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Probing the Theory-To-Practice Gap Among Student Nurses: The Case of Bicol University

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Abstract. Student nurses often struggle to transition from theoretical learning to real-world clinical practice. This study investigates the gaps between theory and practice among nursing students at Bicol University, aiming to develop solutions aligned with the program outcomes of the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) memorandum order no. 15 (CMO-15). Using a qualitative case study design, 24 RLE leaders from levels III and IV across three nursing schools were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via focus group discussions, and the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Gap Analysis Worksheet identified discrepancies between expected and actual practices. Findings showed gaps in 10 out of 14 program outcomes, particularly in applying sciences and humanities to nursing practice, which emerged as the most significant challenge. Responses revealed both commonalities and variations in performance indicators across campuses. The Guide in Advancing the Practices in Nursing 15 (GAPN-15) Model was developed to address these gaps. This model provides practical strategies to enhance students' skills and knowledge, ensuring they meet program outcomes before graduating. The GAPN-15 Model offers actionable steps to bridge theory-practice gaps and better prepare nursing students for clinical environments, contributing to improved educational outcomes and patient care quality.

Keywords: Nursing; Theory-practice gap; Clinical practice; Bicol University; GAPN-15 model; Educational outcomes.

1.0 Introduction

Transitioning from structured classroom learning to fast-paced clinical settings can overwhelm student nurses, highlighting the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world nursing practice. This discrepancy often leaves students struggling to provide optimal care, which may lead to decreased performance during their Related Learning Experience (RLE). Prolonged exposure to these challenges risks undermining their confidence and professional growth. Theoretical knowledge and practical experience are essential for nursing students to develop competencies in cognitive and psychomotor domains. However, the unpredictability of clinical environments and inconsistencies in learning approaches create challenges in translating theory into practice. Studies show differing perspectives on the preparedness of student nurses. Azharuddin and Villanueva (2021) argue that while students excel in planning care, they struggle with prioritization and implementation. In contrast, Relloso (2021) emphasizes the importance of psychomotor skills and confidence gained during lectures, which form the foundation for clinical practice. This divergence underscores a critical gap in nursing education.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 15, Series of 2017 (CMO 15, s. 2017) sets the Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSG) for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program in the Philippines. It outlines nursing graduates' core competencies, curriculum structure, and expected learning outcomes. The CMO emphasizes outcome-based education (OBE), competency-based training, and global competitiveness, ensuring that nursing students are well-prepared for professional practice. However, even with CHED's set guidelines, the nursing education faces several challenges that impact the quality of learning and the readiness of graduates for clinical practiceThe theory-practice gap remains a significant concern, as highlighted by Khodaei et al. (2016), who identified factors such as instructor quality, student engagement, and educational planning as contributors. Addressing these issues is essential to improve the application of theoretical knowledge and enhance the quality of nursing services. Competency development early in the educational journey is crucial for shaping attitudes and ensuring adherence to core nursing standards, as Fukada (2020) suggested.

Bicol University consistently demonstrates excellence in nursing education, evidenced by its impressive performance in the 2023 Philippine Nursing Licensure Exam. Despite this achievement, student nurses at Bicol University still face challenges associated with the theory-practice gap. This study aims to identify the specific competency gaps in nursing education and explore how they affect student performance. By understanding these challenges, the research seeks to propose feasible solutions to bridge the theory-practice gap, enhancing nursing education and practice from the perspective of Bicol University student nurses.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

A qualitative case study was utilized to thoroughly analyze the gap between theory and practice faced by student nurses. The approach, which examines an identifiable problem using research to investigate a person, an event, or a theory, has been effectively used to develop solutions that will significantly contribute to bridging the gap because it is adapted to the needs of the study.

2.2 Research informants

The researchers used primary and secondary data to conduct the study. The responses from the face-to-face focus group discussions with the 4 level 3 RLE leader key informants and 4 level 4 RLE leader key informants that were held in each of the nursing departments of the three campuses of Bicol University: College of Nursing (Main Campus), Bicol University - Polangui, and Bicol University - Tabaco, served as the primary source of the study. The secondary sources of the study were the level 3 and level 4 coordinators of the three campuses that provided the researchers with the list of names of the level 3 and level 4 RLE leaders. Photos, audio, and video recordings of the focus group discussions were also relevant secondary sources. The researchers also provided consent forms for the key informants, filled out with their names and signatures following the Data Privacy Act, or RA 10173, which protects the individual's personal information.

2.3 Data Gathering Procedure and Analysis

To select key informants, purposive sampling was employed to determine the target number of key informants per year level.Key informants were selected based on the following criteria; a. Regular 3rd and 4th year students, b.Rotated in different areas and different hospitals during their clinical exposure. Focus group discussion was conducted to allow all the 8 key informants per campus to interact with one another. Separate focus group discussions were conducted for each set of informants per campus. During the FGD, the key informants sat in a circle, with the two moderators and transcribers seated beside each other. The researchers requested the informants' consent to use an audiovisual recorder and transcription throughout the FGD. The discussion started with the researchers' introduction and an 'ice breaker' for the key informants to introduce themselves.

The FGD followed a semi-structured interview guided by the Gap Analysis Worksheet that was constructed by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), where the researchers asked a series of open-ended questions that revolve around the identification of theory and practice gaps in each program outcome listed on the CHED memorandum order no.15 series of 2017. Then, follow-up questions were used to expound the ideas of each research participant further. Questions in each FGD were the same, neutral and unbiased. By the end of the FGD, there was a rationalization portion, where the informants exchanged their thoughts and insights with each other.

Lastly, the researchers explained what will follow the FGD and, when doing so, be careful not to make any promises or raise expectations about what comes next.

After each FGD, the audio-visual record and transcripts were stored in a flash drive and were stored in another folder with a password and will be kept till the course of the study has been thoroughly analyzed. The data gathered from the FGD were synthesized using the gap analysis worksheet formulated by the ANCC. The synthesized data were analyzed using a Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) Miner Software. This is to determine similarities or patterns within the answers provided by the informants to determine the possible course of action that will bridge the identified gaps and mitigate the effect of the discrepancies.

2.4 Instrumentation

The researchers used audio-visual recording, note-taking, and participant observation throughout the FGD. As one of the roles of the researchers in the discussion was to become a moderator, taking minutes throughout the discussion was challenging. An audio-visual recording of the forum was fundamental for the researchers when transcribing the gathered data, an ethical consideration occurred. After the key informants were informed of the procedures and were told of the voluntary nature of the participation in the study, adhering to their formal consent, they were assured that the information they provided was kept confidential and anonymous, that it was only used for research purposes, and that they could opt-out at any point if they have felt uncomfortable.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Exploring the Potential Gaps Between Theory and Practice Among Student Nurses in Bicol University

The Theory-to-Practice Gap has been a significant concern in the nursing curriculum nowadays. De (2020) supported this in their study, which said nurses' biggest problem today was integrating theoretical knowledge with guiding practice to close the theory-practice gap. The most challenging period has been said to be the shift from student to registered nurse. Some even experienced transition shock during this time, primarily because of the disconnect between the theory they were taught in school and their clinical experience. The differences between the knowledge and skills of student nurses have led to several challenges and misconceptions in the nursing field. Integrating theory and practice is necessary for effective performance in the actual settings; nevertheless, there is a disconnect between what students learn in the classroom and the experience they encounter in the actual settings.

