

# Practice Deficit of Graduating Students in Community Health Nursing: Basis for an Intervention Program

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## Abstract

**Background:** Community health nursing education is fundamental in preparing nursing students to effectively serve diverse populations and address public health challenges. . Community health nurses work collaboratively with other healthcare professionals and community stakeholders to address the unique health needs of populations. It focus on handling diverse environments such as homes, clinics, schools, and community centers, aiming to enhance the well-being of the community as a whole. Community-based nursing is a crucial method that provides necessary healthcare throughout all stages of life, emphasizing improved overall health, primary care, and recovery. This approach relies on teamwork between different healthcare disciplines to serve various patient groups

**Purpose:** To inform policy creation and to cultivate new generation of nursing practitioners, armed with the acumen, empathy, and resilience needed to navigate the intricate tapestry of community health settings and effectuate meaningful change in the healthcare landscape.

**Methods:** A total of fifteen participants in the study and utilize descriptive phenomenological study. Interview guide questionnaire was utilized in the study. The respondents for this research are the Teachers handling the Community Health Nursing course in selected university in Manila.

**Result:** A total of two major themes in the study (1) Practice Deficit encounter among Graduating Students In Community Health Nursing Course which generated there subthemes which is (a).Limited Clinical Opportunities (b) Lack of readiness in the community engagement (c) Lack of advance skills in communication and understanding health issues (2) Challenges encounter among clinical instructor in facilitating community health nursing course which generate three subthemes (a) Curriculum Imbalance (b) Insufficient Clinical Placements (c) Lack of Resource and materials to be use in the community setting.

**Conclusion:** The findings reveal that the primary practice deficits among graduating community health nursing students are due to limited clinical opportunities, curriculum imbalances, inadequate faculty support, resource constraints, and insufficient interdisciplinary training and community engagement.

**Keywords:** *community, Community health nursing course, graduating students, issues in community*

## 1.0.Background

Community health nursing education is fundamental in preparing nursing students to effectively serve diverse populations and address public health challenges. It is the act of promoting and safeguarding the health of populations by applying knowledge from nursing, social sciences, and public health. Moreover, it focuses on providing healthcare to individuals, families, and groups within a community setting. Community health nurses work collaboratively with other healthcare professionals and community stakeholders to address the unique health needs of populations. It focus on handling diverse environments such as homes, clinics, schools, and community centers, aiming to enhance the well-being of the community as a whole. Community-based nursing is a crucial method that provides necessary healthcare throughout

all stages of life, emphasizing improved overall health, primary care, and recovery. This approach relies on teamwork between different healthcare disciplines to serve various patient groups. It emphasizes preventive care, health promotion, and education to improve overall health outcomes. Zeydani,et.al.(2023).

Nursing education goal is to train competent and confident nurses with the knowledge, attitude and skills necessary to maintain and promote community health. Bahramnezhad et.al.(2019). Despite its goal challenges to overcome barriers need to address. Barriers such as community based education program deficit must overcome through skills improvement and participation in the community. Zeydani,et.al.(2021). Other factors such as personal characteristic, education-related factors, psychological characteristics and social factors that affects in the practice. Lee, et.al.(2023). Despite the recognition of its importance, a practice deficit persists among graduating nursing students. This deficit stems from various factors, including limited clinical opportunities, inadequate faculty support, and resource constraints within educational institutions. Patel and Gupta's 2023 article in Public Health Nursing advocates for transforming community health nursing education to address these challenges and ensure the readiness of graduates for community-based practice. Lee & Kim (2022). In addition, issues such as advance skills in communication, creativity, critical and analytical thinking, problem solving, and decision making are the common problem that encounter. Therefore, nurses should be empowered to meet the needs of society. Thabet, et.al.(2017)

### **Objective:**

To inform policy creation and to cultivate new generation of nursing practitioners, armed with the acumen, empathy, and resilience needed to navigate the intricate tapestry of community health settings and effectuate meaningful change in the healthcare landscape. This research's backdrop harmonizes with the Department of Health's (DOH) Universal Health Care (UHC) initiative, a steadfast pursuit to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare services for all Filipinos. At the crux of UHC lies the indispensable role of community health nursing in furnishing primary healthcare services, disseminating health education, and spearheading disease prevention within communities. Nonetheless, the pervasive practice deficit among graduating students emerges as a formidable impediment, thwarting their preparedness for community-based practice. Addressing this deficit becomes not just essential but imperative for the realization of UHC's objectives. Competent community health nurses stand as linchpins, facilitating the delivery of comprehensive and accessible healthcare services to marginalized populations, a quintessential facet of UHC's mission.

