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THRIVING THROUGH TRANSITION - LEARNING COMMUNITY

The American University in Cairo

Graduate School of Education

THRIVING RATHER THAN SURVIVING TRANSITION: A CASE STUDY OF
AN EMERGING FIRST-YEAR LEARNING COMMUNITY IN A NURSING
INSTITUTE IN EGYPT

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of International & Comparative Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in

Educational Leadership

By Sylvia Basta

Under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer Skaggs

November 2016



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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The degree of Master of Arts

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my son

Raphael Maged

Hope I can be to him a model for commitment and responsibility, as well as teach him the value of learning and the spirit of diligence.

And to my Students

So that they learn that perseverance creates success.

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ABSTRACT

Transition to higher education is a critical phase for students since it causes stress and confusion especially for underprepared students. It is not less critical for the institutions seeing that it is a significant time through which intensive efforts must be exerted to establish the foundation of effective learning and ethical personal principles. This case study presents a description of the first year students' transition to a technical nursing institute in Egypt by analyzing their challenges and their perceptions regarding the various support offered by the institute. Adding to their perception on whether or not they feel safe in a community that helps them to thrive. This exploratory analysis aims to inform the practice as well as to spread and emphasize on the concept of thriving that calls for holistic student development on three aspects: academic, intrapersonal and interpersonal. Thirty-four students' voluntarily participated in a survey and six of them also engaged in semi-structured interviews. As for the faculty member perspective, this data was collected through five survey responses and three semi structured interviews. Data analysis revealed that the consistent, intensive support services and structured rules constituted an environment conducive to students thriving despite of the resistance showed by the students at the beginning of the year. The case study showed the applicability of two of the western students' development theories in the Egyptian context. As for the future research, opportunities may include analysis of the characteristics' of the studied institution that matches the learning community cores practices, and the means through which the thriving concept can be incorporated in institutional strategic plan.

Key words: First Year Students-Challenges -Transition-Support-Thriving

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The first year at university is a critical phase in which students usually question whether to drop out or persist. Throughout this critical phase the foundation of effective learning is established, and universities can make the greatest impact on student retention (Remsing, 2013). In general, “students are more likely to persist when they find themselves in settings that are committed to their success, hold high expectations for their learning, provide needed academic and social support, frequent feedback about their performance, and actively involve them with other students and faculty in learning” (Tinto, 2002, p.4).

Universities’ programs to help first-year students through their transition are an application of Kurt Lewin’s equation affirming that “behavior is a function of the interaction of the person and the environment” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 160). I believe that by altering the environment, universities aim to transform and develop students’ behavior during this particular time in their lives. Guided by the literature relevant to the transitions and retention of first-year students and respecting the different context, this research presents a case study of first-year students (FYS) in an Egyptian nursing institute working to create a suitable environment in which its students can thrive. I will begin by exploring the concept of thriving; a student development concept describing students who are psychologically healthy, high achieving, highly motivated, goal oriented, and happy. I then discuss the transition phases usually encountered by the first-year students. I also describe the importance of learning communities and its core practices used to ease the stressful transition of first year

students and improve retention (Tinto, 1999). The transition process is considered from two different angles: a psychosocial angle guided by Schlossberg's theory and a developmental ecology angle guided by Bronfenbrenner's work.

Schlossberg's transition theory presents a frame through which students' transitions can be understood (Evans et al., 2010; Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2012). This detailed frame presents the different stages of the transition and provides insight into the diverse variables that can alter students' adaptation to the transition. The theory also recommends a helping model that can be used as an informed outline for student support plans. Schlossberg explains the process of transition and hints at the interaction between students and their environment that can either foster or hinder their adaptation to their new situation. However, Bronfenbrenner presents a clearer explanation of students' different characteristics and interactions with the environment. He also elaborates on the different levels that shape the environment.

Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecology theory presents a different perspective through which the transition process can be examined (Evans et al., 2010; Renn & Arnold, 2003). The focus on how students' characteristics shape their interactions with their environment is highly relevant to this research, since these characteristics rationalizes many of the students' reactions to the new environment to which they are trying to adapt. As for the environment, Bronfenbrenner's presentation of the different level systems surrounding students and the effects of these systems on student development is needed to understand the variables shaping student behavior.