During the study, it was evident that there were varied experiences, knowledge, and perceptions regarding how student nurses learn, handle a range of tasks, and carry out nursing care for their patients. Furthermore, the Theory-To-Practice Gap was visible and, thus, was confirmed by the Program Outcomes of the CHED Memorandum Order no. 15 series of 2017, which are the Policies, Standards, and Guidelines for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Program. The flow of the discussion in this chapter was based on the program outcomes of the CHED Memorandum Order no. 15 series of 2017 which were arranged from the program outcome with the most notable gaps to the minor identified gaps, namely: apply knowledge of physical, social, natural and health sciences and humanities in the practice of nursing, conduct research with an experienced researcher, practice beginning management and leadership skills using systems approach in the delivery of client care, apply techno-intelligent care systems and processes in health care delivery, report/document client care accurately and comprehensively, communicate effectively in speaking, writing, and presenting using culturally-appropriate language, apply guidelines and principles of evidence-based practice in the delivery of care, practice nursing in accordance with existing laws, legal, ethical and moral principles, apply entrepreneurial skills in the delivery of nursing care, collaborate effectively with inter-, intra-, and multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural teams, and lastly, engage in lifelong learning with a passion to keep current with national and global developments in general, and nursing and health developments in particular. The CHED Memorandum Order No. 15 series of 2017 program outcomes were utilized to determine whether the student nurses could meet the Commission on Higher Education standards regarding the important qualities of a student nurse. They functioned as a guide to identify the gaps and the factors contributing to the Theory-To-Practice Gap in the nursing curriculum of Bicol University.

3.2 Obstacles in Implementing Nursing Theoretical Knowledge in the Clinical Setting

A key focus of this study is the challenges student nurses encounter in translating classroom instruction and skills laboratory training into real-world patient care during their Related Learning Experience (RLE). Key informants

from different campuses highlighted several barriers, including situational constraints, patient-related concerns, intrapersonal factors, administrative policies, resource limitations, and variations in skills competency. These findings shed light on the gaps in nursing education and the need for enhanced strategies to strengthen clinical preparedness and competence among student nurses.

During the study, the key informants shared their experiences acquiring knowledge, learning a procedure, and applying what they learned in their RLE. It was evident that the student nurses from the different campuses had trouble overcoming the distinction between theoretical learnings and applying those learnings to practice during their RLE in the hospital and the community. Moreover, all the key informants from the three campuses expressed that there was a big difference between what they did during their Skills Laboratory and Theoretical Learnings from what they did in the actual Clinical Exposure. In this study, the first program outcome has the most gaps encountered by the student nurses during their education. The following **o**bstacles were experienced in implementing nursing theoretical knowledge in the clinical setting: situational aspects, patient-related concerns, intrapersonal aspects of students, administrative regulations, lack of supply, skills competency, and experience.

Most key informants mentioned that they were not exposed to the same techniques during their clinical exposure as during their return demonstration.

"*The procedures in the actual situation or setting were very different.*"

The key informants claimed that certain situational factors, such as patients needing immediate care in the actual setting, were the primary cause for the discrepancy between their performance in the skills laboratory and the clinical area.

"For example, if there is an emergency. You cannot apply the step-by-step procedures you learned in an emergency."

Furthermore, the key informants expressed feeling pressured to remember the necessary procedures or practices when the patient's significant other (SO) and clinical instructor were present during care delivery.

"*Especially when there are guardians, and of course, as a student, you feel scrutinized by them, unlike in the skills lab where you just get nervous because of your clinical instructor.*"

During clinical practice, student nurses encountered a variety of stresses. Among these stressors were the demands of schoolwork, including workload and assignments. They also dealt with pressure associated with patient care, such as having accountability for the well-being and lives of their patients.

In addition, some key informants stated that patient-related problems and conflicts also became a component in the various approaches they used in patient care delivery, some of which were the use of mannequins during their return demonstrations:

"In the skills lab, you will not perform procedures on actual patients or patients experiencing symptoms."

Mannequins or "fake patients" in the skills laboratories do not always accurately replicate human anatomy. Martins and Pinho (2020) supported the idea that some "fake patients" cannot be altered to represent abnormal anatomy. That is one of the struggles of the key informants in performing accurate procedures that can be done in the actual setting.

Furthermore, the key informants emphasized some intrapersonal aspects contributing to their inadequate implementation of patient care within the clinical context. Some of which were when they were seeking validation,

"But when it comes to the professor, you must apply the theory, principles, and rationale, so it takes longer and is more comprehensive. That is also the factor, satisfying different needs - the patients and the professors."

Students have made it clear that they wish to impress their superiors with their abilities in a variety of settings and scenarios. However, they must also consider patients in the clinical context.

Moreover, some key informants mentioned that having doubts about doing patient care and having a lack of confidence make it challenging to apply what they know in the actual setting:

"Is my reading still correct? Is it still like this? Because during duty, no one will validate if your vital signs are correct because you are on your own already."

According to HealthStream (2021), patients and healthcare providers value confidence in their care. While providers must be confident in their ability to keep patients safe and assist them in achieving their goals, patients must have faith in their care. Resolving the issues on both ends is essential for improved satisfaction.

Among the factors identified by the key informants as contributing to variances in the appropriate provision of patient care were administrative regulations, noting that each institution has different rules and policies.

"It is different in every institution because each institution follows different policies, and what we demonstrated in RLE sometimes differs."

They have mentioned that some institutions correctly followed procedures. However, in some, they just used the basic techniques and what they were accustomed to, which caused the students distress in applying their learnings to practice.

"There were procedures that were not strictly followed there, depending on the hospital's practices or the specific ward they have."

This was justified in a study by Absalan et al. (2020), which concluded that a bad organizational culture in the clinical setting and unethical resource allocation will damage student-nurse relationships, which will ultimately damage clinical education.

The key informants also identified a lack of supply as a factor in their inability to deliver patient care appropriately.

"*You need to be resourceful, especially in public hospitals, because supplies are often lacking. Sometimes, you cannot even practice certain procedures in the actual setting because the supplies are unavailable."*

Key informants have emphasized the challenge of rendering appropriate patient care when equipment and supplies are lacking. In some instances, they need to be resourceful with what they have instead of using the proper equipment. During their return demonstration, they were equipped with supplies.

"*It also depends on the availability of resources. While it may be listed on the checklist as ideal materials, when you are in the hospital, especially with resource scarcity, you always must be resourceful."*

However, some key informants stated that their experience was the opposite. During their return demonstration, they lacked the equipment and were overwhelmed when using it in the actual clinical exposure.

Lastly, experience and skills were also identified as factors responsible for altered patient care delivery. Some key informants have expressed that their return demonstration was only done through videos and was taught online, which makes it challenging to apply it in the actual setting.

"I said, 'I do not know,' I tried it online and handled it right away."

Students were overwhelmed upon their exposure to the facility, knowing that their experiences were only through videos and online teaching or demonstrations. As there were identified factors causing discrepancies between theoretical knowledge and its actual application, there were also reportable variations in the responses of the key informants on the three campuses. As there were similar answers, there were also contrasting thoughts.

3.3 Challenges in Conducting Nursing Research in the Perspective of Student Nurses

Through the experiences of key informants from different campuses, several themes emerged, including group incompatibility, complex research topics, time constraints, research advisers, availability of resources, and research setting. Group collaboration issues and conflicts were identified as significant obstacles, along with difficulty selecting a feasible research topic and managing time effectively amidst academic demands. The role of research advisers was also emphasized, as their guidance significantly impacts the research process. Additionally, challenges in data collection, resource availability, and logistical difficulties in research settings further complicated the experience. These findings underscore the need for improved support systems to enhance the research capabilities of nursing students.

