

Relationship between Transition Status and Professional Identity: A Quantitative Exploration of Nursing Interns' Perspectives

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Abstract:

Background: The transition from nursing student to professional practitioner is a pivotal and often challenging experience, marked by a range of emotional, cognitive, and professional adjustments. For nursing interns, this shift can lead to transition shock, as they adapt to the demands of clinical practice. **Aim:** to explore the relationship between nursing interns' perception of transition status and their professional identity. **Design:** Descriptive- Correlational research design was utilized in this study. **Setting:** The current study was conducted at this study carried out at the Technical Institute of Nursing. **Sample:** A purposive sample consists of nursing interns; who enrolled in internship round (n=688). **Tools:** Three tools were used for data collection in this study. (1): Personal characteristics data sheet. (2): Transitional status scale for newly graduated nursing students. (3): Professional identity scale. **Results:** The majority of nursing interns (79.60%) reported a high perception of their transition status. About two third (67.16%) had moderate sense of professional identity during their transition into clinical practice. **Conclusion:** There was a statistically significance negative correlation between nursing Interns' perception of transition status and their perception of professional identity, implying that higher transition challenges were associated with lower professional identity. **Recommendation:** Support nursing interns with coaching, mentoring, clear communication, reflective learning initiatives and development programs to facilitate smoother transitions and reinforce nursing interns' professional identity.

Keywords: Transition Status, Professional Identity, Nursing Interns' Perspectives

Introduction

The transition from student nurse to professional nurse is a critical stage in nursing education, characterized by rapid changes in responsibility, identity, and expectations. The nursing internship represents a pivotal bridge between theoretical education and professional practice, enabling nursing interns to apply learned knowledge in clinical settings under supervision (Alotaibi et al., 2023). This experiential phase aims to develop competence, confidence, and readiness for independent practice while nurturing the professional values essential to nursing identity formation (Ibrahim et al., 2025; Hussien, Shahin, & Ibrahim, 2021).

During this transition, nursing interns often face a phenomenon known as transition shock, which refers to the psychological, emotional, and professional turbulence experienced when moving from the academic

environment to the clinical workforce (Kim & Yeo, 2021; Ko & Kim, 2022). Interns frequently report uncertainty, stress, and a sense of unpreparedness as they adapt to complex clinical demands and professional accountability (Zhang, Wang, Zhao, & Shi, 2025). Studies confirm that transition shock significantly influences interns' ability to perform effectively and impacts their overall professional identity development (Ding et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2024).

The concept of transition status captures how well new graduates or interns adjust during this shift and reflects their ability to integrate interpersonal, emotional, and professional competencies (Ma et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2024). The Transitional Status Scale for Newly Graduated Nurses (TSSNGNs) by Ma et al. (2021) identifies domains such as interpersonal integration, active coping, emotional balance, and competence for nursing work—factors that directly affect the success of this transformation.

These dimensions are particularly important in understanding how interns construct their emerging professional identity.

Professional identity (PI) in nursing represents the internalization of professional values, attitudes, and behaviors that shape one's perception of belonging to the nursing profession (Hussien, Shahin, & Ibrahim, 2021). It evolves through experiential learning, mentorship, and self-reflection during clinical training (Qin et al., 2024; Li et al., 2025). A strong PI promotes commitment, ethical practice, and resilience, whereas weak identity formation can lead to disillusionment, emotional distress, and intentions to leave the profession (Li et al., 2024; Zhou, Wu, & Yang, 2025).

Recent evidence emphasizes that transition shock and professional identity are intricately linked. Ding et al. (2024) found that a positive future time perspective and strong professional self-concept mitigate transition shock and enhance PI among nursing interns. Similarly, Li, Liu, Fang, Shen and Li (2024) reported that self-efficacy and resilience act as chain mediators between transition shock and PI in novice nurses. These findings highlight that psychosocial attributes—such as coping, confidence, and resilience—are crucial for maintaining a stable transition and promoting identity integration.

