

Nursing faculty perspectives on semester-based versus year-based academic curriculum

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Abstract— The present study was conducted to compare nursing faculty perspectives on semester-based and year-based academic curricula in selected nursing institutions of Kerala. Curriculum organization plays a significant role in influencing teaching-learning processes, clinical training, assessment methods, and student outcomes in nursing education. A quantitative descriptive comparative cross-sectional research design was adopted for the study. A total of 54 nursing faculty members were selected through non-probability convenience sampling. Data were collected using a structured rating scale consisting of demographic variables and perception statements measured on a five-point Likert scale. The findings revealed that faculty members had a more favourable perception towards the year-based curriculum (Mean = 198.00 ± 18.54) compared to the semester-based curriculum (Mean = 128.35 ± 34.22). While 74.1% of participants demonstrated a favourable perception towards the year-based curriculum, 70.4% showed only a moderately favourable perception towards the semester-based curriculum. Domain-wise analysis indicated that the year-based curriculum was preferred in areas such as curriculum organization, teaching-learning process, student outcomes, clinical training, innovation, and examination preparedness. Faculty also reported higher workload and examination burden under the semester-based system. No statistically significant association was found between faculty perception and selected demographic variables including age, educational qualification, teaching experience, and designation. The study concludes that nursing faculty in the selected institutions of Kerala generally prefer the year-based curriculum due to its perceived advantages in clinical integration, continuity of learning, improved student outcomes, and administrative feasibility. The findings provide valuable evidence for curriculum planners, nursing administrators, and policymakers in making informed decisions regarding curriculum reforms in nursing education.

Index Term -Academic curriculum, Faculty perspectives, Semester-Based Curriculum, Year-Based Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum is the basis of professional education and plays a crucial role in determining the competencies, knowledge, attitudes, and skills of future nurses. In nursing education, curriculum organization influences teaching-learning processes, clinical exposure, assessment methods, faculty workload, and student outcomes. Traditionally, many nursing institutions in India followed a year-based curriculum, where students study subjects over an academic year and appear for annual examinations. In recent years, educational reforms and competency-based approaches have encouraged the adoption of a semester-based curriculum, characterized by shorter instructional periods, continuous assessment, and more frequent examinations.

The transition from year-based to semester-based curriculum has generated diverse opinions among nursing educators. Supporters of the semester system argue that it promotes constant learning, regular assessment, outcome-based education, and greater student engagement. Critics, however, point to increased examination frequency, administrative burden, fragmented clinical postings, and higher faculty workload. Since nursing education requires integration of theory, clinical practice, and competency-based assessment, understanding faculty perspectives is essential for effective curriculum planning.

This study therefore aims to compare nursing faculty perspectives on semester-based and year-based academic curricula in selected nursing institutions of Kerala.

Background of the Study

Educational systems worldwide have progressively shifted toward learner-centered and competency-based curricula. The semester system is widely adopted in higher education because it allows periodic evaluation, modular learning, and flexibility in curriculum delivery. However, nursing education differs from many academic disciplines because it requires extensive clinical exposure, continuity of patient care experiences, and integration of theoretical knowledge with practical skills.

In India, the implementation of semester-based curricula in nursing programs has been influenced by university regulations, accreditation standards, and the need for outcome-based education. Nevertheless, many faculty members who have experience with both systems continue to debate which curriculum better supports student learning, clinical competence, and administrative feasibility.

Previous studies have reported mixed findings. Some studies suggest that semester systems improve continuous learning and student participation, whereas others indicate that year-based curricula provide better continuity of clinical postings and reduce examination-related stress. Given these conflicting observations, empirical comparison of faculty perspectives becomes necessary.

Need for the Study

The need for this study arises from several practical and educational considerations:

Nursing faculty are directly involved in curriculum implementation, teaching, clinical supervision, assessment, and administration; their perceptions provide valuable insights into curriculum effectiveness. The semester-based curriculum has been increasingly introduced in nursing education, yet concerns regarding workload, clinical integration, and examination burden remain.

Limited research is available comparing faculty perceptions of semester-based and year-based curricula within the context of nursing institutions in Kerala.

Evidence-based understanding of faculty perspectives can assist policymakers, universities, and nursing institutions in curriculum revision and educational planning.

The findings may help identify strengths and weaknesses of both curriculum systems and guide future reforms in nursing education.

Statement of the Problem

“A comparative study of nursing faculty perspectives on semester-based versus year-based academic curriculum in selected institutions of Kerala.”

Objectives of the Study

Primary Objective

1. To compare the perspectives of nursing faculty regarding semester-based and year-based academic curriculum in selected nursing institutions of Kerala.