According to the University of Montana (2024), research allowed people to pursue their interests and challenge them in new ways. Research may be conducted individually or by the group. This can help you understand how to analyze the research problem you are going for. This can also be a contribution to future research and other significant aspects of the study. In this study, the researchers identified themes about the variables contributing to the challenges arising during research: group incompatibility, complex research topic, time constraints, research adviser, availability of resources, and the research setting. As per the Institute of Medicine, nurses conducted various research studies to develop clinical interventions to support patients needing nursing care. Because of its complex nature and wide-ranging application, nursing research frequently needs scientific support from multiple fields. As a result, nursing research crosses traditional research boundaries and incorporates techniques from other disciplines.

Several factors affected the key informants in conducting their research. This study presented different themes, and most of the key informants mentioned that group incompatibility was the major factor contributing to the challenges faced in conducting research. Numerous key informants emphasized the issue of group collaboration, citing it as the primary reason for emerging issues.

"*One of our members, during meetings, always says, 'That is okay. It is up to you, like that.'*"

Key informants highlighted the need to select cooperative group mates in conducting research, as this will lead to better results. According to Mitchell et al. (2004), having positive social relationships enhances the effectiveness of group work.

"You have to be well coordinated with your groupmates because they are your helpers, and even if we say that you are assuming that you are good, you still need them to work."

Team coordination can be a very effective tool for boosting productivity and quality of work, reducing mistakes and conflicts, fostering more creativity and innovation, raising motivation and engagement, and promoting customer happiness and loyalty. Additionally, it can foster a supportive and encouraging team environment where all members feel valued and respected. Efficiency in managing your staff can significantly enhance all these advantages.

In addition to group collaboration, the presence of conflict within the group was also a key factor identified by the key informants as a major contributor to research challenges.

"We fought, so we thought we should finish this (research) in separate ways."

In contrast, when managed well, conflict can help a group better understand the problems they confront. However, a poorly managed conflict that lasts too long might result in reduced cohesion. Even among those in the group who attempt to stay out of a fight, irritation or rage might nevertheless surface when it persists. Group inconsistencies, particularly when conducting research, negatively affect both the process and the results of the study.

A complex research topic was also one of the top factors identified by the key informants when starting their research.

"If you encounter a hard topic, stick with it."

The key informants have already selected a research topic, but some still have difficulty because it is not immediately apparent.

"Just like what they said, topic. In our research, we need to go far places during our data gathering. It is very tiring, and we must exert effort and time."

According to Mangla (2022), avoid having research topics that necessitate intensive computation unavailable or unaffordable. Also, the objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-specific. In addition, the key informants also emphasized that they find it challenging to apply the research topic in a real-life setting. The research topic of the key informant is a study of a disease,

"It is easier to study the disease, but it is so hard to understand its process."

Elfman (2022) explained that research can be used to solve problems in the real world, but it also plays a crucial role in addressing the problems. Whatever the research topic is, it will always be associated with expenses, public-private collaborations, and risk assessments. In addition, key informants shared recommendations about choosing a research topic that is favorable to the group,

"Choose a topic as a group. All of you should have the same thoughts and enjoy the topic and process."

Choosing a good topic will influence key informants and their groups. Choosing an interesting topic that will be approved by the group will ensure the success of the research (Zaveri, 2023).

Furthermore, time constraints were also mentioned as a contributing factor in the research process.

"*And our deadlines were pressuring. Your defense should be before Christmas or December; it puts pressure on you."*

Making time to do research is very essential in the process of doing research; however, due to the heavy workloads, time restrictions present several difficulties for researchers, such as the requirement for concurrent data collection operations, restricted respondent access, and implications for research design and planning. The amount of time to accomplish research is being compromised due to duties, activities, exams, etc. in nursing school.

"You will pass it two weeks from now, and there is no extension. If there will be extensions, they will probably be for three or four days."

Adhere to deadlines when conducting research to complete everything on time. Research takes a lot of time to gather reliable information that will be useful later.

Moreover, the key informants mentioned the role of the research adviser as a factor in conducting their research. Key informants shared that choosing an adviser well,

"*Choose your adviser well because even if your group mates are okay, you will struggle if there is no proper guidance from your adviser. For instance, it is like you are doing it alone and groping in the dark. And then, even if you reach out to your adviser but cannot help you, they are just supporting you but not helping you."*

The research adviser is responsible for assisting the researchers in making decisions throughout the research process. According to Loui (2024), the most important part of starting your research is choosing a good research adviser because having a research adviser who will support and, at the same time, help you will contribute to helping you meet your goals and have a successful research project.

Another factor was the research setting. They chose a research topic that they approved, but when it came to the data gathering, that is where they struggled,

Before, the location of our study was in Bangkirawan or somewhere high, and the jeep arrived only every 30 minutes; it was difficult there because you had to coordinate with the city. In our study, we needed to get information from different offices. Coordinating is hard when that is the case because they do not follow your time but their own time."

To support these statements, Rimando et al. (2015) stated that data collection is one of the most critical parts of the research process, and researchers may encounter challenges. The data should be accurate and reliable, so the key informants accepted the challenges they encountered to collect accurate and reliable data.

Lastly, the key informants identified the availability of resources. One key informant expressed,

"Because we have many materials that we could not procure, which was indicated in our chapter 3, it needs to be erased."

According to Refnwrite (2023), the materials and methods used in the research were among the common mistakes made by researchers. The methods will describe the research process, and it is essential to input accurate information, especially the materials used. Due to the lack and unavailability of materials, the key informants experienced using other materials to continue their experimental research. When the researchers analyzed the data collected, they noticed that key informants from BUCN identified the most important factors when conducting the research. Compared to the other campuses, BUCN still struggles with choosing groupmates, research topics, and research advisers. They also shared recommendations for future student nurse researchers. Key informants from all three campuses shared their experiences as research group members. There were positive opinions, but most key informants shared the negative factors influencing nursing research.

3.4 Influence of Leadership and Management in Patient Care Satisfaction

This section explores the key factors influencing student nurses' leadership and management capabilities in client care delivery. The study identifies several challenges, including patient noncompliance, group conflicts, time constraints, psychological stress, communication barriers, and lack of experience. Student nurses often struggle with patients who resist their guidance, notably when trust is lacking. Internal group conflicts further hinder teamwork, while academic pressure and workload demands contribute to stress and reduced confidence in clinical settings. Additionally, unfamiliar environments and leadership inexperience create further obstacles. Addressing these challenges requires strong mentorship, leadership development, and supportive strategies to enhance student nurses' adaptability and effectiveness in healthcare settings.

Leadership and management are crucial in ensuring effective client care delivery within healthcare settings. According to Hyeonmi Cho and Kihnye Han (2018), effective leadership is a significant factor in encouraging nurses to demonstrate increased accountability and engagement in physical tasks. To provide well-coordinated and integrated treatment, leadership was deemed essential by both healthcare professionals and patients. Additionally, functional management practices were essential for organizing resources, coordinating activities, and ensuring smooth workflow within healthcare facilities. Professionals observed a high correlation between leadership styles, quality care, and related indicators (Sfantou et al., 2017).

Several elements that influence the key informant's capacity for leadership and management in client care delivery include contravening patients and/or SO, group Impediment, time constraints, psychological consequences, utilization of jargon in communication, and lack of experience.

In the Contravening of Patients and/or SO, most key informants expressed that it is one of their struggles when patients do not want to follow their advice. One of the key informants stated that,

*"When we had our ward class in *redacted*, some patients did not want to follow the no bottle feeding policy, even though one of my groupmates reprimanded them. They did not care that they were told so."*

Though the student nurses' desire to teach their patients is there, it is often in vain, for they cannot foster an effective nurse-patient relationship with them, thus making their cooperation one-sided. Consequently, an informant added that,

"It depends on the patient whether they will follow or believe in you, even if you are therapeutic and you put effort in teaching them. It is up to them if they will listen to you, and you cannot do anything about that."