## **2.0 Methodology**

### **2.1. Research Design**

This study used a qualitative phenomenological design in which the lived experiences of the respondents is the focus. Through this, the researchers were able to gather information based on what really happened in a certain phenomenon. This design allows for the comprehensive exploration of the current state of community health nursing education and the identification of specific areas requiring improvement. By collecting data through interviews, and document analysis, researchers can gather detailed information about the practice curriculum. Bergman (2010) highlights the importance of descriptive research in providing a thorough understanding of a phenomenon or issue without manipulating variables.

### **2.2. Key Informant Selection**

A total of fifteen participants was generated in the study. The participants are from selected University in Manila, Philippines. The inclusion of criteria includes: (1) Teachers handling the Community Health Nursing course (2) affiliated in one of the university colleges in manila (3) at least one year of clinical experiences in Community Nursing field.

### 2.3. Instrumentation

An interview guide is the major instrument that was used in the study. It served as a one-on-one interview guide and semi-structured in nature. It also consisted of open-ended questions that helped the informants give their answers in their chosen way or manner. These questions, too, were flexible enough to ensure that it would fit in the informant's feelings or reactions. The aforementioned flexibility also allowed the interviewers to ask follow-up questions and clarifications. Recording done thru phone or social platform with their permission first.

### 2.4. Data-Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure for this study begins with obtaining ethical clearance and permission from relevant University authorities, ensuring compliance with research ethics guidelines. Once approval was secured, the researchers approached the teacher respondents. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, emphasizing voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Data collection method were interviews, and document analysis. Interviews was conducted with teachers to gather in-depth insights regarding the practice deficit in community health nursing course.

### 2.5. Data analysis

After collecting the data, the researchers followed the steps to be undertaken in analyzing qualitative data. They also used thematic analysis. document analysis involved reviewing curriculum documents, course syllabi, and educational resources related to community health nursing programs. Data analysis employed thematic coding techniques to identify patterns, categories, and themes across the dataset, facilitating the interpretation and synthesis of findings. Researchers iteratively refine codes and themes through a collaborative process to ensure rigor and validity in data interpretation.

## 3.0. Results And Discussion

### 3.1. Practice Deficit encounter among Graduating Students In Community Health Nursing Course.

In the context of community health nursing education, "practice deficit" refers to the gap or deficiency in the practical skills, hands-on experience, and applied knowledge among graduating nursing students. This deficit manifests as a lack of preparedness to effectively perform community health nursing tasks, engage with diverse populations, and address the complex health needs within community settings. Factors contributing to this deficit include limited clinical placements, inadequate curriculum focus on community health, insufficient faculty expertise, and resource constraints. The practice deficit hinders students' ability to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical application, ultimately impacting their readiness for professional practice in community health nursing.

*"For me, it's hard to work in the community, especially I am handling students to be involve in the area. Community courses is quite challenging due to few hours practice in the course. Clinical competency must enhance this include creating more engagement with in the community. It quite challenging as well to understand the needs of our graduate students due to work load. Addressing graduating student concern failed to facilitate which somehow contribute to the bursen among the students"-P3*

Setting the Community Nursing Course is important in establishing community engagement. Reforms in the curriculum design and innovation should be initiated in to set define competency in the community setting. Meng,et.al.(2016). In addition resources must develop through support of the faculty who are engage in practice setting. This include also policy and funding must support on the community engagement both the faculty and the students to have that confidence in working in the field. Cai(2020)

#### 3.1.1. Limited Clinical Opportunities

Nurse educator have observed that students often struggle to secure placements in community health settings, primarily due to a lack of available sites and the predominance of hospital-based training. Exposure in the community helps to create wider perspective in understanding the needs of the community. This

involve opportunity to assess the needs of people in the community. Having that lack of clinical confidence affects students confidence in the delivery of health care in community setting.

