Collaborative Informal Social Support Initiative as Perceived by the Nursing Students

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Abstract

Few studies have explored the experiences of nursing students participating in a collaborative informal social support initiative. This study describes and explores how nursing students perceived their experiences of participating in a pilot collaborative social support initiative program. The collaborative program initiated by the faculty member, planned to facilitate the collaboration between the academic and clinical staffs in order to manage the stress experienced by the mothers of cancer children, and to develop the nursing students knowledge and skills.

Mixed method approach was used. Convenience sample of nursing students practiced to fulfill the requirement of advanced nursing course objectives - a required last-semester nursing program course participating in the pilot social support program. Qualitative data were collected using team and individual reflection. Self report reaction index was used to collect quantitative data. SWOT analysis framework to analyze the internal and external strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that impact the program was utilized. Nursing students participating in the initiative program were highly positive about their experiences.

Keywords: social support-informal social support initiative, associate nursing students – advanced nursing course, team and individual reflection, SWOT technique

1. Introduction

Nursing students took part in a pilot collaborative informal social support initiative program. The aims of the collaborative informal social support program which was initiated by the faculty member of the nursing students were: to relieve the stress experienced by the mothers of cancer children, and to enrich the nursing students' academic experiences and facilitate their achievement of the advanced nursing course objectives as described and explored by their own reflections. The first aim of this program was addressed by Al-Momani (2013), and the results which were reached through participant reaction index and level of stress of mothers of cancer children clarified that the program was supportive to mothers of cancer children participated in the program. The help provided by the nursing students got the highest rate as the most favorable part of the social support program with a rate of 100% by all of the participated cancer children mothers (Al-Momani, 2013). This highlighted the importance to continue the program, and the need to explore the nursing students' perception of the program which might aid in the clarification of areas of strength, weakness, and possibility of modification required to enrich the pilot informal social support program. Therefore, this study was carried out to describe and explore how the nursing students perceived their experiences of participating in the informal social support collaborative program as expressed through their own team and individual reflection.

Studies of parental stress and stress reaction related to diagnosis and treatment of childhood cancer indicated that the stress reactions including uncertainty, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and the posttraumatic stress symptoms occur most frequently around the time of diagnosis and decrease over time (Tatjana et al, 2012).

Social support and the importance of providing content of social support in advance on the individual's adjustment for the development of coping strategies had been emphasized by many researches findings (Chiquelho et al, 2011; ChuShieh, et al, 2012). Social support defined by (Wilsey & Shear, 2007) as the potential of the network to provide help in situations when needed.

The importance of the collaborative professional efforts in producing positive outcomes in both quality and

efficiency of care, patient satisfaction, and improved work environment highlighted by Liedtka &Whitte (1998), and the importance of shared values, trust, and personal engagement - all empirically demonstrated to be linked with the participants' perceptions of successful collaboration (Liedtka &Whitte 1998). Study by Danielson & Berntsson (2007) carried out to explore the registered nurses' perceptions of educational preparation for professional work and development in their profession. This study mainly indicates that registered nurses need a stimulating work environment, including mentoring and support to enable continuous professional development in health care (Danielson & Berntsson 2007)

From the point of view of the nursing school faculty, because the health team members including the nursing students are directly available to the mothers of cancer children during the children hospitalization period. Informal social support initiative program was an opportunity through which nursing students could provide benefit for the mothers of cancer children in participating in the informal social support initiative directed to relieve the stress experienced by the mothers of cancer children, as will as recognizing the merit of the collaborative health team effort, and can be used to fulfill the requirements of their advanced nursing course objectives.