The intersection between the three concepts of thriving, transitions, and learning communities and the linking of these concepts with the Egyptian context is the theoretical basis on which this research is built.

The present research examines Gouna Technical Nursing Institute (GTNI), the only private institute officially certified by Egypt's Ministry of Higher Education. Every year, this Egyptian technical nursing institute receives 50 students from the central placement office, the centralized government office that coordinates the admission of Egyptian students to national higher educational institutions. The distribution is based on students' high school grades (*ThanaweyaAmma*) and the capacity of the universities. As a result, students sometimes find themselves admitted to universities that do not match their interests.

Gouna Technical Nursing Institute offers a fully funded scholarship to support admitted students for three years while they earn their associate nursing degree. Based on an educational collaboration agreement with the Regis College Nursing Program at Lawrence Memorial Hospital in Massachusetts, USA, the institute offers a comprehensive curriculum delivered entirely in English (Gouna Technical Nursing Institute, 2010). After graduation, the institute ensures students' employment in reputable Egyptian hospitals. The institution's commitment to graduating quality nurses promotes the "advancement of not only the nursing profession but also health care services within Egypt" (Gouna Technical Nursing Institute, 2010). The quality nursing education that students receive transforms them not only intellectually but also socially and personally.

This research focuses particularly on the experience of first-year students at GTNI, as this is the stage during which the foundation of effective learning and ethical

personal principles can be established. In this first year, students face many challenges, and the institution offers various support services. The challenges and support services at GTNI are analyzed from the perspective of students and faculty members.

This educational case study is guided by three goals. The first goal is to use the theory to inform practice (Evans et al., 2010). As a part of the first-year team, I have experienced the efforts of the institution's administration to properly support students through this phase. Consequently, I analyze the interventions made in the 2015-16 academic year in relation to student development theories that may have a positive effect on the future implementation of the program. The second goal is to explore the applicability of Western student development concepts in the Egyptian context. The third goal is to present the whole experience in order to inspire other leaders in Egyptian higher education who wish to replicate this educational model in their institutions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

I begin the literature by examining the goals of higher education and elaborating on the concept of thriving. I then discuss how its three components intersect, align, and respond to the major factors affecting students' transitions: academic success (Krumrei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim, & Wilcox, 2013; Brower, 2007), psychological wellbeing (Conley, Travers, & Bryant, 2013; Bowman, 2010; Snyder & Lopez, 2005), student engagement (Shreiner, 2010b; Rocconi, 2011) and motivation (Remsing, 2013; Petty, 2014).

Afterward, I discuss the literature pertaining to students' transitions to higher education from Bronfenbrenner and Schlossberg's perspectives. I then discuss some of the clear aspects that invite students' thriving and conclude by hinting at the core practices of the learning community.

2.1 The Goals of Higher Education

While universities' focus on students' academic success, teaching, learning, and persistence until graduation ensures a better institutional ranking and reputation, this focus cannot guarantee that students have a quality higher education experience. Throughout university, students need to challenge their capabilities in order to develop intellectually, intrapersonally, and interpersonally (Shreiner, 2010a). Universities that adopt this holistic development vision motivate students to take responsibility for their lifelong learning and enhance students' positive attitudes and communication skills beyond standard concerns about academic achievement. This philosophy fully transforms students and invites them to discover themselves and their surroundings. In other words, this vision creates an

environment in which students can thrive (Shreiner, 2010a). The concept of thriving can be separated into three components: academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal.

Exploring these components individually makes it possible to understand the benefits of each and explore the related support services that help students thrive rather than survive during the first-year transition.

2.2 Toward the New Vision of Thriving in University

The concept of thriving is defined as “the experiences of college students who are fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally” (Shreiner, 2010a, p.2). Thriving students find reasons to wake up every day and understand the importance in the work that they do, not only individually but also with their peers, classmates, faculty and institutions. Thriving is a positive, productive, and resilient way of facing difficulties. Thriving relates to “Seligman’s concept of flourishing from positive psychology” (Berea, Tsvetovat, Daun-Barnett, Greenwald, & Cox, 2015) but has an added academic component (Shreiner, 2010a).

