

# LECTURER'S EXPERIENCE OF GUIDING STUDENTS FACING EXIT EXAM AS A REQUIREMENT TO GET A NERS DEGREE

Indonesian Nursing Journal of Education and Clinic (INJEC)  
IN PRESS  
Volume 7 Issue 2, December 2022  
DOI: 10.24990/injec.v7i2.499  
injec.aipni-ainec.org/index.php/INJEC/index  
Received : 2022-10-03  
Accepted : 2022-11-15  
The Association of Indonesian Nurse Education Center (AINEC)

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The exit exam is a competency test that is carried out at the final stage after completing all stages of education which is part of the assessment of student learning outcomes in the health sector. The aim of this study was to explore in depth the experience of lecturers guiding students to face the exit exam as a condition for obtaining a nursing degree.

**Method:** The study used a phenomenological design. Five participants were selected by purposive sampling with criteria inclusion.

**Result:** The data were gathered by conducting in-depth interviews and analyzed by Collaizi method. The result emerged four themes, namely: 1) Response to application of exit exam; 2) Facilitating students in facing the exit exam; 3) Obstacles in guiding students; 4) Lecturers' expectations of the Association of Indonesian Nurses Education Institutions.

**Conclusion:** It is recommended for clinical supervisors to provide intensive guidance to nursing students so that they can prepare themselves to take the exit exam.

**Keywords:** *lecturer, guide, exit exam, student, nurse*

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## INTRODUCTION

Schools of nursing are now initiating a variety of interventions to ensure that their graduates have the tools necessary to pass this required examination, and one such intervention is the implementation of an exit exam (Challenger, 2014). The exit exam is testing students at the end of the study program for program achievement, namely learning outcomes (Ahmad et al., 2014).

Currently, the challenge in nursing education is the Exit Examination System, which has only been implemented in 2020 for the Health Education Program based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No.2 of 2020 (Mendikbud RI, 2020). By Exit Examination System what is meant is the policy in which health students graduate. Graduates must be declared competent after taking the national competency test. Also, the latest regulatory changes from Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture regarding the competency test mechanism are one of the requirements for graduation of health students in tertiary institutions with a vocational program; the proportion of the cumulative value assessment is 60%, and the competency test is 40% with the Exit Examination System (Ose et al., 2021).

NCLEX has been conducted for twelve periods with an overview of NCLEX results nationally including in the VII period 37.87%, VIII 37.42%, IX period 33.46% and X-period 39.3%. The NCLEX graduation rate nationally only reaches 37% (Mushawwir et al., 2019). We see competency tests in other countries, for example in America, the exam system is called the NCLEX (Nursing Council Licensure Examination). NCLEX is a computerized examination system to determine the ability of a nurse, both in

terms of cognitive, skill, and attitude so that they are able to provide nursing care safely and effectively at all levels of nursing services. The results of this NCLEX examination will be the basis for the National Council of State Board of Nursing (NCSBN) in granting a license as a practical nursing (PN) or register nurse (RN). This is the same as the current implementation of nurse competency tests in Indonesia (Hartina et al., 2017).

Standardized examinations in nursing programs may be used to facilitate admission decisions, assess program progress, and ensure success on licensure examinations. A study noted that academic difficulties are experienced by 6% to 15% of all health profession students, with 30% of college freshmen in need of basic studies remediation. Timely academic assessment using standardized testing is vital to identify at-risk students for early remediation. Individualized remediation plans meet student needs to facilitate academic success during the program and future success on licensure examinations (Maize et al., 2010).

Successful graduates of prelicensure nursing programs are eligible to take the NCLEX-RN. The NCLEX-RN is a high-stakes test not only for nursing program graduates, but also for nursing programs. For graduates, NCLEX-RN is the final hurdle they must clear before starting a professional nursing career. For nursing programs, the success of graduates on the NCLEX-RN is considered an indicator of the quality of the nursing program (Brodersen, 2018; Crow et al., 2004).

In nursing education, it is essential to assess nursing competencies for the future professional role, such as the assessment of clinical competence by

bedside exams. Unfortunately, the students in the current study were nervous and fearful of failing. They were focused on the assessment itself and insecure of their own capability to perform the forthcoming clinical practical exam in a correct manner. However, they tried to balance their nervousness, and stress prior the exam by increasing their competence and strategic thinking. For an educator, this information is important, to be able to create relevant learning activities helping the students to succeed and pass the exam (Bengtsson et al., 2016; Spector & Alexander, 2006).