The undergraduate associate nursing students' curriculum is covered over a two-year period. Advanced nursing course is the final undergraduate course; it's a preceptorship course, where the nursing student's practice (forty eight hours shifts, day and night shifts. Each student should work 20 shifts on the day duty, 10 shifts evening duty, and 10 shifts night duty. The students practice in a one-to-one educational relationship of an experienced registered nurse who has been especially prepared to support, guide and direct student learning during clinical placement (preceptor). The faculty member collaborates with the preceptors and the clinical placement administrators in planning, implementing, and evaluating the students' achievements of their course objectives. The course objectives aim to develop students learning, accept personal responsibility and accountability for nursing practice, integrate knowledge from the biological, physical, behavioral, humanities and nursing science in the practice of nursing, collaborate with other health professionals and consumers in the delivery of health care, and serve as a change agent with clients and colleagues to meet changing health needs. Therefore, this study try to answer some questions, and hypothesized that: Strengths, weaknesses of, opportunities and threats for the collaborative informal social support initiative pilot program as perceived by the nursing students will be explored through the analysis of the participants' team and individual reflexive journaling manuscripts. Nursing students had positive reactions toward the informal support initiative program as indicated by a survey data completed by them in order to determine the usefulness of initiative program components in achieving their advanced nursing course objectives from their own perceptions.

Informal social support collaborative program was guided by the work of House (1981). House (1981) identified four categories of social support. Emotional support, the first category comes from family and close friends and is the most commonly recognized form of social support. It includes empathy, concern, caring, love, and trust. Appraisal support, the second category involves transmission of information in the form of affirmation, feedback and social comparison. This information is often evaluative and can come from family, friends, co-workers, or community sources. The third category is the informational support which includes advice, suggestions, or directives that assist the person to respond to personal or situational demands. Instrumental support is the fourth category which is the most concrete direct form of social support, encompassing help in the form of money, time, in-kind assistance, and other explicit interventions on the person's behalf. Social support is closely related to the concept of a social network, or the ties to family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and others of significance to the person. The work of House (1981) was reemphasized by (Roehrle & Strouse, 2008).The operational definition of the four categories of social support is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Social support (Operational definitions)

Social Support		
Category	Form	Resources Persons
Emotional Support	- Empathy	- Peers (Mothers of cancer children)
	- Concern	
	- Caring	- Researcher (Faculty member)
	- Love	
	- Trust	- Nursing staff (Preceptors)
Appraisal Support	Transmission of Information in the form of	- Nursing students
	- Affirmation	- Co-workers (Each up to professional rules and responsibilities.
	- Feedback	
Informational Support	- Advice	
	- Suggestions	
	- Directives that assist the person to respond to personal or situational demands	
Instrumental Support	- Money	
	- Time	
	- In-kind assistance	
	Derived from (House, 1981; Roehrle & Strouse 2008)	

Four general categories of social support provided to mothers of cancer children (Operational definitions)

2. Theoretical Framework

Mezirow (2006) critical theory of transformative adult learning and education was used to guide this phase of the initiative. The theory asserts that the two major elements of transformative learning are critical reflection, or critical self-reflection on assumptions, and critical discourse, where the learner validates a best judgment, and as much as the individual becoming more reflective and critical, the person will be more open to the perspectives of others and being less defensive and more accepting of new ideas (Mezirow, 2003). Reflection conceptualized by Gustafsson et al (2008) as an approach to handling, managing and coping with impossible working situation that include nursing responsibility for client in complex nursing care situations. Consistent with critical theory of transformative adult learning, the ultimate goal of this study is to describe and explore how the nursing students perceived their experiences of participating in the pilot informal social support collaborative program as expressed through their own reflection. In order to facilitate the nursing students' abilities in utilizing reflection as a strategy, and to help the students to debrief their view and concerns, team reflection was used. Team reflection guided by the team leader which was one of the nursing students who was independently chosen by the group on daily base. Individual reflection on a weekly base to allow for further reflection by each student's was required. Team leader and individual student were asked to write a one or more pages on events or situations. Furthermore nursing students express their perceptions of the usefulness of the initiative for them and for mothers of cancer children.

3. Method

3.1 Study Hypotheses

Although the main purpose of the informal social support initiative was to manage the stress among mothers of cancer children, the specific objectives of this study were to describe and explore how the nursing students perceived their experiences of participating in the informal social support collaborative program as expressed through their own reflection, as well as the degree to which the program would meet with positive reactions from the participants nursing students, and help participants students successfully achieve the advanced nursing course objectives. Therefore, this study hypothesized that:

1) *Strengths, weaknesses of, opportunities, and threats for the collaborative informal social support initiative pilot program as perceived by the nursing students will be explored through the analysis of the participants' team and individual reflexive journaling manuscripts.*

2) *Nursing students had positive reactions toward the informal support initiative program as indicated by a survey data completed by them in order to determine the usefulness of initiative program components in achieving their advanced nursing course objectives from their own perceptions.*

3.2 Study Design

Mixed method approach was selected including team and individual reflexive journal of the nursing students, and a student's survey to assess for student's perception of the usefulness of the initiative program components. Andrew and Halcomb (2009) highlight the advantages of the mixed method approach and how it could accommodate the disadvantages of individual method. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection in order to assist in understanding the complexities of health care trends and issues was earlier emphasized by (Greene & Caracelli, 1997).

