





Factors Influencing Nursing Students' Attitudes and Perceptions of Clinical Posting at Rivers State University Teaching Hospital

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Abstract	Article History
<p>Clinical posting is essential in nursing education, facilitating the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical skills and shaping students' professional attitudes and future career commitment. This descriptive cross-sectional study examined factors influencing nursing students' attitudes and perceptions toward clinical posting at Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH), the primary clinical training site for the Department of Nursing Science, Rivers State University, Nigeria. The study targeted 229 nursing students in Years 2, 3, and 4 who had completed at least six months of clinical rotations. Using purposive total enumeration sampling, a researcher-designed electronic questionnaire was distributed, yielding 212 valid responses (92.6% retrieval rate). Data were analyzed with SPSS version 25.0, employing descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and an independent samples z-test at 0.05 significance level. Responses were scored on a 5-point Likert scale with a criterion mean of 3.0. The sample was predominantly female (67.9%), aged 20–25 years (60.8%), with Year 2 students forming the largest group (41.5%). All eight factors assessed—support from preceptors/staff, adaptation challenges, workload effects, staff conduct, inclusivity, direction provided, socio-cultural influences, and overall satisfaction—recorded mean scores ≥ 2.97 (grand means 3.36 for males and 3.33 for females), indicating positive perceptions. Students felt supported, included, and generally satisfied despite challenges in adaptation and workload. No statistically significant gender difference was found ($z = 0.45, p = 0.65$). The findings affirm RSUTH's supportive clinical environment and highlight the importance of preceptor quality and staff conduct. Recommendations include enhanced preceptor training, workload management strategies, and cultural sensitivity initiatives to further optimize clinical education. This study provides context-specific evidence to strengthen nursing training in Nigerian teaching hospitals.</p> <p>Keywords: Nursing students, clinical posting, attitudes and perceptions, Rivers State University Teaching Hospital, clinical learning environment.</p>	<p>Received: 15 Mar 2026 Accepted: 17 Apr 2026 Published: 26 Apr 2026</p> <p>Scan QR code to view*</p>  <p>License: CC BY 4.0*</p>  <p>Open Access article.</p>
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1. Introduction

Clinical posting, also referred to as clinical placement or practicum, represents a cornerstone of undergraduate nursing education globally. It serves as the critical bridge between theoretical classroom knowledge and real-world application, enabling students to develop essential clinical competencies, professional behaviors, and a sense of identity as future nurses (Moroney et al., 2022; Walker et al., 2024). Through immersive experiences in healthcare settings, students apply evidence-based practices, refine technical skills, enhance communication with patients and interdisciplinary teams, and cultivate resilience amid dynamic clinical demands. Positive clinical experiences foster confidence, motivation, and long-term commitment to the profession, while suboptimal

environments can lead to stress, reduced learning outcomes, and attrition risks (Zhang et al., 2022; Marriott et al., 2024).

Numerous international studies underscore the multifaceted factors shaping nursing students' attitudes and perceptions toward clinical postings. Effective clinical teaching environments—characterized by supportive supervision, constructive feedback, and opportunities for skill acquisition—are pivotal in promoting positive perceptions and academic adjustment (Al-Daken et al., 2024; Karimi Mirzanezam et al., 2024). Preceptor qualities, such as approachability, expertise, and role modeling, significantly influence students' sense of belonging and learning satisfaction (Shudifat et al., 2024). Conversely, challenges including heavy