In addition, contextual and emotional factors also shape this transition. Roca et al. (2021) demonstrated that coping skills and emotional responses influence nursing students' well-being during high-stress clinical periods. Likewise, Mayor-Silva et al. (2024) confirmed that resilience and positive affect predict higher engagement and lower burnout among undergraduate nursing students. These studies underscore that the transition experience is not only professional but deeply personal, requiring institutional and educational support to promote adaptation and professional growth.

Therefore, it becomes imperative to explore the relationship between transition status and professional identity among nursing interns. This understanding is essential for developing educational and institutional strategies that strengthen professional readiness, reduce

transition shock, and support the formation of a confident and resilient nursing workforce.

Significance of the Study

Transition shock has been widely recognized as a critical issue influencing the successful adaptation of nursing students and newly graduated nurses as they enter clinical practice. This period is often characterized by feelings of anxiety, role confusion, and decreased confidence as theoretical knowledge is integrated into complex real-world situations (Snowden, Stenhouse, & Ho, 2021). Empirical evidence indicates that insufficient organizational and emotional support during this stage may result in increased stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced compassion or job satisfaction, which in turn heighten the risk of early attrition from the nursing profession (Cao, Li, & Gong, 2021; Labrague & De Los Santos, 2020).

Professional identity serves as a cornerstone of nursing practice, guiding ethical decision-making, professional commitment, and long-term retention (Hussien, Shahin, & Ibrahim, 2021; Qin et al., 2024). Studies by Li et al. (2025) and Zhou, Wu, and Yang (2025) confirm that a clearly developed professional identity correlates with higher self-efficacy and job satisfaction among novice nurses. However, during the internship period, the instability of transition status often undermines identity development, leading to stress, confusion, or decreased motivation (Zhao et al., 2024; Ibrahim et al., 2025).

The findings from this study can guide nurse educators, preceptors, and clinical administrators in designing targeted programs that reduce transition shock, enhance self-efficacy, and promote reflective learning. For example, structured mentorship, emotional support, and resilience-building initiatives have been shown to reduce stress and strengthen identity formation among nursing interns (Atta, Hammad, & Elzohairy, 2024; Li, Liu, Fang, Shen & Li 2024). Moreover, educational interventions that foster empathy, resilience, and coping—as emphasized by Roca et al. (2021) and Mayor-Silva et al. (2024)—can help interns

integrate both professional and personal growth during this transition.

Ultimately, this study's significance extends beyond the academic domain. It supports the development of a competent and emotionally resilient nursing workforce, capable of sustaining professional identity through complex healthcare challenges. In doing so, it aligns with global efforts to enhance professional preparation, reduce turnover among new graduates, and reinforce the integrity and sustainability of the nursing profession (Zhao et al., 2024; Li, Ding, Sun, & Ni, 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2025).

From the researchers' experiences during interactions with nursing interns through mentorship, supervision, and training, they closely observed the challenges that nursing students encounter as they move from the structured environment of academia to the realities of clinical practice. The researchers recognized this as a critical period of adjustment that often shapes nurses' long-term commitment, confidence, and sense of belonging within the profession. Frequent reports of role ambiguity, emotional strain, and uncertainty during this transition prompted them to investigate how a successful or difficult transition might impact the development of professional identity.

Subject and methods

Aim of the study: The current study aims to explore the relationship between nursing interns' perception of transition status and their professional identity

Research questions

Q1: What is the nursing interns' perception of transition status?

Q2: What is the nursing interns' perception of professional identity?

Q2: What is the relationship between transition status and professional identity among nursing interns?

Design

A descriptive correlational design was utilized in this study. It is a research design used to investigate the relationship between variables without manipulating them (Fowler, 2013).