3.3 Population

The eligible population for this study was 53 nursing students booked into two classes of the advanced nursing course, 40 students were female and 13 students were male. One faculty member (researcher) was responsible for the students in the two classes in fulfilling both the theoretical and clinical course requirements.

3.4 Sample

Convenience sampling procedure was used to obtain the larger sample. Undergraduate nursing students in their last pre-graduate semester had the opportunity to participate in the informal social support initiative program, as an option to fulfill the requirements of their advanced nursing course objectives. Each student was permitted to choose independently to participate in one out of two planned initiatives. A total of 32 out of 53 students, divided into four groups participated in the informal social support initiative program. All the participants were female students. The average age of the participants was 20 years (SD = 2.6), and their academic average was 68% (SD = 6.6).

3.5 Setting

Pediatric unit located in a general teaching hospital with 85 – bed inpatient. The unit receives the cancer children during the phase of diagnosis, and then the child has to be transferred to a specialized cancer treatment hospital The waiting for transfer varies between two days-to-two weeks or more period after the diagnosis of the case, which depends on the availability of beds in the specialized cancer center, medical insurance system and fund, regardless of the condition treatment started as early as the time of the diagnosis.

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data collected through team and individual reflexive journal manuscripts of the nursing students. Team reflection guided by the team leader on daily base. Team leader was one of the nursing students independently chosen by the group. Individual reflection on a weekly base to allow for further reflection by each student was required. Team leaders and each student were asked to write a one or more pages on the discussed situation. Participants' reflection – on – action was guided by group of questions formed by Ruth-Shad (2003) to discuss what happened in a patient or health worker interchange, bringing together multiple points of view and ways of knowing to quickly assess potential new behaviors to guide future interactions.

3.6.2 Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data collected through survey using Students Satisfaction Index. The index which was developed by the researcher includes 12- items prepared to determine the student's perception of the usefulness of the program. Student was asked to put on a continuum varies from 0-100% students opinion and view on the usefulness of the program to the participants in achieving the advanced nursing course objectives. Each question evaluates the participant satisfaction of one of the initiative program components which were planned to cover one of the four types of social support (Emotional, Appraisal, Informational and Instrumental).Index was pilot-tested for clarity of presentation and content among a random population of nursing students not participating in the initiative program (See Appendix A) for Students Satisfaction Index.

3.7 Procedure

After the initiative program had reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board. The chairman of the

department and the nurse manager were informed of the initiative program. Senior preceptor assigned by the unit manager to be our liaison with the patients, preceptors, and staff. Collaboration with the initiative program was one mean of fulfilling the preceptors and staff roles, which served as an incentive for participation. Participation of the nursing students in the initiative program was one mean of fulfilling the advanced nursing course objectives - a required last-semester nursing program requirement. Participation of the student served as a required graded experience, and represented 20% of their final grade in the course. All nurse preceptors and associate nursing students were informed, oriented, and received the initiative plan at a pre planned meeting, and were asked to facilitate the initiative program through their day-to-day assigned work and practice.

Potential participants were assured that they could withdraw without prejudice at any time. Participants' confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by assigning pseudonyms A, B, C, D and……….H. To reduce the risk of coercion, there were no independent observer, and the faculty member was not involved in reflective sessions.

Nursing students regardless of their choice to participate in the initiative program attended planned lecture discussion about the social support, stress and stress management strategies prior to implementation of the informal social support initiative program. Faculty member (researcher) discussed the previous topics and trained the students on the process of reflection and the different instructional strategies which could be used to develop reflectivity as critical incident technique, Reflective journaling, and story telling. Guided reflection exercises (Ruth-Shad, 2003), and reflective writing (Storch et al, 2002; Ruland & Ahern, 2007) were practiced by the students.