Suikkala (2021) emphasized that fostering nurse-patient relationships is vital to promoting the student's capacity to adapt to a clinical environment. Thus, the disconnect between the patient and student nurses creates a ground for ineffective health education.

Another identified factor in the Contravention of Patients and/or SO is the patients' lack of trust in their assigned student nurse alone. On the same campus, as mentioned above, a key informant expressed

"The patient will not take me seriously if I am not with my CI. Because some have a different perspective to us, student nurses, it "feels like this is not like this, like that'. Sometimes, when assessing a patient, it feels like what they tell you differs from what they tell the CI or the staff there. That is it, and it depends on the patients. However, our experiences indeed vary."

Moreover, one more factor identified was the group impediment wherein the key informants expressed their concerns about the foundation of their respective groups. Most key informants emphasized their concerns regarding encountering conflicts within the group. A key informant stated that

"When we were in the third year, there was a conflict between two of my members, so the group was somewhat divided."

Conflicts within student groups can significantly impact teamwork, trust, and group dynamics. In a study conducted by Yanqing Wang and Zheng Zong (2019), task-related conflicts within learning groups can enhance the depth of students' understanding. However, it is important to acknowledge that specific research has highlighted the adverse effects of such conflicts, especially when they lead to relationship issues. Constructively resolving conflicts is crucial for achieving cohesion and integration within the group. This process involves addressing task conflicts, which can stimulate knowledge development, and relationship conflicts, which may hinder collaboration. Students can foster a more harmonious and productive learning environment by effectively managing conflicts.

Furthermore, another factor discussed by the key informants was the psychological consequences, which focused on the characteristics of the student nurses viewed throughout their observations. In one campus, two key informants expressed an evident presence of academic pressure. One of the key informants stated that,

"The pressure of last year's passing rate is severe, and the goal now is 100%, so I can say that greeting each other is still insufficient. With so much stress, you forget to check up on others."

The key informants highlight significant academic pressure among student nurses, including expectations of high passing rates and frequent exams. Such stress may affect interpersonal dynamics and well-being. According to Yuhuan et al. (2022), academic pressure leads to higher levels of self-regulatory fatigue, which can be alleviated through social support. Educational institutions should focus on enhancing social support for nursing students to help them manage self-regulatory fatigue and promote their overall well-being and academic success.

Lack of confidence, especially in unfamiliar situations like operating rooms or special areas, can lead to anxiety and self-doubt. Similarly, distractions and multiple factors can affect focus, impacting mental clarity and potentially contributing to stress or cognitive overload. This is backed up by the study conducted by Pandurugan et al. (2010), which states that confidence is crucial for nursing students in clinical settings. The study found that 90.5% of nursing students lacked confidence in patient care and management. One of the worries of the key informants was lack of experience. A key informant stated that,

"Both of my group members and I have been in one group since the second year, so only a few were removed and replaced. From my personal experience with them, I do not have enough experience as a leader since we are still young."

The key informant's concern about lack of experience in leadership roles highlights a common challenge students face in a group setting. Moreover, a key informant from a different campus stressed the time constraints due to the hectic schedule provided to them.

"Our schedule is super hectic, and we are under pressure."

3.5 Medical Equipment Proficiency of Student Nurses in the Clinical Area

This section explores student nurses' challenges in mastering medical equipment and technology in clinical settings. Key factors influencing their proficiency include limited exposure, equipment scarcity, lack of familiarity, and the sequence in which technologies are introduced. Many students struggle with using digital equipment such as ECGs, cardiac monitors, and dopplers, as they often encounter them for the first time in hospitals rather than in skills labs. The inadequate availability of equipment and inconsistent practice opportunities contribute to decreased confidence in patient care. Additionally, gaps in nursing education regarding informatics systems hinder students' ability to integrate technology into healthcare effectively. Addressing these issues through enhanced training, better resource allocation, and structured exposure to medical technologies is crucial for improving nursing competency and patient outcomes.

Technology developments are altering the way healthcare services are provided. It makes it easier for experts to collect, process, and evaluate data to give communities better care (Keck School of Medicine of USC, 2023). Applying technology systems in nursing provides nurses with accurate and detailed data. This also helps in saving the lives of the patients. In this study, key informants mentioned digital equipment, such as ECG, cardiac monitors, doppler, and CBG, taught and used during their RLE. They shared why they lack knowledge and skills about the technologies used in delivering care.

The factors that affect the key informants' equipment mastery include themes such as duration of exposure to the equipment, scarcity of equipment, familiarity with the equipment, and sequence of introduction to the equipment.

Key informants shared their struggles in using the technology or digital equipment as it was not taught during their return demonstrations, and it was their first time to try the equipment in the hospital. They shared,

I have not tried it yet in the skills lab; hence, my first experience was when we were in the ER."

These statements show that they learned the equipment during their RLE. In a study conducted by Relloso et al. (2021), one of the difficulties encountered by nursing students is the inadequate availability of equipment and materials necessary for their practice and mastery.

The scarcity of equipment was also a factor for the key informants. They mentioned their struggles because of the lack of equipment, especially the ECG, since, as stated by the key informants, it is the most known equipment in hospitals. Key informants shared their experiences,

"There is not enough equipment here; there is no ECG."

Medical equipment is essential in the medical field, but due to the lack of equipment in nursing schools, student nurses struggle to use it in the actual setting without learning how to use it in school. According to Berhe and Tigistu Gebretensaye (2021), the clinical learnings of student nurses affect their competencies. Their lack of knowledge and skills decreases their confidence in taking care of their patients because they are still struggling to use and apply the equipment in the delivery of care.

Moreover, the duration of exposure to the equipment is also a factor that the key informants mentioned. In every duty rotation, they were assigned to different hospitals and areas, so that is why they sometimes forget what they have learned. A key informant shared their experience,

"So, the last time you had a duty in the OR was last month, then you suddenly had a duty in the same area again; at some point, you will recall the procedures, so you need to refresh to learn to use the equipment."

The key informant expresses the need to recall the specific equipment due to the nature of nursing practice, where skills are developed through repeated practice. However, there is a potential that skills will become forgotten if there is a prolonged period without utilizing specific equipment, such as when a nursing student's last exposure to a procedure was weeks or even months ago. In healthcare, where precision and efficiency are critical, nurses must use equipment correctly and confidently. Therefore, the key informant stresses the importance of refreshing one's memory on equipment usage to ensure competence and effectiveness in providing patient care, especially after extended periods without practice.

In connection with the thematic area 'Medical Equipment Proficiency of Student Nurses in the Clinical Area,' the content analysis of the gap analysis worksheet further supports and demonstrates the existence of gaps within the twelfth program outcome. As stated by the key informants, they experience a lack of exposure to handling medical equipment or technologies in the skills laboratory before entering the clinical area. The lack of equipment was attributed to poor maintenance or unavailability. This leads to the negative implication of poor-quality nursing care, profession, and healthcare services (Moyimane, 2017). Thus, this gap defies the program outcome's first indicator: the utilization of appropriate technology to perform safe and efficient nursing activities.