Inspired by Laurie Shreiner, the distinguished professor who deeply explored the concept of thriving and its three aspects; academic (Shreiner, 2010b), intrapersonal (Shreiner, 2010a) and interpersonal (Shreiner, 2010c) thriving. This study utilizes her suggested order to display the three different aspects of thriving and link each aspect with the factors affecting student transition.

2.2.1 Academic Thriving

While academic success has two components, cognitive and affective, (Krumrei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim, & Wilcox, 2013); it is often measured solely using scores and grades. Grade point average is a measure of the cognitive aspect of success; in many

cases, it is a source of disappointment for first-year students when they fail to achieve or struggle to perform required academic tasks. This failure to achieve is attributed to a lack of the skills necessary for university study that makes most FYS underprepared for university; some are even at risk of failure (Brower, 2007).

Because the journey is of greater importance than the outcome, I personally believe that the affective aspect of success is as important as cognitive influence. The affective aspect shapes the outcome and makes the journey more enjoyable. This aspect of academic success is usually reflected in *life satisfaction*, which can be defined as a student's "academic self-efficacy, organization, and attention to study, stress and time management, involvement with college activity, satisfaction with the academics, and class communication" (Krumrei-Mancuso et al., 2013, p.254). It is worth noting that the cognitive and affective aspects of success are considered to be much more relevant in predicting student retention than high school grades, aptitude tests, and demographic values (Krumrei-Mancuso et al., 2013) because these aspects mirror real struggles faced by most first-year students during the transition phase.

Academic thriving goes beyond the success that is usually evaluated by "academic performance and persistence to graduation" (Shreiner, 2010a). This aspect of thriving involves the learning experience itself and is determined by two facets: engaged learning and academic determination (Shreiner, 2010b). Academic thriving characterizes students who are "energized by the learning process" (Shreiner, 2010b), involved, and fully engaged.

Student engagement is defined as "a positive energy invested in one's own learning, evidenced by meaningful processing, attention to what is happening in the

moment, and involvement in learning activities”(Shreiner& Louis, 2011, p.4). Engaged students are not only physically present and actively participating in class activity but also psychologically present.

Psychological presence, or mindfulness (Langer, 2000), is a characteristic of students who “notice what is new or different in what they are hearing, seeing, or reading” (Shreiner, 2010b,p.6). They are highly curious, attentive, and work on making the material personally meaningful,those behaviors lead to deep learning.

Deep learning is an approach that “encourage[s] students to make connections and formulate personal meaning” (Shreiner& Louis, 2011, p.5). Mindfulness opposes mindlessness, which leads to surface learning, or the memorization of information without making sense of it or seeing connections with any personal meaning (Langer, 2000).

Academic determination is the second facet of academic thriving; it is the “ability to regulate one’s own learning behavior”(Shreiner, 2010b, p. 7). According to Shreiner (2010b), academically determined students invest their time and effort to overcome any academic challenges that they face.

Though the academic determined students show persistence, they do not mind changing their learning strategies to accommodate different tasks. Academically determined students see their academic achievements as being under their own control, which enables them to act confidently and invest more effort. They also have *hope*, “the process of thinking about one’s goals, along with the motivation to move toward and the ways to achieve those goals,” or “an elevated sense of mental energy and pathways for goals.” (Snyder, 1995, p. 355)

Considering the two facets of academic thriving, it is promising to know that the main requirements for students to thrive academically are their engagement and determination in addition to their skills and abilities. Therefore, if underprepared students are determined to learn and engage in their studies, they can succeed, achieve their goals, and maintain a positive state of mind and sense of psychological being throughout their learning journey.

2.2.2 Intrapersonal Thriving

Following the academic effect on students' transitions is the effect of psychological wellbeing on transitions. It has been argued that students with a healthy psychosocial wellbeing and stress management skills adapt more easily to the stress (Conley, Travers, & Bryant, 2013) that is usually faced in the first year of college. Because psychological wellbeing is characterized by "self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth" (Ryff, 1989, p. 1071), it closely relates to intrapersonal thriving.

