Perceived Self-Efficacy In Nursing Competencies And Readiness For Professional Nursing Practice Among Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Transition from student nurse to professional nurse is a crucial milestone that demands not only technical competence but also strong confidence in one's abilities. Self-efficacy plays an important role in shaping this transition by influencing decision-making, adaptability, and readiness for practice. This study explored the self-efficacy in nursing competencies and readiness for professional nursing practice among nursing students. **Aim**: To assess the perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies, readiness for professional nursing practice and their relationship between them among nursing students. **Objectives: 1**) To determine the perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies among nursing students. 2) To assess the readiness for professional nursing practice among nursing students. 3) To assess the relationship between perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies and readiness for professional nursing practice among nursing students. 4) To associate the selected demographic variables among nursing students and their perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies and readiness for professional nursing practice. **Materials and methods:** A quantitative approach with descriptive cross sectional research design was adopted. The participants were 96 final-year B.Sc. Nursing students of a nursing college at Kanyakumari district. Data were collected using perceived self-efficacy rating scale to assess the nursing competencies and Casey Fink readiness rating scale to assess the professional nursing practice through self-report. Findings were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. **Findings:** Nearly 36 (37.5%) of them fell into the high self-efficacy, while 18 (18.8%) scored in the highest self-efficacy. Only a small percentage, 10 (10.4%) demonstrated low self-efficacy. The remaining 32(33.3 %)s had moderate perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies. The mean self-

efficacy score was 77.1 ± 12.4, and the mean readiness score was 22.9 ± 3.8, indicating moderate self-efficacy and moderate readiness for practice. In regard to the readiness for professional nursing practice, many nursing students 46 (43.8%) were in high readiness. Another 46 (43.8%) showed moderate readiness, while 4 (12.4%) fell in the low readiness. The mean readiness score was 22.9 ± 3.8. A significant positive correlation ($r = 0.79$, $p < 0.001$) was observed, suggesting that higher self-efficacy was associated with greater readiness for professional practice. **Conclusion:** The study concluded that perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies significantly influences readiness for professional practice. Structured mentorship, confidence-building activities, and reflective practice should be integrated into the curriculum to ease the transition.

Keywords: perceived self-efficacy, nursing competencies, readiness for professional nursing practice, Nursing students.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing is a profession that assumes responsibility for the continuous care of the sick, the injured, the disabled and dying. A nurse is a health care provider who focuses on the needs of each individual person. Nursing in 21st century is the glue that holds a patient's health care journey together. Across the entire patient's experience and wherever there is someone in need of care, nurses work tirelessly to identify and protect the needs of the individual. **(American Nurses Association 2021)**

Nursing education plays a critical role in preparing students for the transition into professional practice, a phase often marked by both challenges and opportunities. Nursing education is looking forward to building not just intellectuals but also well qualified professionals to address the collective needs of transforming society. To address this challenge the clinical environment should be facilitated with mentoring and students should have better knowledge retention, clinical reasoning and satisfaction with the learning experience **(Sharma R., Garadi S 2022)**. With the rapid development of higher nursing education, the enrollment scale of undergraduate nursing students has been expanding for the past ten years in India **(NRHM report 2023).** The number of nursing institutes offering undergraduate nursing education in the year 2023 was 2268. **(News meter, December 2023)**

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to take actions to manage future situations. Increasing self-efficacy fosters independence and confidence **(Alavi N M., 2021).** Self-efficacy affects the nurses' beliefs , actions and behaviors while caring for sick patients. It is a powerful variable that affects the nurse's motivation to care, thinking process and decision making, prioritizing interventions **(Sharour L A., Salameh A B 2021).** Self-efficacy is a good indicator to predict senior nursing students' performance in clinical practice. Intention to stay in a profession is enhanced by a strong sense of self- efficacy **(Alavi N M., 2021).**

Readiness for professional practice is not only determined by theoretical knowledge but also by self-efficacy, which reflects a student's confidence in applying acquired skills in real-world clinical situations. According to Bandura's theory, self-efficacy influences motivation, decision-making, and persistence in facing challenges. Nursing students with higher levels of self-efficacy demonstrate better clinical reasoning and adaptability during practice (**Zhu et al., 2023; Alreshidi et al., 2024).** Hence, self-efficacy is considered as significant determinant of competence and readiness to provide safe, quality nursing care.

