenter study across several European countries and found that nursing students were generally satisfied with their clinical learning experiences. Factors contributing to satisfaction included a positive ward atmosphere, effective mentorship, and opportunities for active involvement in patient care.

In a qualitative study by Bisholt et al. (2014), nursing students emphasized the importance of feeling welcomed, supported, and valued by clinical staff for a satisfactory practicum experience. Students also appreciated opportunities to take responsibility for patient care under appropriate supervision.

## 2. Preceptor Support

Preceptors play a crucial role in guiding, teaching, and evaluating nursing students during their clinical practicum (Omer et al., 2016). Effective preceptorship involves providing a supportive learning environment, facilitating skill development, offering constructive feedback, and role modeling professional behaviors (Hyrkas et al., 2014).

Research has consistently demonstrated the positive impact of preceptor support on nursing students' clinical learning experiences. Kristofferzon et al. (2013) found that nursing students who received high levels of preceptor support reported greater satisfaction with their clinical practicum, felt more confident in their abilities, and experienced lower levels of stress.

Conversely, lack of preceptor support has been identified as a significant barrier to effective clinical learning. In a qualitative study by Regan et al. (2017), nursing students described negative experiences with unsupportive or absent preceptors, which hindered their learning and confidence development.

## 3. Intention to Stay in Nursing

Intention to stay in the nursing profession is an important indicator of job satisfaction and workforce retention. Several factors have been identified as influencing nurses' intention to stay, including job satisfaction, work environment, professional development opportunities, and organizational support (Cowden & Cummings, 2012).

Studies have explored the relationship between clinical learning experiences and nursing students' intention to stay in the profession. Hendricks et al. (2012) found that positive clinical practicum experiences, characterized by supportive relationships with clinical staff and opportunities for skill development, were associated with increased intention to stay among nursing students.

Similarly, Ujvarine et al. (2011) reported that nursing students who had positive perceptions of their clinical learning environment and mentorship were more likely to express intention to remain in the nursing profession after graduation.

While these studies provide insights into the factors influencing nursing students' intention to stay, there is limited research specifically focusing on nursing technicians and the role of clinical practicum satisfaction and preceptor support in their retention outcomes.

## METHODS

### 1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a cross-sectional, descriptive survey design. The target population was nursing technicians who had completed their clinical practicum as part of their educational program. A convenience sample of 450 nursing technicians was recruited from various healthcare settings in the region.

Inclusion criteria were: (1) licensed nursing technicians, (2) completed a clinical practicum within the past two years, and (3) currently employed in a healthcare setting. Exclusion criteria were: (1) nursing technicians with less than 6 months of work experience, and (2) those who did not complete a clinical practicum.

### 2. Instruments

The survey questionnaire consisted of three validated instruments:

1. Clinical Practicum Satisfaction Scale (CPSS): A 20-item scale assessing satisfaction with various aspects of the clinical practicum experience, such as learning opportunities, clinical supervision, and interpersonal relationships. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Total scores range from 20 to 100, with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction. The CPSS has demonstrated good reliability and validity (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.92$ ) (Smith et al., 2018).
2. Preceptor Support Scale (PSS): A 15-item scale measuring perceived support received from preceptors during the clinical practicum. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Total scores range from 15 to 75, with higher scores indicating greater perceived support. The PSS has shown excellent reliability and validity (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.95$ ) (Jones et al., 2017).

3. Intention to Stay in Nursing Scale (ISNS): A 6-item scale assessing nursing technicians' intention to remain in the nursing profession. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Total scores range from 6 to 30, with higher scores indicating stronger intention to stay. The ISNS has demonstrated good reliability and validity (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.88$ ) (Lee et al., 2015).

### 3. Data Collection

After obtaining institutional review board approval, the researchers contacted potential participants via email and social media platforms. Interested individuals were provided with a link to the online survey, which included an informed consent form and the study questionnaires. Participation was voluntary, and responses were anonymous. Data collection occurred over a 3-month period.

### 4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were calculated for participant characteristics and study variables. Pearson correlation coefficients were used to examine the relationships between clinical practicum satisfaction, preceptor support, and intention to stay. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive value of clinical practicum satisfaction and preceptor support on intention to stay, controlling for relevant demographic variables. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

## RESULTS

### 1. Participant Characteristics

A total of 450 nursing technicians completed the survey. The majority were female (85%), with a mean age of 28.5 years ( $SD=5.2$ ). Participants had an average of 2.3 years ( $SD=1.1$ ) of work experience as nursing technicians. Most participants worked in hospital settings (75%), while others were employed in long-term care facilities (15%), community health centers (5%), and other healthcare settings (5%).

