

Learner Centered Approach as Perceived by Teaching Staff and Students at Benha Faculty of Nursing

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Abstract: Student-centered approach, interactive teaching and learning are important in nursing education because it is critical for student nurses to achieve balanced core competencies for better clinical performance, also foster preparedness of the new graduate nurse to meet the ever changing health care environment. **Purpose of the study:** The study was conducted to identify learner centered approach as perceived by teaching staff and students. **Research design:** Descriptive study was utilized to conduct this study. **Setting:** The current study was conducted at Faculty of Nursing, Benha University. **Sampling:** The sample included 55 teaching staff and 634 nursing students in the second and fourth academic year. **Instrument:** One instrument was used: *Learner –Centered Approach Perception Questionnaire*. **The result showed that:** more than three quarter of teaching staff (78.2%) had a high perception level toward learner centered approach. while more than half of students (51.0%) have low perception level toward learner centered approach. **Conclusion:** there was no statistical significant difference between teaching staff and students' perception level toward learner -centered approach and their demographic characteristics, except for students' academic year. **This study recommended:** Nursing educators have to explain for their students the learner –centered activities and give them opportunity to share in formulating these activities.

Key words: Student-centered approach, teaching staff, students.

Introduction:

Education is a creative and dynamic process that occurs within the context of relationships, it also a fundamental human right and the basic building block of every society. Within the educational process, opportunities are provided for learners to attain desired

goals through variety of both structured and unstructured learning experience (*Barakat, 2014*).

Two main teaching approaches for university education; Traditional teacher-centered approach and Learner – centered approach , the traditional

model, is commonly considered as teacher-centered approach in which the teacher lectures, the students listens and takes notes, with little time to reflect or seek clarification, is outdated, and in contrast with current knowledge of effective science teaching. Research shows that the change to more engaged scientific teaching techniques which involve active-learning strategies to engage students in the process of science, and use teaching methods demonstrated to reach different students, is a widely-accepted reform, but adoption is slow (*Nordlund, 2016*). Learner-centered education has gained increasing interest in recent years within nurse education. Learner-centered education privileges the learner in the learning process and the focus is on the needs of the student rather than the content. Learner-centered education is expected to generate independent, active, and autonomous learners, who take responsibility for their own learning (*Lea et al., 2013*).

Student-centered learning is a form of study in which students have the primary responsibility for planning, carrying out, and evaluating their own learning experiences, rather than being passive recipients of knowledge as

instructed by teachers' direction. That is, the student-centered perspective focuses on 'what learners do' and 'why they think they are doing it', rather than 'what the teacher does' (*Maher, 2014*). Nursing teachers do not just teach content; they teach students how to become critical thinkers and contributing members of society. While a well-recognized teaching technique, most college professors are hired for their expertise in a discipline, not in teaching. Professors' benefit from guidance and hands-on assistance in developing learner-centered courses and activities, provide college of nursing instructors with such an experiential learning model, detailing three key stages - planning, delivery and evaluation (*Stephenson et al., 2013*).

Purpose of the study

The Purpose of the study is to identify learner -centered approach as perceived by teaching staff and students at Benha Faculty of Nursing, This can be achieved through:-

- 1) Identifying the teaching staff perception toward learner -centered approach.
- 2) Identifying the students' perception toward learner -centered approach.

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- 3) Comparing between teaching staff and students' perception toward learner -centered approach.

Research Question

- 1) What is the teaching staff perception toward learner -centered approach?
- 2) What is the students' perception toward learner -centered approach?
- 3) Is there a difference between teaching staff and students' perception toward learner -centered approach?

Methods

Research Design:

A descriptive study was utilized to conduct this study.

Setting:

Data was collected from students at their specific classrooms (Medical and Surgical, Obstetric and Woman's Health, Pediatric, Psychiatric and Mental Health, Community Health and Administration) or laboratories. Meanwhile data was collected from teaching staff inside Quality Assurance Unit, teaching staff rooms inside different departments.