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workloads, adaptation difficulties to new settings, inadequate resources, and unsupportive staff behaviors often evoke anxiety, fear, and diminished resilience during placements (Aryuwat et al., 2024; Baba et al., 2024). In multi-country and regional contexts, these elements collectively determine overall satisfaction and perceived effectiveness of clinical learning (Al-Daken et al., 2024; Rowland & Trueman, 2024).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, clinical training faces unique contextual constraints that amplify these influences. Resource limitations, high student-to-instructor ratios, overcrowded facilities, and gaps between theory and practice frequently hinder optimal experiences (O Abah et al., 2024; Maitanmi et al., 2024). Nigerian studies highlight additional socio-cultural dynamics, infrastructural deficits, and supervisory inconsistencies that affect students' willingness to engage fully and pursue careers in underserved areas (O Abah et al., 2024). Perceptions of clinical environments also intersect with broader educational tools and assessments, such as objective structured clinical examinations, where instructor support and environmental factors shape student confidence (Kibuuka et al., 2025). These regional insights emphasize the need for context-specific investigations to inform improvements in nursing curricula and clinical partnerships.

In Nigeria, the Bachelor of Nursing Science (B.N.Sc.) program adheres to standards set by the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN), mandating extensive supervised clinical rotations across a 5-year curriculum to ensure graduates achieve requisite competencies. Rivers State University (RSU), situated in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, exemplifies this framework through its Department of Nursing Science within the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences. The program equips students with theoretical foundations complemented by practical training, primarily at the affiliated Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH)—a tertiary facility offering diverse specialty exposures essential for comprehensive skill development.

Despite RSU's alignment with national standards and its role in addressing regional healthcare manpower shortages, empirical data on nursing students' specific attitudes and perceptions toward clinical postings at RSUTH remain scarce. While broader Nigerian research documents positive perceptions in some settings alongside compliance challenges influenced by supervision and support (Maitanmi et al., 2024), localized evidence is vital for tailoring interventions. Factors such as preceptor conduct, workload management, inclusivity, socio-economic influences, and overall satisfaction warrant examination to identify strengths and gaps.

This study therefore investigates the factors influencing nursing students' attitudes and perceptions of clinical posting at RSUTH. By assessing key domains—including support from preceptors and staff, adaptation challenges, workload impacts, staff conduct, inclusivity, direction provided, socio-cultural effects, and general satisfaction—it aims to provide baseline insights for enhancing clinical education quality. The findings hold implications for faculty development, hospital-university collaborations, and policy refinements to optimize

learning outcomes in this setting and similar Nigerian institutions.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional design was adopted for the study. This design was considered appropriate because it allowed the investigator to describe the current and prevailing information about nursing students' perceptions of clinical training and reveal areas that need change. The design was successfully used by Okpala et al. (2014) in a study of students' perception of environmental sanitation at a Nigerian university.

2.2 Area of Study

The study was conducted at the Department of Nursing Science, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The university offers a comprehensive 5-year B.N.Sc. program domiciled in the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences. The focal clinical site is the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH), which provides diverse specialty rotations. The department aligns with NMCN standards, emphasizing practical training through experienced faculty, simulation labs, and clinical placements at RSUTH.

2.3 Population of Study

The study targeted nursing students across Years 2, 3, and 4 who had completed at least six months of clinical posting. The population comprised 92 students in Year 2, 60 in Year 3, and 77 in Year 4, for a total of 229. These students possessed rich experiential knowledge from clinical rotations.

2.4 Sample Size

The total population of Two Hundred and Twenty Nine (229) student nurses was used for the study because of its small size. However, because all the subjects may not be around at the time of data collection, only those who met inclusion criteria were used thus:

Inclusion criteria

- i. Students in 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th year of study in the Department of Nursing Sciences, Rivers state university.
- ii. Willingness of the students to participate in the study.

2.5 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to select entire classes from Years 2, 3, and 4, amounting to total enumeration of the targeted groups.

2.6 Instrument for Data Collection

A researcher-designed electronic questionnaire was used. Items were derived from reviewed literature and aligned with study objectives. The instrument had four sections: A (demographics), B–D (factors addressing objectives, questions, and hypotheses).

2.7 Validity of Instrument

The questionnaire was submitted to the research supervisor for face and content validity. Suggested corrections were incorporated before final approval.

