



## The effects of action learning-based education of nursing students on the perception of child abuse

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of an integrated theoretical and practical educational approach on nursing students' understanding of children's rights and perceptions of child maltreatment, as well as their motivation and efficacy to learn. The study used a single-group pretest-posttest design to assess changes in perceptions following an action learning-based curriculum focused on child maltreatment in pediatric nursing education. Data from participating nursing students were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, and one-way ANOVA using SPSS 21.0. The results indicated a significant increase in the students' awareness of children's rights ( $t=-2.71$ ,  $p=.008$ ) and recognition of child abuse ( $t=-5.73$ ,  $p<.001$ ) following the intervention. This study underscores the effectiveness of action learning in cultivating a deeper understanding of child rights and abuse among nursing students, highlighting its potential as an educational strategy in nursing curricula.

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### 1. Introduction

Nursing is a practical study that applies theoretical knowledge to the field of nursing. The goal of nursing education is to train professional nurses who are equipped with practical nursing skills as well as the theoretical knowledge necessary to practice nursing through the theoretical education and clinical practice curriculum (Saifan et al., 2021; Chyun et al., 2015). Nursing students improve their clinical competence based on the knowledge and practice gained from lectures, and the curriculum of nursing education must include not only the theoretical knowledge necessary for the performance of nursing work but also the content necessary for the cultivation of practical nursing skills (Lundell Rudberg et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2007). Intensive lecture-oriented major theory subject education is conducted as simple memorization-oriented education centered on knowledge through information provision rather than improving students' ability to cope with critical situations and clinical performance skills (Shin et al., 2007). There

are difficulties in improving students' learning goals and learning abilities with the traditional lecture-based teaching method. Therefore, nursing educators introduced and applied a new teaching and learning method as a way to improve the clinical performance by improving the lecture-based education and improving the students' academic self-efficacy and achievement level (Lee et al., 2009).

Among the various teaching-learning methods, action learning enables learners to learn the problem-solving procedures through practice and reflection for problem-solving through small group teamwork (Go and Yang, 2012). Action learning in college classrooms involves not only learning in the process of solving tasks, but also learning the content that learners need to know in the corresponding class, whether the class goal of the action learning-based college classroom is achieved (Kim and Bong, 2016).

The members participating in action learning acquire the knowledge and take actions in a voluntary and proactive manner in order to derive the optimal solutions for tasks by sharing different perspectives and experiencing new mutual experiences through their team activities (Dotlich and Noel, 1998; Lee, 2018).

Reporting by those who work in the professions most likely to detect child abuse plays such an important role in preventing child abuse (Lee, 2018). Nurses can directly contact children and their families, discover the site or environment of

suspected child abuse as early as possible, and are in an important position to report on and provide interventions when child abuse occurs (Kim, 2017a).

The perception of child abuse means whether a child can perceive that he or she is a victim of abuse when a case of child abuse is actually discovered (Jeong et al., 2019). If abuse is not perceived as abuse, it cannot lead to a report, and hence, it is important to understand the perception of child abuse by those subject to preliminary reporting who may encounter children in the workplace in the future. The knowledge of child abuse that affects the child abuse reporting behavior, that is, symptoms of child abuse, child abuse prevention methods, or knowledge or education level related to reporting, seemed to have a positive relationship with the reporting behavior. The higher the children's rights and the more experience in receiving education related to child abuse, the more likely they are to report (Jeong et al., 2019).

Hence, it would be necessary to verify the effectiveness of educational activities by confirming the level of awareness of child rights and child abuse based on the participation activities to help the nursing students who are required to file a preliminary report understand child abuse. Among the major courses available for the Department of Nursing, the child abuse-related learning details are organized to be dealt with in the general discussion of the child nursing classes.

In this study, an attempt has been made to confirm the effect of designing and operating the content of child abuse among some of the contents of the child nursing classes based on action learning. As the goal of child abuse education and the goal that may be achieved through action learning, perception of children's rights, perception of child abuse, learning motivation, and learning efficacy were selected as the variables of effect.

The purpose of this study is to confirm the effect of action learning-based education on child abuse in the theory classes for child nursing majors on the nursing students' perception of children's rights, perception of child abuse, learning motivation, and learning efficacy. The specific purpose is as follows:

1. Identify the general characteristics of the subject.
2. Identify the extent of the awareness of child rights, awareness of child abuse, learning motivation, and the academic efficacy of the nursing students.
3. Confirm the effect of the action learning-based education on the awareness of child rights, awareness of child abuse, learning motivation, and the academic efficacy of the nursing students.
4. Verify and confirm the effect of action learning-based education on the nursing students' perception of children's rights, perception of child abuse, learning motivation, and learning efficacy.