Participants were asked to independently divide into four teams with eight students in each one. Team number decided to provide a chance for every student to talk and reflect on the event, and to provide diversity of opinion (Karau et al,1998; Lattimore & Glinow, 2010). Team leader was independently chosen by the team members.

Team leader toward the end of each shift in a scheduled meeting with the team members discuss what happened with each team member in reflective strategy, bringing together multiple points of view and set behaviors to guide future interaction. Participants were asked to consider strengths, weaknesses of, and opportunities and threats for the informal social support program. Team reflection was guided by the following questions:

- What did we do?
- What should we have done that we did not?
- How would we act differently, what would we do next time? (Ruth-Shad, 2003)

Students were asked to write on a weekly base individually a one or more pages reflecting on event's reflected on by the team. Participant was asked to consider strengths, weaknesses of, and opportunities and threats for the informal social support program Student's reflective writing was guided by group of questions derived from the work of Ruth-Shad (2003) which includes:

- What did I do?
- What should I have done that I did not?
- How would I act differently, what would I do next time?

Team and individual reflection as a choice for collecting qualitative data was driven by issues and concerns raised by authors about the extent to which reflective discussions and reflective writing should be shared. Some authors discuss the pervasive exercise of power that may be inherent within shared reflection (Gilbert 2001; Bradbury – Jones et al, 2008), while other authors raised concerns about the sharing of private thoughts (Cotton, 2001), and the importance of confidentiality and safe environment in relation to reflection (Chirema, 2007). So, the individual reflective journal was excluded from the clinical practice assessment and students permitted to deliver the individual reflective journals with harmonic pseudonym.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data collection and initial analysis were undertaken concurrently. Team and individual reflexive journaling were verbatim analyzed using thematic analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Conventional content analysis was used to analyze all reflexive journaling. The data were read, reread word by word with a focus on students' perceptions of strengths, weaknesses of, and opportunities and threats for the collaborative informal social support initiative program. Memos were written regarding first impressions and thoughts emerging from the data. Initial themes were identified; organized and related codes were then collapsed into broader categories. These emergent categories were organized coded in a template based on the study hypotheses (Patton , 2002; Hsieh & Shannon,

2005).To promoted consistency and resolve ambiguities and identify divergence and convergence of views, data were interpreted as a whole, and emergent themes in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the informal social support initiative program were discussed among researcher and students' team leaders (Creswell et al 2010). Quantitative data collected through Students Satisfaction Index survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics Table 2.

Table 2. Usefulness of the initiative program

	Program component	Usefulness rate %
1	Orientation to the initiative project including purpose, procedure and expected outcomes	100%
2	Reflection as teaching learning strategy	100%
3	Brochure	
	- Introduction	90%
	- Stress management strategies	90%
	- Social Support and it's types	90%
	- Referral process outline	90%
	- Community resources list	90%
4	Attending the mothers meeting	
	- Introduction	90%
	- Discussing challenges	80%
	- Demonstrating stress management strategies	100%
5	Taking care of the child while the child mother leave to her home	100%
6	Program Coordinator Approach	95%

Note: If you please, any comments to be included in the reflection manuscripts

Participants' opinion and view on the usefulness of each of the initiative program Component in achieving their advanced nursing course objectives.

4. Results

Initially 32 students participated in the collaborative informal social support pilot program. However 30 of these students were completed the participation requirement with a response rate of 93.8%, the other two students choose to change to another project. Total of 408 reflective manuscripts 48 of them team reflection and 360 individual reflection manuscripts were obtained. The first hypothesis of this study was "Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the collaborative informal social support initiative pilot program as perceived by the nursing students will be explored through the analysis of the participants' team and individual reflexive journaling manuscripts". This hypothesis was addressed by analyzing the students' manuscripts utilizing SWOT technique (Riley, 2012). SWOT is a structured analytical technique used to support strategic decision for pilot projects, through identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a project. Strengths are characteristics of the project that give it an advantage over others. Weaknesses are characteristics that place the team at disadvantages relative to others. Opportunities are elements that the project exploits to its advantage. Threats are elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the project (Riley, 2012). The findings from the participants' manuscripts revealed:

4.1 Strengths of the Initiative Program as Perceived by the Nursing Students

Positive consideration of the orientation provided to the nursing student before their decision to participate in the initiative, exemplified from the following team quotation "*The orientation about the initiative and the reflection as a teaching learning strategy provided to us in advance facilitate our work*".

