IGNATIAN
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH
www.icceph.com
ISSN 2984-9942

READY, SET, CARE: CLINICAL READINESS AND LIVED EXPERIENCES OF UA 2025 NURSING GRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological qualitative research study that was completed in June 2026 aimed to explore the clinical readiness and lived experiences of the Private Catholic Higher Educational Institution Batch 2025 Nursing Graduates as they transition from student nurses to practicing nurses. The study aimed to identify the challenges new graduate nurses faced, how they coped with these challenges, and to understand how they adapted to practicing in a real clinical setting. Fifteen (15) new graduate nurses were selected using purposive sampling. Data was gathered using semi-structured in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Participants experienced various difficulties relating to their emotional well-being, physical health and professional development, including feelings of anxiety, lack of confidence, high stress due to workload, communication issues and struggling to adjust to a fast-paced environment. However, they developed confidence, skills, resilience, independence and a stronger professional identity through gaining experience in the clinical environment, self-directed learning, mentorship and internal support. This research demonstrates that students may find the transition from a nursing student to an actual nurse challenging. To be clinically competent, new graduate nurses need to have not only the knowledge and skills but also emotional resilience, flexibility and commitment to ongoing professional development.

Keywords: *Clinical Readiness, Lived Experiences, Newly Graduated Nurses, Transition to Practice, Phenomenology*

INTRODUCTION

A medical group consists of professionals who work hand in hand to provide an effective treatment to the patients. In addition, these professionals are equally significant as they provide care among their patients. Subsequently, among the members of the medical group, nurses are considered to be the key components of the health care profession. According to the research of Kilpatrick et al. (2016), nurses are treated as the professionals who provide safe health care to patients which makes the patients satisfied with the treatment.

Becoming a Nurse is more than just a responsibility, but a calling to serve other people with humility and compassion. According to Price (2009), choosing to pursue Nursing is affected by multiple factors, which involve: the influence of peers, role models, career expectations, and career choice decisions. Student nurses are considered as the next generation of nurses. In addition, through their four years of academic preparation, they are molded enough to establish their skills to become a professional nurse.

In the study of Sterner et al. (2023), the results showed that previous nursing education helped new nurses in preparation for clinical nursing practice. Despite having the competence, they still need the support from a well-designed transition program. Overall, the knowledge and skills provided by nursing education influence the new nurses' readiness and the challenges they perceive in the clinical nursing practice.

Research literature highlighted more importance on the collaboration, clinical readiness, and transition support in the nursing profession. Healthcare organizations are beginning to realize how important teamwork and communication among healthcare professionals are to keeping the patients safe and ensuring that quality care is provided. There are also studies which state that nursing education and clinical practice can affect the work readiness of newly upskilled nurses. Transition programs help to support newly qualified nurses and ease their way of adaptation to their professional work. The recent studies show that readiness is not a mere possession of knowledge and technical skills because newly graduated nurses experience confusion, stress, difficulties with communication, and even fear in the process of their transition into their job.

Even though new nurses obtain years of work experience in practice, they still face challenges connected with the use of their skills. According to Walker et al. (2021), work readiness is a vital outcome of nursing education that influences how successful the graduates of the nursing schools will be in the process of adapting to the job. According to another research conducted by Mahon et al. (2025), newly graduated nurses have a strong feeling of readiness. However, they also note that they often have doubts and feel unprepared for the job.

Previous studies have indicated that collaboration in the healthcare setting is necessary to deliver safe, holistic, and patient-oriented care. Moreover, current studies also revealed that nursing education, clinical practice, and socialization in nursing student life are substantial in the development of their clinical competencies. It has also been highlighted that transition programs are helpful for getting recently graduated nurses

ready for real-world clinical practice. Furthermore, even with these studies, little is known about how new nurses really apply their academic learning to real-world practice. The majority of current studies center on skills and competence, but less emphasis has been placed on the emotional preparedness, confidence, and lived experiences of these new nurses in their transition.

Clinical readiness of new nurses is vital to be studied as it shapes patient safety and holistic care. In addition, further research is necessary to learn about their actual challenges and what type of support they require. Moreover, by filling this gap, nursing educational and transition programs can be evaluated and enhanced to support student nurses in being both competent and emotionally equipped to meet the demands of professional practice.