## 2. Theoretical background

Action learning is among the experiential learning methods through which member of a team form

their team with a small number of people and learn by acting and reflecting in order to address the organization's pending issues or seek alternatives based on their systematic knowledge and in-depth questions (Revans, 1982). Learning is a commonly used method and consists of two components: how teachers provide information to their students and how students use questions to help teachers and students navigate each other's situations (Revans, 1982). As for action learning, in the process of solving organizational or learning problems, learners, who are members of the organization, voluntarily develop knowledge and behavior, and it is the process of changing the consciousness or behavior of organizations and individuals through the reflection of systemic knowledge and experiences combined with the mutually in-depth questions and feedbacks based on team activities (Kim, 2017a).

The educational method of action learning has become increasingly popular among various organizations and schools. It may be characterized as a project worthy of organizational and educational purposes. Action learning requires the application of relevant skills and knowledge (Revans, 1982). In general, in terms of action learning, the learning coach plays the role of helping all members of the learning team for the purpose of enhancing the effectiveness of the learning team (O'neil and Marsick, 2007).

While the role of learning coach is not an easy task for college professors, the development of courses such as learner-centered courses or the ICT-based courses required by modern society is an important skill for educators (Koh, 2013). In a study by Koh (2013), it was claimed that the purpose of introducing action learning into classes at universities is to help students in practice in the process of finding and solving tasks to ensure that they can understand theories in real context rather than understanding them as textbooks, and help them grow themselves the ability to solve problems.

When action learning is applied in the educational field rather than in an organization, the teacher's facilitation is emphasized to ensure that the learners can commit themselves to each learning process of problem-solving (Koh, 2013), and it may be classified into the scope of solution, team structure, field trip, and performance evaluation (Go and Yang, 2012). The action learning-based university classes are learner-centric classes, and the purpose of introducing action learning in universities is to match the positive elements of action learning with the characteristics of practice-oriented applied studies, it is also intended to help acquire theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge by connecting them (Kim and Bong, 2016). Furthermore, members have the unique advantage of being able to derive optimal solutions for tasks by sharing their different perspectives (Dotlich and Noel, 1998).

Action learning in university classes is not only learning in the process of solving tasks but also

learning what you must know in classes as to whether the class goal of the action learning-based university class is achieved (Kim and Bong, 2016). That is, it is different from action learning with the companies in that the purpose of learning is to solve tasks that include problems faced by the action learning participants within a fixed period or learn in the process of deriving solutions. In an action learning class environment, the learners define tasks through their constant interactions with their fellow learners to prepare solutions for tasks and undergo the process of collecting, analyzing, and applying data to solve the tasks (O'neil and Marsick, 2007). In terms of acquiring knowledge through the task-solving process, it can produce qualitatively different learning outcomes than traditional lecture-style classes (Kim and Bong, 2016).

The action learning-based university classes are effective in acquiring the procedural and practical skills rather than unilaterally providing the learners with knowledge and skills, and hence, they not only acquire the academic subject knowledge but also improve the learners' self-efficacy (Kim et al., 2012; Jang and Park, 2012) and enhance the problem-solving skills (Chang, 2010). However, Naftalin (1996) claimed that in an action-learning-based university class, it may be difficult for the learners to fully immerse themselves in learning because there is no clear standard in the process of identifying the goal of the task to be solved by the learners themselves and finding a method to solve the task. Rho (2007) claimed that it is necessary to prepare the specific evaluation criteria for the action learning-based university classes and present them to the learners.

Examining the previous studies above, it is helpful to improve self-efficacy and problem-solving skills in the process of achieving class goals through problem-solving in action learning-based university classes. On the other hand, it is obvious that there are no specific guidelines for the evaluation of action-learning activities. It can be seen that for a fair evaluation of the learners who participated in the action learning class, not only the learning goals of the academic subject but also the achievement of the team task and the field trip and the performance evaluation of the learners must be carried out.

### 3. Research method

#### 3.1. Design of the study

This study is a similar experimental design before and after a single group to compare the effects of action learning classes applied to nursing students.