Secondary Objectives

2. To assess the perspective of nursing faculty regarding the semester-based academic curriculum.
3. To assess the perspective of nursing faculty regarding the year-based academic curriculum.
4. To compare the perspectives of nursing faculty on semester-based and year-based academic curriculum.
5. To determine the association between faculty perspectives and selected demographic variables such as age, gender, educational qualification, years of teaching experience, designation, and type of institution.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between nursing faculty perception scores regarding semester-based and year-based curriculum.

H₁: There is a significant difference between nursing faculty perception scores regarding semester-based and year-based curriculum.

H₀₂: There is no significant association between faculty perception scores and selected demographic variables.

H₂: There is a significant association between faculty perception scores and selected demographic variables.

Assumptions

1. Nursing faculty have sufficient experience to evaluate academic curricula.
2. Participants will respond honestly to the rating scale.
3. The rating scale adequately measures faculty perception regarding curriculum systems.
4. Both curriculum systems are implemented according to institutional and university guidelines.

Delimitations

1. The study was limited to nursing faculty working in selected nursing institutions in Kerala.
2. Only faculty who were available during the data collection period were included.
3. The study focused on faculty perspectives and did not assess student outcomes directly.
4. Data were collected using a self-administered rating scale.

Limitations

1. The study relied on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by personal bias.
2. The sample predominantly consisted of female faculty, limiting gender comparisons.
3. Most participants belonged to private institutions, restricting comparison by institution type.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

A quantitative comparative research approach was adopted.

Research Design

Descriptive comparative cross-sectional design

Population

The target population consisted of nursing faculty working in selected nursing colleges of Kerala.

Sample

The study included 54 nursing faculty members selected from nursing institutions in Kerala.

Sampling Technique

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used.

Variables

Independent Variable: Type of academic curriculum (semester-based vs year-based)

Dependent Variable: Faculty perception score

Demographic Variables: Age, gender, educational qualification, years of teaching experience, designation, and type of institution.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Nursing faculty currently employed in selected nursing colleges.
2. Faculty involved in teaching undergraduate nursing students.
3. Faculty willing to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Faculty not directly involved in teaching activities.
2. Faculty unwilling to participate.

Data Collection Tool

A structured rating scale consisting of demographic variables and perception items across ten domains was used. Responses were scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The total score ranged from 50 to 250.

Scoring Interpretation

Score Range	Interpretation
188–250	Favourable perception
125–187	Moderately favourable perception
50–124	Unfavourable perception

Ethical Considerations

Permission was obtained from the institutions, informed consent was taken from participants, confidentiality was maintained, and participation was voluntary.

RESULTS**1. Demographic Characteristics**

Table 4.1: Distribution of Nursing Faculty According to Gender

(N = 54)

Gender	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Male	1	1.9
Female	53	98.1
Total	54	100

The majority of the nursing faculty were female (98.1%), while only 1.9% were male, indicating female predominance among the study participants.

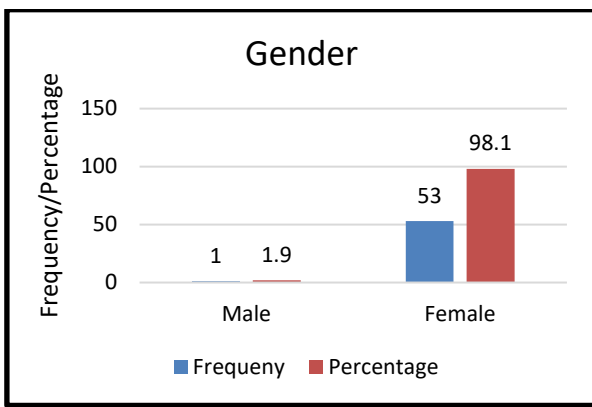


Figure 4.1: Distribution of Nursing Faculty According to Gender

Table 4.2: Distribution of Nursing Faculty According to Type of Institution (N = 54)

Type of Institution	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Government	0	0
Private	54	100
Total	54	100

All participants (100%) belonged to private nursing institutions. No faculty from government institutions participated in the study.

2. Perception Regarding Semester-Based Curriculum

Table 4.3: Perception regarding Semester – Based Curriculum

Statistic	Value
Number of respondents	54
Mean Score	128.35
Standard Deviation	34.22

Minimum score - 17

Maximum Score – 180

Table 4.4: Perception level of sample regarding Semester-Based Curriculum

Perception Level	Frequency	Percentage
Favourable	0	0%
Moderately Favourable	38	70.4%
Unfavourable	16	29.6%

3. Perception Regarding Year-Based Curriculum

Table 4.5: Perception regarding Year-Based Curriculum

Statistic	Value
Number of respondents	54
Mean Score	198.00
Standard Deviation	18.54

Minimum Score – 148

Maximum Score - 238

Table 4.6: Perception level of sample regarding Year-Based Curriculum

Perception Level	Frequency	Percentage
Favourable	40	74.1%
Moderately Favourable	14	25.9%
Unfavourable	0	0%

The mean score for each domain was calculated by averaging the responses of all faculty members. Higher mean scores indicate a more favourable perception of the curriculum in that domain.

