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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## NURSE INTERNS' SATISFACTION WITH THE CLINICAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY.

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##### Key words:-

Nurse Interns', Satisfaction, Clinical, Learning Environment.

#### Abstract

**Background:** As part of nursing education clinical internship forms an integral part of the learning experience. Since nursing is a skills-based profession, clinical internship plays an important role in enabling a student to acquire professional skills and competencies as they seek to become registered nurse. Despite its importance, clinical internship can also be a source of frustration to students and can lead to some choosing to work away from the clinical nursing set-up.

**Objective:** This study sought to assess nurse interns' satisfaction with the clinical learning environment.

**Methods:** This was a descriptive cross-sectional study that was conducted at Uasin Gishu County hospitals. 70 qualified degree nurses were sampled with a response rate of 93%. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Ethical approval was sort from University of Eastern Africa, Baraton Ethics Review Board. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0.

**Results:** The study results showed that 97% of respondents expressed satisfaction with internship program. Satisfaction with the clinical learning environment was associated with hospital staff relationship with the interns: staff were interested in supervising interns ( $\chi^2=17.048$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.001$ ), easier to approach ( $\chi^2= 34.72$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), gave feedback on performance ( $\chi^2= 8.49$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.021$ ) and nurse managers allocating duties fairly ( $\chi^2= 8.35$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.019$ ).

**Conclusion:** The study demonstrates that nurses on internship are happy with their preparation to practice nursing. Therefore, it is important to ensure that resources needed are availed to support student nurses during internship.

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#### Introduction:-

Nursing training is a combination of theoretical and practical learning experiences that enable nursing students to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes for providing nursing care (Nabolsi et al., 2012). As part of nursing education, clinical internship forms an integral part of the learning experience. Since nursing is a skills-based profession, clinical internship plays an important role in enabling a student to acquire professional skills and

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competencies as they seek to become registered nurse (Jons'en, 2013). Kaşlı & Ilban (2013) suggested that, a successful internship period will facilitate the transition and may yield a fruitful outcome in terms of enhancing graduates' competency. Despite its importance, clinical internship can also be a source of frustration to students and can lead to some choosing to work away from the clinical nursing set-up (Nabolsi et al., 2012).

Smith, (2006) indicated that clinical internships enable students to apply theory to practice in a supervised real-life environment that supports the development of essential skills. The clinical internship usually requires the student to be placed in a clinical environment that is detached and disassociated from the college or university. Such placement is associated with feeling of isolation and detachment from the college and university, as well as from the lecturers and friends that students have built relationships with.

Jamshidi et al (2016) indicated that challenges faced by nursing students during internship affects their overall health and disturbs their learning process. Changiz et al (2012) indicates that nursing students face three types of stress. These are; stress from nursing program; stress from clinical environment and stress from individual student life. Jamshidi et al (2016) also indicated that nurses on internship face discrimination from regular staff. Such discrimination can affect the professional identity of nurses and in a way violates nursing students' personal dignity and could give them a sense of professional inferiority (Sana et al., 2013). The discrimination worsens the internship experience as learning is disturbed, nurses become anxious and end up being less motivated to learn (Jamshidi et al 2016).

In Kenya, the Nursing Council requires that students graduating from degree programs complete a one year of clinical internship placement (Appiagyei et al., 2014). The success of this clinical internship depends on experiences arising from interaction with hospital staff and institutional structure during the internship period (Jamshidi et al 2016). While it is the desire of every nurse intern to undergo and successfully complete the internship program as directed by the Nursing Council of Kenya, there is little information that documents experience and satisfaction with clinical internship. Therefore, this study intended to determine nurse interns' satisfaction with the clinical learning environment.

### Methods:-

This was a descriptive cross-sectional study that was conducted at Uasin Gishu County hospitals. 70 nurse interns were sampled with a response rate of 93%. Census sampling method was used to select participants. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Ethical approval was sort from University of Eastern Africa, Baraton Ethics Review Board. Participants were required to give a signed, voluntary informed consent prior to participation in the study without coercion. The anonymity of participants was ensured by serializing the structured questionnaires. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. Chi-square test was used to determine significance of relationships between nominal variables. A P-value of  $\leq 0.05$  was considered significant.

### Results:-

A higher proportion of respondents were females compared to males. Majority of the respondents were in the age bracket of 25-29 years. More than two-thirds of nurses completed between 10-12 months of internship. This is illustrated by table 1 below.