Literature Review

Clinical Readiness and Professional Transition

Clinical readiness plays an essential role in the journey from nursing education to practice as nurses are required to utilize knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional judgment in real-life patient care situations. As Konlan et al. (2024) describe, clinical readiness implies obtaining and combining medical knowledge and skills, ability to communicate effectively, self-management, and application of the acquired competencies in delivering quality patient care.

Jerpseth and Jensen (2025), likewise, seek to find the view of newly licensed nurses on the concept of readiness and professional authority they learned according to their first-year practice experience, and the subjects of the research characterized readiness as the ability to gain confidence and common-sense judgment. Those participants who were ready for their first practice asserted that they were able to apply knowledge and skills in action, while some others felt a gap between responsibility and authority. The other study conducted by Hussein et al. (2017) revealed that newly-graduated nurses felt nervous and excited and emphasized their self-assurance, adaptability, and emotional management. These studies demonstrate a conclusion that readiness is a result of the combination of competence, confidence, judgment, emotional management, and clinical experience.

Work Readiness

Work readiness is closely related to the extent to which graduates adjust to their roles in professional environments. Walker et al. (2021) noted that work readiness has implications for the smooth transition of nursing graduates into practice and identified mentorship and supportive environments as crucial. Chen et al. (2025) pointed out similar aspects related to emotional self-management and support by clinical instructors and managers as factors affecting success, especially for those graduates who are less confident in their abilities.

Despite the fact that Yang et al. (2024) and Mahon et al. (2025) highlighted such barriers as psychological stress, feeling unprepared, insufficient skills, communication problems, and lack of confidence, the studies conducted by these authors fill different aspects of the problem. This means that supportive environments are likely to overcome difficulties regardless of their nature and individual readiness of graduates and their ability to cope make a key impact on their performance of the available support.

Lived Experiences of Graduate Nurses

Gaining experiences affirms deep understanding into le readiness for practice. Hofler and Thomas (2016) described the initial months of working as daunting yet transformative. Graduate nurses managed their subjective feelings and objective demands, while growth was rooted in emotional strength, guidance, and reflection. Likewise, Yang et al. (2024) showed that recent graduates referred to readiness in their accounts concerning stress, moral dilemmas, self-esteem, care for patients, and collaboration with others.

Kreedi and team (2021) conducted a literature review and recognized several challenges in transition, such as confusion of roles, stress, and lack of support. They made it clear the aspects contributing to successful transition were education, hospitable orientation, and organizational support. Additionally, the authors emphasized the need for further research in different educational and cultural settings. Below all studies, there was a consistency discovered, that transition was difficult yet transformative as it was the period of building confidence and professional identity. Thus, phenomenological approach should be applied in the research agenda aimed at learning how recent graduates interpret their experiences.

Competency Development and Role Transition of Graduate Nurses

Competency does not stop developing after graduation. Atta et al. (2024), the nursing-process competency is of prime importance for novice nurses, and transitioning from education to practice involves great changes. Similarly, See et al. (2022) discussed the knowledge deficit and heavy workload during transition and stressed the importance of peer support and transition programs. The two studies suggest that graduates may come to practice well prepared but still need guidance and constant learning.

Besides, research indicates that repeated clinical exposure converts theoretical knowledge into practical skill. Challenges become more pronounced in the context of new situations, unusual procedures, specialized units, complicated cases, or dynamic conditions of patients. While describing the situation, Kang et al. (2025) reported reduced certainty among new nurses entering critical care settings. Therefore, competency can be considered as an ongoing process including practice, mentorship, self-reflection, and independence.

Educational Preparation and the Theory–Practice Gap

The foundation for professional practice is formed by nursing education, although academic preparation and clinical readiness do not necessarily mean the same thing. In their systematic review and meta-analysis, Lahti et al. (2014) found that e-learning improved knowledge, skills, and happiness but did not verify the more complicated outcomes such as clinical judgment, confidence, and application to reality as often. Therefore, simply learning concepts and procedures in an educational institution cannot mimic the complexity of reality in patient care.

In clinical practice, graduates need to prioritize patient needs while communicating with health professionals, responding to unexpected situations, making decisions, and handling emotions at the same time. Therefore, the literature illustrates the theory-practice gap where academic preparation provides the base upon which graduates work in practice. Hence, it is necessary to eliminate this gap by improving the connection between academic education and practical experience through education-based learning, hands-on practice, mentoring system, and transition programs.