2.8 Reliability of Instrument

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was computed, yielding 0.78, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

2.9 Method for Data Collection

A total of 229 electronic surveys were disseminated to eligible students over 7 days via Google Forms with clear instructions. The researcher monitored the process. All 229 responses were retrieved; after cleaning for incompleteness and errors, 212 valid responses (92.6%) were retained for analysis.

2.10 Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25.0. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) answered research questions. The decision rule on the 5-point Likert scale (SA=5, A=4, N=3, D=2, SD=1) was a criterion mean of 3.0: ≥ 3.0 = Accepted (Agree); < 3.0 = Rejected (Disagree).

$$\text{Mean response} = \frac{\sum(f \times \text{score})}{N}$$

Z-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Probability value > 0.05 = Accept null hypothesis; < 0.05 = Reject null hypothesis.

2.11 Ethical Considerations Permission was obtained from the Head of Department, Department of Nursing Science, Rivers State University. Participation was voluntary, with

informed consent embedded in the electronic form. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured.

3. Results

3.1 Questionnaire Distribution

A total of 229 electronic questionnaires were distributed to eligible nursing students (Table 1). All 229 were retrieved, representing a 100% retrieval rate. After data cleaning (removal of incomplete, inconsistent, or invalid entries), 212 responses were deemed valid and suitable for analysis, yielding a usable response rate of 92.6%.

Table 1: Questionnaire Administration and Retrieval

Distribution	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Distributed copies	229	100.0
Retrieved copies	229	100.0
Cleaned and used copies	212	92.6

Source: Field Survey, 2023

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

3.2.1 Sample Demographics

Table 2 shows the gender distribution of respondents; with the higher distribution on female respondents 144 (67.9%); followed by respondents reported as male respondents – 68 (32.1%).

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	68	32.1	32.1	32.1
Female	144	67.9	67.9	100.0
Total	212	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 reports age distribution of respondents; the ones below 20 years who recorded 57 (26.9%); followed by those reported as between 20 to 25 years recorded 129 and the highest of all the distributions (60.8%); followed by those reported between 26-30 years – 25 (11.8%) and those within 31-35 years bracket – 1 (5%).

Table 3: Age of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below 20 years	57	26.9	26.9	26.9
20-25 years	129	60.8	60.8	87.7
26-30 years	25	11.8	11.8	99.5
31-35 years	1	.5	.5	100.0
Total	212	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 reports age distribution of respondents; the ones reported as between 2nd year students recorded 88 and the highest of all the distributions (41.5%); followed by those in their 4th year who recorded 69 (32.5%); followed by those in their 4th year – 55 (25.9%).

Table 4: Academic Year of the Respondents

Academic Year	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2nd Year	88	41.5	41.5	41.5
3rd Year	55	25.9	25.9	67.5
4th Year	69	32.5	32.5	100.0
Total	212	100.0	100.0	

3.2.2 Presentation of Data

Table 5 shows the mean responses of male and female nursing students on the factors that contribute to nursing students'

attitudes and perceptions toward their clinical experiences. Item 1 has mean scores of 3.37 and 3.09; standard deviation of 1.208 and 1.022 for the male and female nursing students

respectively. Since the mean scores are more than the critical mean of 2.50, it means that both the male and female nursing students accepted that they feel supported by clinical preceptors and staff during their posting. Item 2 has mean scores of 3.35 and 3.63; standard deviation of 1.156 and 1.022 for the male and female nursing students respectively. Since

the mean scores are more than the critical mean of 2.50, it means that both the male and female nursing students accepted that they have encountered challenges in adapting to new clinical settings during rotations. Item 3 has mean scores of 3.16 and 2.97; standard deviation of 1.141 and 1.149 for the male and female nursing students respectively.

