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IMPACT OF CLINICAL SUPERVISION ON NURSING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Background

Clinical supervision is one of the essential elements of nursing education that allows the integration of theoretical knowledge with clinical practice. Supervision helps nursing students to gain professional competence, critical thinking skills, better clinical judgment, and academic achievement. Clinical supervisors are instrumental in students' learning through guidance, feedback, mentorship, and emotional support. Despite the significant global evidence concerning the significance of clinical supervision in nursing education, the amount of empirical research in this area is scarce, especially in nursing schools in Southern Punjab.

Objective

To test the effects of clinical supervision on the academic performance of nursing students in nursing institutes of Southern Punjab, Pakistan.

Methods

It was a quantitative cross-sectional correlational study on 120 undergraduate nursing students in state and privately-owned institutions of nursing. The structured questionnaire, which included the Clinical Supervision Scale and Academic Performance Assessment Scale, was used to collect data. Content validity was determined by means of expert judgment, and reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha. The correlation between clinical supervision and academic performance was analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and linear regression analysis.

Results

The results showed that there was a high perceived clinical supervision among nursing students. Clinical supervision showed that it had a positive and significant relationship of significance with academic performance. Those students who reported greater levels of supervisory support, constructive feedback, and clinical guidance achieved better academic results and were more competent clinicians.

Conclusion

Clinical supervision plays a great role in the academic success of nursing students. Enhanced supervisory practices in nursing education programs can enhance learning outcomes, professional development, and clinical competence.

Keywords

Clinical supervision, nursing students, academic performance, clinical learning, nursing education, mentorship, professional development, Pakistan.

Introduction

Clinical education is the basis of nursing education as it gives students a chance to apply theoretical knowledge to practical skills in actual healthcare settings. Clinical placements enable nursing

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CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

students to acquire competencies that they need in professional practice, such as patient assessment, communication, critical thinking, decision-making, and evidence-based care. The success of clinical learning, however, relies on the quality of supervision by clinical instructors, preceptors, and nursing educators.

Clinical supervision refers to a process that involves experienced practitioners in supporting, guiding, educating, and evaluating students in the course of clinical practice (Proctor, 2010). It is known to be among the most powerful elements that impact the learning process and the learning outcomes of students. Good supervision provides an enabling learning atmosphere that promotes professional development, reflectivity, and competency.

Modern healthcare systems have become very complex, and this has heightened the expectations of nursing students. Students will have to work with sophisticated technologies, with complicated patient conditions, with multidisciplinary teams, and with evidence-based practice requirements. In turn, clinical supervision has gained growing importance as an effective way to ensure successful learning experiences and equip students with the knowledge of successful practice (Tuomikoski et al., 2020).

Studies have shown that high-quality clinical supervision of students leads to increased academic achievement, clinical competence, and professional confidence in comparison to those students who receive poor-quality clinical supervision (Saarikoski et al., 2008).

Positive feedback, personalized instruction, and positive supervisory relations help students to realize learning needs, address obstacles, and enhance performance.

Clinical supervision is also a factor that assists students with regard to their emotional well-being. Clinical placements usually subject the students to stressful experiences such as patient suffering, death, ethical issues, and professional duties. Positive supervisors also assist students in coping with stress, building resilience, and confidence in their learning process (Snowdon et al., 2020).

Although there is abundant international literature on the positive effects of clinical supervision, very few studies have been conducted to understand its effects on the academic performance of nursing students in Pakistan. The problem of clinical resources, faculty, and rising student enrollment is one of the challenges that the institutions of nursing education in Southern Punjab are grappling with. The correlation between clinical supervision and academic performance is thus a critical aspect that needs to be understood in enhancing the quality of nursing education and equipping future nurses with competency.

Problem Statement

Clinical supervision is regarded as one of the foundations of nursing education, as it supports learning, the acquisition of skills, and the development of a professional. Nevertheless, the quality and effectiveness of supervision can differ greatly in terms of various educational institutions and clinical settings. Lack of proper supervision may result in bad learning experiences, low confidence, lack of competence development, and low academic performance amongst nursing students.