Setting

This study was carried out at the Technical Institute of Nursing which is affiliated to the faculty of nursing-at Cairo University. The institute located in Al kasr Elainy hospital. The duration of study is two years and six months internship round in different clinical settings at Cairo-University hospitals mainly Medical, Surgical, Pediatrics, Obstetrics, Emergency and ICU units.

Sample

A purposive sample consists of nursing interns; who enrolled in internship round during the academic year 2023/2024(688 out from 718); and who are agreed to participate in the study. Inclusion criteria are both the Egyptian male and female students who are enrolled in an internship for the first time. Exclusion criteria are the students who are repeating any round of internship period, more than two trials, and students who have previously worked in a private or similar hospital. This ensured that participants possessed the relevant knowledge and exposure required to provide meaningful insights into the study variables.

Data Collection Tools

Data was collected by using three tools as following

1-Personal characteristics data sheet: It was developed by a researcher. It used to collect personal characteristics data about nurse interns' age, gender, specialty training setting, and marital status.

2-Transitional status scale for newly graduated nursing students TSSNGNs

The transitional status scale for newly graduated nursing students (TSSNGNs) was adapted from Ma, He, Zhao, Xu, and Liang (2021) to measure newly graduated nursing students' perception regarding the transition

period from undergraduate student to graduate nurse. This scale consists of 38 items divided into five subscales, which included: (a) ten items addressing 'interpersonal integration'; (b) ten items addressing 'active coping strategies; (c) seven items addressing 'profession-related positive emotion'; (d) seven items addressing 'competence for nursing work'; and (e) four items addressing 'balance between work and life'.

Scoring system: Responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The scores for each subscale are summed, and the total score is calculated by adding up the scores from all five subscales. Higher scores indicate a more positive transition experience. Lower scores suggest challenges in these areas and may indicate transition shock. From 38 – 88 indicate Low transitional status; From 89 – 139 indicate Moderate transitional status; and from 140 – 190 indicate High transitional status (Ma, He, Zhao, Xu & Liang 2021).

3- Professional identity scale (PI)

PI scale for nursing students was adapted from Hao, Niu, Li, Yue, and Liu, (2014) which was used to measure the PI among interns nursing students. It consists of 17 items that are distributed under five subscales; professional self- image (6 items), benefits of retention and risk of turnover (4 items), social comparison and self- reflection (3 items), independence of career choice (2 items), and social modeling (2 items). Responses are rated on a five- point likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Scoring system: Scores ranged from 17 to 85, with a higher score reflecting a more PI. From 17 to 39 indicate Low level of professional identity; 40 to 62 Moderate level of professional identity and from 63 to 85 indicate High level of professional identity (Hao, Niu, Li, Yue, and Liu, 2014).

Procedures

A written ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Scientific Research at the Faculty of Nursing, Cairo University. In addition, official permission was granted by the Director of the Nursing Technical

Institute affiliated with the Faculty of Nursing, Cairo University, to conduct the study. The researchers met with the students to explain the purpose of the study, assure them of confidentiality and anonymity, and invite them to participate voluntarily. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason and without any penalty. The research questionnaire was prepared using Microsoft Forms and distributed to students through a link shared on the nursing interns' WhatsApp group. The form remained open for responses from October 1 to November 15, 2024.

Tool Validity: The content validity of the study tools was evaluated by five experts specializing in psychiatric nursing and nursing administration to assess the clarity, relevance, comprehensiveness, and appropriateness of the items in measuring the intended constructs. Their feedback was used to revise and refine the tools to ensure that each item accurately represented the study variables and aligned with the research objectives.

Reliability : Cronbach ' s alpha of the overall Transitional status scale for newly graduated nursing students (TSSNGNs) was 0.891 and ranged from 0.851 to 0.939 for the five factors, indicating a good reliability. The reliability of Professional identity scale (PI) has been well-established in previous studies, with cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.88 to 0.94 (Chen, Zhang, & Jin, (2020); Haghighat, Borhani,& Ranjbar, (2020); Mei, Wang, Wu, Lu, & Ye, (2022).