Table 5: Responses to the Factors that Contribute to Nursing Students' Attitudes and Perceptions toward their Clinical Experiences

S/N	Statement	Male Mean (N=154)	Std. Deviation	Decision	Female Mean (N=111)	SD	Decision
1.	I feel supported by clinical preceptors and staff during my posting	3.37	1.208	Agree	3.09	1.140	Agree
2.	I have encountered challenges in adapting to new clinical settings during rotations	3.35	1.156	Agree	3.63	1.022	Agree
3.	The workload during clinical posting affects my overall experience	3.16	1.141	Agree	2.97	1.149	Agree
4.	The conduct of nursing staff influences my attitude towards clinical posting	3.57	1.012	Agree	3.70	1.018	Agree
5.	The level of inclusivity and belongingness in the clinical environment is high	3.37	1.021	Agree	3.41	.978	Agree
6.	Adequate support and direction are provided to student nurses during clinical posting	3.18	1.145	Agree	3.14	1.227	Agree
7.	Socio-economic and cultural backgrounds affect the clinical learning experiences of students	3.46	1.099	Agree	3.25	1.215	Agree
8.	Overall, I am satisfied with my clinical posting experience.	3.41	1.109	Agree	3.45	1.063	Agree
Grand mean		3.36	1.113		3.33	1.102	

Since the mean scores are more than the critical mean of 2.50, it means that both the male and female nursing students accepted that their workload during clinical posting affects their overall experience. Item 4 has mean scores of 3.57 and 3.70; standard deviation of 1.012 and 1.018 for the male and female nursing students respectively. Since the mean scores are more than the critical mean of 2.50, it means that both the male and female nursing students accepted that the conduct of nursing staff influences their attitude towards clinical posting. Item 5 has mean scores of 3.37 and 3.41; standard deviation of 1.021 and 0.978 for the male and female nursing students respectively. Since the mean scores are more than the critical mean of 2.50, it means that both the male and female nursing students accepted that the level of inclusivity and belongingness in the clinical environment is high. Item 6 has mean scores of 3.18 and 3.14; standard deviation of 1.145 and 1.227 for the male and female nursing students respectively. Since the mean scores are more than the critical mean of 2.50, it means that both the male and female nursing students accepted that adequate support and direction are provided to student nurses during clinical posting. Item 7 has mean scores of 3.46 and 3.25; standard deviation of 1.099 and 1.215 for the male and female nursing students respectively. Since the mean scores are more than the critical mean of 2.50, it means that both the male and female nursing students accepted that socio-

economic and cultural backgrounds affect the clinical learning experiences of students. Item 8 has mean scores of 3.41 and 3.45; standard deviation of 1.109 and 1.063 for the male and female nursing students respectively. Since the mean scores are more than the critical mean of 2.50, it means that both the male and female nursing students accepted that overall, they are satisfied with their clinical posting experience.

With a grand mean is 3.36 and 3.33, standard deviation of 1.113 and 1.102 respectively, the results indicated that both male and female nursing students strongly agreed on the factors that contribute to nursing students' attitudes and perceptions toward their clinical experiences.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that nursing students at Rivers State University exhibited predominantly positive attitudes and perceptions toward their clinical posting experiences at the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH). With grand mean scores of 3.36 for males and 3.33 for females across the eight assessed items—all exceeding the criterion mean of 3.0—the results indicate overall agreement that clinical placements were supportive, inclusive, and satisfying, despite acknowledged challenges. Students reported feeling supported by clinical preceptors and staff (means 3.37 male,

3.09 female), experiencing high levels of inclusivity and belongingness (3.37 and 3.41), receiving adequate direction (3.18 and 3.14), and expressing overall satisfaction (3.41 and 3.45). These positive perceptions align with global evidence emphasizing the role of effective supervision and supportive environments in enhancing student confidence and learning outcomes.