The program outcome's second indicator was also unattained, as identified by the key informants. This refers to the implementation of a system of informatics to support the delivery of healthcare. Conforming to the statements given in the study's thematic analysis, the results of the context analysis yielded similar findings, which suggest the lack and absence of informatics in the actual area. Therefore, the informants expressed familiarity with nursing informatics theory rather than in practice. As specified by a study conducted by Stunden (2024), this leads to the implication that having a limited understanding of health informatics and its role brought by its limited integration in healthcare would result in negative repercussions in the future of healthcare. This gap would potentially evolve to the inability of future registered nurses to keep up and integrate with the evolution and changes in the clinical environment brought about by technological innovations.

3.6 Challenges Faced by Students in the Accuracy of Nursing Documentation

This section discusses the factors influencing student nurses' documentation skills, particularly in writing nurses' progress notes. Key informants identified themes such as intellectual discipline, student expertise, clinical experiences, and institutional policies as critical to their charting proficiency. The role of clinical instructors was highlighted, with students noting variations in teaching methods that impacted their learning. The transition from novice to more experienced student nurses was also emphasized, showing how exposure and confidence influence documentation accuracy. Additionally, differences in instructional approaches affected consistency in charting practices. Ensuring standardized training and fostering confidence in documentation are essential for preparing student nurses for professional practice.

Documenting the progress of the patient's care using nurses' progress notes or simply 'charting' has been an essential part of nursing practice. It has enabled nurses to keep track of the interventions done to a patient and be able to communicate vital information to the healthcare team systematically. In ensuring the authenticity of the data being added to the patient's chart, nurses follow strict guidelines based on ethics and the law. The themes that the key informants from the three chosen campuses identify are their skills, perceptions, and experiences in documenting. The recognized themes are intellectual discipline, student expertise, clinical experiences, and institutional policies.

The most frequently mentioned among the identified themes is 'Intellectual discipline.' Generally, this theme speaks of the key informant's drive to learn and explore the discipline that the nursing profession follows. It is their attitude and capacity to widen their perception and understanding. To put this in simple terms, as Rafii (2019) stated, a person's academic motivation is the main thing that sets into motion professional pursuits. In conjunction with this, they also claim that a person driven by motivation is the most eager among their peers to learn and translate their goals into reality. Clinical instructors are the prominent people of authority who are

accessible to the student nurses during their duty. They also supervise and guide the students in performing and delivering care to their patients. An informant stated that

"*Another factor is the Clinical Instructor who taught you. Since we were in the 3rd year, what was taught to us was like summarizing, but the details were already there and still lacking. Then, when there were changes in the Clinical Instructor during our 4th year, the charting was taught to us in that manner. However, you can still see in other nurses that their charting is still summarized. Well, the charting our CI taught us was detailed in the charts; you can see it on one page. So, it is like she also instilled that in us.*"

Moreover, the key informant also mentioned the effects and their experiences in circumstances wherein they transitioned from one clinical instructor to the next. Both have different practices of educating their students. An informant stated that

"*Even when it comes to our clinical instructors, it is very different. There were times when they did not approve of some things. The only thing we could do consistently was the procedures in the delivery room, since they have a format of how things are done.*"

We can deduce from this statement that clinical instructors' effectiveness in guiding and teaching student nurses is significant. As per a study by Mohsmed (2022), students learn from adapting their observations on how their CI does procedures and behavior or outlook of the profession. Thus, it is a must that clinical instructors are well informed of how their actions, behavior, and educational tactics are crucial in shaping and reinforcing their students' perception of the profession.

Student nurses begin at the bottom of Patricia Benner's 'Novice to Expert' theory. This signifies their stage of journey in the nursing profession. Novice is the stage all student nurses are in; they are described as having little to no professional experience, having a very rigid understanding and adherence to rules, and often having an ideal perception of the profession. In connection with this, the key informants' second most identified the expertise of a student nurse as a factor that influences their experience when it comes to documentation. An informant verbalized that,

"In our first experience, we said almost everything written on the FDAR, but now, we only say the important part. Like the problem-important matters only regarding the patient."

Key informants have expressed that their charting skills have grown more advanced as they have gained experience during their RLE. Additionally, they have stressed that their competence, confidence, and capacity to set priorities affect how accurately they do charting. Being confident entails having optimism regarding your capacity to fulfill an assignment or reach an objective. Nurses must possess competence and autonomy in their work. That capacity can be readily compromised by a lack of
confidence, especially in doing charting.

3.7 Probability of Miscommunication during Nurse-Patient Interaction

This section highlights the significance of communication in nursing, emphasizing its role in effective nurse-patient interaction and care delivery. Key informants from Bicol University identified three major factors influencing their communication skills: articulability, student nurses' integrity, and institutional nurse-patient interaction. Language barriers were noted as a challenge, potentially leading to miscommunication. Integrity was emphasized as essential for building trust and sincerity in patient interactions. Additionally, student nurses stressed the importance of fostering rapport and adapting their communication approach based on patient needs. Effective communication enhances patient care, promotes trust, and strengthens nurse-patient relationships.

Communication is a vital aspect of the nursing profession. It facilitates the effectiveness of the nurse-patient interaction and nursing care performance, according to a study by Kwame and Petrucka (2021), underscoring the significance of patient-centered communication in healthcare delivery. Effective communication between patients and healthcare providers is crucial for ensuring patients receive appropriate care and facilitate recovery. Patient-centered communication aligns with traditional nursing values, emphasizing the individualized nature of care

tailored to each patient's unique health issues, beliefs, and contextual factors. This approach acknowledges patients' diverse needs and preferences, fostering a collaborative relationship between patients and healthcare providers. During the focus group discussion, the key informants were asked about their skills and experiences concerning charting their nurse's notes and endorsing them to the succeeding staff on duty. All the key informants from the three identified campuses of Bicol University noted that their skills had significantly improved when comparing their present status to their first clinical exposure in their Related Learning Experience (RLE). Furthermore, they have also identified notable factors that have influenced them and their capacity to communicate effectively and document their patients' status.

The factors that have contributed to the key informants' experiences in communicating with their patients, colleagues, hospital staff, and the patient's watcher during their R.L.E. consist of the articulability of communication skills, institute nurse-patient interaction, and student nurse integrity.

The most notable among the identified themes is the 'Articulability in Communication Skills', which refers to the ability of the key informants to grasp and construct in-depth conversation. A key informant shared that the different language or dialect is a factor under this theme,

"*Our Bikol in Camarines Sur is easy so sometimes we ask (the meaning).*"

Patients and student nurses may misinterpret the words they say due to their different language or dialect. Similar words may have different meanings, which may cause misunderstandings for both sides. According to Shamsi et al. (2020), language barriers are one of the challenges nurses face in providing care. They lead to miscommunication and reduce patients' trust in nurses.

The second identified theme is the 'Student Nurses' Integrity', alluding to the key informants' morals and principles. According to an article by Berlinger (2017), ethical communication is based on truthfulness, respect, clarity, and compassion. It supports and paves the way for the advancement of the patient's condition through the adherence towards their health goals. A key informant shared how they show their sincerity despite the struggle in understanding the patient,

"*Sometimes, when I am doing NPI and they use the Bicol language, I cannot understand it, so sometimes I ask them, 'What is it, Ma'am?' and they adjust it for me.*"

Alongside sincerity, the key informants also emphasized the importance of trustworthiness when communicating with their patients. Building trust between the nurse and their patient is essential to making communication feasible and practical. Trust can be fostered through active listening and strengthening verbal and nonverbal communication skills (Shanahan, 2021).