The role of supervisor or clinical instructor is advisor, role model, coach, problem solver, teacher, encouragement, organizer and guide. Individual guidance during practice in accordance with the supervisor's duties is a giver of encouragement and facilitator so that it can increase the professionalism and self-development of students (Kalén et al., 2010).

We discussed issues related to the exit exam on multiple occasions in a series of personal communications with a high-level university administrator familiar with the nursing program at Aufa Royhan University. Originally, the administrator stated that the failure of students to meet the exam benchmark was related to lack of student studying and poor faculty buy-in regarding the importance of the exam. However, she later stated that the delivery method of the curriculum likely needs to be updated. The adequacy of the curriculum content was called into question by the large percentage of students not meeting the exit exam benchmark. However, the curriculum is aligned to the most current NCLEX-RN test plan and failure rates for NCLEX-RN are low, suggesting that the evaluation methods, and not the curriculum, need to

be investigated (Challenger, 2014). However, schools are using the exit exam as if it does predict failure and are preventing students from progressing in the program, graduating, and taking the state board exam.

The aim of this study was to explore in depth the experience of lecturers guiding students to face the exit exam as a condition for obtaining a nursing degree.

## **METHODS**

### *Study design*

This study uses a qualitative study with a descriptive phenomenology approach which aims to reach true meanings through engaging in-depth into reality (Laverty, 2003). Husserl valued the experience of phenomenon as perceived by human consciousness which should be an object of scientific study. The descriptive phenomenology design was chosen so that it can explore more deeply about how the lecturer's experience guides students to face the exit exam as a condition for obtaining a nursing degree (Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

### *Participants*

The participants used in this study were lecturers who worked in Faculty of Health University of Aufa Royhan Padangsidempuan. The number of participants who participated in this study were five lecturers. Researchers determined five participants because data saturation had occurred so that no new information was obtained and experience had been gained (Polit & Hungler, 1999). Selection of participants was according to the inclusion criteria, namely: lecturers who have experience guiding nursing professional students for at least two years

and have been local supervisors of the Indonesian national competency test.

*Instruments*

The data collection tool in qualitative research is the researcher himself. The data collection method used in this study was in-depth interviews using the interview guide in Table.I that had been tested for the content validity index by three experts with the result being 0.80. Experts in this research include: Ns. Nanda Suryani Sagala, M.KM., Ns. Sukhri Herianto Ritonga, M.Kep., Ns. Rosmadani Hasibuan, M.Kep. Two of the five participants had conducted a pilot study with the aim of confirming the accuracy of the questions asked to the participants and the results of the interview will be made in the form of a transcript.

Table I. Interview Guide

No.	Questions
1.	What is your perception of the implementation of the competency test as an exit exam for a nurse's professional education?
2.	What was your experience in guiding the clinical practice of nursing professional students?
3.	What is your experience guiding students to take competency tests?
4.	What strategy do you use to improve students' ability to understand nursing concepts as material for case studies and competency test questions?
5.	How do you feel after obtaining the results of your students' exit exam?
6.	What will you do to increase the graduation of nursing profession students?

*Procedure*

The data collection procedure was carried out by researchers by conducting in-depth interviews with participants using

cell phones and simultaneously recording the results of conversations between researchers and participants. Before carrying out data collection, researchers conducted ethical clearance. Prior to data collection, a content validity index was first carried out with three experts. After that, the researcher conducted a pilot study on two participants. In collecting data, researchers used demographic data questionnaires consisting of initials, age, and gender. The researcher also used an interview guide in collecting data made by the researcher himself. In addition to the interview guide, field notes are also a tool used for data collection in this study.

*Data Analysis*

The descriptive Colaizzi method was used to analyze the obtained data. This method consists of seven steps as follows: (1) collecting the participants' descriptions, (2) understanding the depth of the meanings, (3) extracting the important sentences, (4) conceptualizing important themes, (5) categorizing the concepts and topics, (6) constructing comprehensive descriptions of the issues examined, and (7) bringing together new data into theme groups, from the results of clarification to participants by adding them and correcting the descriptions that have been perfected. out.

*Ethical Clearance*

This research has gone through an ethical test conducted at the health research ethics commission of Universitas Prima Medan and has obtained permission to obtain research number 059/KEPK/UNPRI/VIII/2022.

**RESULTS**

**Demographic Data Characteristics of Participants**

The number of respondents in this

study were five lecturers; three female and two male. Age between 30-35 years old four lecturers, and age between 36-40 years old one lecturer, the education of all lecturers is Master of Nursing and all have been working as lecturer between 5-10 years.