Intrapersonal thriving is a positive perspective that enables students to have an optimistic view of their present and future lives, allows them to plan for their success, and fosters confidence in their ability to reach expected outcomes (Shreiner, 2010a). Optimists usually expect a positive future; they remain active while progressing toward this future (Snyder & Lopez, 2005). Optimism is the characteristic that pushes students to "keep trying" without becoming distressed, even when difficulties are encountered. Despite difficulties, these students see the larger picture and find positive perspectives; by acting "proactively and [as] problem solver[s] rather than being reactive and avoidant" (Shreiner, 2010a, p.6). It is worth mentioning that intrapersonal thriving puts students in a

state of personal happiness (Berea et al., 2015) coupled with the ability to see the positivity in themselves and others. Generally speaking, intrapersonal thriving is a process promoting “good health and wellbeing” (Snyder & Lopez, 2005). Optimistic students usually have *hope*, *motivation*, and a high level of *self-efficacy* (Snyder & Lopez, 2005).

Intrapersonal thriving is a vital aspect of progress because it touches on students' perceptions of and reactions to institutional support. Educators supporting students should know that optimism can be learned; teaching optimism can maximize the benefit of transition support (Shreiner, 2010a).

2.2.3 Interpersonal Thriving

Literature related to the retention and transition phases usually relates in some way to motivation and student engagement. Motivation is defined as “what people desire, choose, and commit to do” (cited in Rensing, 2013, p.10); it leads to goal-oriented behavior (Rensing, 2013). Motivation is believed to have a tremendous effect on the transition phase because it can enhance success and foster psychosocial adaptation.

Student engagement, the quality of effort exerted by students that shapes their perceptions of improvement, has a similar effect (Rocconi, 2011). Because motivation and engagement are both fostered through positive constructive interpersonal relationships; I proceed by elaborating on social or interpersonal thriving.

Social development is achieved when students have meaningful connections with other people (Shreiner, 2010a). Social connections and diverse citizenship are the two aspects of interpersonal thriving (Shreiner, 2010c). Social connection occurs when students have healthy relationships with others, whether on or off campus. These people are caring, willing to listen, and trustworthy. The social connection is also realized when a

sense of belonging to the university community is felt. Students not only have healthy relationships but also feel like part of a larger network that cares, commits to, and fulfills their needs. Connections can extend to the level of being open and caring about the surrounding world. Those connections are fostered through active participation in community service, which serves society while also giving students the chance to feel important, valuable, and effective.

Focusing on students in transition and referring to the separation, transition, and incorporation phases, it is possible to clearly link how feelings of trust can help students cope with the feelings of estrangement usually faced in the early weeks or months of their college experiences. Accordingly, “creating a sense of community on campus is the single best way to help all students thrive” (Schreiner, 2013, p.46) in rather than survive the transition.

2.3 Thriving Versus Surviving the Transition

First-year college students pass through what teDeuits (2007) calls the rites of passage: separation, transition and incorporation. The separation and transition phases are challenging, as students usually struggle to balance between their culture at home and the new culture they are asked to cope with at college (Petty, 2014). This culture change is intensified for students from low-income families or whose parents are not educated or do not value education. This difficulty is attributed to the fact that students in the early phase of separation are greatly influenced by the support of their families and acquaintances who remain the main people that they trust at this stage (Petty, 2014). In this case, the negative reactions of a family to the difficulties experienced by a student (being a young adult) put the student at risk of dropping out. This dropping out occurs as

early as the first three weeks of the academic semester. The challenge requires an early intervention known as the Sideman's retention formula (Johnson, Johnson, Kim, & Mckee, 2009) that affirms the better positive effect that the early identification of risk factors and early intervention has on student retention:

RET= Early IDentification + (Early + Intensive + Continuous) intervention
(Seidman,2005, p. 21).