#### 3.2. Subject of the study

This investigation focused on nursing students from a university in Gyeongbuk, who were enrolled in child nursing courses that utilized action learning to address child abuse. Participants included those

who consented to partake in the survey. The required sample size for conducting an independent t-test was determined using the G-Power 3.1 program. Parameters set for this calculation included a significance level of .05, an effect size of .5 (medium), and a statistical power of .95. The initial calculation indicated a requisite sample size of 45 students. However, to ensure comprehensive analysis, 130 students who consented to enroll in the course were ultimately included in the study, thereby exceeding the minimum sample size requirement.

#### 3.3. Progress of the study

The action-learning program implemented in this study was devised following Rothwell's (1999) action-learning model and tailored to the learning objectives of child nursing. Over eight sessions, student teams engaged in learning tasks pertinent to child abuse. Each team was responsible for selecting a specific topic within this domain and devising solutions. This educational approach, embedded within child nursing courses, combined foundational theoretical knowledge with practical elements. These included team discussions, task resolution, and reflective practices, all structured around weekly lecture plans in child nursing. Additionally, the program provided tools and forms specifically designed for action learning activities. A crucial component of this approach was the role of the learning coach, who facilitated smooth interaction among learners and offered guidance, feedback, and responses to queries essential for problem-solving. The progression of the classes and the details of the activities are outlined in Table 1.

#### 3.4. Research tool

##### 3.4.1. Perception of children's rights

In the present study, the instrument for measuring perceptions of children's rights (CRRS), originally developed by Hart et al. (1996) for teachers, was adapted and augmented for use with adolescents. This modification entailed recalibration of the instrument to ensure its applicability and relevance to the adolescent cohort. The reliability of this adjusted instrument was rigorously assessed, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .91 in the pre-measurement phase and an enhanced reliability coefficient of .96 in the post-measurement phase, indicating a high level of internal consistency for the instrument in both instances.

##### 3.4.2. Perception of child abuse

In this study, the Child Abuse Perception Scale (CAPS), originally devised by Chung (2007) for child welfare workers and subsequently revised and expanded by Kim (2008) for emergency room nurses, was utilized. This scale, having undergone

modifications and enhancements, was employed to measure perceptions. The reliability of this adapted instrument was thoroughly assessed, demonstrating a high degree of internal consistency. This was

evidenced by Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .96 in the pre-measurement phase and .95 in the post-measurement phase, indicating robust reliability of the instrument across both time points.

**Table 1: Action learning schedule and content**

Week	Learning topics	Action
1	Orientation and teaming team building and team activities, presentations	Discussion and presentation
2	Selection of child abuse cases using idea dissipation techniques	Review literature, use of media materials such as news and the Internet
3	Case selection and clarification of problem	Discussion
4	Causal analysis and solution	Collecting data discussion
5	Establishment of action plan by choosing the best alternative	Information collection discussion
6	Action activities plan	Action activities (including external activities)
7	Action activities	Action activities (including external activities)
8	Final result presentation and discussion	Discussion and presentation feedback

**3.4.3. Learning motivation**

In this study, the assessment of learning motivation was conducted using a 19-item scale, which had been adapted and expanded by [Chang and Park \(2017\)](#). Each item on this scale was evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ('very rarely') to 5 ('very often'). The cumulative score from this scale served as an indicator of the participants' learning motivation, with higher scores reflecting greater motivation. The reliability of this instrument was rigorously validated, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .95 in the pre-measurement phase and .96 in the post-measurement phase, thus confirming the scale's high internal consistency.

**3.4.4. Learning efficacy**

In the current research, academic self-efficacy was conceptualized as the degree of confidence students exhibit in contexts pertinent to their academic performance, drawing upon the framework established by [Kim and Lee \(2020\)](#). To measure this construct, the study employed an academic self-efficacy instrument developed by [Jang \(2019\)](#), specifically designed for university students. This instrument comprised seven items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability of the tool was rigorously assessed, demonstrating high internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha values of .92 in the pre-measurement phase and .94 in the post-measurement phase.

**3.5. Data collection and the procedures**

Data collection was conducted using a structured self-report questionnaire from February 28 to March 6, 2022 before the application of action learning class, and from May 2 to May 8 after the application of action learning class. The classes for the corresponding subject were conducted in action learning, but for the part of responding to the questionnaire by participating in the research, the entire URL of the questionnaire and the consent form were distributed to ensure that the students could participate voluntarily, and the students who wanted to fill out the questionnaire were encouraged

to participate voluntarily. A total of 132 subjects responded to the questionnaire by agreeing to participate in this study, and 130 copies were finally analyzed, except for the 2 questionnaires with insufficient responses.