Despite the constant proven positive outcomes of clinical supervision on the learning outcomes of students in international studies, there is still a lack of empirical data on the same in Pakistan. Specifically, there is a paucity of information about the effects of clinical supervision on the academic performance of nursing students undertaking courses in institutions of Southern Punjab. Thus, this relationship has to be explored to guide the educational practices and enhance student performance.

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Research Gap

The results of the previous research performed in Europe, Australia, North America, and other developed countries revealed high correlations between clinical supervision, student satisfaction, clinical competence, and academic performance (Saarikoski and Leino-Kilpi, 2002; Hyrkäs et al., 2014; Tuomikoski et al., 2020). But most of these studies have been carried out in health systems, which are very different in terms of the Pakistani context.

In addition, a lot of the literature available is on clinical competence, satisfaction with learning or professional development, but not on actual academic performance indicators. Very little has been done to study the effect of supervisory support, feedback, and clinical guidance on the academic performance of students in the Pakistani institutions of nursing education.

This research fills this gap by considering the effect of clinical supervision on the academic performance of nursing students in Southern Punjab.

Objectives General Objective

To determine the effects of clinical supervision on the academic performance of nursing students.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine the extent of clinical supervision among the nursing students.
2. To compare the performance of nursing students.
3. To find out how clinical supervision is related to academic performance.
4. To test the predicted impact of clinical supervision on academic performance.
5. To offer suggestions to enhance the supervisory practices in nursing education.

Research Questions

1. How well is the clinical supervision of nursing students?
2. How well are nursing students performing?
3. Does clinical supervision significantly relate to academic performance?
4. Is there a significant relationship between clinical supervision and academic performance?

Significance of the Study

This research has relevance to nursing educators, clinical instructors, nursing administrators, policymakers, and students. The results will add to the existing amount of literature on nursing education and clinical learning.

To nursing educators, the research offers evidence on the significance of good supervision in enhancing academic achievement. In the case of clinical instructors, the results could inform the supervisory practice and enhance the support of students. The findings can help nursing administrators to come up with policies that enhance clinical education and learning conditions.

Nursing students can also find the study significant as it points to the importance of supervision in professional development, confidence, and academic success. Finally, better supervision will also help in producing effective nurses who are competent enough to provide safe and effective patient care.

Literature Review

7.1 Clinical Supervision in Nursing Education

Clinical supervision is an important aspect of nursing education that has been known to be a critical factor. It helps to combine the knowledge gained in the classroom and practice, and allows students to become professionally competent (Proctor, 2010). Clinical supervision entails mentoring, mentorship, assessment, and reflective learning that lead to academic and professional growth of the students.

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CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

According to Saarikoski and Leino-Kilpi (2002), the best predictors of successful clinical learning experiences are effective supervisory relationships. Likewise, Tuomikoski et al. (2020) have discovered that good supervision boosts students' perceptions of learning and professional development.

Supervision effectiveness is determined by many factors, such as the competence of the supervisor, communication, availability, quality of feedback, and the learning environment in general (Bjerknes and Bjork, 2012). Emotional support and constructive feedback from supervisors are also important in positive learning experiences.

7.2 Clinical Supervision and Academic Performance

Academic performance is a multidimensional concept that encompasses examination, practical, and clinical scores, as well as overall educational performance. Several studies have shown that clinical supervision is positively related to academic performance.

Brunero and Stein-Parbury (2008) stated that effective supervision enhances the confidence of students, critical thinking, and academic performance. Individualized support and frequent feedback enable students to have better educational results.

A study by Snowdon et al. (2020) has found that structured supervisory interventions had a great positive impact on student learning outcomes and reflective skills. Equally, Franklin (2013) discovered that clinical supervision had a positive impact on academic achievement by improving the level of engagement and motivation of the students.

The connection between supervision and academic performance can be attributed to better learning opportunities, higher confidence, and better acquisition of skills.

7.3 Clinical Supervision and Clinical Competence

One of the main nursing education outcomes is clinical competence. Effective nurses have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and judgment required to provide safe and effective patient care.