The third and last identified theme, 'Institute Nurse-Patient Interaction,' refers to the experiences of student nurses interacting with their patients whenever they are on duty. As stated by Vurjanic (2022), nurse-patient interaction is the trusting relationship that is the foundation of quality health care. Additionally, safe and confidential nurse-patient interaction is important for patients' satisfaction with the care provided and treatment outcomes, as well as for nurses' satisfaction. In conjunction with NPI, the key informants also highlighted how communication and approach to the patient affect how they can build an effective rapport. A key informant stated that,

"*When conducting NPI, I try to avoid coming off as passive-aggressive. I want to make them feel that I am sincere when I am taking care of them, and that is why, most of the time, I do not hesitate when it comes to my patients; I want to show my genuine care to them to build that thing we call rapport.*"

This is proven by the study of Kwame and Petrucka (2021), which also stated that the manner of communication between nurses and patients will vary depending on the relationship developed between them. Nurses' and patients' attitudes can influence nurse-patient communication and care outcomes since nurses and patients may have different demographics, cultural and linguistic origins, beliefs, and worldviews on health and illnesses.

3.8 Aspects of RLE Exposure that Causes Misconception in Nursing Practice

Nursing theories provide a structured foundation for practice, guiding nurses in delivering safe, effective, and evidence-based care. However, applying theoretical knowledge to real-world clinical settings challenges student nurses. This study explores key informants' difficulties in translating classroom learning into practice, particularly in areas such as charting, sterility, and vital sign assessment. Common mistakes, including documentation errors, failure to maintain sterility, and inaccurate recording of vital signs, highlight gaps between theoretical instruction and hands-on application. Addressing these issues through enhanced clinical training and reinforcement of theoretical principles is essential to ensuring patient safety and improving nursing competencies.

According to Duquesne University (2020), the nursing field is governed by organized, knowledge-based nursing theories. Along with following guidelines and policies in care delivery, we also follow specific principles acquired or learned through our theoretical learnings in the classroom. Nursing theories serve as conceptual models that explain the nature of nursing, health, and patient care. They encompass diverse perspectives, including holistic care, patient-centeredness, and evidence-based practice. Holistic care emphasizes addressing patients' physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs, while patient-centeredness involves upholding patients' autonomy and involving them in decision-making. Evidence-based practice integrates the best available research with clinical expertise and patient preferences to inform care decisions. These theories guide nurses in assessing patient needs, planning and implementing care interventions, and evaluating outcomes. By grounding practice in theoretical knowledge, nurses can deliver more effective and compassionate care, ultimately enhancing patient well-being and health outcomes.

The key informants identified different courses of action as routines that need improvement in their application in the actual setting. These include taking vital signs, charting, and violating sterility, all of which constituted challenges in applying what they know to what they do.

In this study, most key informants have verbalized having difficulty bridging their theoretical learnings regarding the principles and theories about a specific procedure to the actual setting. This includes their mistakes in charting.,

"Me, in charting. There is an institution; you must put a space when you write in the chart. So sometimes, I did not put a space. That is the second time I made a mistake; I forgot to put a space."

Other key informants also mentioned their common mistakes during charting, such as the wrong color of ink used, erasures, and taking pictures of the chart, which are all violations or lack of compliance about guidelines and principles during the delivery of care, as a patient's chart is one of the most important documents to safeguard since it contains important information about the patient. According to Natalia Cineas, Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Executive at New York City Health and Hospitals (2023), In the acute care context, where charting is becoming progressively more important for patient care and safety, overcoming documentation problems is essential.

Additionally, a patient's chart also provides a chronological record of the patient's development, the care is given, and the patient's reaction to that care supplied by good nursing notes, which is why any errors in charting could lead to consequences. One key informant also added,

"*Me, in chartings, it is not allowed to repeat, especially the messy double word–right? For example, if I got it wrong in writing the first word, I repeated it. I repeatedly spelled out the word and tried to spell it out. The spelling got cleared, but it is already messy*."

This experience by the key informants goes against documentation guidelines. According to Principle 1 of the American Nurses' Association's Principles for Nursing Documentation (2010), high-quality documentation should be clear, concise, complete, and legible or readable.

Other than charting, the key informants also mentioned their mistakes about sterility. Other key informants have shared their experiences, especially when they are in special areas where sterility is essential,

"They saw that the gown was touching the floor, and they said, 'You should change that there."

Although they have mentioned that they have learned from their mistakes, understanding the guidelines and consequences, especially regarding sterility, is crucial. Patient safety is significantly compromised by nursing students' inadequate knowledge and proficiency and false confidence in their aseptic technique skills due to the differences between what is taught in the classroom and what is observed in practical settings.

Student nurses are in an uncertain position when providing the best possible care to patients because there are still significant distinctions within nursing education and practice. The improper application of scientific theories in conjunction with adherence to conventional traditional procedures in the medical setting might result from an imbalance between theoretical teaching and the performance of nurses in the clinical situation. Checking and recording a patient's vital signs was also a common mistake the students had made. One key informant shared that they sometimes make up a patient's respiratory rate without assessing and counting manually.

"Maybe if there is a mistake, the RR was wrongly counted."

However, Article III, Section VI from the Board of Nursing stated that quality and excellence in the care of the patients are the goals of nursing practice. In addition, Accurate documentation of actions and outcomes of delivered care is the hallmark of nursing accountability. Additionally, according to Brekke et al. (2020), clinical deterioration frequently remains undetected or is not discovered until it is too late to treat, even though changes in vital signs reliably predict it. This is primarily brought on by poor vital sign recording or improper reaction to abnormal values. Due to this, a thorough evaluation of a patient's vital signs is crucial in the profession, especially regarding the patient's health. As the name suggests, they are called "vital" because measuring and assessing them is an essential initial step in any
clinical evaluation.

3.9 Probability of Errors by Student Nurses and its Impact on Practice

Nursing practice is guided by ethical, legal, and professional principles to ensure safe and effective patient care. However, this study reveals that while student nurses acknowledge the importance of adhering to nursing laws and guidelines, gaps in awareness and external pressures often lead to unintentional violations. Key factors influencing these challenges include pressure from clinical instructors, self-doubt, and the influence of senior colleagues. These elements impact decision-making, confidence, and adherence to proper procedures. Addressing these issues through enhanced education, mentorship, and structured support systems is essential in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and ethical clinical practice.

According to the Code of Ethics by the Board of Nursing (2004), The Code of Good Governance for the Professions in the Philippines served as the primary foundation for developing the Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses. In Article 3 Section 10 of the said promulgation, registered nurses know their actions have professional, ethical, moral, and legal dimensions. They strive to perform their work in the best interest of all concerned. In this study, key informants expressed that they conform to the existing nursing laws and principles according to the Board of Nursing (BON) guidelines. Although the key informants mentioned the essence of following rules and guidelines, they also stated a lack of awareness about most of the existing laws. Thus, they unintentionally infringe on some laws, policies, or principles.

The prior errors made by students and the several circumstances that affected the key informants and led them to commit violations are pressure from the clinical instructor, self-doubt, and overstepping colleagues. These factors prove that there is still a gap in program outcome 4 of the CMO series of 2017.

Key informants shared that their clinical instructor somehow pressured them, causing them to commit errors.

"*They (clinical instructors) will be there, especially if you do dosage calculations. They will double-check it."*

Clinical instructors play an important role in achieving the nursing program objectives. They influence the student nurses' performance during procedures in the skills lab or RLE (Allan, 2017). The pressure that the key informant feels affects their performance, resulting in a negative learning process.

The key informants also discussed excitement and overstepping colleagues, noting that they usually follow when a senior leader leads them because it seems like a superiority complex.

"Just because that senior was a fourth year, that senior acts like they have the authority. I do not have any choice but to follow."

A key informant pointed out her disbelief at following incorrect practices under the guidance of a senior even though they knew better.