Ethical consideration

Primary approval was obtained from the research ethics committee at the Faculty of Nursing-Cairo University. Written consent was obtained from all participant students after being revised and approved by the research ethics committee. Also, the purpose and nature of the study was explained to them. The researchers emphasized that participation in the study is entirely voluntary. Anonymity and confidentiality also will be assured.

Statistical Analysis

The data were collected and scored, then tabulated and analyzed by using statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) program version 21. The means, standard deviations and percentages was used to quantify and describe the data. Descriptive as well as inferential statistics was utilized to analyze data pertinent to the study. Pearson correlation test and Friedman test was used to compare between means. Pearson correlation was used to determine the correlation between study variables. Statistical level of significance will be set at $P < 0.05$.

Results:

Table (1): shows that slightly more than half (52.5%) of the nursing interns were aged between 21 to less than 22 years. Approximately two-thirds (63.4%) of the interns were males, and the majority were single (98.8%). Regarding the specialty training settings, nearly one-third (29.7%) of the nursing interns were trained in intensive care units (ICUs), while slightly more than one-fifth (21.9%) received their training in obstetric units and the rest in Emergency, dialysis and NICU.

Table (2) indicates that, the majority of Nursing Interns (79.60%) highly perceived their transition status, which implying a smoother transition. Concerning sub-domain, the most of the nurses' interns with (85.64%) were highly perceived their competence for nursing or confidence in performing their nursing tasks and responsibilities, followed by (83.62%) having personal integration e.g., relationships with colleagues, communication, social support, then (79.25%) using active coping strategy, and (72.46%) having balance between work responsibility and personal life and lastly, (72.39%) having profession- related positive emotion, they may still experience emotional strain and difficulty maintaining work-life equilibrium during the transition period..

Table (3): indicates that, about two third (67.16%) had moderate sense of professional identity during their transition into clinical practice. Concerning professional identity sub-domain the majority of the nurses' interns

(71.93%) were highly perceived social comparison and self- reflection, They are likely to assess their progress, success, or identity by comparing themselves to others, which is a healthy aspect of professional development, followed by more than two third (71.71%) have professional self-image, they feel confident and competent in their professional role, then less than two third (64.02%) perceives benefits of retention and risk of turnover, and (62.70%) perceives social modeling as they influenced by peers or mentors in shaping their professional identity and lastly, more than half (57.06%) have independency of career. They may rely on external support or guidance to some degree, or feel some dependence on others.

Table (4): concluded that, there was a statistically significance negative correlation between nursing Interns' perception of transition status and their perception of professional identity. This might indicate that nursing Interns' with higher professional identity scores may experience smoother transitions, but the effect is not very pronounced.

Table (5) revealed that, there is a highly statistically significant ($p = 0.000$) between Age, gender, marital status and training setting with Transition Status. As age increases, the likelihood of experiencing transitions in career or role appears to increase as well. Also, training Setting indicates that individuals working in certain settings or contexts may experience more career transitions. There is no statistically significant relationship ($p = 0.000$) between Age, gender, marital status and training setting with professional identity.

Table (6): concluded that transition status was responsible for the variation in professional identity. Transition status is a negative predictor factor of professional identity among nursing interns. (Beta -.121) suggests a weak inverse relationship, meaning that transition status has a small but statistically significant negative effect on professional identity. It suggests that nursing interns undergoing transitions might experience a slight reduction in their sense of professional identity.