Ang et al. (2024) explored the experiences of 24 final-year nursing students through individual semi-structured interviews and inductive thematic analysis, identifying three main themes: experiencing multiple concerns, requiring a network of support, and easing the transition to professional practice, highlighting the challenges and supports that influenced their readiness for clinical practice. This study emphasizes the need to equip student nurses with both competence and confidence to navigate the professional transition successfully.

Self-efficacy acts as the driving force that transforms learning into leadership by empowering students to take initiative, manage complex care situations, and adapt to the dynamic healthcare environment. By assessing the correlation between perceived self-efficacy and readiness for professional practice, this study aims to generate evidence that can evolve curriculum reforms, mentorship strategies, and capacity-building initiatives in nursing education, especially in the Indian context. It also enhances student confidence and bridges the theory practice gap, ensuring a smoother and safer integration of new graduates into the workforce.

Need and significance of the study

The transition from nursing student to professional nurse is an important phase that determines the future workforce capacity to deliver safe and quality healthcare. Globally, studies show that the first year of professional practice is often the most stressful and vulnerable period for new graduates, where inadequate self-efficacy can lead to attrition, burnout, and compromised patient outcomes. **(Smith et al., 2023)**

Jeong and Park (2024) reported that newly graduated nurses in Korea with higher self-efficacy and core competency experienced lower transition shock, with self-efficacy ($\beta = -1.324$, $p < 0.001$) and core competency ($\beta = -0.078$, $p = 0.039$) together explaining 30.6% of the variance. These findings highlight that self-efficacy is a protective factor, supporting smoother adaptation to clinical demands, enhancing job satisfaction, and facilitating a successful transition from classroom to bedside practice**.**

Rajan and Thomas (2023) conducted a study among Indian nursing graduates in rural settings and reported that the overall mean readiness for professional practice was 58.5 ± 5.58, indicating a moderate level of preparedness among the participants. The findings highlight the need to strengthen educational strategies and clinical exposure to enhance graduates' readiness for professional nursing practice in rural contexts**.** In India,

the need for competent and confident nursing professionals is particularly urgent given the high patient–nurse ratio, complex disease burden, and ongoing reforms in nursing education.

Menon and Ramesh (2024) conducted a study among Indian nursing interns and reported that the mean clinical competence score was 4.2 ± 0.5 and the mean self-efficacy score was 3.8 ± 0.6 on a 5-point Likert scale. They also found a strong positive correlation between clinical competence and self-efficacy ($r = 0.85$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher self-efficacy was associated with better clinical performance and potentially improved patient safety outcomes. Thus, assessing perceived self-efficacy and readiness for practice among undergraduate nursing students in India becomes not only an academic exercise but a critical healthcare priority that directly influences patient safety and care quality.

Pu et al. (2025) conducted a study among 552 intern nursing students in China and reported that the mean self-efficacy score was 29.71 ± 5.25, the mean score nursing competence score was 148.73 ± 22.63, and the mean satisfaction with the clinical learning environment was 123.02 ± 19.62. They found a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and core nursing competence $r = 0.597$, $p < 0.001$.