Sampling:

The sample included 55 teaching staff (Two Professors one in Medical and Surgical Nursing and another one in Obstetric Nursing, 3 Assistant professor in Medical Surgical, 3

Assistant professor in Obstetric Nursing, 4 Assistant professor in Pediatric Nursing, 5 Assistant professor in Community Health Nursing, There were Lecturers in Medical Surgical 8, Obstetric 4, Pediatric 5, Psychiatric 6, Community 8, Administration 7.

Regarding nursing students, the sample included 245 students in the second and fourth academic year at Benha Faculty of Nursing at the time of study. The total number was 634 students who enrolled in the academic year 2017-2018 at Faculty of Nursing.

The following equation was used to determine the sample size of the students.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)2}$$

n=total sample

N=number of student

e=co-efficient factor

Instruments:

One instrument was used: *Learner – Centered Approach Perception Questionnaire*. This questionnaire was developed by *Soror (2016)* and modified by the researcher based on reviewing the related literature (*Trigwell and Prosser, 1991 , Ellis, 2013*). It was used to identify teaching staff and students' perception toward Learner Centered Approach. It consisted of two parts:-

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- **Part I:** contained personal characteristics of teaching staff such as age, academic degree, marital status, place of residence, and academic department. Personal characteristics of students such as age, gender, marital status, place of residence and academic year.
- **Part II:** It included 76 items. There 11 items for Learner- centered activities, 7 items for Special teaching instruction, 9 items for Relating to experience, 8 items for Educational environment preparation, 16 items for Assessing student needs, 8 items for Participation in the learning process, 8 items for Flexibility for personal development, 8 items for Evaluation system

Scoring system for each item was 2 for always, 1 for sometimes and 0 for never.

Total Scoring system:

<60% of total perception score	Low perception
60-<75% of total score	Moderate perception
≥75% of total perception score	High perception

An official permission for data collection was granted from Dean of Benha Faculty of Nursing after explaining the aim of the study.

Preparatory phase:

A review of the past, current Arabic and English related literature covering various aspects of the topic was done, using available books, articles, periodicals, and magazines to get acquainted with the research topic and develop the study tool.

Tools validity:

Face and content of study tool were validated by group consisted of Five panel of Expert; one Assistant Professor of Nursing Administration at Faculty of Nursing, Zagazig University, Two Assistant Professors of Nursing Administration , Faculty of Nursing, Menofia University, one Assistant Professor of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing , Faculty of Nursing, Menofia University and one Assistant Professor of Community Health Nursing ,Faculty of Nursing Benha University, minor modification were done based on Expert opinions.

Reliability of the instrument:

Reliability of teaching staff and students ' perception questionnaire was measured by using Cronbach's Alpha and the value was 0.96

Pilot study:

Pilot study was conducted to assess tool clarity and applicability. It has also served in estimating the time needed for filling the form .The study was tested on 10 % of total subjects, it was done on 5 teaching staff members and 20 students at Faculty of Nursing, Benha University, No modification were done.

Procedure:

- 1) An official letter was obtained from the Dean of the Faculty of Nursing to collect data after explaining the purpose of the study.
- 2) Data was collected after theoretical and practical lessons.
- 3) Collection of data took about two months at Benha Faculty of Nursing from beginning of October / 2017 to the end of November /2017 by using the developed questionnaire sheet, the researcher applied interview for teaching staff and students before and between their theoretical practical class hours, the time needed to complete questionnaire sheet 15:20 minutes.
- 4) **Informed consent:** The respondent rights was protected by ensuring voluntary participation, so the informed consent was obtained by

explaining purpose, nature time of conducting the study, potential benefits of the study, how data was collected, any invasive procedure, expected outcomes and the respondent rights to withdrawing from the research study at any time in case of violation of his rights.

5) **Anonymity and confidentiality:**

The respondents were assured that the data will be treated as strictly confidential; furthermore, the respondent anonymity was maintained as they did not require mentioning their names.