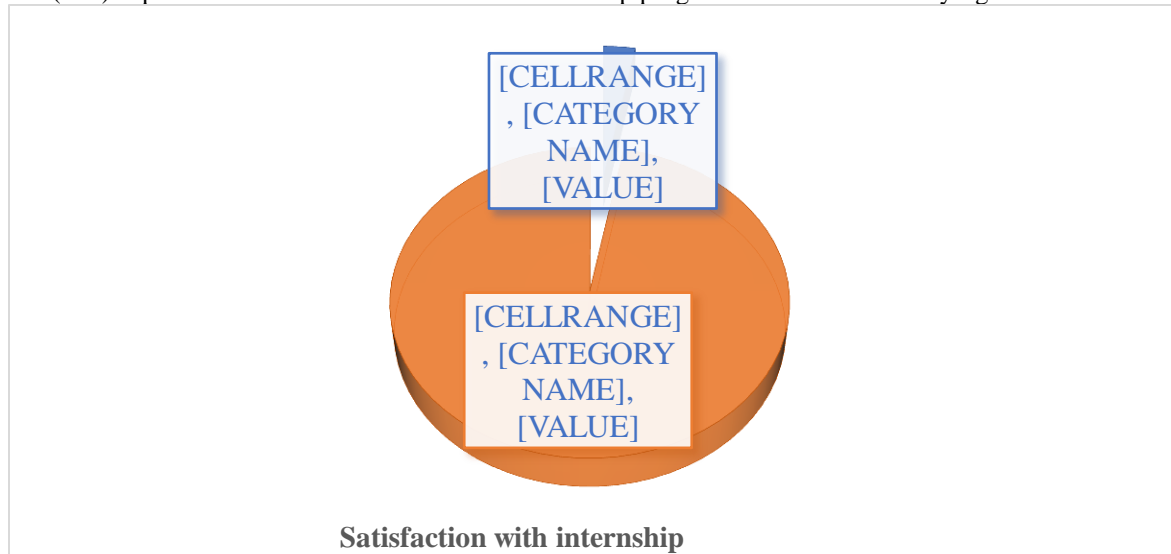
**Table 1:-**Demographic profile of respondents

Demographics	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	19	27.1
	Female	51	72.9
Age	25-29Years	40	57.1
	>30Years	30	42.9
Months of internship	<3 Months	1	1.4
	3-6 Months	3	4.3
	7-9 Months	1	1.4
	10-12 Months	65	92.9
First Unit	Surgical Ward	11	15.7
	Maternity	9	12.9

	Pediatric	9	12.9
	Out-Patient/Casualty	10	14.2
	Medical unit	22	31.4
	Obs/Gynae	4	5.7
	Newborn Unit	1	1.4
	Renal Unit	1	1.4
	ICU	1	1.4
Duration to employment	<3 months	45	64.3
	3-6 Months	10	14.3
	7-9 Months	2	2.9
	10-12 Months	13	18.1
Year of degree completion	2012	1	1.4
	2013	6	8.6
	2014	18	25.7
	2015	45	64.3

### Level of satisfaction of the clinical internship

The study results showed that majority (97%, n=68) of the respondents expressed satisfaction with internship while 3% (n=2) expressed dissatisfaction with clinical internship program. This is indicated by figure 1 below.



**Figure 1:-**Level of satisfaction of the clinical internship

### Social-demographic factors associated with satisfaction of the internship

Social-demographic factors that were statistically significantly associated with satisfaction of the internship included: age ( $\chi^2 = 8.34$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.043$ ), months taken to complete internship ( $\chi^2 = 10.50$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.015$ ), first unit of placement ( $\chi^2 = 8.503$ ,  $df=8$ ,  $p=0.023$ ), duration taken to secure employment ( $\chi^2 = 6.735$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.014$ ) and year when internship was completed ( $\chi^2 = 7.43$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.003$ ). This is illustrated by table 2 below.

**Table 2:-**Social-demographic factors associated with satisfaction of the internship

Demographics	Categories	Satisfied with Internship				Chi-Square Test of independence
		Satisfied	Dissatisfied			
Gender	Male	18	1			$\chi^2 = 0.544$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.461$
	Female	50	1			
Age	25-29Years	39	0			$\chi^2 = 8.34$ , $df=1$ , $p=0.043$
	>30Years	29	2			
Months of internship	<3 Months	1	0			$\chi^2 = 10.50$ , $df=3$ , $p=0.015$
	3-6 Months	2	1			
	7-9 Months	1	0			

	10-12 Months	64	1			
First Unit	Surgical Ward	11	0			$\chi^2 = 8.503$ df=8 , p=0.023
	Maternity	9	0			
	Pediatric	8	1			
	Out-Patient/Casualty	5	0			
	Medical unit	21	1			
	Obs/Gynae	4	0			
	Newborn Unit	1	0			
	Renal Unit	1	0			
	ICU	1	0			
Duration to employment	<3 months	44	1			$\chi^2 = 6.735$ , df=3, p=0.014
	3-6 Months	9	1			
	7-9 Months	2	0			
	10-12 Months	12	0			
	2012	1	0			$\chi^2 = 7.43$ , df=3, p=0.003
	2013	6	0			
Year of completion	2014	17	1			
	2015	44	1			

**Table 3: Relationship with hospital staff versus internship satisfaction**

The study showed that hospital staff relationship with the interns was associated with internship satisfaction. Table 3 below indicates staff relationship factors that had statistical significant association with satisfaction with internship which included: staff were interested in supervising interns ( $\chi^2=17.048$ , df=2, p=0.001), being easier to approach hospital staff( $\chi^2= 34.72$ , df=2, p=0.000), receiving feedback on performance ( $\chi^2= 8.49$ ,df=2,p=0.021) and nurse managers allocating duties fairly  $\chi^2= 8.35$ , df=1, p=0.019).