Nursing students indicated the importance of meeting with the mothers of cancer children and how it improve the effectiveness of their work, this was exemplified from the following team quotation "*Every meeting we found ourselves more and more oriented to the mothers feeling*", "*We realized how much more help we might provide to our clients and their families*", "*Following each meeting with mothers of cancer children we know and know why the mothers were stressed*".

They reported the importance of the faculty member as a resource person provided administrative guidance, knowledge, and motivation for them, as much as for the clinical staff. This is exemplified by the following quotations: "*You are in position to give preceptors and clinical staff guidance when ever they ask for*". "*You work as a key formant for us and for the clinical staff, what if you are absent or not their*".

Nursing students indicated the importance of the support provided by the clinical staff especially the preceptors, particularly during evening and night duties. Nursing students indicates the importance of good communication from the clinical staff especially the nurse preceptors. Also the importance of good communications between the teams and the team members which foster the collaboration were reported. As Team manuscripts reported: "*Our assigned preceptor s encouraged our work with the social support.....more than once they acknowledge our participation in the initiative program ....even they appreciate our faculty member effort ..... They repeat saying it is good of you and your faculty to initiate this program*". Most nursing students commented on the need to foster the initiative sustainability "*The initiative program is very important and it provides advantage for all the participants...*". "*....Really it is a beneficial program, please try your best to be continued*". Constant communication with the faculty member, nurse preceptors and mothers of cancer children with different background, and the initiative program in general with reflection in specific as a new way of learning to the nursing students were mentioned "*Reflection a process I started to use in most of life situations, challenges, and events*"..

Also the importance of good communications between the teams and the team members which foster the collaboration were reported "*Support the mothers of cancer children with those small effort tasks as orienting them to the program component, attending with them the planned meeting, and taking care of their children while they go home rearrange themselves. All those tasks help us to expand our communication with the children and their mothers and families. Also it improves our communication with the clinical staff and health team members even it improves our communication with each others*".

4.2 Weaknesses of the Initiative Program as Perceived by the Nursing Students

Nursing student team manuscripts indicated that staffing level and staff workload had limited their capacity to provide social support to mothers of cancer children, so not all mothers got the same level of social support. This is exemplified by the following quotations: "*Our social support effort is sometimes limited, because of the staff shortage as much as we are not allowed to meet the mothers without being supervised by clinical staff*".

Nursing students reported that the extra effort and load for them and their faculty was a result of the pilot project which only include them, to overcome this weakness they suggest expanding the initiative to include all nursing faculties and student training in the unit, and to shift the coordination of the initiative program to the unit manager supported by all faculty members were all faculty members could serve as a resource persons for the program. This is exemplified by the following quotation: "*We think the load which we feel some times is the result that we and our faculty the only included in the informal social support initiative program, and we understand that because the initiative program still under study. If this to be continued include all nursing faculties and student training in the unit, and shift the coordination of the initiative program to the unit manager supported by all faculty members were all faculty members could serve as a resource persons for the program*".

Nursing students indicated their preference to be allowed to change their teams at least in a monthly base or less, which might enable them to exposed for more learning opportunities, and expanded their range of interactions. This is exemplified by the following quotation: "*...I've wished to change my team......I felt as if our team leader tried to dominate our work....where other team leaders more opened*".

Unclear communication specially from the team leaders reported as weakness and limited the students effective work and it was the reason behind some participants willingness to change their teams "*I feel my colleagues' highly satisfied of their participation in the initiative, and their groups work in more harmony..............I think if*

the team choice was opened, and if I'm allowed to change my team I will be more interested of my work in the initiative program".

Nursing students raised issues regarding their level of stress this is indicated by the following quotation: *"….We knows that we are a nursing students, but we think we feel the pain and stress as much as the child mother". "….We can never forget those children and their mothers…It was hard experience".*

"It was a good experience to take care of others, to support the mothers, but what about us………..our feeling of stress…..really we are stressed too".