Emotional Readiness and Professional Growth

Emotional readiness is yet another concept which is frequently encountered in the context of professional transition. Newly graduated nurses might suffer from anxiety, nervousness, self-doubt, psychological distress, and fear before taking up their professional responsibilities. According to Chen et al. (2025), Stockhausen (2019), and Notarnicola et al. (2025), fresh nurses might focus on performing various technical tasks at the same time struggling with emotional involvement and patient-centered communication. Thus, one can conclude that safe nursing practice requires not only technical expertise, but emotional competencies as well.

Nonetheless, facing emotional challenges may help with professional development. Fresh graduates may develop resiliency by seeking assistance, reflecting on failures, learning continuously, and adjusting to new situations. Hence, it is important to state that emotional readiness should not be viewed as something separate from clinical competencies. Both of them come with experience, reflection, supportive relationships, and lifelong learning.

Integrative Synthesis and Research Gap

Existing literature shows how the transition from student to nurse is complex, involving not only development in clinical competence, but also confidence, professional judgment, emotional resilience, mentorship, support in the workplace, and real-life experience. In all reviewed studies, experiential learning and clinical exposure are a must for practical competence development. Supportive workplaces as well as mentorship are crucial for the mere fact that they help cope with uncertainty, while emotional readiness gives graduates the ability to be responsive in a demanding professional environment.

The studies show that different aspects are considered in the literature. Certain studies emphasize individual traits of a graduate including confidence, resilience, competence, while others take into account systemic factors such as workload, workplace culture, socialization, and organizational support. Similarly, some studies discuss educational impact, while others stress that graduates feel underprepared for real clinical practice.

However, while there has already been some research, little attention has been paid to graduates' individual experience in the process of the transition. Thus, while most of the studies have concentrated on competence or work readiness, the emotional side of the process remains outside the focus of research. The current study aims at filling this gap.

Research Objectives

Main Objective:

The study aimed to explore the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that were developed to the Batch 2025 of Private Catholic Higher Educational Institution Nursing Graduates. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Describe their experiences in the real clinical world.
2. Recognize their challenges as they start working in the real clinical setting.
3. Identify their strategies they employ as they meet the different challenges in the real clinical world.
4. Recognize their insights and realizations in the real clinical settings.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research utilized qualitative phenomenological research design to investigate Private Catholic Higher Educational Institution Batch 2025 Nursing Graduates' clinical preparedness and lived experiences in the course of transitioning from schooling to nursing practice. The objectives of the research are to concentrate on participants' experiences and opinions about the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that were obtained in the course of their education.

The phenomenological methodology was applicable here as the research aimed at understanding the meaning of the participants' counseling rather than measuring particular parameters and establishing direct cause-effect relationships. It allows one to assess the experiences characterized by the high level of precision.

Participants and Setting

The study focused on the population of 94 graduates from the UA College of Nursing, Batch 2025, who graduated from the program in June, 2025. Out of those, 21

participants were male and 73 were female graduates. Out of this population, only 15 participants were purposely chosen based on the given inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Purposive sampling was used based on the idea that the participants should have experiences related to the shift from nursing education to nursing practice. The participants should have graduated from the UA College of Nursing, 2025 Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduates, be over 18, have some experience working in a hospital or a clinical environment to be eligible. Also, they should have provided their contact details and agreed to participate.

The candidates to be disallowed were those who were not part of the UA Nursing Batch 2025, were below 18 years old, did not have clinical experience, refused to provide consent, or declined to take part in the study. Any graduate that could not be reached, no matter how many attempts have been made, was also excluded. Transferees, students with irregular attendance, and those who did not graduate from the program were excluded as well.

The sample of 15 participants is considered sufficient for the phenomenological study as the qualitative research contributes more to the depth of knowledge rather than to the statistical significance of the received data.

Research Instrument

The research has been performed at the UA College of Nursing where the participants finished their Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. The chosen graduates belong to the batch of 2025 that made them the right choice because they have already completed the study and went through the change from studying into practicing as an active nurse.

Interviews were performed either face to face or online depending on the availability of the participants. This made it easier to create a comfortable environment while announcing the rules of conducting the research.

Data Collection Procedure

The research tool used is a semi-structured interview guide which is already validated and devoted to finding out participants' experiences, sentiments, perceptions, and preparedness to work as a nurse and their confidence and competence. The interview guide consists of three parts. The first part collected demographic information and provided information about age and sex.