Statistical Design:

Statistical analysis was done using Statistical package for social science (SPSS, Version twenty). Descriptive statistics were used in the form of mean and standard deviation for quantitative variables and frequency and percentages for qualitative variables. Qualitative categorical variables were compared using chi-square test(χ^2) as the test of significance. The p-value is the degree of significance .Statistical significance was considered at p-value ≤ 0.05 and considered highly statistically significance at p-value ≤ 0.001 , while p- value > 0.05 indicates non- significance results.

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Results:

Table (1) Distribution of Nursing Students Regarding their Demographic Characteristics (N= 245)

Demographic Characteristics		Students (n = 245)	
		No	%
Age (years)	<19	6	2.4
	19-21	182	74.3
	>21	57	23.3
	Mean \pm SD	40.4 \pm 0.92	
Marital status	Married	18	7.3
	Not Married	227	92.7
Sex	Male	22	9.0
	Female	223	91.0
Place of residence	Village	208	84.9
	City	37	15.1
Academic Year	Second	126	51.4
	Forth	119	48.6

Table (1): Shows that less than three quarter of students (74.3%) had age from (19-21) years old, with mean age of (40.4 \pm 0.92). Regarding to marital status, the majority of students (92.7%) were not married. According to sex, the majority of students (91.0%) were female. Regarding to place of residence, highest percentage of students (84.9%) live in village.

Table (2) Distribution of Teaching Staff Regarding their Demographic Characteristics (N= 55)

Demographic Characteristics		Teaching staff (n= 55)	
		No	%
Age (years)	30-35	33	60.0
	35-40	12	21.8
	>40	10	18.2
	Mean \pm SD	34.5 \pm 3.01	
Marital status	Married	47	85.5
	Not Married	8	14.5
Place of residence	Village	33	60.0

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	City	22	40.0
Department	Medical and Surgical Nursing	12	21.8
	Community Health Nursing	13	23.6
	Obstetrics and Women's Health Nursing	8	14.5
	Nursing Administration	7	12.7
	Pediatric Nursing	9	16.3
	Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing	6	10.9
Academic Degree	Professor	2	3.6
	Assistant Professor	15	27.2
	Lecturer	38	69.0

Table (2): Clearly shows that about two thirds of teaching staff (60.0%) had age from (30-35) years old. with mean age of (34.5 ± 3.01) . Regarding to marital status, the majority of teaching staff (85.5%) were married. Regarding to sex, all teaching staff (100%) were female. According to place of residence, about two thirds of teaching staff (60.0%) live in village respectively. Regarding to academic degree, more than two thirds (69.0%) occupied as lecturers.

Perception of the Studied Subjects toward

Learner- centered Approach Items.

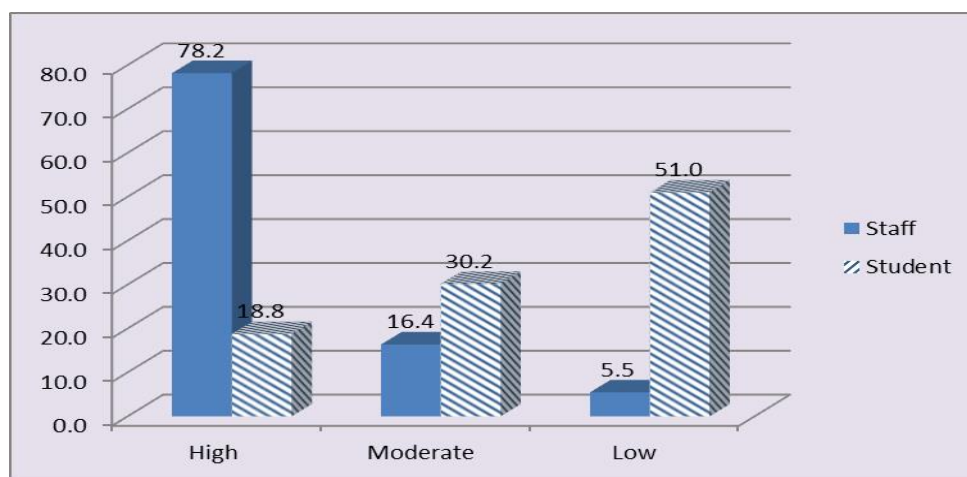


Figure (1): Distribution of Studied Subjects according to Total Perception Levels toward Learner Centered Approach