Nursing students reported concerns about obtaining commitment from clinical staff and senior administrators. They identified some source of weaknesses as selectivity of target group " mothers of cancer children" they reported the importance of expanding the informal social support program to include all mothers of hospitalized children regardless of the child diagnosis. This is exemplified by the following quotation: *"Our work in providing the informal social support was very beneficial, and it was directed only to mothers of cancer children. All mothers of hospitalized children were exposed to challenges and stressful situations, It is better if they were included in the program".*

4.3 Opportunities Provided by the Initiative Program as Perceived by the Nursing Students

Participants explain that their participation in the initiative program provided them with opportunities to practice their future roles independently which improves their autonomy and increases their feeling of individual responsibility. Nursing students reported positive consideration of the opportunities provided to them in attending the mothers meetings, *"The realization that I could assist myself in achieving my course objectives and the children and their mothers through informal social support components crated a confidence I have never had in myself".* Nursing students positively appreciated the opportunities provided to them in practicing reflection and reflexive journaling. This is exemplified by the following quotation: *"Practicing reflection and writing reflexive journaling really revealed a way of thinking to us, which we have applied in many other situations". "Reflection is a process I started to use in most of my life situations".*

Nursing students positively appreciated the opportunities provided to them to them through attending the meeting planned to discuss the challenges the mothers of cancer children faced, learn something new regarding time management, demonstration of stress management exercises. These activities were reported as important in giving the students new content, interactive teaching learning strategies , and facilitating their effective interactions with the mothers in planning for the in-kind individual support inform of taking care of the child while the child's mother leave to her home. This is exemplified by the following quotations: *"The best thing we do is keeping our diary so we look for the information by our self, then we will remember it more easily". "Attending the meeting as a group, the contact with the mothers and how they talk and how they face the challenges". "We have started utilizing the relaxation strategies during our daily activities".*

Nursing students appreciated the opportunities provided to them through the program component in providing the mothers of cancer children with in-kind assistant. This is exemplified by the following quotations: *"Support the mothers of cancer children with those small effort tasks as orienting them to the program component, attending with them the planned meeting, and taking care of their children while they go home rearrange themselves. All those tasks help us to expand our communication with the children and their mothers and families. Also they improve our communication with the clinical staff and health team members even they improve our communication with each others".*

4.4 Threats that Could Cause Trouble to the Initiative Program as Perceived by the Nursing Students

The findings from the participants' manuscripts revealed: Threats as unclear policies, rules and regulation for sustainability of the initiative program were expressed by the nursing students. Most nursing students commented on the need to foster the initiative sustainability *"The initiative program is very important and it provides advantage for all the participants, but what will happened when our training completed".* Students expressed fear that the initiative could stop when their practice completed and the clinical staff can not manage the load, and that a program shared all the nursing faculties more likely to sustain, but this may make a need for more collaboration and coordination.

"Really it is a beneficial program, please try your best to be continued, but if the program going to be continued a need for ongoing coordination of the collaborative effort by a clinical experienced staff prepared for teaching learning effort the senior preceptor for example". Nursing students commented on the need to find nursing staff voluntarily share the initiative program and not just the preceptors. Some of team manuscripts reported the need for staff just nursing staff incentives to facilitate their participation in the initiative program. Weaknesses such as

staff work load in absent of nursing students also reported through individual and team manuscripts.

Nursing students reported needs for greater clarity about the informal social support initiative especially for the clinical staff, and to structure the initiative program in the manner that best suits the initiative program sustainability. The following sentences exemplifies this " *The initiative plan and procedure was clear to the nursing students, but not to the nursing staff more than once we heard nursing staff saying "…..I don't see the point in initiating informal social support program while we have already formal social support department and specialized social workers assigned for this work"*. Team manuscripts reported that lack of clear structure of the collaboration, well defined roles of the clinical staff in the initiative should be included in the department written policies". They reported some difficulties in providing quality care "We are not clear which staff will share us the informal support program activities, while others not as if it is personal attitude of the staff, even some of our preceptors they don't like the extra activities loaded their regular work, we need more clarification of the clinical staff roles".