*“ I am worried because we only have limited hours in the community duty. Even my graduate students As far that we want to be more engage with people but most the time we only visit community five times within our duration within a limited time only. The students somehow complain that they need more time to assess the community needs. It was also concern on how to assess the community situation in the limited time of duty. We need to work fast to assess the community. This include their concern in plan of action to be done to help the community”P2*

This highlighted the importance of practical experience in nursing education, noting that students often miss out on essential community health skills due to limited clinical placements. Chongloi (2024). Emphasized the need for comprehensive practice models that include community health settings to ensure students develop the necessary competencies for community- based care. By forming partnerships with local health centers and community organizations, schools can provide more diverse clinical opportunities and better prepare students for community health roles. Li et al. (2023)

### **3.1.2. Lack of readiness in the community engagement**

Readiness is important aspect in community engagement, having the skills to be engage is important in order to assess the needs or issues with in the community. Factors that are reported to be associated with students nurses readiness for practice includes lack of information on how to work in the community and understanding the complex health care arena in the community.

*“ As I observe students, doubted themself if they can perform well in the community, it just they not ready at all. This is on how to engage to people in the community. It needs a lot of effort and patience in oder to understand their situation. Providing opportunity for the graduating students to be more participative help to prepare them in community engagement. It requires strategies to be able to transmit in the student ways for them to prepare in the community setting” P5*

Engaging with diverse community populations is critical for preparing students for real-world community health nursing, yet opportunities for such engagement are often limited. Asian (2021) emphasized the importance of community engagement in nursing education, noting that it enhances students' practical skills and cultural competence. Li et al. (2023) found that community engagement initiatives can significantly improve students' readiness for community health practice. Schools can enhance community engagement by establishing student-run community health projects and facilitating service-learning opportunities.

### **3.1.3 Lack of advance skills in communication and understanding health issues**

Health care providers must have advance skills in dealing with the people in the community. Graduating student are expected to have interprofessional skills and communication skills to coordinate to the plan of care. Nursing students experience delight on graduation but are challenged by experiencing reality shock as the responsibility of caring for multiple patients in a multifaceted healthcare team in the community.

*I Believe that it is important to have not only skills in communication but there should be advance skills in how to communicate in the community. That is the one rule that I always taught to my student. As I assess their work students failed to understand some issues in the disparity within the community.*

*graduating student must find solution to help in my own means to promote health services that can be helpful for the people”P4*

Understanding the issues in the community help to strengthen in the creation of health promotion and disease prevention which somehow not address. In the nursing education program there lack of information given to the student to understand that the health issues which the people in the community. Integrating public health principles into nursing education is crucial for preparing students to address population health issues Campbell (2019). Comprehensive understanding of public health is essential for holistic patient care. By

incorporating dedicated courses on public health and ensuring thorough coverage of these principles. Schramm et al. (2021)

### **3.2. Challenges encounter among clinical instructor in facilitating community health nursing course**

Faculty encounter so many challenges especially on building character among graduating students. This include in starting to work by the graduating students in preparation in working new environment and socio cultural and educational norm base on what is expected. Training and developing curricula is important to prepare the graduating students in clinical and multi dynamic teams.

*“ I believe that graduating nurses are unprepared in the clinical practice which influence gap in the instructional setting and quality of training and opportunities. This involve poor social engagement and challenges in the transition after graduation. Clinical instructor quite challenges on how to facilitate the course for the student to gain knowledge, skills and attitude in facilitating community encounter. Community said to have factors that you need to consider when you have duty in community health centers. This include consideration to their beliefs and practices in that they possess. Overcoming those barriers will provide quality care for the people with in the community.” P1*

Interdisciplinary training is essential for community health nursing, yet students often do not receive enough opportunities to collaborate with other healthcare professionals. Asian (2021) highlighted the benefits of interdisciplinary learning, such as improved critical thinking and teamwork skills. Williamson et al. (2023) demonstrated that interdisciplinary training can enhance students' ability to work effectively in community health settings. Incorporating interdisciplinary case conferences and collaborative projects into the curriculum can foster better teamwork and communication skills among nursing students.

#### **3.2.1. Curriculum Imbalance**

The curriculum in many nursing programs heavily favors acute care, leaving community health nursing underemphasized. The increase in number of nursing students have impact on the perspective of education program. It important focus real world requirements in balancing the curriculum that will enhance in understanding community setting.