The second part aimed to assess the life background of participants in terms of their perceptions of a nurse's work readiness and competence. Finally, the third part is aimed at finding out the issues connected with pressure, communication issues, cooperation, solving problems, and adapting to the situation. The interview guide was reviewed by the academic head of the research and two specialists in the field of qualitative research.

Data analysis of Information

Within this study thematic analysis was utilized in order to find patterns, meaning and themes. No quantitative statistical tests were performed since qualitative phenomenological methodology was the method used in this research.

Text analysis was performed by reading the interviews several times in order to get used to the data. The next stage was identifying meaningful statements and assigning them initial codes. The codes that had similarities were combined together in order to create the themes. The themes were checked for coherence, conformity and agreement with the interviewees' answers. After that, the themes underwent a refining process.

In order to boost trustworthiness of the analysis process, codes and themes were double-checked by the research advisor. Certain interpretations of the study results were applied to member checking. Additionally, an audit trail that contained all of the information about the codes and themes formation processes was created.

RESULTS

The findings are presented according to the four statements of the problem. They describe the experiences, challenges, strategies, and insights of newly graduated nurses in the real clinical setting. The study involved fifteen (15) newly graduated nurses from the University of the Assumption, Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Batch 2025. The participants were 22 to 24 years old and were working as professional nurses in hospital settings.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Participants

Participants	Profile	
	Sex (Participant)	Age (in years)
P1	M	24
P2	F	23
P3	M	22
P4	F	23
P5	F	22
P6	F	22
P7	F	24

P8	M	22
P9	F	23
P10	F	22
P11	F	23
P12	F	23
P13	M	23
P14	F	23
P15	F	23

Table 1 presents the demographic profiles of the fifteen (15) participants. They were newly graduated nurses aged 22 to 24 and included both male and female participants. All participants were graduates of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing of the University of the Assumption, Batch 2025.

Experiences of Newly Graduated Nurses in the Real Clinical Setting

For the first statement of the problem, a total of 30 unique verbal responses were documented. The responses were organized into two major themes: Transition and Adjustment to Professional Role and Experiences of Developing Confidence and Skills in Practice.

Table 2
Themes, Sub-Themes, and Verbal Responses on the Experiences of Newly Graduated Nurses in the Real Clinical Setting

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	VERBAL NO. OF RESPONSES
I. Transition and Adjustment to Professional Role	Theory–Practice Gap	4
	Lack of Supervision	7
	Adjustment Period	3
II. Experiences of Developing Confidence and Skills in Practice	Confidence Development	5
	Competence Building	6

	Independence Enhancement	5

Table 2 displays the subthemes under Transition and Adjustment to Professional Role as Theory–Practice Gap, Lack of Supervision, and Adjustment Period, and verbal responses of 4, 7, and 3, respectively. The participants noted the gaps between the nursing knowledge and clinical experience, and described the professional role adjustment and the shift to less direct post-graduation supervision.

The second theme, Experiences of Developing Confidence and Skills in Practice, included Confidence Development, Competence Building, and Independence Enhancement, with five, six, and five verbal responses, respectively. The participants noted the gradual shift to clinical practice and the role of practice and supervised guidance as participants attained the confidence and skill to assume greater nursing practice independence.

Challenges Encountered by Newly Graduated Nurses in the Real Clinical Setting

For the second statement of the problem, a total of 50 unique verbal responses were identified. Four major themes were found: Emotional Challenges, Skills and Workplace Challenges, Clinical Exposure and Competency Gaps, and Workloads and Clinical Demands.

Table 3
Themes, Sub-Themes, and Verbal Responses on the Challenges Encountered by Newly Graduated Nurses in the Real Clinical Setting

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	VERBAL NO. OF RESPONSES
I. Emotional Challenges	Anxiety and Nervousness	6
	Low Confidence/Self-Doubt	4
	Feeling Overwhelmed	3
II. Skills and Workplace Challenges	Skills and Competence Difficulty	5
	Communication and Team Challenges	4
	Toxic Work Environment	3

III.	Clinical Exposure and Competency Gaps	Limited Clinical Exposure	3
		Knowledge and Skill Gap	2
		Adjustment to Specialized Area	4
IV.	Works Loads and Clinical Demands	Heavy Work Time and Pressure	8
		Multiple Patient Handling	5
		Fast-Faced/Emergency Situation	3

Emotional Challenges included Anxiety and Nervousness, Low Confidence/Self-Doubt, and Feeling Overwhelmed, with six, four, and three verbal responses, respectively. Participants described nervousness and anxiety when performing clinical tasks, making decisions, and handling critical situations. They also reported self-doubt, hesitation, and feeling overwhelmed by their responsibilities.