Nursing students raised issues regarding the sustainability of the informal social support initiative. Some teams' manuscripts reported that sustainability of the initiative program depends on collaboration and continuity of the daily follow up. Teams' manuscripts quotations include: "……………*If this important initiative program has to sustain, it needs to be restructured, to be directed by the ward manager, at that time all nursing students regardless of their faculty willing through their preceptors will participate"*.

The second hypothesis of this study "Nursing students had positive reactions toward the informal support initiative program as indicated by a survey data completed by them in order to determine the usefulness of initiative program components in achieving their advanced nursing course objectives from their own perceptions". This hypothesis was addressed by reviewing and summarizing participant responses to students' satisfaction index survey. Overall, student ratings of the usefulness of the initiative program components were 93%. On average, 90% of the respondents provided rating of 90-100% across all items. Means were calculated for each item. Results presented in Table 2 show that reflection as teaching learning strategy, demonstrating stress management strategies provided through the mothers of cancer children meetings, and taking care of the child while the mother leave to her home were rated as the highest favorable part of the social support program with a rate of 100% by all of the respondents. The other most favorable components as rated by respondents with a mean rate of 95% were orientation to the initiative project including purpose, procedure and expected outcomes provided by the researcher , community resources list, program coordinator approach. The least favorable component of the program as rated by respondents with a mean of 80% was discussing challenges by mothers of cancer children through the meeting designed for this purpose.

5. Discussion

The results of this study were reached by analyzing the students' satisfaction index, and the reflexive manuscripts utilizing SWOT technique. SWOT (2008) is a structured analytical technique used to support strategic decision for pilot projects, through identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a project. The mixed methods approach used in this study allowed a multifaceted view of the strengths, weaknesses of, opportunities, and threats for the collaborative initiative programs. The findings from the students' satisfaction survey, and the reflexive journaling manuscripts indicated that establishing sustainable collaborative program for the purpose of providing informal social support for the mothers of cancer children as perceived by the participants nursing students has much strength. Participants positively rated the effect of the initiative program components in facilitating their achievement of the advanced nursing course objectives, and it helped them to develop their individual roles. The average mean score for participants' satisfaction index was (93%). All participants rate the orientation provided to them about the initiative program, reflective journaling, and taking care of the children while their mothers went home as a high valuable components of the initiative program. These findings are consistent with previous study conducted by Beaty et al (2009) which emphasized the importance of orientation and communication of information about the initiative to existing staff as factors which facilitate the initiative success. Reflective writing helped the nursing students positively change their views of their practice (Ruland & Ahern, 2007), and that work-based learning increased participants' confidence in their work (Swallow and Coates, 2004).

They reported the importance of the faculty member as a resource person provided administrative guidance, knowledge, and motivation for them, as much as for the clinical staff.

Nursing students indicated the importance of the support provided by the clinical staff especially the preceptors, particularly during evening and night duties. Nursing students indicated the importance of good communication from the clinical staff especially the nurse preceptors. Also the importance of good communications between the

teams and the team members which foster the collaboration were reported. As Constant communication with the faculty member, nurse preceptors and mothers of cancer children with different background, and the initiative program in general with reflection in specific as a new way of learning to the nursing students were mentioned. Also the importance of good communications between the teams and the team members which foster the collaboration were reported. Good communication has been identified by Hanson et al (2009) as important factor in maintaining collaborative professional programs. While collaborative initiative program has much strength, the findings illustrate that establishing collaborative programs between the nurses in the educational and clinical practice has some weaknesses which could be taken as a challenges for promoting the sustainability of the program. One of the most recognized weaknesses is the load increased on the clinical staff where they have to work in high risk circumstances and are overloaded by the unregistered nursing students. So, in order to sustain the informal social support initiative program significant effort continuous and careful attention and change at the level of the individual clinical staff, and the unit policy and procedures are required. Also to think with incentives in form of money could be provided. Increase level of stress reported by the nursing student as a result of their participation in the informal social support program and their required communication with cancer children and their mothers. This is consistent with the findings which have been reported by (Isikhan et al, 2004). Isikhan et al (2004) concluded that the multiple pressures associated with nursing responsibilities translate into significant stress levels among nurses.

