

## Comparison of structured and traditional clinical evaluation methods among nursing students.

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Clinical evaluation is a critical component of nursing education, enabling educators to assess whether students have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes to provide safe and effective patient care. Traditional evaluation methods, often based on instructor observation and unstructured ratings, may be subjective and inconsistent. In contrast, structured evaluation methods use standardized checklists and competency-based criteria, offering more objective and reliable assessment. Despite these advantages, many nursing institutions continue to rely on traditional methods, and limited evidence exists comparing their effectiveness.

**Aim:** To compare structured and traditional clinical evaluation methods among nursing students in terms of accuracy, reliability, and student perception.

**Methodology:** A quantitative, descriptive-comparative study was conducted among 100 nursing students selected through convenient sampling. Clinical performance was assessed using both a structured clinical evaluation checklist and the traditional instructor-based evaluation form. Students also completed a demographic and feedback questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired t-tests to compare the evaluation methods.

**Results:** Among the participants, 45% were aged 20–21 years, with 50% enrolled in B.Sc. Nursing and 50% in GNM programs. Structured evaluation produced higher mean scores ( $86.3 \pm 5.1$ ) than traditional evaluation ( $78.0 \pm 8.8$ ), with a statistically significant difference ( $t = 9.05, p < 0.001$ ). Students' perceptions indicated that structured evaluation was fairer (80%), more helpful in identifying strengths and weaknesses (85%), motivated skill improvement (78%), and reflected true performance (82%), compared to lower percentages for traditional evaluation.

**Conclusion:** Structured clinical evaluation is more effective, consistent, and reliable than traditional methods in assessing nursing students' clinical competency. It is also preferred by students for its transparency and ability to enhance learning outcomes. Adoption of structured assessment tools is recommended to improve the quality and fairness of clinical evaluations in nursing education.

**Keywords:** Clinical evaluation, Structured evaluation, Traditional evaluation, Nursing students, Clinical competency

### Introduction :

Clinical evaluation is an essential component of nursing education as it helps determine whether nursing students have acquired the knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes required to provide safe and effective patient care. It allows educators to assess students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge in real clinical situations and perform nursing procedures competently. Therefore, effective and reliable clinical evaluation methods are crucial for preparing competent nursing professionals<sup>(1)</sup>.

Traditionally, clinical evaluation in nursing education has been carried out through observation by instructors, unstructured rating scales, and subjective judgments. Although these traditional methods are widely used, they may lack clear criteria and standardized guidelines, which can lead to inconsistency and bias in evaluating students' clinical performance<sup>(2)</sup>.

In contrast, structured clinical evaluation methods use standardized tools such as checklists, rating scales, and competency-based assessment criteria. These methods aim to provide more objective, consistent, and transparent evaluation of nursing students' clinical skills and professional behavior.

Despite the increasing emphasis on structured evaluation methods, many nursing institutions continue to rely on traditional approaches. However, there is limited evidence comparing the effectiveness of structured and traditional clinical evaluation methods in assessing nursing students' clinical competence<sup>(3)</sup>.

Therefore, this study aims to compare structured and traditional clinical evaluation methods among nursing students to determine which method provides a more reliable and effective assessment of clinical performance.

### Research Gaps

#### 1. Limited comparative studies

Although both structured and traditional clinical evaluation methods are used in nursing education, there are limited studies directly comparing their effectiveness in assessing nursing students' clinical competency<sup>(4)</sup>.

#### 2. Lack of standardization in traditional evaluation methods

Traditional clinical evaluation often relies on subjective judgment by instructors, but few studies have examined how this subjectivity affects the accuracy and fairness of student assessment<sup>(5)</sup>.

#### 3. Insufficient evidence in local nursing institutions

Most research on structured clinical evaluation methods has been conducted in developed countries, and there is limited evidence from nursing colleges in many regions regarding their effectiveness<sup>(6)</sup>.

#### 4. Limited focus on students' learning outcomes

Existing studies often focus on evaluation techniques themselves rather than examining how different evaluation methods influence students' clinical performance and skill development<sup>(7)</sup>.