Table I. Demographic Data Characteristics of Participants

Characteristics	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	2	40
Female	3	60
<b>Age</b>		
30 - 35 year	4	80
36 - 40 year	1	20
<b>Education</b>		
Master of Nursing	5	100
<b>Length of Work</b>		
5 - 10 year	5	100

*Lecturers' Experience Guiding Students Facing Exit Exams as a Requirement for Obtaining a Nursing Degree*

The results of in-depth interviews with participants obtained four themes, namely lecturers' responses to the implementation of exit exams, facilitating students in facing exit exams, obstacles in guiding students and lecturers' expectations of the Association of Indonesian Nurses Education Institutions.

*Lecturers' response to the implementation of the exit exam*

The implementation of the exit exam policy by AIPNI has the support of supervisory lecturers in the Nursing Professional Education study program at Afa Royhan University, so that it can increase lecturers' motivation in preparing students for exit exams and also improve guidance methods so that students can pass NCLEX. In addition, the lecturers are

also worried that students will not pass NCLEX so they cannot attend the graduation, such as the following statement:

*"In my opinion, the implementation of exit-exam is actually very good for students, especially for graduate users" (P1)*

*"by adding various guidance methods in each carriage to provide guidance time on NCLEX questions on campus" (P2)*

*"adds enthusiasm to guide students and must share concentration in guiding students to be able to solve questions that might be tested" (P3)*

*"Secondly, there is a feeling of anxiety, ma'am, because we must be able to prepare students to be able to pass NCLEX" (P1)*

*Facilitating students in facing the exit exam*

Preparations made by lecturers to prepare students for exit exams are by participating in AIPNI activities such as Workshop Item Deployment and Item Review. In addition, lecturers are required to make questions such as the NCLEX question which will later be used during the Mid and Final Semester Examinations at the undergraduate stage. Additional guidance methods are carried out by lecturers by connecting cases of findings in managed patients with NCLEX questions, providing guidance on campus at each station and at the end of the nurse's station using questions from the siNERSI book and also questions made by lecturers, and making NCLEX Try Outs using CBT at campus. In addition to guiding offline, lecturers also provide online guidance via WhatsApp, Zoom and Google Meet. Like the following statements:

*"lecturers are required to make*

questions such as the NCLEX question so that it can be used to guide students, so it is a semester exam question and also a try out question before trying on campus" (P1)

"lecturers participate in AIPNI activities such as Item development and Item review" (P2)

"Each station and at the end of the station we have special guidance to discuss questions that are similar to NCLEX" (P3)

"Before there is a national NCLEX try out on campus, we make a try out using the CBT room, and we require students to join the try out" (P4)

"Besides that, I have a WA group to guide me in discussing SME issues, sometimes I use Zoom" (P3)

*Obstacles in guiding students*

Many obstacles are encountered by lecturers in guiding students such as adjusting the right time to guide, lack of student attendance, mastery of student nursing basic concepts and also network constraints when providing online guidance via Zoom, Google Meet or WhatsApp. As for the participant's statements as follows:

"if there is guidance at a hospital where students are present but sometimes it is also difficult to distribute time for guidance in each carriage, the students don't all come because it's already on duty every day" (P1)

"It's difficult, ma'am, if the students do not master the concept of nursing, so it's hard to guide them" (P2)

"In addition to clinical guidance, I and my friends also do online guidance, some use Zoom, sometimes through WA to discuss NCLEX" (P3)

"If online tutoring sometimes the network is not friendly and the students don't all follow ma'am" (P4)

*Lecturers' Expectations Against the Association of Indonesian Nurses' Educational Institutions*

All participants in the study stated that AIPNI should make online tutoring at an affordable cost and use the siNERSI mobile application for free and analyze the results of implementing the exit exam, such as the following statement:

"Yes, maybe AIPNI can provide online tutoring at an affordable cost" (P2)

"What I know is that some from AIPNI have to pay first and then we can use them, want it for free, ma'am" (P3)

"If I think this policy is very good, my suggestion is that AIPNI should look at the results of this exit exam, whether it can improve the quality or competence of Indonesian nurses graduates" (P5)

Table 2. Table Matrix

<b>Theme 1: Lecturers' response to the implementation of the exit exam</b>	
<b>Sub Themes:</b>	<b>Categories :</b>
1. Positive Feedback	a. Support exit exam implementation policy b. Improve the guidance method
2. Negative Feedback	c. Increase motivation to prepare students for the exit exam Worried
<b>Theme 2: Facilitating students in facing the exit exam Preparations</b>	
<b>Sub Themes :</b>	<b>Categories:</b>
1. Intensive guidance	a. Guiding students in the practice field a. Guiding students on campus
2. Provide	

questions	b. Making questions for AIPNI review
	c. Making question bank
3. Make a try out	a. Try out in institution
	a. Offline
4. How to guide students	b. Online