4. Comparison of Faculty Perspectives on Semester-Based and Year-Based Curriculum

Table 4.7: Comparison of Faculty Perspectives on Semester-Based and Year-Based Curriculum

Curriculum Type	Mean Score	SD
Semester-Based Curriculum	128.35	34.22
Year-Based Curriculum	198.00	18.54

The mean perception score for the year-based curriculum (198) was substantially higher than that of the semester-based curriculum (128.35)

This indicates that nursing faculty members showed a significantly more positive perception toward the year-based curriculum compared with the semester-based curriculum.

The relatively lower standard deviation in the year-based curriculum suggests greater agreement among faculty members regarding its benefits, whereas the higher variability observed in semester-based curriculum scores indicates differing opinions among faculty.

Table 4.8: Domain wise distribution of Year-Based and Semester-Based Curriculum Mean Scores

Domain	Year-Based Curriculum Mean Score	Semester-Based Curriculum Mean Score	Preferred Curriculum
Domain 1: Curriculum Structure & Organization	3.98	2.92	Year-Based
Domain 2: Teaching-Learning Process	4.04	2.95	Year-Based
Domain 3: Evaluation & Assessment	3.44	2.96	Year-Based
Domain 4: Student Outcomes	4.19	2.81	Year-Based
Domain 5: Administrative & Practical Feasibility	3.71	3.26	Year-Based
Domain 6: Clinical Training & Practical Exposure	4.25	2.62	Year-Based
Domain 7: Faculty Stress & Workload	3.02	3.65	Semester-Based**
Domain 8: Innovation & Skill Development	4.06	3.04	Year-Based
Domain 9: OSCE & Clinical Assessment	3.67	3.32	Year-Based
Domain 10: Examination Duration & Frequency	3.94	3.12	Year-Based

Faculty perceived the year-based curriculum (Mean = 3.98) as superior to the semester-based curriculum (Mean = 2.92) in terms of syllabus distribution, academic planning, and overall organization. The year-based curriculum (Mean = 4.04) received considerably higher ratings than the semester-based curriculum (Mean = 2.95), indicating better teaching effectiveness, flexibility, and teacher-student interaction. The year-based curriculum obtained a favourable mean score of 3.44. Faculty strongly favoured the year-based curriculum (Mean = 4.19) over the semester-based curriculum (Mean = 2.81) regarding student outcomes. The year-based curriculum (Mean = 3.71) was perceived as more feasible and easier to manage than the semester-based curriculum (Mean = 3.26). This domain showed the largest difference between curricula. Faculty rated the year-based curriculum very highly (Mean = 4.25) compared with the semester-based curriculum (Mean = 2.62), suggesting that year-based education provides better continuity of clinical postings and clinical skill development. The semester-based curriculum received a higher mean score (3.65) than the year-based curriculum (3.02). However, since most statements in this domain relate to increased stress and workload, higher scores indicate greater perceived burden. Therefore, faculty reported higher stress and workload under the semester-based system. The year-based curriculum (Mean = 4.06) was rated more favourably than the semester-based curriculum (Mean = 3.04) for promoting innovative teaching, skill-based learning, and outcome-based education. Faculty rated the year-based curriculum (Mean = 3.67) slightly higher than the semester-based curriculum (Mean = 3.32) for objective clinical assessment and clinical competence. The year-based curriculum (Mean = 3.94) was perceived as providing better student preparedness and more comprehensive examination preparation compared to the semester-based curriculum (Mean = 3.12).

5. Association with Demographic Variables

To determine the association between the perspectives of nursing faculty and selected demographic variables such as age, gender, educational qualification, years of teaching experience, designation, and type of institution.

Variable	Test	Statistic	p-value	Result
Age	Pearson Correlation	$r = -0.233$	0.091	Not Significant
Teaching Experience	Pearson Correlation	$r = -0.203$	0.149	Not Significant
Educational Qualification	ANOVA	$F = 1.799$	0.176	Not Significant
Designation	ANOVA	$F = 1.375$	0.206	Not Significant