The concept of thriving should not be seen as an outcome that is difficult to reach. Thriving should be perceived as a means through which first-year students can learn to live happily while overcoming challenges rather than focusing on struggles and stress while completing a difficult phase of life. Berea et al. (2015) relate thriving to successfully achieving a degree, persistence, and success. The concept of thriving also links to transitions because approaching the challenges of transitions as opportunities for learning shapes students' thriving in other aspects of their future lives (Barnes, 2014). Believing in such interaction, I proceed by presenting a theoretical perspective of transition through the lens of developmental ecology theory.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Transition Through the Lens of Developmental Ecology Theory

Developmental ecology theory, "accounts for both outcomes and processes of development by incorporating the interactions of individuals with their environments over time in a Person-Process-Context-Time model" (Renn & Arnold, 2003, p. 263). The theory can give insight into transitions through the lens of participants and the events that they encounter. Brower (2007) defines transition using three aspects: time, events, and people. Berea et al. (2015) attributed thriving during transitions to students' interactions

with the campus ecosystem. These aspects align with the components of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) developmental ecology theory (Evans et al., 2010). Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecology theory is also inspired by and adapted from Kurt Lewin's equation ($f B = P \times E$) implying that "behavior is a function of the interaction of the person and the environment" (Evans et al., 2010, p.160). The components of this theory are process; person, context, and time (PCCT) (Evans et al., 2010, p.161). First-year students passing through the transition process embark on a major developmental endeavor that will impact multiple aspects of their lives. Using Bronfenbrenner's terminology, the transition process is "the *proximal process*, that constitutes the primary mechanism producing human development" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 161). Many aspects shape and influence this developmental process.

One aspect that shapes the development of first-year students is their personal characteristics. As outlined by Renn and Arnold (2003), Bronfenbrenner describes four types of "*developmentally instigative characteristics*" that explain the different reactions of first-year students during the proximal process. The first type includes students who invite or avoid responses from peers and faculty (Renn & Arnold, 2003). "Selective responsivity" is the second type, and it describes how people walk around and act in response to the surrounding environment (Evans et al., 2010, p.161). Some get totally involved in organizations while others favor personal activities. The third type is "structuring proclivities," which involves showing "how differently the individuals engage or persist in increasingly complex activities" (Renn & Arnold, 2003, p.269). Those students create a new feature of the environment in order to adapt. Students in the fourth category are "directive beliefs." This category explains how individuals see their

agency in relation to the environment. Directive believers assume that “proper application of efforts yields high grades” (Renn & Arnold, 2003, p.269). Considering the four types of instigative traits makes it possible to correlate and understand the reasons behind students’ different perceptions and interactions during the separation and transition phases. These types also provide a clue about how students can incorporate into their new culture, how they choose their peers, and what activities they will likely select to incorporate into university life.

The second influence is the context to which different instigative characteristics react. Bronfenbrenner presents four levels of context: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. Interpersonal relationships with roommates, classmates, friends, and faculty are components of microsystems and directly affect students’ engagement, development, and learning (Evans et al., 2010, p.161). The second level is mesosystems, which are formed by links between two or more settings or microsystems. A useful example of a mesosystem is when roommates take the same classes. Exosystems are composed of parents’ backgrounds and professions or institutional decision makers. Macrosystems relate to cultural values and norms that are important, especially in some cultures. One of the major culture-related issues in the Egyptian context is related to gender roles providing more freedom to men than women. The interaction between different levels provides either extra stress or relief in first-year students’ transitions.

Finally, the last component of developmental ecology that has a considerable effect on interactions between the proximal process (the transition process), persons (first-year students), and context (the university setting) is time. The most difficult and demanding phase of transition is encountered during the first three to six weeks, when

early drop out usually takes place (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012) and when early intervention plays a crucial role in preventing drop out.

Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecology theory presents the interaction between the environment and a student's personal characteristics. Yet Bronfenbrenner does not elaborate on the specific traits and characteristics of the transition itself. Schlossberg's theory of transition presents a clear coping model that can form a framework for universities to help their students through the transition.