**Theme 3: Obstacles in guiding students**

<b>Sub Themes :</b>	<b>Categories:</b>
1. Offline	a. Time adjustment
	b. Student attendance
	c. Mastery of the basic concepts of student nursing
2. Online	a. Network
	b. Student attendance

**Theme 4: Lecturers' expectations against the Association of Indonesian Nurses' Educational Institutions**

<b>Sub Themes :</b>	<b>Categories:</b>
1. Competency Test Guidance	- Online competency test guidance at an affordable cost
2. siNERSI mobile app	- Free siNERSI mobile app
3. Policy	- Analyzing the results of the implementation of the exit exam

**DISCUSSION**

*Lecturer's response to the implementation of the exit exam*

Based on Law no. 36 of 2014 and Law no. 38 of 2014 concerning nursing that students in the field of health at the end of the vocational and professional education must follow the national NCLEX (Republik Indonesia, 2014a, 2014b). During their journey, NCLEX Nurses underwent several adjustments to ensure the quality of nursing graduates across the country. One of them is the implementation of the exit exam at NCLEX, which means that NCLEX

Nurses are part of vocational education and the nursing profession, in other words, students are declared to have completed their education if they have passed NCLEX. This is stated in the circular letter of the Director General of Belmawa No. 508/B/TU/2018 (Ditjen Belmawa, 2018).

The exit exam was first implemented in 2021, and its application received a positive response from the lecturers of the nursing professional education study program, Aafa Royhan University, Padangsidempuan City. With the implementation of this exit exam, it motivates lecturers to prepare students to graduate on time, attend graduation and be able to get a job. In addition, lecturers also felt anxious about the implementation of this policy.

This was due to concerns about students who were unable to face the exit exam. However, this anxiety did not last long, because students were very enthusiastic about following the guidance given by the lecturers, both in practice and on campus. Yuliani (2020) stated that nurse graduates need thorough preparation to face NCLEX, such as following intensive guidance conducted by institutional lecturers, independent study on NCLEX questions and participating in NCLEX try outs.

The results of the NCLEX exit exams for students showed quite satisfactory numbers, from 91 students who took the NCLEX exit exams only four did not pass, so that the graduation percentage reached 96%. However, this did not make the lecturers feel satisfied with the results. The graduation target that has been set by the Nursing Professional Program Education Study Program at Aafa Royhan University in Padangsidempuan City for this year is

100%.

#### *Facilitating students in facing the exit exam*

To prepare students for the exit exam, the role of the lecturer as a clinical supervisor is needed. Clinical learning is very important in a nursing education, because clinical learning is a student learning process to become a professional nurse (Mahanani et al., 2014). For this reason, lecturers must first prepare themselves to prepare students for the exit exam, namely participating in activities carried out by AIPNI, training item development and item review. With this training, it is hoped that lecturers will be able to make case-based questions that can be used as questions for mid- and final-semester exams at the undergraduate level, as well as on NCLEX try outs that are conducted on campus before students take the national NCLEX try out and NCLEX exit exams.

The head of the study program for the nursing profession program issued a policy for all clinical supervisors, namely requiring lecturers to provide intensive guidance at each station and at the end of the nursing station, both offline and online. In addition, it requires lecturers to make new questions to be used as NCLEX try out questions which are conducted on campus before students take part in the National NCLEX. The policy received support from the Chancellor and the Aufa Royhan foundation, namely by providing several computer units that were used as a Computer-Based test (CBT) room during the NCLEX try out and this CBT room was free to use to facilitate students to take part in the NCLEX try out. Study states that learning that is carried out over a long period of time will not be efficient if it is only done once or rarely, so that time management affects learning and can

provide energy and direct individual learning activities. Studying independently or individually related to NCLEX material and practice questions is important for graduate nurses because it can increase mastery of the material, but there are other activities that are no less important, namely the NCLEX try out (Puspitasari, 2013).

Institutions have an essential role in preparing students for competency exams. Institutions can do many things through strategies contained in institutional policies. The readiness of the institution to motivate students in facing the competency exam of the exit exam can help students mentally prepare for the exam as well as the institution's efforts to provide tutoring or debriefing in the face of competency tests so that students have a thorough preparation for the exam. The institution requires students to participate in a try out held by the Association or the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the institution holds an internal try out every semester. The institutions can have group discussions on NCLEX standard questions so that students often work on questions that will improve their understanding in facing the exit exam (Waliulu & Rumakey, 2022).