"I was in the second year that time, and that senior was in the fourth year; I still followed."

According to Cao et al. (2023), the experience of verbal violence, along with the implicit negative self-esteem effect, will increase pupils deteriorated psychological status and decrease self-efficacy. Impaired self-esteem might last for an extended period if it is challenging to adapt immediately. Individuals, teams, organizations, and patient safety can all suffer because of disrespectful and uncivil behavior in healthcare settings, which can result in life-threatening errors, preventable complications, or patient harm. Identifying nursing students' challenges in the clinical learning setting could help improve training and student advancement.

In addition, a key informant added that they are having self-doubt while interacting with patients,

"*Sometimes I am scared to interact with the patient."*

A study by Panduragan et al. (2011) proves that student nurses usually lack confidence in skills. The confidence level of student nurses in the clinical area is crucial and can affect the patient's trust. Self-doubt may hurt student nurses' growth as they prepare to enter the industry.

3.10 Effectivity of Health Education on Patient's Recovery and Rehabilitation

Entrepreneurial skills in nursing extend beyond patient care to include education, research, and administration. However, barriers such as language differences and patients' difficulty expressing themselves can hinder effective health education. This study highlights how communication challenges impact the delivery of nursing care, emphasizing the need for innovative approaches in patient education. Nurses must develop creative strategies, such as visual aids and adaptive communication techniques, to enhance comprehension and adherence to treatment. By integrating entrepreneurial competencies, nursing students can improve patient outcomes and bridge gaps in healthcare education.

According to Malakoti et al. (2023), applying entrepreneurial skills in healthcare is not new. Nurses do not just provide care-related services; they also offer education, research, and administration services. Even though nursing entrepreneurship has promising opportunities for nurses, struggles and factors still cause barriers to applying entrepreneurial skills in the delivery of nursing care.

Most of the key informants mentioned that one of the factors that influence the efficacy of health education is that there are patients who are unable to comprehend the health teachings. A key informant shared that the language barrier is one of the problems why patients cannot comprehend health teachings,

"I am from Sorsogon, so there is a language barrier."

Norouzinia (2021) claimed that the language difference between nurses and patients prevents effective communication. Furthermore, cultural differences in the meanings of specific nonverbal communication acts such as head nodding, eye contact, and touch may make it difficult for patients and nurses to engage.

Another gap that was mentioned is the patient's inability to express themselves. The key informant mentioned that they have encountered patients who have difficulty expressing themselves due to manifestations of symptoms of an underlying disease.

"*So, there was this one time I encountered a foreigner in the ER, but it turns out that his case, as the nurses there said, he keeps coming back, and he does not have any relatives or anyone with him there. So what he does is type on his phone; that is all he does. We could not read much because they said he has Parkinson's, so he cannot speak.*"

Some diseases can affect how patients speak, manifesting through slurring words, stuttering, or even aphasia. Patients who cannot communicate often feel frustrated whenever they cannot convey what they want to say directly. This frustration would eventually lead to challenges with managing multiple diseases and symptoms, as well as adherence to treatment recommendations (Gill, 2014). The statement emphasized above is a significant difference in applying entrepreneurial skills in nursing care delivery. It revolves around effectively communicating medical terms to patients and adapting to their comprehension level. Entrepreneurial skills in nursing should involve creative approaches to patient education, such as utilizing visual aids or relatable comparisons. Nurses should proactively anticipate common misunderstandings and adjust their communication style accordingly. In a study conducted by Jecklin et al. (2010), it was found that healthcare providers play a crucial role in recognizing when patients struggle to understand related instructions. They also can identify how patients usually handle complex health information; the significance lies in the ability to be innovative and discover fresh approaches to clarify concepts, representing strategic and entrepreneurial competencies. By using these skills, nursing students may ensure that patients understand what is important for their health, which is essential for a better care outcome.

3.11 Model to Fill in the Theory-To-Practice Gap Among Student Nurses in Bicol University

Transitioning from theoretical knowledge to practical application is a critical challenge for nursing students. While nursing theories provide a foundation for decision-making and patient care, real-world clinical exposure is essential for developing critical thinking, clinical judgment, and hands-on skills. To address this, the Guide in Advancing the Practices in Nursing-15 (GAPN-15) model was developed as a structured framework to bridge the theory-to-practice gap among nursing students at Bicol University. Created using the Gap Analysis Worksheet, this model serves as a guide for mitigating risks that may hinder students from achieving the desired program outcomes outlined in CHED Memorandum Order Number 15. Focused on Level 3 and 4 nursing students, who have significant Related Learning Experience (RLE) in clinical and community settings, GAPN-15 identifies key factors contributing to the gap. It provides strategies to enhance integrating theoretical knowledge into real-world nursing practice.

Nursing students' readiness for real-life professional exposure significantly influences the quality of nursing education. Active engagement in hands-on experiences during their RLE is crucial for enhancing students' mental and perceptual skills as clinical decision-making is supported by nursing theories, which also serve to define and direct nursing care. However, the dynamic nature of clinical environments often creates a disparity between theoretical knowledge acquired in lectures and the realities encountered in nursing practice. The discrepancies highlight that nursing students must have real-world experience in their RLE. By working in hospitals and clinics, they can correlate what they learn in class to what they will do in the clinical setting. This helps them develop critical thinking, decision-making, and clinical judgment skills. So, giving students many chances to learn in actual healthcare settings is essential for ensuring they become competent and skilled nurses. Moreover, student nurses must comprehend the integration of theory into practice within the clinical environment. Ensuring students can apply their theoretical knowledge in practical settings and bridging the knowledge gap between theory and practice is key to effective and efficient patient care.

Figure 1 shows the developed model by the researchers through the Gap Analysis Worksheet that will bridge the theory-to-practice gap perceived among student nurses of Bicol University entitled Guide in Advancing the Practices in Nursing-15 (GAPN-15). It indicates the visual representation of the guide on mitigating the risk of not meeting the desired program outcomes in the CHED Memorandum Order Number 15 before a student graduates from their nursing program. The model was developed centered on level 3 and 4 student nurses of Bicol University because they have the most experience during their Related Learning Experience (RLE) in various clinical and

community settings. With this, student nurses could identify the factors or reasons that caused the theory-to-practice gap when applying what they have learned in school to their clinical or community duties.