#### 5. Lack of research on students' perceptions

There is limited research exploring nursing students' perceptions and satisfaction regarding structured versus traditional clinical evaluation methods<sup>(8)</sup>.

#### 6. Need for evidence-based evaluation practices

Many nursing institutions continue to use traditional evaluation methods without sufficient research evidence supporting their effectiveness compared to structured approaches<sup>(9)</sup>.

### Objectives

1. To assess nursing students' clinical performance using structured clinical evaluation methods.
2. To assess nursing students' clinical performance using traditional clinical evaluation methods.
3. To compare the outcomes of structured and traditional clinical evaluation methods in terms of accuracy and reliability
4. To explore nursing students' perceptions and satisfaction regarding structured and traditional clinical evaluation methods.

### Assumption

1. Nursing students have received adequate clinical training and are familiar with the required skills.
2. Clinical instructors are competent and capable of applying both structured and traditional evaluation methods effectively.
3. Structured evaluation methods are applied consistently using standardized checklists and criteria.
4. Traditional evaluation reflects the instructors' usual assessment practices without intentional bias.
5. Students will perform honestly and to the best of their abilities during evaluations.
6. Differences in clinical performance are primarily due to the evaluation method, not external factors such as patient complexity or the clinical environment.

### Research Methodology

Research Approach: Quantitative

Research design: Descriptive comparative

Sample size: 100

Sampling technique: Convenient sampling

### Tools for Data Collection

1. Structured Clinical Evaluation Checklist – A standardized checklist with clear criteria to objectively assess nursing students' clinical skills and competencies.
2. Traditional Clinical Evaluation Form – The usual instructor-based evaluation method, relying on observation and unstructured rating of students' clinical performance.
3. Demographic & Feedback Questionnaire (optional) – To collect students' personal details and perceptions regarding the evaluation methods.

### Methods of Data Collection

1. Orientation/Briefing:

Nursing students were informed about the study objectives, procedures, and evaluation methods.

Consent was obtained from all participants before data collection.

2. Clinical Assessment:

Students' clinical performance was assessed using:

Structured Clinical Evaluation Checklist (with standardized criteria)

Traditional Clinical Evaluation Form (usual instructor observation).

## 3. Demographic &amp; Feedback Data:

Students completed a brief questionnaire on personal information and their perceptions of the evaluation methods.

## 4. Data Recording:

Scores from both evaluation methods were recorded systematically for analysis.

## Results

The study aimed to compare the effectiveness of structured and traditional clinical evaluation methods in assessing clinical competency among 100 nursing students. Participants' demographic characteristics were collected using a questionnaire, and clinical performance was assessed using both structured and traditional evaluation methods.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n = 100)**

Characteristic	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age (years)</b>		
18–19	30	30
20–21	45	45
22–23	25	25
<b>Name of Programme</b>		
B.Sc. Nursing	50	50
GNM	50	50

**Table 2: Comparison of Clinical Performance Scores**

Evaluation Method	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
Structured Evaluation	86.3	5.1	70	95
Traditional Evaluation	78.0	8.8	60	93

A paired t-test was conducted to compare the two evaluation methods.

**Table 3: Paired t-test Comparison of Evaluation Methods**

Comparison	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Structured vs Traditional Method	8.3	9.05	<0.001

The results indicate a statistically significant difference between structured and traditional evaluation methods ( $p < 0.001$ ), demonstrating that structured evaluation is more effective in assessing clinical competency.

Students' perceptions of the evaluation methods were also recorded. The majority of students reported that structured evaluation was fairer, more transparent, and helpful in improving clinical skills, while traditional evaluation was perceived as less reliable.

**Table 4: Students' Perception of Evaluation Methods**

Perception Statement	Structured (%)	Traditional (%)
Fair and transparent evaluation	80	38
Helpful in identifying strengths/weaknesses	85	42
Motivates improvement in clinical skills	78	40
Reflects true clinical performance	82	45

Overall, the findings indicate that structured clinical evaluation not only provides higher and more consistent scores but is also preferred by students as a more reliable and effective method than traditional evaluation. These results support the use of structured assessment tools to enhance the quality and fairness of clinical evaluations in nursing education.

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**Conflict of Interest:** Nil

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