Figure (1): Clearly illustrates that more than three quarter of teaching staff (78.2%) had a high perception level toward learner centered approach. while more than half of students (51.0%) have low perception level toward learner centered approach.

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Table (3): Studied Subjects' Perception Regarding Learner- Centered Activities or Strategies. (No=300)

Learner- centered activities or strategies Items	Nursing Students (N=245)						Teaching Staff (N=55)						X ²	p-value
	Always		Sometimes		Never		Always		Sometimes		Never			
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		
The teaching staff: Helps students to create new learning methods and styles according to their prior experiences and their needs.	59	24.1	138	56.3	48	19.6	31	56.4	21	38.2	3	5.5	23.67	0.000**
Gives all students in class the same assignment on a given topic.	50	20.4	137	55.9	58	23.7	16	29.1	30	54.5	9	16.4	2.62	0.26
Allows a student more time to complete assignments when they need it.	61	24.9	148	60.4	36	14.7	41	74.5	12	21.8	2	3.6	49.44	0.000**
Encourages students to reach accepted middle-class values for academic success (teach them how to pass and reach middle level of success).	99	40.4	130	53.1	16	6.5	32	58.2	22	40.0	1	1.8	6.52	0.038*
Helps students diagnose the gaps between their goals and their present level of performance.	87	35.5	104	42.4	54	22.0	36	65.5	18	32.7	1	1.8	20.88	0.000**
Measures a student's educational growth by comparing their total achievement in class to their expected performance.	80	32.7	107	43.7	58	23.7	30	54.5	18	32.7	7	12.7	9.64	0.008*
Maintains clarity and understanding of evaluation standers and grads.	106	43.3	109	44.5	30	12.2	36	65.5	19	34.5	0	0.0	12.44	0.002*
Uses disciplinary action when it is needed (ex: disciplinary and systematic dealing with student's absenteeism).	129	52.7	100	40.8	16	6.5	25	45.5	24	43.6	6	10.9	1.71	0.42
arranges learning tasks at levels appropriate to students' abilities	77	31.4	118	48.2	50	20.4	36	65.5	17	30.9	2	3.6	24.06	0.000**

(P ≤ 0.001)

*statistical significant difference (P ≤ 0.05)

Table (3): Reveals that more than half of students (52.7%) reported that teaching staff used disciplinary action when it is needed (ex: disciplinary and systematic dealing with

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Learner- centered activities or strategies Items	Nursing Students (N=245)						Teaching Staff (N=55)						X ²
	Always		Sometimes		Never		Always		Sometimes		Never		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Develops assignments that actively engage students in study activities.	72	29.4	135	55.1	38	15.5	41	74.5	13	23.6	1	1.8	39.80
Uses written tests to identify and indicate new developing directions for learning process and evaluation exams.	115	46.9	98	40.0	32	13.1	40	72.7	15	27.3	0	0.0	14.89

****A highly statistical significant difference (P ≤ 0.001)**

***statistical significant difference (P ≤ 0.05)**

Table (3): Reveals that more than half of students (52.7%) reported that teaching staff used disciplinary action when it is needed (ex: disciplinary and systematic dealing with student's absenteeism). Also less than three quarter of teaching staff (74.5%, 74.5%) reported that they allowed students more time to complete assignments when they need it and developed assignments that actively engage

students in study activities. While (23.7%, 23.7 %) of students reported that teaching staff never give all students in class the same assignment on a given topic and measure a student's educational growth by comparing their total achievement in class to their expected performance. And (14.6%) of teaching staff reported that they never give all students the same assignment on a given topic in class.