Table (1): Frequency Distribution of Nursing Interns According to Personal data (n=688)

Personal characteristics	No.	%
Age in years		
21-<22	358	52
22-<23	289	42
≥23	41	6
Gender		
Male	252	36.6
Female	436	63.4
Marital status		
Single	680	98.8
Married	8	1.2
Specialty training setting		
ICU	204	29.7
NICU	99	14.4
Dialysis	100	14.5
Emergency	134	19.5
Obstetric	151	21.9

Table (2): Mean, Standard Deviation and Mean Percentage of Nursing Interns' Perception towards Transition status (n=688)

Transition status subscales	Min. score	Max. score	Mean±SD	Mean %
Interpersonal integration	10	50	41.80±5.20	83.62%
Active coping strategies	10	50	39.62±7.38	79.25%
Profession- related positive emotion	7	35	25.33±9.52	72.39%
Competence for nursing work	7	35	29.97±3.78	85.64%
Balance between work and life	4	20	14.49±3.65	72.46%
Total transition status	38	190	151.23±22.20	79.60%

Table (3): Mean, Standard Deviation and Mean Percentage of Nursing Interns' Perception towards Professional Identity (n=688)

Professional identity Subscales	Min. score	Max. score	Mean±SD	Mean %
Professional self-image	6	30	25.51±7.40	71.71%
Social modeling	2	10	6.27±3.46	62.70%
Independency of career	2	10	5.70±3.22	57.06%
Benefits of retention and risk of turnover	4	20	12.80±5.38	64.02%
Social comparison and self- reflection	3	15	10.79±3.99	71.93%
Total professional identity	17	85	57.09±18.05	67.16%

Table (4): Relationship between Total Nursing Interns' Perception of Transition Status and Their Perception of Professional Identity (n=688)

Variables	Overall score of transition status	
	R	p
Overall score of professional identity	-.121**	.001

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table (5): Relationship between Nursing Interns' Perception of Transition Status, professional identity and Their Personal Data (n=688)

Variables	Personal characteristics data							
	Age		Gender		Marital status		Setting	
	r	p	r	p	R	p	r	p
Transition status	.275**	.000	.251**	.000	.196**	.001	.287**	.000
Professional identity	-.099**	.055	-.053	.082	-.015	.347	-.071*	.032

Table (6): Effect of Nurse Interns' Transition Status on Their Professional Identity

Regression Model	R	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		F	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta				
(Constant)	.121	71.997	4.709			10.24	15.28	.000
Transition status		-.099	.031	-.121			-3.20	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Professional Identity

Discussion:

Regarding to personal characteristics, the current study showed that slightly more than half of the nursing interns were aged between 21 to less than 22 years suggests that most interns are at the early stages of their professional careers. Approximately two-thirds of the interns were males, indicates a gender imbalance in the study sample as male and female nurses may experience transition shock differently based on societal expectations and gender roles. The majority of the interns being single could imply that they have fewer personal responsibilities compared to married individuals, which may affect their ability to cope with the challenges of transitioning to the professional nursing role. Single individuals might have more flexibility and adaptability during the transition period. The fact that nearly one-third of the nursing interns were trained in intensive care units (ICUs) indicates that many were exposed to high-pressure, complex environments, which may intensify their experience of transition shock due to the fast-paced, critical nature of the work. Those trained in obstetric units, emergency rooms, dialysis, and NICU are likely to face

different challenges, which could influence how they cope with the shock of transitioning into the nursing profession.

Regarding to total perception of transition status, the present study concluded that the majority of nursing interns highly perceived their transition status. According to the theoretical interpretation based on Meleis's Transition Theory when nursing internship programs provide clear orientation, consistent supervision, and a psychologically safe environment, interns become more capable of self-assessing their transition and experience less stress (Meleis, 2010).

This finding supported by Alruwaili, Alruwaili, and Colby (2024) who reported that the majority of nursing interns demonstrated moderate to high readiness for clinical practice, which was attributed to structured simulation training and supportive faculty supervision. Such preparedness was found to facilitate self-awareness and confidence during the transition period. Similarly, Chen et al. (2025) emphasized that achievement motivation, a supportive clinical practice environment, and educator guidance significantly reduced transition shock

and enhanced the interns' ability to recognize and manage their own adaptation process. These findings support the notion that interns who receive adequate mentorship and institutional support are more likely to perceive a smoother and more self-aware transition to clinical roles.