Skills and Workplace Challenges included Skills and Competence Difficulty, Communication and Team Challenges, and Toxic Work Environment, with five, four, and three responses, respectively. Clinical Exposure and Competency Gaps included Limited Clinical Exposure, Knowledge and Skill Gap, and Adjustment to Specialized Area, with three, two, and four responses, respectively. Workloads and Clinical Demands included Heavy Work Time and Pressure, Multiple Patient Handling, and Fast-Paced/Emergency Situation, with eight, five, and three responses, respectively.

Strategies Employed by Newly Graduated Nurses in Meeting Clinical Challenges

For the third statement of the problem, a total of 30 unique verbal responses were identified. The responses were grouped into Continuous Learning and Skill Development, Seeking Guidance and Workplace Support, and Confidence and Personal Growth.

Table 4
Themes, Sub-Themes, and Verbal Responses on the Strategies Employed by Newly Graduated Nurses in Meeting Clinical Challenges

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	VERBAL NO. OF RESPONSES
	Self-Directed Learning	6

I. Continuous Learning and Skill Development	Application of Learning	5
II. Seeking Guidance and Workplace Support	Guidance from Senior Nurses	6
	Supportive Relationships	5
III. Confidence and Personal Growth	Self Reliance	4
	Self Reflection	4

Continuous Learning and Skill Development included Self-Directed Learning and Practice and Application of Previous Training, with six and five verbal responses. Participants described reviewing procedures, studying after duty, using learning materials, practicing independently, and applying previous nursing knowledge and skills in clinical situations. Seeking Guidance and Workplace Support included Guidance from Senior Nurses and Supportive Relationships, with six and five responses. Participants reported asking senior nurses and colleagues for assistance, clarification, and guidance. Confidence and Personal Growth included Self-Reliance and Self-Reflection, with four responses each. Participants described gaining confidence through experience and reflecting on their performance and feedback.

Insights and Realizations of Newly Graduated Nurses in the Real Clinical Setting

For the fourth statement of the problem, a total of 40 unique verbal responses were identified. Three major themes were identified: Fostering Psychological Resilience and Self-Efficacy, Nurturing Professional Growth Mindset, and Practicing Nursing with Heart and Purpose.

Table 5
Themes, Sub-Themes, and Verbal Responses on the Insights and Realizations of Newly Graduated Nurses in the Real Clinical Setting

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	VERBAL NO. OF RESPONSES
I. Fostering Psychological Resilience and Self-Efficacy	Developing Resilience	7
	Cultivating Confidence	8

II. Nurturing Professional Growth Mindset	Embracing Mistakes and Openness to Learning	8
	Valuing Mentorship and Collaborative Inquiry	8
III. Practicing Nursing with Heart and Purpose	Integrating Empathy, Patience, and Professional Attitude	7
	Recognizing Nursing as a Passion and Calling	2

Fostering Psychological Resilience and Self-Efficacy included Developing Resilience and Cultivating Confidence, with seven and eight verbal responses, respectively. Nurturing Professional Growth Mindset included Embracing Mistakes and Openness to Learning and Valuing Mentorship and Collaborative Inquiry, with eight responses each. Practicing Nursing with Heart and Purpose included Integrating Empathy, Patience, and Professional Attitude and Recognizing Nursing as a Passion and Calling, with seven and two responses, respectively. Participants described learning from mistakes, accepting feedback, seeking guidance, developing confidence, practicing empathy and patience, and recognizing the personal meaning they attached to nursing practice.

DISCUSSION

According to Benner's (1982) Novice to Expert Theory, nurses develop clinical competence progressively through education and experience. Novice nurses initially depend on rules, guidelines, and supervision because they have limited clinical experience, while advanced beginners gradually develop the ability to recognize recurring situations and apply previous experiences in practice. This theory provides a useful framework for understanding the experiences of the Batch 2025 nursing graduates as they transitioned from academic preparation to professional practice.

The findings of this phenomenological study revealed that the transition of the fifteen (15) Batch 2025 nursing graduates from student nurses to professional nurses was both challenging and transformative. Participants experienced difficulties in adjusting to their professional roles, including the theory–practice gap, lack of supervision, emotional insecurity, heavy workloads, competency difficulties, communication challenges, and unfamiliar workplace environments. However, these challenges were accompanied by the development of confidence, competence, independence, resilience, and a stronger professional identity.