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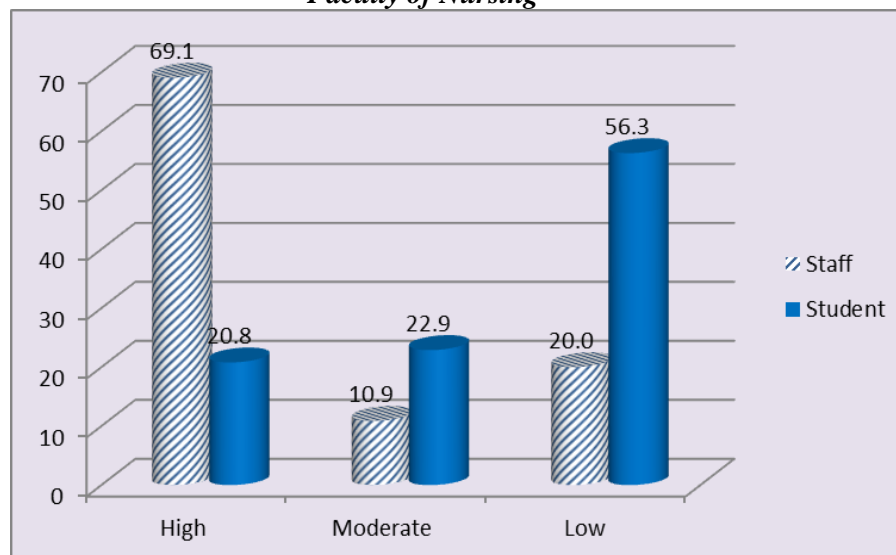


Figure (2): Distribution of Studied Subjects Perception Level Regarding Total Learner-centered Activities or Strategies

Figure (2): Shows that more than two thirds of teaching staff (69.1%) had a high perception level toward learner- centered activities or strategies. while more than half of students (56.3%) have low perception level toward learner- centered activities or strategies.

Discussion:

The findings of the present study illustrated that more than three quarter of teaching staff had a high perception level toward learner centered approach. This finding may be due to the fact that most of nursing teaching staff had knowledge and skills about learning and learners, also they have teaching ability, and they continuously attain training courses about development of educational process. As well as availability of resources in the faculty, easy access to reach any new information and their awareness about different teaching approaches and teaching methods.

In a similar study carried out by *Rolfe (2010)* about "Changing to learner-centered education: challenges experienced by nurse

educators in Taiwan" it was revealed that a general movement of nursing educators' towards a learner-centered approach was achieved even though the challenges experienced by nurse educators in changing a teacher-centered, content-driven approach to teaching into a learner-centered within a School of Nursing in Taiwan and students were overcome these challenges and the transition process from teacher-centered to learner-centered activities were facilitated.

This result was supported by *Dekker et al., (2015)* who conducted a study about "A novel approach to teaching pharmacotherapeutics, feasibility of the learner-centered student-run clinic" and revealed that the learner- centered approach is feasible,

and all participants considered it to be a valuable educational activity. It offers students the opportunity to learn in a real inter-professional and longitudinal setting for their future role as prescriber in clinical practice. Also, **Bhatti and Ahmed (2015)** who conducted a study about "Improving skills development in residency using a deliberate-practice and learner-centered model" agreed with the present study and showed that the learner-centered approach allowed flexibility and personalized learning by shifting the responsibility of the learning process to the learners.

Furthermore, **Cheang (2009)** who conducted a study about "Effect of learner-centered teaching on motivation and learning strategies in a third-year pharmacotherapy course" reported that students responded positively to the learner-centered approach, also learner-centered approach was effective in promoting several domains of motivation and learning strategies in a third-year pharmacotherapy course.