**3.6. Data analytical method**

The collected data were statistically analyzed by using the SPSS 21.0 program. Descriptive statistics were applied for the general characteristics of the subjects, perception of child abuse, perception of child abuse, learning motivation, and learning efficacy, and the effect of the application of action learning classes on the perception of children's rights, perception of child abuse, learning motivation, and learning efficacy were analyzed by the paired t-test. The level of significance of all analyses was applied based on .05.

**4. Research results**

**4.1. General characteristics of the subject**

Examining the general characteristics of the subjects in this study, most of them were female, with 93 females (71.5%) and 37 males (28.5%). In terms of age, 911 people (91.5%) were aged 25 or younger, and 11 (8.5%) were aged 26 or older, with an average of 23.51±2.92 years. As for the motivation for entering the nursing department, the consideration of one's own aptitude was the most at 50.8%, followed by the recommendation from others such as parents or teachers at 23.5%, employment rate at 22.0%, and grade points at 2.3%. As for the nurse's image, 53.0% were positive, 25.0% were very positive, 18.9% were very positive, and 1.5% were negative. As for religion, 62.9% of the subjects responded that they do not have a religion, and 35.6% of those who have a religion. The general characteristics of the subject are illustrated in [Table 2](#).

**4.2. Effect before and after the application of action learning**

As a result of comparing the subject's perception of children's rights, perception of child abuse,

learning motivation, and learning efficacy before and after the application of the action learning class, the perception of children's rights was 186.50±13.56 points before the application of action learning class and 190.58±13.88 points after the application, which statistically and significantly improved ( $t=-2.71$ ,  $p=.008$ ). The perception of child abuse was

23.74±8.15 points before the application of action learning and 27.54±5.17 points after the application, demonstrating a statistically significant difference ( $t=-5.73$   $p<.001$ ). There was no significant difference in the learning motivation ( $t=0.25$ ,  $p=.799$ ) and learning efficacy ( $t=-1.92$ ,  $p=.057$ ) (Table 3).

**Table 2:** General characteristics of the subject

Variables	Categories	n(%)
Gender	Female	93(71.5)
	Male	37(28.5)
Age(yr)	≤ 25	119(91.5)
	≥ 26	11(8.5)
Entrance motivation	Consider aptitude	67(50.8)
	Recommendations from people around you	31(23.5)
	Employment rate	29(22.0)
	According to my grades	3(2.3)
Nurse image	Very positive	33(25.0)
	Positive	70(53.0)
	Middle	25(18.9)
	Negative	2(1.5)
Religion	Very negative	-
	Yes	47(35.6)
	No	83(62.9)

### 5. Discussion

This research endeavored to assess the impact of action learning-based activities in child nursing courses on students' perceptions of children's rights and child abuse, as well as on their learning motivation and efficacy. Additionally, it aimed to furnish foundational data for the implementation and management of action learning in core academic courses. The study was designed to evaluate variations in students' perceptions of children's rights and child abuse, alongside their learning motivation and efficacy, facilitated by active and varied classroom activities. This approach involved shifting from instructor-centric lectures to learner-centric participation and action. The findings of the study revealed several key outcomes. Primarily, there was a significant alteration in students' perceptions of children's rights following the integration of action learning in the classroom. This change is attributed to the enhanced understanding of children as bearers of rights equal to adults, fostered through the processes of planning and executing actions. Moreover, the augmented awareness and practices concerning children's rights among healthcare workers are deemed crucial, as

they could potentially lead to advocacy actions in favor of children's rights (Park, 2020). In light of the escalating incidences of child abuse and infringements upon children's human rights, it becomes imperative to scrutinize the current state of children's human rights. This scrutiny aims to safeguard these rights and to formulate educational strategies that bolster the awareness of children's rights. The application of action learning appears to have influenced students' consciousness, as it facilitated their formation of personal understanding and performance assessment through techniques associated with action learning, such as reflective journals and feedback. An increased awareness of children's rights correlates with heightened participation of children and their families in the therapeutic process, which in turn accelerates the recovery trajectory (Liaquat et al., 2018). Therefore, educational curricula, especially in nursing, should encompass a variety of content that augments nursing students' awareness of children's rights. This approach is vital in ensuring that future healthcare professionals are equipped with the knowledge and sensitivity required to advocate effectively for the rights of children in their care.