**Table 3:-Relationship with hospital staff versus internship satisfaction**

Factors	Categories	Satisfied with Internship		Chi-Square Test of independence
		Satisfied	Dissatisfied	
Staff were interested in my supervision	Agree	37	1	$\chi^2=17.048$ , df=2, p=0.001*
	Neutral	20	0	
	Disagree	1	1	
Staff were easy to approach	Agree	61	1	$\chi^2 = 34.72$ , df=2, p=0.000*
	Neutral	7	0	
	Disagree	0	1	
Comfortable taking part in nursing round	Agree	60	1	$\chi^2 = 8.19$ , df=2, p=0.146
	Neutral	3	1	
	Disagree	5	0	
Interns regarded as key resource	Agree	67	1	$\chi^2 = 1.45$ , df=2, p=0.692
	Neutral	1	1	
	Disagree	0	0	
Received feedback on performance	Agree	55	2	$\chi^2 = 8.49$ , df=2, p=0.021*
	Neutral	12	0	
	Disagree	1	0	
Nurse managers appreciated efforts of interns	Agree	58	2	$\chi^2 = 1.54$ , df=2, p=0.819
	Neutral	9	0	
	Disagree	15	0	
Took part in nursing rounds	Agree	60	1	$\chi^2 = 8.19$ , df=2, p=0.146
	Neutral	3	1	
	Disagree	5	0	
Adequate experienced nurses to act as preceptors	Agree	53	2	$\chi^2 = 1.83$ , df=2, p=0.607
	Neutral	14	0	
	Disagree	1	0	

Hospital staff consider MO- as more important	Agree	38	2	$\chi^2 = 2.23, df=2, p=0.693$
	Neutral	14	0	
	Disagree	16	0	
Nurse managers allocated duties fairly	Agree	61	2	$\chi^2 = 8.35, df=1, p=0.019^*$
	Neutral	4	0	
	Disagree	3	0	

### Discussion:-

The study revealed a higher proportion of respondents expressed satisfaction with the nursing internship. In concurring with findings of this study, Makhlof et al (2017) in their study observed that nurses on internship were generally satisfied internship.

It is important to observe that, contrary to Makhlof et al (2017) in their study they observed that gender of the interns was related to level of satisfaction with internship, however in this study, gender was not significant. Furthermore according to Loch (2013) differences that existed across demographic and academic characteristics most often were present with the group of interns that have not, nor plan to participate in a clinical healthcare internship. Students who do not have plans to do a clinical healthcare internship were more likely to be less than full-time, slightly older, more likely to be married, and more likely to have children living with them, than students who plan to or have participated in a clinical healthcare internship. The finding from this study is supported by Al-Mahmoud et al (2013) in who in their study showed that satisfaction with internship program does not depend on socio-demographic characteristics of nurse interns.

Relationship between the intern and hospital staff is one of the factors that impacts successful completion of clinical internship (Nash et al. 2009). As observed in this study majority of the nurse respondents indicated that hospital staff were easy to approach and work with. Hence it is possible to conclude that interns were accepted as part of the nursing team in the respective hospitals, a fact that is further demonstrated when interns indicated that hospital staff regarded nurse interns as key resource personnel in the hospital. In concurring with the findings of this study Nabolsi et al (2012) demonstrated in their study that proper treatment and establishment of a communication with interns is an important item for preceptors to be a role model for students. They indicated that a training which involves value and respect facilitates the teaching-learning process and socializes the students into the nursing profession. This also concurs with Chang & Chu (2009)

As literature demonstrate, hospital staff and preceptors provide feedback to nurse interns on their performance (Al Mamari et al., 2015). This study observed that more than two-thirds of nurse interns concurred to have received feedback from hospital staff. A fact that demonstrates good relationship and willingness of the hospital staff to help interns learn and improve. Consistent with findings of this present study, Al-Mamari et al (2015) observed in their study that most nurse interns indicated they received constructive feedback from their preceptors. They concluded that that preceptors provided emotional support and nurtured interns with the sense of responsibility and accountability that in turn led to increase level of graduates' independence and maturity. In contrast to the findings of this present study, Makhlof et al (2017), observed in their study that most interns felt that preceptor didn't provide them with regular feedback on their strengths and weaknesses.

Furthermore, this study observed that nurse managers allocated duties fairly while taking into consideration their clinical internship learning needs. It is the view of the researchers that, fair allocation of duties that takes into consideration the objectives of clinical internship promote learning in the sense that an intern can learn thus feel they have accomplished the objectives of their learning experiences. In concurring the findings of this present study, Nash et al (2009) and Bakr et al (2013) argued that high level of satisfaction with internship program would occur when nurse managers ensure that learning needs of the interns' area taking care off when planning and allocating for duties in a nursing unit.

### Conclusion:-

This study revealed that satisfaction of nurse interns with the internship is high. Nurse interns had a positive experience during internship and there was availability of adequate clinical learning situations to support acquisition of skills during internship. The implications of this study are that internship ensures human resources in health

sector are better prepared to practice nursing. Therefore, it is important to continue availing resources needed by nurse interns during internship.

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### **Competing Interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests whatsoever.

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