The findings indicate that academic preparation provided participants with foundational knowledge, skills, and attitudes, but actual clinical exposure was essential in transforming these foundations into practical competence. Participants initially relied

heavily on guidance because they were accustomed to being supervised during their student years. Entering professional practice required them to make decisions, prioritize patient needs, manage multiple responsibilities, and perform nursing interventions with greater independence. Thus, clinical readiness should not be understood as something completely achieved upon graduation; rather, it develops continuously through actual experience.

The theory–practice gap further demonstrated that the realities of hospital practice do not always follow the exact procedures and situations presented in the classroom. Participants encountered situations that required flexibility, critical thinking, and adaptation. This explains why some graduates felt unprepared despite having successfully completed their academic requirements. The adjustment period was therefore not simply a matter of learning procedures but also involved adapting to workplace expectations, communication patterns, responsibilities, and professional accountability.

These findings are consistent with previous studies concerning the transition experiences of newly graduated nurses. Aldosari et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of transition programs in bridging theoretical knowledge and practical application. Similarly, Kang et al. (2025) reported that nursing education may not completely reflect the realities of clinical practice, resulting in transition difficulties and uncertainty among newly graduated nurses.

The participants' experiences of anxiety, nervousness, self-doubt, and feeling overwhelmed are also supported by See et al. (2022), who found that newly graduated nurses may experience knowledge deficits and feelings of being overwhelmed in clinical settings. Tsai et al. (2025) likewise highlighted that novice nurses commonly experience stress and anxiety while adapting to professional practice.

Workload and time pressure were also prominent findings. Narbona-Gálvez et al. (2024) identified workload, environmental adjustment, professional expectations, and interpersonal relationships as important challenges affecting novice nurses. Similarly, Brinkmann et al. (2022) identified multiple patient handling as a significant source of burden among healthcare workers. These findings support the participants' experiences of difficulty in managing several patients, completing documentation, performing procedures, communicating with the healthcare team, and responding to urgent situations within limited time.

The importance of workplace relationships is also consistent with Tarhan et al. (2022), who emphasized communication and collaboration as essential for newly graduated nurses adapting to the healthcare system. Ching et al. (2022) further highlighted the importance of belonging and interpersonal connections in helping new graduate nurses adapt to clinical teams.

One possible explanation for these findings is the difference between the controlled learning environment of nursing education and the unpredictable nature of actual clinical practice. In school, students commonly perform procedures under

supervision and within structured situations. In professional practice, however, nurses are expected to respond to changing patient conditions, prioritize competing needs, communicate with different healthcare professionals, and make decisions within a limited time.

The lack of supervision reported by participants may have intensified feelings of uncertainty because they were suddenly expected to function more independently. At the same time, repeated exposure to clinical situations gradually allowed participants to develop confidence and competence. This supports Benner's view that experience is essential to the development of clinical judgment.

The findings also suggest that emotional and workplace factors influence clinical readiness. A supportive environment, effective teamwork, and mentorship may reduce anxiety and encourage learning, whereas negative interactions and toxic workplace conditions may increase stress and decrease confidence. Therefore, professional competence is influenced not only by individual knowledge and skills but also by the environment in which nurses practice.

The findings have important implications for nursing education, healthcare institutions, and newly graduated nurses. For nursing schools, the results emphasize the need to strengthen clinical exposure, simulation activities, case-based learning, and opportunities for students to manage realistic and complex patient situations. These approaches may help reduce the theory–practice gap and prepare students for the responsibilities they will encounter after graduation.

For healthcare institutions, structured transition programs, mentorship, orientation, and supportive supervision may help newly graduated nurses adjust more effectively. Experienced nurses can provide practical guidance, feedback, and encouragement while gradually allowing new nurses to develop independence. A positive workplace culture that promotes communication, teamwork, and psychological support may also improve confidence and professional adjustment.

For newly graduated nurses, the findings emphasize the importance of continuous learning, self-reflection, asking questions, seeking guidance, and learning from mistakes. As Matlhaba (2024) emphasized, nurses beginning their careers need to continuously evaluate their knowledge and skills and strive for professional growth.