Gholami et al. (2024) conducted a cross-sectional study among 237 nursing students in Iran and reported that the mean self-efficacy in clinical performance was 127.88 ± 21.79, the mean motivation to choose nursing was 40.50 ± 8.44, and the mean perception of the clinical education status was 100.27 ± 21.90. Regression analysis revealed that for every one-unit increase in motivation to choose the field, self-efficacy increased by 0.985 units ($p < 0.001$), while the clinical education status did not show a significant effect ($p = 0.294$). In the Indian context, empirical studies remain sparse, particularly among undergraduate students in rural and semi-urban settings. Without a clear understanding of this relationship in India, nursing graduates may enter the workforce with inadequate preparation leading to stress, burnout, or reduced quality of patient care.

Nursing education programs are designed to build competency, but without simultaneously fostering self-efficacy, the knowledge–practice gap persists. Studies show that self-efficacy enhances problem-solving, leadership, and decision-making abilities, which are essential for new nurses in dynamic clinical environments (**Lopez et al., 2023).**

A qualitative study among nursing students acknowledged that although classroom teaching improved theoretical knowledge, their confidence in managing real clinical scenarios largely depended on experiential learning and self-efficacy. This suggests that assessing students' self-efficacy levels allows educators to design tailored interventions such as simulation, mentorship, and reflective practice to strengthen readiness for practice. (**Priyadarshini et al., 2025)**

Despite growing global evidence, literature addressing the combined assessment of self-efficacy and readiness for professional practice in the Indian undergraduate nursing context is limited. Most existing studies focus either on academic performance or clinical skills, without capturing how students perceive their overall readiness as they near graduation. **(Gupta & Sharma, 2023)**

The investigator during her professional experience as a nurse educator found out that bridging theory to practice contributes to preventable errors and leads to increased professional confidence and a safe transition into practice by improving high patient safety outcome. With this point of view, the present study provides valuable insights into the strengths and vulnerabilities of nursing students before they transition into the workforce. The findings may guide policymakers, curriculum planners, and educators in enhancing teaching–learning strategies, integrating mentorship programs, and fostering reflective practice to improve both competence and confidence. In this way, the study contributes not only to nursing education but also to the advancement of safe, patient-centered care in the healthcare system by cultivating the capable, confident and well-prepared qualified quality nurse and meeting the challenges of modern health care.

Statement of the problem

A descriptive cross sectional study to assess the perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies and readiness for professional nursing practice among Nursing students in a Nursing College at Kanyakumari District.

Objectives

- To determine the perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies among nursing students.
- To assess the readiness for professional nursing practice among nursing students.
- To assess the relationship between perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies and readiness for professional nursing practice among nursing students.
- To associate the selected demographic variables among nursing students and their perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies and readiness for professional nursing practice.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive cross sectional research design to assess the perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies and readiness for professional practice among undergraduate nursing students. The study was conducted in St Xavier's Catholic College of Nursing, Kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu, during the academic year 2024- 2025. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of St Xavier's Catholic College of Nursing Research and Development Committee - Institutional Review Board. A total of 96 participants were chosen using non-probability enumerative sampling technique. Informed written consent was secured from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

Data was collected through structured tools by self-report. Section A had demographic information included age, gender, year of study and percentage of mark in third year university examination. Section B consisted of Perceived self-efficacy in nursing competency scale which has 20 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not confident at all) to 5 (highly confident). Scores were categorized as low self-efficacy (20-39), moderate self-efficacy (40-59), high self-efficacy (60-79), highest self- efficacy (80-100). Section C had Casey Fink readiness rating scale through which the readiness for professional nursing practice was assessed. This rating scale has 20 items and is rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Analyzed th findings using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation) to examine the relationship between perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies and readiness for professional nursing practice.

Major Findings

The findings of the study were presented based on the objectives.

Demographic variables

Many of the nursing students, 87 (91%) were 20 years of age and remaining 9 (9%) nursing students were 21 years of age. Regarding the gender 12 (13%) were males and the remaining 84 (87%) students were females. In terms of year of study all 96 of them were from final year B.Sc. Nursing. Related with the percentage of III-year B.Sc. nursing university overall score 58 (60%) scored above 70%, 10 (10%) scored 65 to 69.99 % and remaining 28 (30%) scored below 65 %.