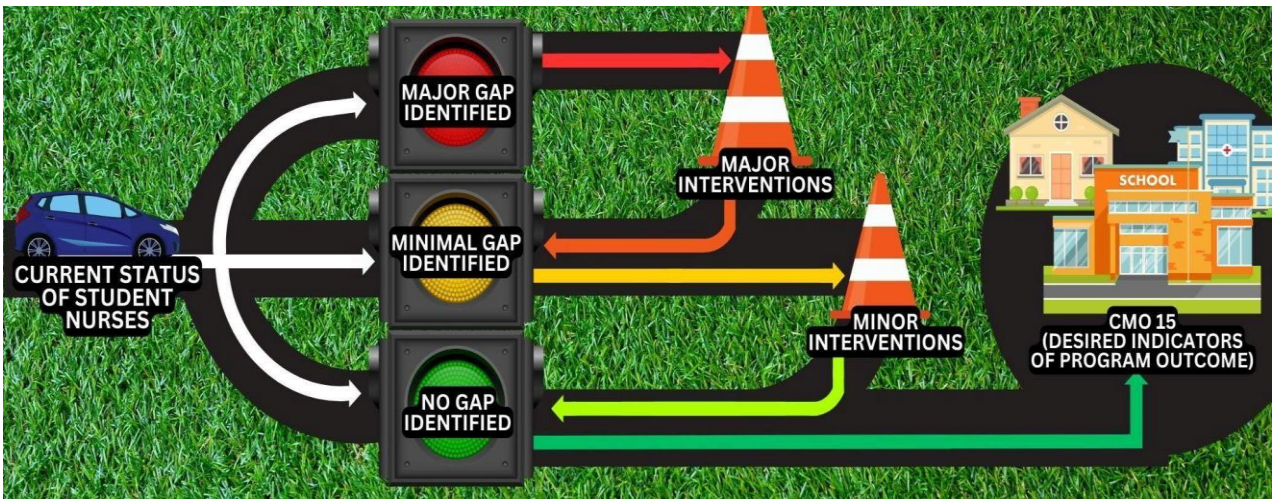

Figure 1. *Guide in Advancing the Practices in Nursing-15 (GAPN-15)*

GAPN-15 begins with the status of the students, which is represented as the 'car.' It indicates where the student nurses are academically and their capacity to integrate their theoretical knowledge into practice. The model is then divided into three (3) categories enclosed inside a box like a traffic light. Each of the three colors of the 'traffic light' represents the identified gaps encountered by student nurses by the program outcomes outlined in the CHED Memorandum Order No.15 Series of 2017. The red light is located at the topmost portion of the traffic light, representing the program outcome with the most identified gaps. The middle of the traffic light has the yellow light, which refers to the program outcome with a minimal gap, while at the bottom is the green light, which indicates the program outcome with no identifiable gap present. Regarding the colors of the traffic lights, there are arrows with corresponding colors that visualize the flow of traffic that the program outcomes take to reach the end destination or goal, fulfilling the desired indicators of each program outcome. Along the path of the arrows are the traffic cones representing the appropriate interventions for each gap.

When student nurses have experienced numerous disparities in applying theoretical knowledge in practice about a specific program, they will be classified as the red light or the one with a 'major gap identified,' which will signal them to stop and evaluate themselves. Then, they will meet the first obstacle, the first traffic cone, corresponding to the primary intervention that will help them overcome the gaps they are dealing with by enhancing their theoretical knowledge and skills. The major interventions will be based on administrative actions. Once they have accomplished the recommendations for the significant gap, they will immediately proceed to the next light, the yellow light or the 'minimal gap identified.' Here, they will be slowing themselves down and reevaluating the remaining gaps they are encountering and how they impact their experience as student nurses. Then, they can move on to the second traffic cone, which holds the minor interventions. Minor interventions will be implemented by implementing seminars or meetings in the department. As with the previous recommendation, once it is accomplished, they can proceed to the next light, which is the green light. Similarly to a traffic light, once reaching the green light, they can speed their way through the end destination, which is the desired indicator of the program outcomes because, at this stage, they have already bridged the gaps they once were facing. Furthermore, reaching this stage indicates that the student nurses are knowledgeable and well-equipped with the skills needed as future registered nurses in the Philippines following the CMO 2015.

Upon deliberation and analysis of the data gathered in this study, it was discovered that the program outcomes that hold the most gaps encountered by the key informants are program outcome numbers 1, 6, 8, 9, and 12. Thus, these identified gaps will be classified and placed under the red-light category. This will prompt significant recommendations to student nurses to mitigate the widening of the identified gaps and permanently bridge them to avoid future retrogradation. The program outcome, number one (1) states that there is a need to integrate the relevant social, physical, natural, and health sciences and humanities principles in a given health and nursing

situation to indicate that student nurses accomplish this program outcome. Therefore, the use of realistic scenarios and simulations during class discussions and their return demonstrations is suggested, so that student nurses' expectations in the scenarios in the Philippine healthcare setting are up to par with reality, making them more prepared and equipped in handling their patients. The ninth (9) program outcome revolves around the conduct of nursing research alongside an experienced researcher. With that being said, the implementation of having a high number of gaps encountered by student nurses when it comes to research indicates the unsuccessful realization of this program outcome, which leads to the recommendation of this study for an extensive preparation through numerous workshops before the execution of nursing research. On the other hand, program outcome no. Eight (8) indicators emphasized the importance of applying leadership skills in patient care delivery. To bridge the gap for this program outcome this study suggests for clinical instructors of student nurses to teach and demonstrate to student nurses' leadership and management during their RLE to enhance their confidence in influencing and becoming an effective educator towards their peers and especially their patients. For program outcome no. Six (6) it highlighted accurate and comprehensive documentation of patient care. Moreover, its indicators for accomplishment are the patient's response to care, promotion of patient safety, adherence to protocol, and confidentiality. To be sure that student nurses can fulfill these indicators, this study suggests the initiation of presentations to student nurses regarding the ethics followed in documentation and charting before they expose the students to the actual healthcare setting. Lastly, to address the gap in applying techno-intelligent care systems and processes in the healthcare system discussed in the program outcome no. Twelve (12), this study put forwards the importance of the presence of a variety of equipment in skill laboratories that is commonly found and used in the different wards and special areas of a healthcare facility for the student nurses to become familiarized and be equipped with the knowledge and skills to use these devices in providing an effective care towards their patients during their community and hospital exposure.

Program outcomes 4, 14, 7, and 10 are under the yellow lights where they only have minimal gaps and can be bridged with a few interventions. It is recommended for the program outcome 4 to teach the student nurses and successfully establish norms of conduct based on the Philippine Nursing Law and other legal, regulatory and institutional requirements relevant to safe nursing practice. Using strategic interventions in return demonstrations and real-life case simulations in their skills laboratory can help bridge the minimal gap in program outcome 14. The respective nursing departments are recommended to teach the student nurses how to collaborate appropriately with other healthcare staff, since key informants mentioned that they have minimal gaps under the program outcome 7. Finally, program outcome 10 is about student nurses engaging in lifelong learning in nursing. The recommendation is to allow students to join programs that aid in health promotion in the development of the nursing profession.

Despite the mention of gaps by the key informants for the program outcomes numbers 2, 11, 13, and 14, they are still classified under the green light, which pertains to the absence of a gap. The reason for this is that even though the key informants had perceived the presence of gaps, the current state of the key informants under these program outcomes suggests that they have met the desired outcome based on the CMO 15 series of 2017 and have unknowingly already fulfilled its indicators based on their account of what they have experienced during their RLE to the researchers.

4.0 Conclusion

The study discovered inconsistencies in integrating nursing theoretical knowledge into the healthcare setting within Bicol University's curriculum. To comply with CHED Memorandum Order No. 15 Series of 2017, nursing schools should implement better strategies to enhance student skills and produce competent nurses with the competencies outlined in CMO-15. The Guide in Advancing the Practices in Nursing 15 (GAPN-15) Model was developed to address these gaps, guiding students to achieve the desired program outcomes. The study explored the gap between theory and practice from the student's perspective. Still, its focus was limited to regularly enrolled RLE group leaders and did not include broader student experiences. The study also focused mainly on hospital settings, with limited information about community nursing. Future research should explore strategies like clinical simulations, seminars, leadership programs, and hands-on medical equipment training to improve the integration of theory and practice in nursing education. These approaches help prepare students for real-world practice and ensure they are ready to handle complex situations in patient care.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The authors equally contributed to every aspect of the research, collaborating closely on the design, data collection, and writing. Each member reviewed and carefully examined the final manuscript, ensuring the study's goals were aligned. After thorough discussions and revisions, all authors approved the final work, demonstrating their full involvement and commitment to the study's success.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

Neither the researchers had any conflict of interest that would have influenced the study's outcome directly or indirectly.

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9.0 Reference

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