Hyrkäs et al. (2014) established that supportive supervision has a great impact on clinical competence as it promotes reflection, critical thinking, and evidence-based practice. Well-supervised students can be more competent in the application of theoretical concepts in clinical cases.

In a systematic review, Tuomikoski et al. (2020) found that clinical supervision has a positive effect on competence development in a variety of areas, such as communication, patient care, and professional behavior.

7.4 Clinical Supervision and Student Confidence

Confidence is fundamental in the practice of clinical practice as it determines decision-making, communication, and professional conduct. Clinical placements can be full of anxiety and uncertainty for nursing students.

Confidence development is facilitated by supportive supervisors who offer guidance, support, and constructive feedback (Lofmark et al., 2012). Feeling supported, students will be more inclined to participate in learning activities and become professionals.

The studies indicate that supervision and academic performance have a mediating variable of confidence. High confidence facilitates active engagement, reflective learning, and better learning outcomes.

7.5 Clinical Learning Environment and Student Outcomes

Clinical learning environment refers to the physical, social, and educational environments in which clinical learning takes place. One of the elements of a good clinical learning environment is good supervision.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
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CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

Saarikoski et al. (2008) have pointed out that favorable learning conditions that involve quality supervision, favorable attitudes of the staff, and meaningful learning opportunities relate to improved academic performance. On the other hand, environments that are not supportive can be a barrier to learning and be detrimental to student performance.

Recent data show that clinical learning settings characterized by a focus on mentorship, teamwork, and feedback have a tremendous positive impact on student satisfaction and performance (Warne et al., 2010).

Theoretical Framework

This paper will be informed by the Proctor Model of Clinical Supervision (2010), which indicates three key roles of supervision:

Formative Function

Emphasizes teaching, learning, developing knowledge, and acquiring skills.

Normative Function

Supports compliance with professional standards, accountability, and safe clinical practice.

Restorative Function

Offers emotional support, stress management, and professional encouragement.

The Proctor model indicates that effective supervision improves learning experiences, competence development, and academic achievement.

Conceptual Framework

Clinical Supervision

- Supervisor Support
- Feedback C Evaluation
- Clinical Guidance
- Professional Development

▼

Academic Performance

- Academic Achievement
- Clinical Competence
- Critical Thinking
- Learning Engagement

The framework hypothesizes that proper clinical supervision has a positive impact on various aspects of the academic performance of nursing students.

Methodology Study Design

To examine the association between clinical supervision and academic performance of nursing students, a quantitative cross-sectional correlational research design was used.

Study Population

The population of interest was undergraduate nursing students studying in both the public and private institutions of nursing in Southern Punjab, Pakistan.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling was used to sample a population of 120 nursing students. The respondents were sampled from various nursing colleges in teaching hospitals.

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CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

Inclusion Criteria

- Undergraduate nursing students.
- Students who had already accomplished one or more clinical placements.
- Students who would like to take part in it voluntarily.

Exclusion Criteria

- Students in their first semester who have no clinical experience.
- Students who were not available during data collection.

Study Instrument

The questionnaire was divided into three parts:

Part 1: Demographic Information

- Age
- Gender
- Academic Year
- Institution Type

Part 2: Clinical Supervision Scale

Subscales:

- Supervisor Support
- Feedback and Evaluation
- Clinical Guidance
- Professional Development Part 3: Academic Performance Scale Domains:
- Academic Achievement
- Clinical Competence
- Critical Thinking
- Learning Engagement

Validity

The instrument was assessed by five nursing education and research experts. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was equal to 0.91, which is excellent content validity.

Reliability

Pilot testing was conducted among 15 nursing students. Cronbach's alpha coefficients:

- Clinical Supervision Scale = 0.93
- Academic Performance Scale = 0.89
- Overall Instrument = 0.91

These values indicate strong internal consistency.

Ethical Considerations

Approval was obtained on the ethical side by the authorities of the relevant institutions. Informed consent of the participants was obtained, and the confidentiality of all participants was ensured during the study.