The first objective of the study was to determine the perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies among Nursing students.
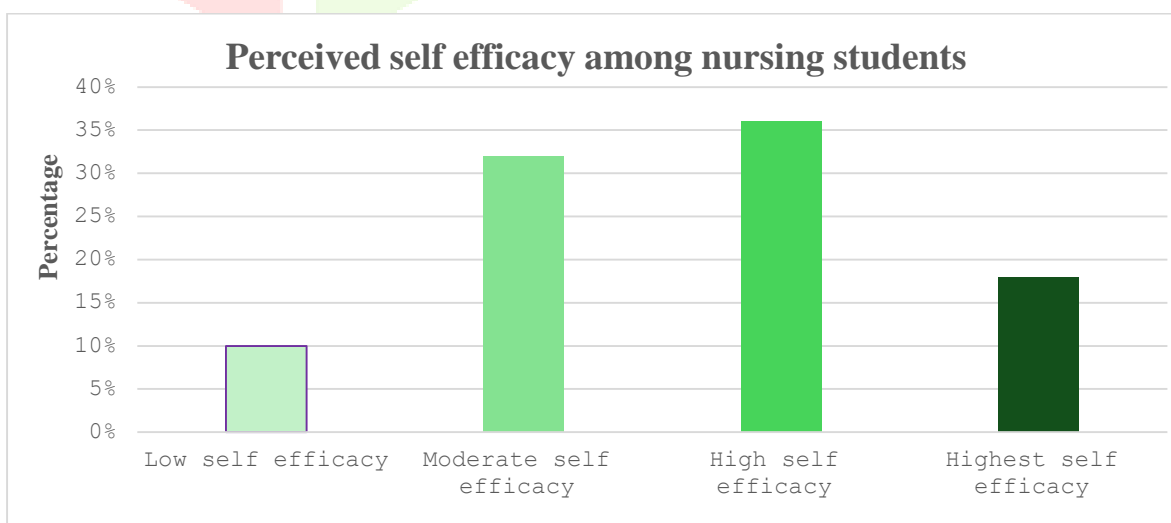

Fig. 1: Percentage distribution of perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies among Nursing students

The above bar diagram showed the perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies. Nearly 36 (37.5%) of them fell into the high self-efficacy, while 18 (18.8%) scored in the highest self-efficacy. Only a small percentage, 10 (10.4%) demonstrated low self-efficacy. The remaining 32 (33.3 %) had moderate self-efficacy in nursing competencies. The mean perceived self-efficacy score among the 96 nursing students was 77.1 ± 12.4, indicating a generally high self-efficacy in nursing competencies.

These findings were consistent with a study conducted by **Rady S M., Ellietey N S (2023)** among 65 senior nursing students on assessment of the level of self-efficacy among newly graduate nursing students , it appeared in the result that 39 (60.5%) of them showed moderate self-efficacy, 22 (33.3%) of them showed high self-efficacy, 4 (6.2%) perceived low self-efficacy.

The second objective of the study was to assess the readiness for professional nursing practice among Nursing students.

Table 1 : Frequency and percentage distribution of readiness for professional Nursing practice among Nursing students

N=96

S.No	Readiness for professional Nursing practice	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard deviation
1	High readiness	46	43.8%		
2	Moderate readiness	46	43.8%	22.9	3.8
3	Low readiness	4	12.4%		

The above table 1 showed the percentage distribution of readiness for professional Nursing practice, many nursing students 46(43.8%) were in high readiness and another 46 (43.8%) showed moderate readiness, while 4 (12.4%) fell in the low readiness. The mean and standard deviation for readiness in professional nursing practice was 22.9 ± 3.8.