Based on the findings, nursing schools and healthcare institutions should strengthen collaboration in preparing nursing graduates for professional practice. Nursing programs may provide greater exposure to complex and specialized clinical situations, while hospitals may establish structured transition and mentorship programs for newly hired nurses. Experienced nurses should be encouraged to provide constructive feedback and supportive supervision while gradually promoting independence.

Newly graduated nurses should also be encouraged to maintain a professional growth mindset by recognizing that uncertainty and mistakes can be part of the learning

process. Continuous education, reflection, teamwork, and mentorship should be promoted as strategies for improving competence and confidence.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the transition from nursing education to professional practice is not an immediate process but a gradual journey of learning, adjustment, and growth. Although participants experienced emotional challenges, workload pressures, theory–practice gaps, and competency difficulties, these experiences ultimately contributed to their confidence, independence, resilience, and professional development. Consistent with Benner's theory, the findings suggest that clinical competence develops through the interaction of foundational education and meaningful clinical experience. Therefore, effective preparation, supportive workplaces, mentorship, and continuous professional development are essential in helping newly graduated nurses successfully transition into competent and confident professional practitioners.

Conclusions

This phenomenological study looked into the lived experiences of University of the Assumption Batch 2025 nursing graduates, as they moved from academic preparation into professional nursing practice. Overall, the results show that the transition can be pretty challenging, but also something transformative, because it is not just about applying clinical knowledge or skills the right way. What the participants shared was that once they entered the real clinical environment, they had to recalibrate to new duties, handle higher expectations for independent practice, and face the real world of patient care which can feel different from the more structured setup they had during nursing education. It seemed like the whole shift was highlighted by a perceived gap between what they learned in theory, and what they actually encountered in the hospital, especially in those fast paced clinical settings where decision making communication, workload, and patient needs pushed them to respond with more independence.

More than that, the study also pointed out that newly graduated nurses faced emotional, and workplace related challenges during the whole adjustment period. The participants described anxiety , nervousness, self doubt , pressure linked to responsibility, trouble communicating , limited clinical exposure, and unfamiliarity in specialized areas. On top of that there were heavy workloads, time constraints, and fast paced emergencies. Still, even with all those hurdles, their accounts also implied a slow, but steady growth in confidence, competence, independence, and professional adaptability, mostly because they kept getting repeated exposure to actual patient care , and kept practicing over time.

When it came to dealing with these issues, participants depended on continuous learning, self directed practice, asking questions, learning from mistakes, and then applying what they knew from their earlier academic and clinical experiences. Support from senior nurses, colleagues, and mentors also helped their adjustment and development , and in the end it strengthened their confidence in the workplace. These experiences suggest that readiness for professional nursing practice keeps developing after graduation as newly graduated nurses step into real clinical situations and learn to function within professional teams.

The participants gained more understanding of their personalities and of the nursing practice. The experience affected participants' resistance power, versatility, unity, sympathy, patience, responsibility, and eagerness of learning. Furthermore, participants understand the mistakes and disadvantages are normally happened on them whereas confidence comes with experience, consistency and learning desire. Finally, participants confirmed that nursing is not just a profession and knowledge but also a set of values, including compassion, responsibility, patience, and commitment to patients' care. Some participants even identified their nursing practice as a calling.

Therefore, based on the research results, it would be correct to assume that the readiness of new graduate nurses for independent clinical practice is a complex, evolving process that must not be limited to the end of the educational course. The clinical experience of the UA Batch 2025 nursing students confirms this assumption, demonstrating that for adequate professional preparation, participants need proper training, exposure, work environments, mentors, and continuous learning. Thus, the study's results expand understanding of the transition from nursing students to professional nurses, highlighting the importance of emotional support, confidence development, adaptability, and continuous learning for participants.

These findings can be used to improve the practice of newly graduated nurses by providing them with opportunities for professional development and support environments, as well as help in understanding the importance of such conditions for their further practice. In conclusion, the research described in the article highlights the importance of new graduate nurses' independent clinical practice, identifying the factors of adequate preparation for such practice. The results will be essential in further developing the professional practice of new graduate nurses.