Moreover, This finding was supported by **Ellis (2016)** who conducted a study about "The role of nurse educators' self-perception and beliefs in the use of learner-centered teaching in the classroom" and demonstrated that nurse educators who identify themselves as learner-centered are more likely to use learner-centered teaching in their

classrooms, and nurse educators who strongly believe learner-centered teaching is beneficial in understanding and applying nursing concepts are also somewhat more likely to use learner-centered teaching in the classroom. Also, it produced a picture of the role of self-perception and beliefs about learner-centered teaching, and the influence this may have on actual utilization of learner-centered teaching. It is clear that valuing learner-centered teaching and believing in its efficacy are only part of the answer to convincing nurse educators to widely adopt this teaching framework.

In contrary, the findings of the present study revealed that more than half of students had low perception level toward learner centered approach. From the researcher opinion, this finding may be due to nursing students may not have the desire to change or to adopt new teaching approaches beside teacher not request from those students to be at the center of learning process, Moreover, those students were in need to receive educators advice, supervision and support to facilitate their learning.

In the same line **Fathi, Shafiean, M., and Gharibi (2012)** who conducted a study about "Clinical education stressors from the perspective of students of nursing" stated that clinical instructors need to actively support their students, effectively communicate with them, identify their problems, provide them

with constructive advice, and help them manage the identified problems.

This finding disagreed with *Srorr (2016)* who conducted a study about "Nursing educators' staff utilization of learner-centered approach for university teaching nursing student" and stated that over half of nursing students presented mid- range utilization for Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS). It was found that nursing educators and students sometimes were at high level of utilization for learner-centered teaching approach and other times utilize the traditional teacher-centered approach.

The findings of the current study indicated that more than two thirds of teaching staff had a high perception level toward learner-centered activities or strategies, From the researcher opinion, this may be due to teaching staff are knowledgeable about; classroom activities, learning styles, learner types, learning and teaching method, how to motivate their students, As well as , teaching staff know how to develop assignments that actively engage students in study activities, give students more time to complete assignments, arrange learning tasks at levels appropriate to students' abilities, In addition, they help students to create new learning methods and styles, measured a student's educational growth.

Teaching staff have knowledge about how to arrange learning tasks for their students, also

teaching staff know how to develop assignments that actively engage students in study activities. *Maria (2010)* reported that student's behavior is highly self-motivated and self-determined, when they are given the opportunity to gauge their learning so that their learning becomes an incentive for progress. *Cheng et al (2016)* showed that Learner-centered teaching emphasizes teaching activities and deemphasizes learning processes, based on the premise that transmitting information is most efficient and effective.

Path and Kak (2010) said that during neurosurgical clinical practice the nursing demonstrators provided students with ideal situations for effective communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision making, good inter personnel relationship, and objectivity in applying learning activities. to teach effectively either teachers up-date their skills by participating in care, or maintain effective teaching activities and knowledge in the clinical area through reading, writing and research. A teacher's task is to present broad knowledge, which is applicable to a wide range of academic and practice setting.

On the other hand, the result of the present study clarified that more than half of students have low perception level toward learner- centered activities or strategies. From the researcher opinion, this may be due

to lack of students' knowledge and experiences about classroom tasks (activities), students may be confused about their roles in learning process, the educators may not give students the chance to participate or actively engaged in classroom activities.

Conclusion:

The present study concluded that more than three quarter of teaching staff had a high perception level toward learner centered approach. While more than half of students had low perception level toward learner centered approach. Moreover, there was no statistical significant difference between teaching staff perception level toward learner-centered approach and their demographic characteristics. Also, there was no statistical significant difference between nursing students' perception level toward learner-centered approach and their demographic characteristics, except for their academic year.

Recommendations:

1. Teaching staff should support students during their education and help them develop their independence, self-confidence, and self-efficacy.
2. Further research need to examine stressors and coping strategies that affect learning styles among nursing students.
3. Conducting a study about effective strategies for enhancing learner-centered

approach.

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