The above findings were congruent with the study conducted by **Bashaer A et al. (2024)** 135 among intern nursing students in the Al Jouf Region, Saudi Arabia to assess their readiness for professional nursing practice during the transition to clinical work, and concluded that most of the students (63.7%) had moderate readiness, while 36.3% demonstrated high self-regulation and 33.3% showed high collaborative interpersonal relationships. This suggests that most students feel prepared to enter the workforce.

The third objective was to examine the relationship between perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies and readiness for professional nursing practice
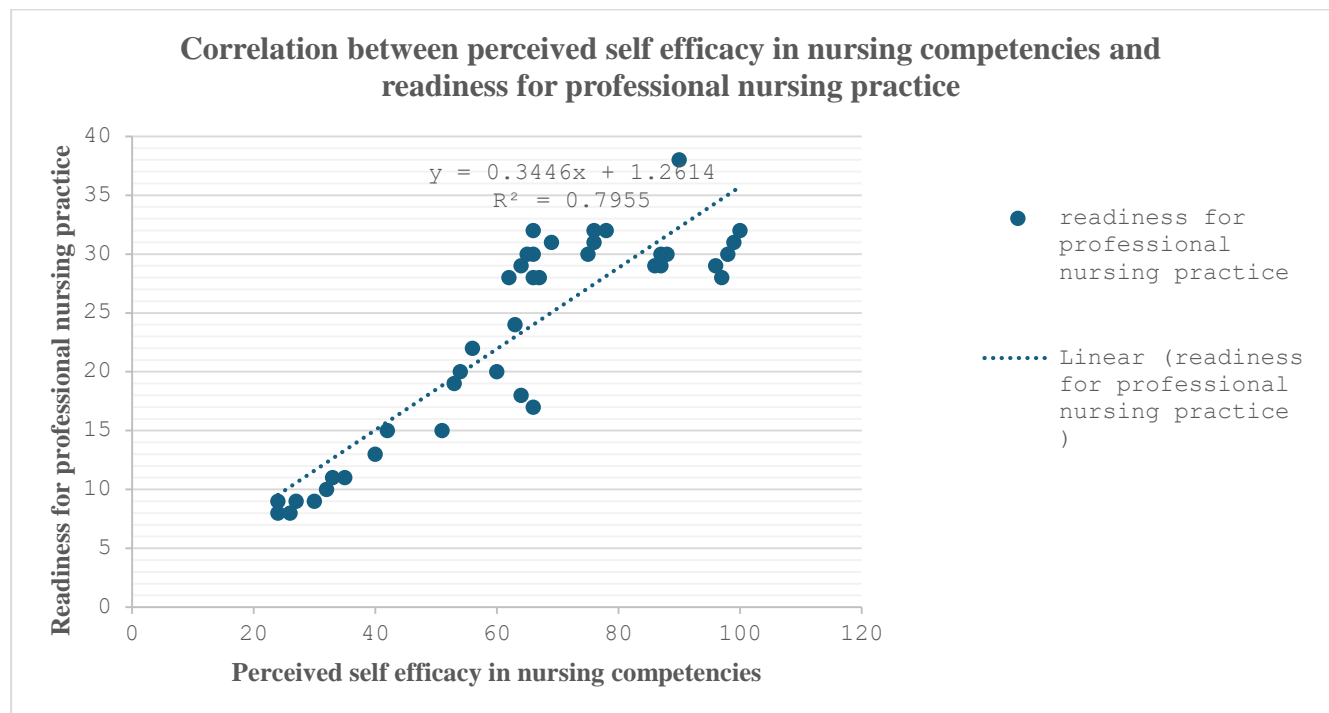

Figure 3. Scatter plot for correlation between perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies and readiness for professional nursing practice among Nursing students.

The above figure 3 showed that, there was a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.79$, $p<0.001$) between self-efficacy in nursing competencies and readiness for professional Nursing practice.