Recommendations

In light of the findings, nursing institutions and ancillary educators ought to provide increased clinical training through reality-based clinical learning experience and allow students to engage in simulation-based practice and experimental learning that is vital in preparing graduates for practical duties. Furthermore, healthcare institutions should develop structured programs for the orientation and mentoring of new nurses. Moreover, novice nurses need to be encouraged to pursue continuous education, engage in self-learning and practice, and consult experienced colleagues whenever required. It is also advisable for nurses still under training to learn also about their communication and interaction skills beforehand. Additionally, it is necessary to conduct further research addressing the same issues with different cohorts, nursing institutions, and hospitals.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The researchers obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Board (UA-REB) of the University of the Assumption before starting the procedure of gathering data. The researchers singled out possible participants for this research through purposeful sampling and contacted them via emails or social media messaging. All participants got information about the procedure of participating in the research, including purposes of the

research, ways of gathering data, methods of keeping personal information confidential, the voluntary nature of participation and the rights of participants. Anyone who gave consent to participate in the study was provided with a form for informed consent. The researchers answered all questions about the conducted research and elaborated on potential risks as well as advantages of being a participant in the study. Besides, they explained to participants that they had rights regarding refusal to answer and withdrawal from the research without being punished.

The researchers used semi-structured interviews that required 30-45 minutes to conduct. The interviews were held in face-to-face format or online according to what the participant preferred – in English or Filipino. The researchers recorded all conversations with permission to guarantee that everything was said in the interview. Transcribing was conducted right after the interviews were over and audio materials were listened to. All electronic files were saved in a safe folder with access limited to the members of the team conducting the research. Audio recordings together with the consent documents were planned to be destroyed three months after the completion of the research process. The investigators ensured the protection of the rights, worth, dignity, privacy, confidentiality, and welfare of all participants. Ethical approval was received from UA-REB before the start of data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to each interview. It was explained to the participants that they could refuse answering questions, stop the interview, or quit the study at any moment without any punishment.

With the intention of keeping the information confidential, the researchers did not allow anyone to access the files related to the research other than the research team. The recording of interviews was done only after getting permission from participants. The level of risk was very low, but the participants could feel emotional discomfort when they were asked questions related to their transition to the profession.

Acknowledgments

The success of this study was made possible through the assistance, support, and guidance of numerous individuals. Their contributions were essential in helping the researchers reach the objectives of this study. The researchers express their heartfelt gratitude and sincere appreciation to the people who contributed to the success of this research:

To the Almighty God, the researchers express their heartfelt gratitude for granting upon them wisdom, strength, guidance, and perseverance during the completion of this study. His blessings provided hope and inspiration during challenging and tough times.

To Ms. Lorna M. Basmayor, their Research Adviser, the researchers are sincerely grateful for her guidance, patience, and encouragement of valuable insights throughout the research process. Her unwavering support and expertise greatly contributed to the completion and improvement of this study.

To Dr. Emmanuel M. Bagtas, their Research Professor, the researchers extend their sincere gratitude for his expertise, guidance, encouragement, and valuable knowledge shared throughout the conduct of this study. His dedication and support greatly contributed to the researchers learning and development in the field of research.

To Dean Anele C. Mallari, Dean of the College of Nursing and Pharmacy, the researchers extend their sincere thanks for providing an academic environment that encourages growth, learning, and excellence among nursing students.

To the University of the Assumption Research and Ethics Board, the researchers are grateful for reviewing and approving this study, ensuring that ethical standards were properly observed throughout the conduct of the research.

To the participants, the Private Catholic Higher Educational Institution Batch 2025 Nursing Graduates, the researchers express their utmost gratitude for willingly sharing their experiences, insights, and time, which became the foundation and strength of this study.

To the panelist and Clinical Instructor of the College of Nursing and Pharmacy, the researchers express their appreciation for their constructive suggestions, professional advice, and encouragement, which helped strengthen the quality of this research.

To the University of the Assumption, the researchers would like to thank the institution for providing quality education, resources, and opportunities that contributed to the success of this academic endeavor.

Finally, to their supportive loved ones, the researchers express their heartfelt appreciation for their unwavering support, understanding, encouragement, and prayers throughout this journey. Their motivation inspired the researchers to persevere and complete this study.

To everyone who became part of this endeavor, the researchers extend their sincere gratitude. May God bless you all abundantly.

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APA Citation:

Lopez, L. C., Armas, M. M., Galang, J. M. T., Lovendino, A. L. D., Salac, A. M. D., & Vergara, S. R. L. (2026). READY, SET, CARE: CLINICAL READINESS AND LIVED EXPERIENCES OF UA 2025 NURSING GRADUATES. Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research, 4(11), 705–725. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24195973

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