#### *Obstacles in guiding students*

Preparing students to graduate from NCLEX is not easy. There are obstacles faced by the supervising lecturers such as adjusting the time for intensive guidance in the practice field and at each station and the end of the nursing station carried out on campus. This study is in line with research which states that supervisors must also divide their time between learning carried out in class and also guide students in hospitals or in practice fields. There are several obstacles



apart from the guidance facilities, such as the short guidance time, so that it is not optimal (Etlidawati & Yulistika, 2022).

Another obstacle is the lack of student attendance caused by students who have been present in clinical practice so that, in order to spend time following intensive guidance on campus at each station, students are sometimes absent and the percentage of student attendance is between 50-70% of 91 students. However, when intensive guidance activities were carried out at the end of the station, students were very enthusiastic about participating in the guidance to discuss NCLEX questions and the percentage of student attendance was between 80-90% of the 91 students.

The existence of a preceptor in the hospital where students practice is also very important. Experience and knowledge possessed by the preceptor is related to what will be conveyed to students. In addition to providing nursing care to patients, nurses will always interact with the patient's family regarding health services. A lot of information is needed from families regarding patient data, so the new information regarding patient-centered care makes the preceptor feel interested in knowing more about this material so that he can apply it to patients and families and can share knowledge with students (Rusyani, 2012).

Lack of mastery of nursing concepts is also an obstacle faced by lecturers when providing intensive guidance, so that lecturers must repeat nursing concepts related to examples of NCLEX questions. To anticipate this, the supervisor advises each student to have a *siNERSI* book to make it easier for students to understand nursing concepts related to examples of NCLEX questions. A study stated that knowledge about the

meaning of NCLEX, the subjects tested, and the NCLEX grid is an important part of the preparation process for NCLEX (Yuliani, 2020).

In addition to guiding offline, lecturers also provide online guidance, such as discussing NCLEX questions via WhatsApp, Zoom and Google Meet. However, there are obstacles faced, namely a weak network, so the guidance is not optimal. In addition, the presence of students taking online guidance is also lacking, this is because many students live in areas that have weak internet networks and they have difficulty using the media. This is in line with research which states that many students live in areas whose geographical conditions have various obstacles regarding internet signal strength during online learning because this learning method is very dependent on the internet network (Ratnawati & Utama, 2021).

Online caching, nursing clinic courses, remediation policy, fourteen-step exit examination review, courses focused on solving clinical decision problems, competency test debriefing courses, courses and tests with adaptive quizzing systems, fundamental development of educational curricula, learning methods, and identification of at-risk students with adaptive quizzing software are some of the strategies the institution has implemented to improve student graduation in the NCLEX-RN competency test (Mushawwir et al., 2019). Socialization and E-course training were found to have a positive impact on preparing and training students to be familiar with the practice of competency test questions, according to research about using of the E-course application during a pandemic on student preparation for the Indonesian Nurse Competency test, positively influencing how well-prepared and trained students

are to practice competency exam questions (Dyna et al., 2022).

*Lecturers' expectations of the Association of Indonesian Nurses Education Institutions.*

To make it easier for students to prepare for the exit exam, lecturers expect AIPNI to make online NCLEX guidance at an affordable cost for students, because many students take online NCLEX guidance with other providers. And based on the results of interviews with students, it was stated that online guidance really helped them master the NCLEX materials and questions, so that preparation for taking NCLEX was maximized. In addition, the lecturers hope that mobile synergy becomes a free application that is freely accessible to students.

All participants in this study have high hopes for AIPNI in order to improve the quality of Indonesian nurse graduates so that they can compete both at home and abroad. By analyzing the results of the exit exam, which is the first time it has been applied, it is hoped that AIPNI will be able to develop better policies and be able to improve the competence of nursing graduates and this is in line with the goals of DIKTI (2014) which states that one of the goals of NCLEX is to enforce the professional accountability of nurses in carrying out their roles.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicate that clinical supervisors play a very important role in helping students face the exit exam. By providing intensive guidance both in practice and on campus, it will help students to master the material and questions used in NCLEX. Support from the Institute is also very much needed, namely by providing a CBT room that will be used by students to try out NCLEX.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank the University of Afa Royhan Padangsidempuan for helping researchers to fund this research.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest..

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