2.4.2 Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Nancy Schlossberg's transition theory includes a psychosocial viewpoint. Schlossberg's theory presented in 1984 offers a frame of reference to understand adult transition and suggests ways to help people cope with its phases. Schlossberg's variables of adaptation differ slightly from the PPCT presented by Bronfenbrenner, but her principles are also closely related to Kurt Lewin's equation of person-environment interaction. The three variables of adaptation to transition presented by Schlossberg are as follows: "individual perceptions of transition, characteristics of the pre-transition and post-transition environments, and the characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition" (Evans et al., 2010, p.213). She also presented three stages of transition: moving in, moving through, and moving out. In her model, Schlossberg presented three components of transition: "approaching change, taking stock, and taking charge" (Evans et al., 2010, p.214). These components were later used as a frame in counseling adults in transition (Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2012). The next section uses these components as an outline to understand what first-year students encounter when beginning their university experience.

The transition is approached only when students are aware of its presence, which differentiates it from change (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 33). “Any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 33) is known as a transition. In order to manage a transition, it is important to understand the nature of the transition, how it impacts students’ lives, and what students are experiencing. The three types of transition are as follows: anticipated, unanticipated, and non-event.

Most students can anticipate moving to university. However, this event can be an unanticipated transition when a different unexpected event takes place. Some Egyptian students experience unanticipated transitions when they must leave their families to attend universities in different governorates, although this situation may be a normal transition in other cultures. This event is unanticipated because in Egyptian culture, young people usually live with their parents until they are married. Gender also plays a major role in this unanticipated transition, as it is much more difficult for women to move far from their parents than men, who still have some concerns.

Non-event transitions take place in the Egyptian setting when students are not admitted to the faculty they wished due to their grades on the Thanaweya Amma, the national examination that all students must complete in high school. Students are admitted to Egyptian universities based on their scores and the list of preferences that they submit to a central placement office that coordinates the admission of all students in all the Egyptian governorates (Abdel Hamid, Saad, Gomma, Khalifa, & Gadallah, 2010, p. 21). Because the capacity of universities is not suitable to accommodate the large number of students, in many cases the students are accepted and enrolled in faculties that are not

their choice. This situation leaves students with the conflicting decision of either studying subjects in a field that may not match their interest or dropping out of university. The choice made by most Egyptian students is to stay enrolled for the sake of earning any higher degree and ensuring a better image in society. The students who adopt this perspective do not show interest in learning or gain deep knowledge or proper skills from their university experience.

These examples provide snapshots of the most common transitions encountered by Egyptian students. Yet other personal anticipated, unanticipated, or non-event transitions sometimes coincide in the same critical phase, exacerbating students' troubles. Hence, context has a major impact on transitions, as the same event can be perceived and interpreted differently in different contexts.

Learning to cope is necessary, since any transition is stressful, regardless of whether it is positive or negative. To cope with different types of transition, they need to go through what Schlossberg named; taking stock of coping resources. The taking stock of coping resources occurs when resources designed to help students are well located; these resources include not only external support but also the present assets and liabilities available that shape how effectively students cope with transition. The resources are grouped into four categories: *situation*, *self*, *support*, and *strategies* (Schlossberg, 2011).

In addition to the common situations that all first-year students share, every student experiences personal situations that may increase his or her stress level. Some may experience family problems, illness, or the loss of a family member or friend. In other cases, students may have to manage new or chronic personal medical conditions. *Self* has a personal, demographic component and a psychological component

(Evans et al., 2010, p.217). A student's age, gender, and socioeconomic status can affect how he or she perceives a transition. Regarding the psychological perspective, optimistic students have an inner strength that helps them cope with stress and the difficulties of transitions (Schlossberg, 2011). The psychological wellbeing of a student also has a direct effect on coping with transition-induced stress (Conley, Travers, & Bryant, 2013). These personal assets can be either students' personal characteristics or skills learned through the support services provided by most first-year programs.