Positive consideration of the opportunities provided to the nursing students as practicing their future roles independently, practicing reflection and reflexive journaling, attending the meeting planned to discuss the challenges the mothers of cancer children faced, learning something new regarding time management, demonstration of stress management exercises, interacting with the mothers and providing the mothers of cancer children with in-kind assistant. These findings are consistent with the previous research findings. Benefits of undergraduate nursing students in the clinical setting as perceived by staff nurses were explored by Slaughter-Smith et al (2012). Eager to learn, willing to help, and serving time of the staff are the three key themes were the staff nurses agree on about the benefits of the nursing students to the clinical setting (Slaughter-Smith et al, 2012).

Threats that could cause trouble to the initiative program as perceived by the nursing students as unclear policies, rules and regulations for sustainability of the initiative program are staff work load in absent of nursing students, and the need for more collaboration and coordination. These findings which indicated that effective managers are crucial for the success of any collaborative program because they understand both the organization vision and its social structure are consistent with the findings of Ulrich et al (2007), and that coordinated leadership and external support is needed in order to overcome barriers to inter-professional collaboration (Barker et al, 2005; Gruen et al, 2008).

As mentioned earlier, this study explores the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as perceived by the nursing students participating in a collaborative informal social support initiative program. The program which was pilot program initiated by a faculty member and directed to relieve stress and stress reaction experienced by the mothers of cancer children. Weaknesses of and threats for the program which was identified by the nursing students could be reframed as challenges that collaborative inter-professional nursing program are experiencing. Thus, to work on sustainability of this program or other collaborative nursing programs special concern should be given to gain the participants including clinical staff, nursing students, and faculty members' willingness, and the manager's coordination and assistant in required logistics changes.

6. Conclusion

The work of this study was based on the assumption that "The collaborative informal social support program initiated by the faculty member will facilitate the collaboration between the academic and clinical staffs in order to manage the stress experienced by the mothers of cancer children and to develop the nursing students' knowledge and skills".

This paper provides some insights into strengths, opportunities that could promote ongoing sustainability of the collaborative nursing programs. These results could benefit others trying to achieve similar outcomes within their workplaces even at the international level.

Several weaknesses and threats to the collaborative nursing programs have been identified. Continued support for collaborative programs, coordination and logistic issues need to be addressed.

This study had a number of strengths; the mixed method approach, the evaluation was developed alongside the implementation of the collaborative informal social support program. This helped ensure that the findings would be meaningful and present the participant perception. The limitations of the study include the small sample, the

purposive convenience sample selection, and the self report surveys which could prohibit the generalization of the study findings.

The result of this study illustrates the need to examine carefully the sources of stress for nursing students in their clinical practice. Hospital related stressors need to be addressed by nursing professionals from the perspective that there may be ways of reducing the nursing students stress through staff nurses' understanding of the nursing students' clinical training requirements, emotional support and on time feedback about their achievements or pitfalls. Lastly, faculty members in nursing colleges need to consider way in which they might contribute to affect positive evidence based change in clinical settings taking care of the initiative sustainability, which could be achieved through appropriate collaboration and coordination through hospital administrators' involvement.

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Appendix (A) Student's Satisfaction Index

	Program component	Usefulness rate %
1	Orientation to the initiative project including purpose, procedure and expected outcomes	0……………………….100%
2	Reflection as teaching learning strategy	0……………………….100%
3	Brochure	
	- Introduction	0……………………….100%
	- Stress management strategies	0……………………….100%
	- Social Support and it's types	0……………………….100%
	- Referral process outline	0……………………….100%
	- Community resources list	0……………………….100%
4	Attending the mothers meeting	
	- Introduction	0……………………….100%
	- Discussing challenges	0……………………….100%
	- Demonstrating stress management strategies	0……………………….100%
5	Taking care of the child while the child mother leave to her home	0……………………….100%
6	Program Coordinator Approach	0……………………….100%

Note: If you please, any comments to be included in the reflection manuscripts

Please select and write down out of 100% the response that best reflects your opinion and view on the value of each of the informal social support initiative program component to you, in achieving the advanced nursing course objectives