Conversely, several studies revealed that many nursing interns continue to experience moderate to high levels of transition shock, suggesting that the process remains challenging in numerous clinical environments. In this issue, Zhao et al. (2024) found that interns frequently reported stress related to heavy workloads, unclear expectations, and limited support, which hindered their ability to identify and regulate their emotional responses during transition. Similarly, Tang et al. (2025) noted that interns often struggled with theory–practice gaps and workload pressure, leading to uncertainty and lower self-awareness regarding their adaptation.

Regarding the total perception of professional identity, the present study concluded that about two-thirds of nursing interns had a moderate sense of professional identity during their transition into clinical practice. According to the theoretical interpretation based on Meleis's Transition Theory while most nursing interns are beginning to establish their professional roles, they still face challenges in fully internalizing their identity as nurses. Such challenges may stem from the complexities of the transition process, the evolving nature of clinical expectations, and occasional gaps in mentorship or role clarity (Meleis, 2010).

In line with this finding, Ding et al. (2024) reported that nursing interns often experience moderate levels of professional identity, with transition shock and uncertainty about role expectations influencing their self-concept. Similarly, Tang et al. (2025) highlighted that personal attitudes toward nursing, the level of interpersonal support, and adaptation to clinical culture significantly affected the formation of professional identity among nursing students during their internship period. Moreover, Lin, Yang, and Wang, (2025) observed that ongoing mentorship and feedback from clinical educators were key factors in promoting stronger professional identity and reducing the sense of

ambiguity during the transition from student to professional nurse.

Conversely, Zhao et al. (2024) found that inadequate role clarity, heavy workloads, and limited communication with supervisors contributed to a weaker sense of professional identity among some interns. These findings suggest that fostering structured preceptor-ship and reflective practice opportunities can help interns strengthen their confidence and identity as competent professionals.

The current study concluded that, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between nursing interns' perception of transition status and professional identity. This indicates that interns who experience smoother transitions and lower levels of transition shock tend to demonstrate stronger professional identity formation.

This finding is supported by Ding et al. (2024), who reported that transition shock was inversely related to professional self-concept and professional identity among nursing interns. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2024) found that weaker professional identity was associated with higher levels of transition shock, emotional exhaustion, and lower patient safety attitudes, reinforcing the negative correlation between these two constructs. Furthermore, Tang et al. (2025) found that nursing students with stronger professional identity and positive attitudes toward nursing experienced lower transition shock and greater adaptability in clinical practice.

The current study concluded that there was a highly statistically significant relationship between age and transition status. From the researchers' point of view age plays an important role in how nursing interns experience the shift from academic learning to clinical practice. Younger nursing interns may face greater transition challenges due to limited clinical exposure and fewer developed coping mechanisms, while older interns tend to demonstrate smoother transitions, possibly because of higher emotional maturity and stronger adaptive skills.

This finding is supported by Lee and Kim (2024), who reported that younger nursing interns experienced higher levels of transition shock and lower self-efficacy compared with their older counterparts. Similarly, Ding et al. (2024) found a negative correlation between age and transition shock, indicating that as age increased, nursing students showed better adjustment and professional adaptation.

On the other hand, Tang et al. (2025) concluded that although age affected some aspects of transition such as confidence and communication, its overall impact was not as strong when factors like clinical support and professional identity were taken into account.

The current study also revealed a highly statistically significant relationship between gender and transition status. This implies that gender differences may influence how nursing interns perceive and respond to transition-related stress. Female nursing interns may experience more emotional and social challenges in managing transition stress due to societal expectations and workplace pressures, whereas male interns might face difficulties related to role identity and social integration in a predominantly female profession.