First-year students need various types of support; in particular, Schlossberg focused on the social support (Evans et al., 2010, p.217) that FYs seek by forming intimate relationships and communicating with their families and old friends. Another type of support can be provided by institutions and is usually offered through student support services, "peer-led social support programs" (Mattanah et al., 2010), or living and learning communities (Rocconi, 2011). This support also points to the interpersonal aspect of thriving, which is one of the most important factors helping students to trust and feel that they belong to their new environment. Schlossberg (2011) endorsed what Pearlin and Schooler (1978) classified as coping strategies. Some students plan and take action to change a situation, others try to reframe the situation, and the third group works to reduce stress. None of these three strategies can serve as a prescription to cope with transitions, as a strategy needs to match the situation, self, and support. It is also important to note that it is usually necessary to change strategies after evaluating their benefits. The third component of transition, known as taking charge of the transition, builds on strengthening already-located resources or amending strategies that did not work. In addition to the three components that shape transition coping strategies, Anderson et al. (2012) approved

Cormier and Hackney’s five-stage helping model. The stages include the following: relationship building, assessment, goal setting, intervention, and termination and follow up (Evans et al., 2010, p.220). The order of the helping model is logical and promising for various reasons. First, building relationships with students is necessary; trusting helpers like counselors, advisors, or faculty members, allows students to share personal challenges and concerns, which helps in assessing assets and liabilities.

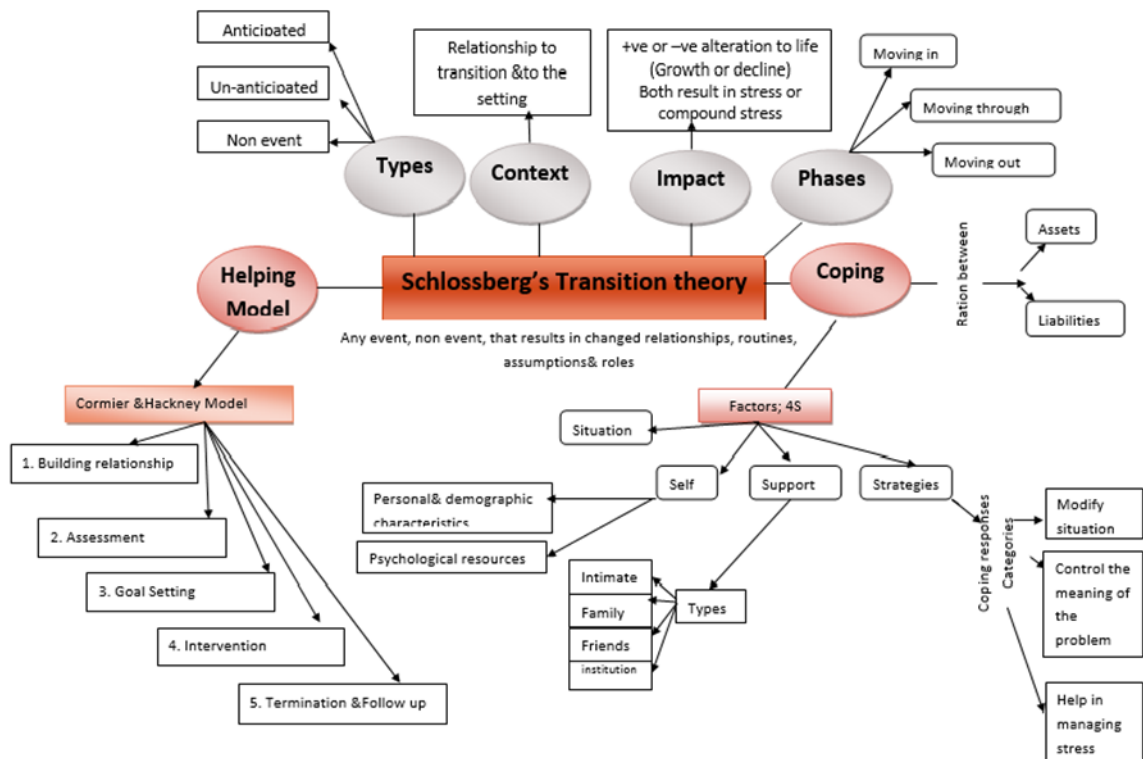


Figure-1: Mapping Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Second, assessment helps to raise awareness about what point a student is at in his or her transition, what is affecting his or her transition that could trigger more tension, what assets he or she has, and what support is the best fit. Third, and as a result of the first two steps, helping students in transition to set goals and ensure that the goals are attainable. The next step is intervention, the point at which the first three steps are put

into action to move through the transition. During termination and follow-up, students take charge of their transitions by strengthening their resources and amending strategies.