*“Curriculum imbalance is one that I observe as clinical instructor handing nursing students in the community. It somehow challenging in the implantation of the curriculum. Due to lack of handling barriers the students somehow suffer on it.” P1*

Understanding the importance of integrating diverse health practices into nursing education to prepare students for holistic patient care is essential to strengthen the barriers curriculum implementation is quite challenging due to increase number of students and lack of nurse educator or clinical instructor in community setting. Schramm et al. (2021). Lack of theoretical knowledge in DNP programs can hinder students' ability to address community health needs effectively. Revising curricula to balance acute and community health content is essential for producing well- rounded nursing graduates equipped to handle diverse healthcare settings. Flanagan et al. (2021)

#### **3.2.2. Insufficient Clinical Placements**

Nursing education program have difficulty in finding setting for clinical duty of the students the availability of community health centers is quite challenging for the institutions. In addition, faculty that will be handing community duty needs to be trained for a couple of months or number of hours need to be accomplish. Student engagement and learning opportunities is important in transformation of graduating students towards proper engagement with the people in the community.

*“The challenges which we often encounter is the lack of health center that caters the needs of the students to enhance their skills and experience through having clinical duty in the community. The students need to train in handling patient in the community not only in the hospital setting. People in the community tends to have capacity to pay medical expenses which result inaccessibility of health services. Graduating nurse help to achieve health care through service*

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*within the community. This help to create action that will promote health care specially in the slum area where health care is difficult to access."*

Clinical instructors observed that students often struggled to secure placements in community health settings due to limited availability and a predominance of hospital-based training. the critical need for practical experience in nursing education, noting that students often miss out on essential community health skills due to insufficient clinical placements. Chongloi (2024). Having Diverse population is challenging in ensuring patient needs according to beliefs and practices. Ensuring students competency for community base care is important to Increased partnerships with community health centers and telehealth services can help address this gap. Li et al. (2023)

### **3.3.3. Lack of Resource and materials to be use in the community setting.**

Insufficient materials is one of the concern of clinical instructor. Information such as design in the community empowerment is underpinning. It entails how the education work effectively through designing materials that can be helpful in supporting both students and the facilitators. Having lack of resources serve as hinder in expanding students' knowledge and problems pertaining to community health care base. Expansion of community learning is important in providing quality care for the people within the community.

*"The problem is the institution doesn't provide enough materials due to lack of budget. When we have duty in the community there is no even resources that pertains to availability of services offers in certain health centers. We need as well to be resourceful when we have duty in the community to provide health services."- P7*

Resource constraints, such as outdated materials and insufficient funding, hinder the quality of community health nursing education. Schramm et al. (2021) noted that access to up-to-date resources is crucial for effective learning and practical application. Williamson et al. (2023) found that inadequate resources can limit the ability of nursing programs to provide comprehensive community health. training. By securing additional funding and developing digital repositories of updated educational materials, schools can ensure that students have the tools they need to succeed in community health nursing. In addition, is the delivery of information such as Traditional teaching methods, dominated by lectures, limit students' ability to develop practical skills and critical thinking necessary for community health nursing.

active learning strategies, such as simulations and hands-on projects, significantly enhance students' learning experiences and practical skills. Asian (2021). importance of experiential learning in nursing education. By incorporating more active learning strategies, nursing programs can better engage students and prepare them for real-world community health practice. Schramm et al. (2021)

## **Conclusion**

The findings reveal that the primary practice deficits among graduating community health nursing students are due to limited clinical opportunities, curriculum imbalances, inadequate faculty support, resource constraints, and insufficient interdisciplinary training and community engagement. factors such as insufficient clinical placements, curriculum imbalances, inadequate faculty expertise, resource constraints, lack of interdisciplinary training, limited focus on public health principles, minimal community engagement, inadequate emphasis on health policy and advocacy, traditional teaching methods, and gaps in integrating theory and practice significantly contribute to practice deficits among graduating community health nursing students. Implementing these innovative strategies will effectively address practice deficits in community health nursing, ensuring that graduating students are well-prepared for diverse and dynamic healthcare environments.

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### Conflicts Of Interest

The authors declares there are no significant competing financial, professional, or personal interests that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this manuscript.

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