The strong endorsement of preceptor and staff support resonates with multi-country research highlighting that constructive feedback, approachability, and role modeling by clinical instructors are central to effective clinical teaching environments (Al-Daken et al., 2024). Similarly, in an Indian cross-sectional study involving undergraduate nursing students, positive perceptions of the clinical learning environment were closely tied to quality supervision, communication, and motivational attitudes from staff, which fostered daily learning and skill acquisition (Patidar et al., 2024). In the present study, the highest-rated items—staff conduct influencing attitudes (3.57 male, 3.70 female) and overall satisfaction—mirror these findings, suggesting that RSUTH's clinical staff effectively contribute to a conducive atmosphere despite potential resource constraints typical in Nigerian settings.

Challenges such as adaptation to new clinical settings (means 3.35 and 3.63) and workload impacts (3.16 and 2.97) were also recognized, yet they did not overshadow positive elements. This pattern is consistent with Malaysian research, where students reported adaptation difficulties, heavy workloads, and environmental stressors, but still valued instructor contributions and overall clinical experiences when support was present (Baba et al., 2024). Qualitative insights from Sweden further corroborate that while transition stress, workload, and unfamiliar settings pose resilience challenges during clinical education, adequate support mitigates negative effects and promotes growth (Aryuwat et al., 2024). In this RSU cohort, the acknowledgment of these issues without leading to dissatisfaction indicates a balanced perception, possibly bolstered by the university's structured rotations and affiliation with a teaching hospital.

Socio-economic and cultural backgrounds were perceived as influential (3.46 male, 3.25 female), aligning with Nigerian evidence from southeast regions where personal, socioeconomic, and institutional factors—such as inadequate equipment, high student-to-client ratios, and limited laboratory resources—significantly shape effective clinical experiences and future career inclinations (O Abah et al., 2024). Although RSUTH, as a tertiary facility, likely offers better infrastructure than rural sites, students still noted cultural and socioeconomic dynamics, underscoring the need for culturally sensitive orientations.

Notably, no significant gender differences emerged ($z = 0.45$, $p = 0.65$), suggesting equitable treatment in the clinical environment at RSUTH. This contrasts with some international reports of marginalization but supports findings from collaborative models where strong academic-healthcare partnerships promote inclusivity (Bivall et al., 2021; DeBoer

et al., 2019). The absence of gender disparity may reflect RSU's commitment to NMCN standards and faculty oversight. These results affirm RSUTH's strengths in supervision and environment quality, contributing to high satisfaction levels comparable to positive global benchmarks (Al-Daken et al., 2024; Patidar et al., 2024). However, persistent challenges in adaptation and workload echo broader concerns in resource-limited contexts (Jafarian-Amiri et al., 2020). Limitations include reliance on self-reported data and a single-institution focus, potentially limiting generalizability. Nonetheless, the high response rate (92.6%) enhances reliability.

Overall, the study highlights opportunities to sustain positives through ongoing preceptor training, workload optimization, and enhanced university-hospital collaboration (Bivall et al., 2021). Addressing identified challenges could further elevate clinical education quality, better preparing students for professional practice in Nigeria's healthcare landscape.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that nursing students at Rivers State University hold predominantly positive attitudes and perceptions toward their clinical posting experiences at the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH). Despite acknowledged challenges such as difficulties adapting to new clinical settings and the impact of workload, students reported strong support from preceptors and staff, high levels of inclusivity and belongingness, adequate direction, positive staff conduct, and overall satisfaction with their clinical placements. The absence of significant gender differences further indicates an equitable and supportive clinical learning environment.

These findings highlight RSUTH's strengths as a primary training site and affirm the value of structured university-hospital partnerships in fostering effective clinical education. To sustain and enhance these positive outcomes, targeted interventions are recommended, including ongoing preceptor development programs, optimized workload distribution, cultural competence training for staff and students, and periodic evaluation of clinical placement experiences.

Ultimately, improving the quality of clinical postings will better prepare competent, confident, and resilient nurses to meet Nigeria's healthcare demands. Future multi-institutional and longitudinal studies are encouraged to explore long-term impacts on professional development and career trajectories.

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