This result aligns with Zhao et al. (2024), who reported that female nursing interns were more likely to experience emotional fatigue and anxiety during transition, though they also displayed higher empathy and relational adaptability. Likewise, Alruwaili et al. (2024) observed that gender influenced readiness for clinical practice, with males reporting more confidence in technical skills and females showing stronger communication competencies.

However, Lin, Yang, and Wang (2025) found that once factors such as mentorship quality, social support, and clinical learning environment were controlled, gender alone was not a significant predictor of transition outcomes. This suggests that organizational and interpersonal support play a more crucial role in shaping the transition experience than gender differences alone.

The current study concluded that there was a highly statistically significant relationship

between marital status and transition status. From the researchers' point of view marital status can influence how nursing interns experience and manage the transition from student to professional practice. Married interns may face additional pressures related to balancing family responsibilities, academic demands, and workplace expectations, which can increase stress during the transition phase. However, strong family support may also serve as a protective factor that promotes resilience and adaptation.

This finding is aligned with Wu et al. (2024), who reported that marital status significantly affected nursing interns' adaptation levels, with married interns demonstrating both higher emotional strain and greater coping abilities depending on the degree of familial support available. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2024) found that interns with family responsibilities were more likely to report transition fatigue and lower readiness for professional roles, especially when support from spouses or families was limited.

Conversely, Tang et al. (2025) highlighted that married interns who had stable social and emotional support networks experienced smoother transitions and less professional burnout, indicating that the quality of support moderates the impact of marital status on transition outcomes.

The current study also concluded that there was a highly statistically significant relationship between training setting and transition status. From the researchers' point of view the type of clinical environment in which interns are trained strongly influences their transition experience. High-acuity settings such as intensive care units or Emergency departments may expose nursing interns to greater clinical complexity and workload, which can intensify transition shock compared to more routine care areas.

This finding is supported by Lin, Yang, and Wang (2025), who found that nursing interns placed in critical care and emergency units reported significantly higher transition stress due to the fast-paced nature and high emotional demands of these environments. Likewise, Ding

et al. (2024) observed that clinical environments characterized by high workload and low supervisory support contributed to higher levels of transition shock and lower professional confidence among nursing students.

In contrast, Lee and Kim (2024) demonstrated that supportive and structured clinical settings—featuring consistent mentorship, feedback, and guidance—reduced transition difficulties and facilitated smoother professional adjustment.

The current study concluded that, there was no statistically significant relationship between age, gender, marital status, and training setting with professional identity. From the researchers' point of view the development of professional identity among nursing interns is shaped more by educational, psychological, and environmental factors rather than by demographic characteristics.

This finding is aligned with Zeng et al. (2022), who reported that while professional identity is a fundamental aspect of nursing professionalism, demographic factors such as age, marital status, or gender did not consistently predict the strength of professional identity among nursing students and novice nurses. Similarly, Lin, Yang, and Wang (2025), found that clinical training environments, whether in hospital or community-based settings, did not show a significant direct effect on the development of professional identity.

On the other hand, some studies identified partial variations. Tang et al. (2025) reported that younger nursing interns tended to display slightly weaker professional identities. Similarly, Qin et al. (2024) found that interns' gender could influence how professional identity is experienced and expressed, with female interns often reporting a stronger identification with nursing values in environments with supportive preceptors and collegial relationships. Moreover, Lin, Yang, and Wang (2025) highlighted that interns in high-pressure clinical settings, such as intensive care or emergency departments, often developed stronger professional identities.

The present study concluded that transition status was responsible for the variation

in professional identity. There was a weak inverse relationship between nursing interns' transition status and their professional identity. From the researchers' point of view interns who experience greater transition difficulties—such as role ambiguity, stress, or uncertainty—tend to exhibit a lower sense of professional identity.