The above findings were supported comparable with the study conducted by **Ersoy E and Ayaz-Alkaya S (2023)** among 832 nursing students in Ankara, Turkey to assess the relationship between academic self-efficacy, personal responsibility, and readiness for professional nursing practice, and concluded that fourth-year students had a mean readiness for practice score of 63.53 , and there was a significant positive correlation between academic self-efficacy and readiness for practice ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher self-efficacy was strongly associated with greater readiness for professional practice. Thus it is indicated that higher self-efficacy is associated with greater readiness for professional nursing practice. Students who feel competent are more likely to approach new challenges with confidence, thus increasing their perceived readiness.

The fourth objective was to associate the selected demographic variables among nursing students and their perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies and readiness for professional nursing practice.

The chi square analysis of demographic variables with perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies were analyzed. The findings revealed that, demographic variables such as age (χ^2 = 6.236, df=6) and gender (χ^2 = 2.24, df= 3) had no association with perceived self-efficacy in nursing competencies. Academic performance (χ^2 = 1.915, p<0.05) was significantly associated with perceived self-efficacy in Nursing competencies.

The chi square analysis of demographic variables such as age (χ^2 = 45.169, df=4), gender (χ^2 = 1.907 , df= 2) had no association with readiness for professional Nursing practice whereas academic performance (χ^2 =51.8 df=4) had significant association with readiness for professional nursing practice. Students with higher academic scores were more likely to report better readiness for professional nursing practice, while gender, age, and year of study showed no significant association with either self-efficacy in nursing competencies or readiness for professional nursing practice.

Nursing Implications

Nursing Practice

- Enhances the confidence of new graduates in delivering safe and effective patient care, which enables nurses to make sound clinical decisions, communicate effectively with patients, and perform procedures independently.
- Helping nurses adapt quickly to workplace expectations and build clinical competence.
- Promotes patient safety and contributes to the overall quality of nursing care, empowering nurses to follow best practices, report incidents responsibly, and uphold high care standards.

Nursing Education

- Peer learning, case-based discussions, and guided journals enhance self-efficacy and critical thinking, helping nurses collaborate, analyze patient scenarios, and develop problem-solving skills.
- Encourages the development of leadership qualities and professional accountability among nursing students, preparing them to take initiative, manage teams, and uphold ethical standards in practice.

Nursing Administration

- Providing nurses with clear guidance and support during their initial stages of employment.
- Implementation of tools to assess self-efficacy and readiness can aid in competency mapping and workforce planning, helping nurse leaders identify areas for growth and allocate resources effectively.

Nursing Research

- Generates evidence on the influence of self-efficacy on professional readiness and performance outcomes, guiding nurses and educators to design interventions that enhance confidence and clinical ability.
- Future studies should adopt longitudinal designs to track changes in self-efficacy over time, helping nurses and organizations understand how confidence evolves throughout a nursing career.

Recommendations

- Conduct studies to evaluate the effect of structured preceptorship programs during internships on nursing students' self-efficacy and readiness for professional practice.
- Conduct true experimental study on the impact of simulation-based training in high-risk clinical scenarios on students' confidence, decision-making, and competence.
- Execute qualitative studies to do continuous assessment and feedback systems in promoting reflective learning and improving clinical performance.

Conclusion

The findings of this study proved that self-efficacy is a stronger, more immediate predictor of nursing students' readiness for professional practice than clinical competency alone. Specifically, while nursing students generally achieve required academic and clinical competencies, this successful transition into the work force is overwhelmingly contingent upon their confidence in their ability to perform these competencies autonomously. Therefore, to optimize graduate nurse preparedness and reduce reality shock educational strategies must focus on cultivating robust self-efficacy through high fidelity, high stake learning environment that reinforce students belief in their own capability rather than relying on the mastery on psychomotor skills

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Conflict of interest statement

The author/ researcher declares that there were no conflicts of interest concerning this research work or its publication.

Ethical statement

The study was conducted after obtaining ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of St Xavier's Catholic College of Nursing Research and Development Committee -Institutional Review Board.

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