Data Analysis

SPSS Version 26 was used to analyze the data. The characteristics of the participants were summarized using descriptive statistics. Pearson correlation analysis was used to test the relationships between the variables, and the predictive effect of clinical supervision on academic performance was tested using linear regression analysis.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
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CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

One hundred and twenty undergraduate nursing students were involved in the study. Most of the respondents were women (65%), which is the gender distribution typical of the nursing education programs. The majority of students were in the 3rd and 4th academic years, which means that they had extensive experience with clinical placements and supervisory experiences.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 120)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	42	35.0
	Female	78	65.0
Academic Year	2nd Year	30	25.0
	3rd Year	35	29.2
	4th Year	32	26.7
	Final Year	23	19.1
Institution Type	Public	68	56.7
	Private	52	43.3
Age	18–20 Years	34	28.3
	21–23 Years	62	51.7
	Above 23 Years	24	20.0

Level of Clinical Supervision

Overall, the level of clinical supervision was high among the students on all dimensions. The highest mean score is received by the supervisor support, which indicates that students felt that their supervisors were available, supportive, and were also interested in their learning process.

Table 2

Clinical Supervision Scores

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Supervisor Support	4.15	0.53	High
Feedback and Evaluation	4.05	0.57	High
Clinical Guidance	4.10	0.49	High
Professional Development	4.02	0.58	High
Overall Clinical Supervision	4.08	0.54	High

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CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

The results show that nursing students had positive supervisory relationships that were guided, mentoring, and constructive feedback.

Academic Performance of Nursing Students

The academic performance was evaluated on four domains, which included academic achievement, clinical competence, critical thinking, and learning engagement.

Table 3

Academic Performance Scores

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Academic Achievement	3.92	0.51	High
Clinical Competence	4.01	0.45	High
Critical Thinking	3.88	0.50	High
Learning Engagement	3.99	0.46	High
Overall Academic Performance	3.95	0.48	High

These results indicate that the students had good academic performance and felt that they were capable of both theoretical and clinical aspects of learning.

Relationship Between Clinical Supervision and Academic Performance

The correlation of clinical supervision and academic performance was done using Pearson correlation analysis.

Table 4

Correlation Between Clinical Supervision and Academic Performance

Variables	r	p-value
Clinical Supervision and Academic Performance	.68	< .001

The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between clinical supervision and academic performance, $r(118) = .68$, $p < .001$.

The correlation coefficient shows that there is a strong positive relationship, implying that students who underwent greater levels of clinical supervision also performed better academically.

Regression Analysis

Simple linear regression analysis was performed to determine whether clinical supervision significantly predicted academic performance.

Table 5

Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Performance Predictor Variable β t-value p-value

Clinical Supervision .64 8.74 < .001

Model Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	p-value
.68	.46	.45	76.38	< .001

The regression model accounted for about 46% of the variation in academic performance (R^2 =.46), which showed that clinical supervision is a strong predictor of academic performance among nursing students.

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CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

Discussion

The current paper has investigated the effects of clinical supervision on the academic performance of nursing students and found that there is a strong positive correlation between these two variables. Students with increased reports of supervisory support, feedback, and clinical guidance achieved much-improved academic results.

The general quality of clinical supervision was high and showed that the students had a general feeling that their supervisor was supportive and involved in the learning process. This observation concurs with the research of Saarikoski and Leino-Kilpi (2002), who found that supervisory relationships were one of the most effective factors that influenced clinical learning experiences. On the same note, Tuomikoski et al. (2020) also found that supportive supervision improves learning satisfaction and professional growth of nursing students.

The high scores that were registered on supervisor support indicate that students rated supervisors who were friendly, knowledgeable, and ready to give advice. According to the theory of education, successful mentoring relationships lead to confidence, motivation, and involvement in learning processes (Benner, 1984). With support and positive feedback, students become more eager to be actively involved in clinical learning opportunities.

The results also showed that the students indicated they had high academic performance. One of the domains that was the strongest was clinical competence, which showed that students felt that they could be able to use theoretical knowledge in practical environments. This is in line with the findings of other studies that reveal that effective supervision helps to integrate the classroom learning with clinical practice (Hyrkäs et al., 2014).