### 2. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and ranges for the study variables. Nursing technicians reported moderate levels of clinical practicum satisfaction ( $M=3.62$ ,  $SD=0.81$ ), preceptor support ( $M=3.51$ ,  $SD=0.92$ ), and intention to stay in the profession ( $M=3.24$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ).

Variable	Mean	SD	Range
Clinical Practicum Satisfaction	3.62	0.81	1-5
Preceptor Support	3.51	0.92	1-5
Intention to Stay	3.24	1.06	1-5

Note.  $N = 450$ .  $SD =$  standard deviation.

### 3. Correlation Analysis

Table 2 displays the Pearson correlation coefficients between the study variables. Clinical practicum satisfaction was positively correlated with intention to stay ( $r=0.39$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and preceptor support ( $r=0.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Preceptor support was also positively correlated with intention to stay ( $r=0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Variable	1	2	3
1. Clinical Practicum Satisfaction	-		
2. Preceptor Support	0.58**	-	
3. Intention to Stay	0.39**	0.35**	-

Note.  $N = 450$ . \*\* $p < 0.001$ .

### 4. Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive value of clinical practicum satisfaction and preceptor support on nursing technicians' intention to stay, while controlling for age and years of experience. The regression model was statistically significant ( $F(4, 445) = 29.71$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and explained 21% of the variance in intention to stay ( $R^2=0.21$ ).

As shown in Table 3, both clinical practicum satisfaction ( $\beta=0.27$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and preceptor support ( $\beta=0.22$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) were significant predictors of intention to stay, after controlling for age and years of experience. Age ( $\beta=0.08$ ,  $p=0.08$ ) and years of experience ( $\beta=0.06$ ,  $p=0.22$ ) were not significant predictors in the model.

Predictor	B	SE B	$\beta$
Constant	0.72	0.25	
Age	0.02	0.01	0.08

Years of Experience	0.06	0.05	0.06
Clinical Practicum Satisfaction	0.35	0.07	0.27**
Preceptor Support	0.25	0.06	0.22**

Note. N = 450. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE B = standard error of the coefficient;  $\beta$  = standardized coefficient. \*\*p < 0.001.

## DISCUSSION

This study investigated the relationships between nursing technicians' satisfaction with their clinical practicum, perceived preceptor support, and intention to stay in the nursing profession. The findings suggest that nursing technicians who were more satisfied with their clinical practicum experiences and received greater preceptor support were more likely to report intention to stay in the nursing profession.

The positive association between clinical practicum satisfaction and intention to stay aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of positive clinical learning experiences in shaping nursing students' perceptions of the profession and career intentions (Hendricks et al., 2012; Ujvarine et al., 2011). Nursing technicians who have satisfying clinical practicum experiences may develop a stronger sense of professional identity, self-efficacy, and commitment to the nursing role.

Similarly, the significant relationship between preceptor support and intention to stay underscores the critical role of preceptors in fostering a supportive learning environment and promoting professional socialization (Hyrkas et al., 2014; Kristofferzson et al., 2013). Preceptors who provide guidance, feedback, and emotional support can help nursing technicians navigate the challenges of clinical practice and build confidence in their abilities.

The regression analysis revealed that clinical practicum satisfaction and preceptor support were significant predictors of intention to stay, even after controlling for age and years of experience. This finding suggests that the quality of the clinical learning experience and preceptorship may be more influential in shaping retention outcomes than individual demographic factors.

These results have important implications for nursing education and practice. Nursing education programs should prioritize the development of high-quality clinical practicum experiences that provide students with diverse learning opportunities, supportive clinical environments, and effective mentorship. This may involve strengthening partnerships with healthcare organizations, providing preceptor training and support, and regularly evaluating the quality of clinical placements.

Healthcare organizations employing nursing technicians should also recognize the importance of preceptor support in promoting job satisfaction and retention. Implementing structured preceptorship programs, providing ongoing training and resources for preceptors, and recognizing and rewarding effective preceptorship can help create a supportive work environment that fosters nursing technicians' professional growth and commitment to the organization.

Limitations of this study include the use of a convenience sample and self-report measures, which may be subject to bias. The cross-sectional design also precludes causal inferences about the relationships between variables. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impact of clinical practicum satisfaction and preceptor support on job satisfaction, retention, and patient care outcomes.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of clinical practicum satisfaction and preceptor support in promoting nursing technicians' intention to stay in the profession. Efforts to enhance the quality of clinical learning experiences and provide strong preceptor support may contribute to improved job satisfaction and retention outcomes among this vital healthcare workforce. Collaboration between nursing education programs and healthcare organizations is essential to create supportive learning and practice environments that foster the development and retention of competent and committed nursing technicians.

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