**Table 3:** Effects of action learning on the perception of children's rights, perception of child abuse, learning motivation, and learning efficacy

	Pre-test M±SD	Post-test M±SD	t(p)
Perception of children's rights	186.50±13.56	190.58±13.88	-2.710(.008)
Perception of child abuse	23.74±8.15	27.54±5.17	-5.731(.000)
Learning motivation	3.71±0.60	3.71±0.65	0.255(.799)
Academic efficacy	3.74±0.67	3.85±0.71	-1.920(.057)

The application of action learning in classroom settings elicited a notable shift in students' awareness of child abuse. This study observed a significant increase in the extent of child abuse perception, from an average score of 23.74 to 27.54 points. This enhancement is attributed to the management of learning through discussions and

feedback exchanges between learners and instructors. Under the stipulations of Article 10 of the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment, etc., of Child Abuse Crimes, various medical professionals, including nurses, are mandated to report suspected cases of child abuse. Nurses, in their routine care of children and families and their

direct engagement in nursing services, are uniquely positioned to identify and report potential child abuse instances and propose interventions (Kim, 2017b). Consequently, they are pivotal in the early detection and prevention of abuse. Upon graduation, nursing students encounter children in diverse settings such as schools, public health centers, and hospitals, where they play a critical role in swiftly identifying abused children and providing necessary care. Therefore, it is essential to systematically educate future nurses, enhancing their perception and awareness of child abuse. This approach will not only improve their ability to detect and report abuse cases but also contribute significantly to the overall rate of reporting by nurses.

After applying the action learning class, the students' learning motivation and learning efficacy did not demonstrate a significant difference before and after applying action learning. In terms of action learning, learners experience learning through their reflection through discussions or debates with fellow learners in the process of deriving and applying solutions to tasks (Lee and Eom, 2019). It is considered that the method of applying the knowledge learned in the theoretical class appropriately for the actual situation may have become rather burdensome rather than familiar with the method of applying the knowledge learned in the theoretical class appropriately to the actual situation by grafting the action learning in the form of assignment to the learning that is accustomed to the one-way lecture learning. This is also a limitation of not forming a team in consideration of the learner's disposition or interest (Cho et al., 2016). It is considered that difficulties in coordinating or expressing opinions among peers during team activities for action learning may not have affected the motivation and sense of efficacy for learning. Furthermore, action learning in university classes differs from corporate action learning in terms of purpose in that it includes the essential learning contents and evaluation (Kim and Bong, 2016), while it may be such that the evaluation of the results was not significant in improving the immersion in the class and the sense of efficacy. Kim and Bong (2016) claimed that it is necessary to develop a specific evaluation strategy since there are difficulties in evaluating learners in the university classes to which action learning is applied. In a manner that does not burden students, specific evaluation criteria are needed to reflect the activity process and characteristics of action learning to derive real tasks for learners and evaluate the learning contents and learning results in the process of solving them.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

This study attempted to examine and understand the effect of teaching with action learning on the perception of children's rights, perception of child abuse, learning motivation, and learning efficacy of nursing students. After action learning was applied to the pediatric nursing major class, it was found that

nursing students' perception of children's rights and child abuse had a significant effect, and there was no significant difference in terms of learning motivation and learning efficacy. By actually applying the theoretical knowledge through the action activities, the students were able to effectively learn the course content. In order to evaluate the learning activities by combining action learning with teaching, guidelines for evaluating tasks and task solutions that are appropriate to the nature of university teaching are needed. The following recommendations are made:

- Various factors related to the effectiveness of action learning classes are confirmed, and studies on their relationships are recommended.
- Studies on the characteristics of the learners and instructors that can affect action learning classes are recommended.
- It would be necessary to develop a program that can help improve learning motivation and learning efficacy according to the learner's characteristics and verify its effectiveness.

## Compliance with ethical standards

### Ethical considerations

Prior to the start of the team learning-based action learning-based pediatric nursing course of this study, the researcher explained to the research subjects the purpose of the research, voluntary participation, information that the data would be processed anonymously and confidentiality would be guaranteed, and that the data collected would be used for research purposes only. It was adequately explained that there were no disadvantages to individual students, such as not being reflected in their course attendance and action learning team assignment grades, even if they did not participate in the research, and that they could withdraw at any time during their participation in the survey.

### Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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