The correlation analysis has shown that there is a strong positive correlation between clinical supervision and academic performance (r =.68). This observation evidences the emerging research that shows that supervision has a strong impact on educational results (Brunero and Stein-Parbury, 2008; Franklin, 2013). The students who undergo supportive supervision tend to gain confidence, develop critical thinking and reflective practice, which are some of the factors that lead to academic success.

The Proctor Model of Clinical Supervision (2010) could also be used to interpret the results. The formative role of supervision encourages learning and skill building, and the normative role of supervision is adherence to professional standards. The restorative role is an emotional support that decreases stress and anxiety in clinical placements. Collectively, these functions lead to enhanced academic achievement.

Clinical supervision was also important, as confirmed by the regression analysis. Clinical supervision accounted for 46% of the variance in academic performance, which was a significant predictor. This observation implies that supervision is not just linked with academic achievement but can potentially help to improve education.

Similarly, these findings are also comparable to those of Snowdon et al. (2020), who suggested that structured supervision enhances reflective learning and professional competence.

Reflection allows students to reflect on their experiences, identify areas of development, and learn more about concepts in the clinical setting.

Clinical supervision can have an effect on academic performance in a number of ways. To begin with, supervisors give instant feedback that assists students in rectifying errors and achieving better results. Second, supervisors offer learning opportunities that can be used to facilitate knowledge and skills acquisition. Third, positive supervisor-supervisee relationships enhance confidence and decrease anxiety, which helps students work better.

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CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

A clinical learning environment is also important, as mentioned in the study. Establishing a healthy learning environment of trust, cooperation and professional assistance will be supported by good supervision. Such an environment will encourage active engagement and will facilitate meaningful learning.

Even though clinical supervision showed a high predictive value, it is worth noting that academic performance is a phenomenon that is affected by various factors. Student motivation, educational materials, quality of teaching, institutional supports, and personal attributes may also be factors influencing educational outcomes. These variables should be studied in the future with the addition of clinical supervision.

Practical Implications for Nursing Education

Structured clinical supervision models should be included in the educational programs in nursing institutions. Often, clinical educators are not trained in mentorship, communication, giving feedback, and evaluating students.

Implications for Clinical Practice

Clinical supervision is an essential aspect of professional development that healthcare organizations ought to embrace. Supportive learning environments contribute to the development of competence and future workforce readiness.

Implications for Nursing Administration

Nursing administrators should ensure proper student-supervisor ratios and have sufficient resources to allow for effective supervision. Supervisory quality monitoring has to be incorporated into the system of educational quality assurance.

Implications for Policy

Standardized guidelines for clinical supervision need to be developed by the regulatory bodies in nursing education. National standards can assist in making sure that there is uniformity in clinical learning experiences across institutions.

Conclusion

Clinical supervision is an important aspect of a nursing student's academic achievement. Based on the results of this research, it can be seen that supportive supervision is an effective method to increase academic performance, clinical skills, critical thinking and learning. In providing high-quality supervision, students will have greater opportunities to achieve positive educational outcomes and the skills required to compete in a working nursing environment.

The positive relationship that was found to be strong between clinical supervision and academic performance underscores the need to invest in supervisory development and enhance clinical learning settings. Good supervision is essential not only to improve educational outcomes, but also to enable competent, confident, and professional nurses to deliver safe and evidence-based care to patients.

Limitations

1. The cross-sectional design does not allow interpretation of causation.
2. Self-report questionnaires were used to gather data, which can be biased in terms of response.
3. The research was done in some chosen nursing schools in Southern Punjab, which restricted the generalizability.
4. There were no other variables that were investigated to affect academic performance.

Recommendations

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

1. Evidence-based models of structured clinical supervision should be put in place in nursing institutions.
2. Clinical instructors are to get regular training on the use of mentorship and feedback techniques.
3. The student-supervisor ratios ought to be optimized in a bid to enhance the effectiveness of supervisors.
4. Clinical education should be incorporated with reflective learning and feedback sessions.
5. Longitudinal designs should be used in future studies to assess the long-term implications of clinical supervision.
6. There should be experimental studies within which the effectiveness of particular supervisory interventions should be assessed.
7. Other variables that affect academic performance in academics should be explored.

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