This finding is supported by Tang et al. (2025), who reported that higher levels of transition shock among nursing students were associated with lower levels of professional identity, highlighting the inverse relationship between adaptation difficulties and identity formation. Similarly, Ding et al. (2024) found that transition stress negatively influenced nursing interns' professional self-concept and identity development, as students struggling to adapt reported lower self-efficacy and less identification with the nursing role. Additionally, Zhao et al. (2024) emphasized that while professional identity can serve as a protective factor against transition stress; its buffering effect is often modest compared to the influence of contextual factors such as workload, supervision quality, and organizational support.

On the other hand, some evidence partially contradicted this finding. Qin et al. (2024) found that in some clinical contexts, the relationship between transition status and professional identity was not statistically significant after controlling for factors such as reflective ability and social support. This suggests that when interns receive strong mentorship and opportunities for reflection, the negative influence of transition challenges on professional identity may be minimized.

Conclusion:

The present study revealed that, the majority of nursing interns highly perceived their transition as relatively smooth. However, about two-thirds of the participants reported moderate sense of professional identity. Also, There was a statistically significance negative correlation between nursing Interns' perception of transition status and their perception of professional identity, implying that higher transition challenges were associated with lower professional identity. Personal factors such as age, gender, marital status, and training setting

showed no significant association with professional identity, reinforcing that identity formation is influenced more by experiential and psychosocial factors than demographics.

Recommendations:

Based on the current study findings recommended the following:

1. For Nursing Administration

- **Establish formal mentorship systems** that assign each nursing intern a dedicated preceptor or senior nurse to provide consistent guidance, feedback, and emotional support throughout the internship period.

- **Develop clear transition support protocols**, including orientation sessions, progress checklists, and regular follow-up meetings to monitor adaptation and role confidence.

- **Create a supportive and inclusive work culture** that values teamwork, open communication, and mutual respect to reduce transition-related stress and enhance interns' sense of belonging.

- **Conduct regular evaluations** of nursing interns' experiences and professional growth using structured feedback tools to identify areas requiring administrative or emotional support.

2. For Nursing Practice

- **Encourage reflective discussions and debriefing sessions** at the end of shifts or rotations to help nursing interns analyze their experiences, identify learning points, and strengthen professional self-awareness.

- **Ensure consistent clinical supervision** by assigning qualified preceptors who can provide real-time guidance, performance feedback, and skill reinforcement.

- **Promote collaboration within the healthcare team** by involving interns in multidisciplinary meetings and case discussions, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and teamwork.

- **Acknowledge and celebrate interns' achievements** through recognition programs or certificates of completion to enhance motivation and reinforce professional pride.

- **Monitor workload and clarify role expectations** to prevent stress, burnout, and confusion that may negatively affect confidence and identity development.

3. For Nursing Education

- **Integrate transition-preparation courses** into nursing curricula to prepare students for clinical realities, emphasizing professional values, ethics, and role adaptation strategies.

- **Utilize simulation and case-based learning** to strengthen students' critical thinking and decision-making skills before entering real clinical environments.

- **Embed mentorship and leadership development** in academic programs to build resilience, communication, and teamwork skills that ease the student-to-practitioner transition.

- **Enhance coordination between universities and clinical sites** to align theoretical instruction with practical expectations, ensuring consistency in learning outcomes.

- **Assess and track students' professional identity formation** throughout their academic journey using validated tools to provide early interventions for those needing additional support.

4. Nursing Research

- **Conduct longitudinal studies** to follow nursing interns from their academic training through early professional practice, assessing how their transition experiences influence professional identity over time.

- **Investigate influencing factors** such as leadership style, clinical environment, mentorship quality, and organizational culture in shaping professional identity.

• **Evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs**—including mentorship, reflective practice, and resilience training—in improving transition outcomes.

• **Explore the role of emotional intelligence, coping strategies, and peer support** in mitigating transition challenges and fostering stronger identity formation.

• **Undertake comparative studies** across different healthcare institutions and regions to identify culturally and contextually appropriate strategies for supporting nursing interns.

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