A weak negative correlation was observed between age and perception score ($r = -0.233$). However, the association was not statistically significant ($p = 0.091 > 0.05$). Therefore, age did not significantly influence the perception of nursing faculty regarding the curriculum. There is no significant association between age and perception score. A weak negative relationship was observed between teaching experience and perception score ($r = -0.203$). However, the association was not statistically significant ($p = 0.149 > 0.05$). Hence, years of teaching experience did not significantly affect faculty perception. There is no significant association between years of teaching experience and perception score. The ANOVA result showed no statistically significant difference in perception scores among nursing faculty with different educational qualifications ($F = 1.799$, $p = 0.176$). There is no significant association between educational qualification and perception score. No statistically significant difference was found in perception scores across various designations of nursing faculty ($F = 1.375$, $p = 0.206$). There is no significant association between designation and perception score. All respondents belonged to Private Institution 54 (100%) and no participants were from Government Institution. Since there was only one category represented in the sample, statistical comparison could not be performed.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that nursing faculty in selected institutions of Kerala demonstrated a more favourable perception toward the year-based curriculum than the semester-based curriculum. The higher mean score for the year-based curriculum suggests that faculty perceive it as more effective for comprehensive learning, continuity of clinical training, and manageable assessment schedules. The domain-wise analysis particularly highlighted strong support for the year-based system in clinical training and student outcomes.

Faculty also reported concerns regarding the semester-based curriculum, including increased examination frequency, administrative workload, and fragmented clinical experiences. These findings are consistent with previous studies that identified workload and continuity of clinical postings as major challenges in semester systems.

No significant association was found between perception scores and demographic variables such as age, educational qualification, teaching experience, and designation. This suggests that curriculum perception was relatively consistent across different faculty groups.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study compared nursing faculty perspectives regarding semester-based and year-based curricula among 54 faculty members in selected nursing institutions of Kerala. A structured rating scale was used to assess perceptions across ten domains.

Key findings included:

1. Most faculty showed a moderately favourable perception toward the semester-based curriculum.
2. Most faculty showed a favourable perception toward the year-based curriculum.
3. The year-based curriculum had a substantially higher mean perception score.
4. Year-based curriculum was preferred in most domains, especially clinical training and student outcomes.
5. No significant association was found between perception scores and selected demographic variables.

Recommendations

1. Future studies should include a larger and more diverse sample, including government institutions.
2. Student perspectives and academic performance should be examined alongside faculty perceptions.
3. Longitudinal studies may assess changes in perception after prolonged exposure to semester-based systems.
4. Curriculum planners should address faculty workload and clinical continuity when implementing semester systems.

5. Hybrid models that combine continuous assessment with adequate clinical continuity may be explored.

Implications of the Study

The findings of the study have important implications for nursing education, nursing administration, curriculum development, nursing practice, and future research.

Implications for Nursing Education

- Educational institutions may utilize these findings while planning curriculum revisions and implementing academic reforms.
- The identified strengths of the semester-based curriculum, such as continuous assessment and outcome-based learning, can be integrated into existing curriculum models.
- Faculty development programs can be organized to address challenges associated with curriculum implementation and assessment strategies.

Implications for Nursing Administration

- Nursing administrators can use the findings to develop policies that reduce faculty workload associated with frequent examinations and continuous assessments.
- The study highlights the need for adequate staffing, academic support, and administrative resources when implementing semester-based curricula.
- Institutional leaders can formulate strategies to improve curriculum management and maintain the quality of nursing education.
- The findings may assist administrators in balancing academic requirements with faculty well-being and job satisfaction.

Implications for Curriculum Development

- Curriculum planners can use the findings to identify the strengths and limitations of both curriculum systems.
- The positive aspects of the year-based curriculum, particularly continuity of clinical training and adequate preparation time, may be preserved in future curriculum revisions.
- The benefits of semester-based education, including regular evaluation and active student participation, may be incorporated into a modified or hybrid curriculum model.
- The findings support evidence-based curriculum decision-making by universities and regulatory bodies.

Implications for Nursing Practice

- Effective curriculum design contributes to the development of competent nursing professionals capable of delivering safe and quality patient care.
- Improved clinical training and competency development identified in the year-based curriculum may enhance graduates' readiness for professional practice.
- Strengthening clinical exposure and practical learning opportunities can improve nursing service outcomes and patient satisfaction.
- Curriculum improvements based on faculty feedback can contribute to better preparation of future nurses for complex healthcare environments.

Implications for Nursing Research

- The study adds to the existing body of knowledge regarding curriculum evaluation in nursing education.
- Future researchers may conduct similar studies involving students, administrators, clinical instructors, and alumni for a comprehensive understanding of curriculum effectiveness.
- Comparative studies involving government and private institutions can provide broader insights into curriculum implementation.
- Longitudinal research can be conducted to evaluate the long-term impact of semester-based and year-based curricula on academic performance and professional competence.
- Further research may explore the effectiveness of hybrid curriculum models that combine the advantages of both systems.

Conclusion

The study concluded that nursing faculty in the selected institutions of Kerala generally preferred the year-based curriculum over the semester-based curriculum. Faculty perceived the year-based system as providing better continuity of clinical training, improved student outcomes, and a more manageable teaching-learning environment. The semester-based curriculum, while promoting continuous assessment and outcome-based education, was associated with increased workload and examination burden.

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