2.5 Working on the Different Aspects of Thriving

Institutions aimed at helping students thrive in their transitions to new environments usually respond to the above-mentioned challenges of students by exerting efforts to foster academic determination, change the students' perceptions, and, most importantly, improve student engagement. This support aligns with Cormier and Hackney's transition model and to the *P* (person) part of Kurt Lewin's equation. Utilizing Cormier and Hackney's transition model assists with building relationships with students, assessing their needs, and helping them to set and achieve goals.

2.5 1 Fostering Academic Determination

Literature reveals that most FYS are underprepared for college and incapable of taking responsibility for their own learning (Brower, 2007). Universities usually present various support services to ease the transition and equip students with needed skills. Because thriving is superior to easing the transition, it is important to address the major ways to foster academic determination stated by Shreiner (2013). These practices include having faculty advisors, teaching courses on learning how to learn, and normalizing the help-seeking process (Shreiner, 2010b) that has been shown to impact student thriving.

Advising refers to a developmental form of advising that differs from the prescriptive type (Rensing, 2013). Having faculty advise affects students' motivation helps them discover their strengths and find strategies to face their fears and challenges (Rensing, 2013). Courses on learning how to learn usually introduce students to time

management, taking responsibility for their learning, goal setting, and effective writing, reading, and presenting skills (Ford, Knight, & McDonald-Littleton, 2001).

With regard to normalizing help seeking, “peer-led social support programs” (Mattanah et al., 2010) have been shown to have a positive impact on the social adaptation of FYS and decrease their levels of loneliness. When students feel that seeking help is normal and even encouraged, they begin to incorporate into the university environment. At that time peer leaders, advisors, and faculty can work with students to show them, through hands on experience, the impact of investing effort and goal-directed thinking on achieving academic and life success.

2.5.2 Changing Students’ Perspectives

On the subject of changing the students’ perspectives Shreiner (2010a) suggests teaching students’ positive explanatory styles. Explanatory style is “how people habitually explain the causes of events that occur to them” (Snyder & Lopez, 2005, p.244). The study of positive explanatory style originates from the learned-helplessness model that explains how animals and people learn to act helplessly. The positive explanatory style provides a way to open the eyes of FYS regarding positive perspectives lying beyond the hectic events of their transitions. Orientation sessions, advising relationships, and retraining videos have been used to introduce the positive explanatory style at the University of Manitoba (Shreiner, 2010a). This style of perception affects students’ wellbeing, gives them hope, and explains happiness.

In addition to positive explanatory styles and as a component of optimism, helping students to envision future success is also related to intrapersonal thriving. This link is attributed to the motivation that the students may experience when they imagine

their future statuses and accomplishments. Motivation is “the process whereby goal-directed activities are instigated and sustained” (Schunk, 2012, p. 58). During this process the hypothalamus, prefrontal cortex, and amygdala secrete chemicals responsible for producing feelings of satisfaction (Schunk, 2012). Motivation actually pushes students toward the self-efficacy that is the key to success. This state combines the mind, body, and behavior, resulting in tangible effects (Schunk, 2012).

A third method for changing students’ perspectives usually involves helping them to apply their strengths (Shreiner, 2010a). Strengths-based development involves helping students “to invest their talents, time, and treasure so that they will bring them success” (Braskamp, 2006). This process usually begins with assisting students in learning who they are and what they do best that can contribute to making a better world. The fact that students discover and then develop their talents gives them strength to “live and perform at a level of excellence” (Braskamp, 2006). This opposes the idea of working to overcome weaknesses, which does not create any uniqueness, excellence, or feeling of contribution to the surrounding environment.

2.5.3 Working on Student Engagement

Behavior without thinking will not lead to effective engagement (Shreiner & Louis, 2011). In their paper, Shreiner and Louis (2011) affirmed that student engagement has cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. Shreiner (2010b) explains that because students’ behavior does not necessarily reflect the true picture of their engagement, instructors must look beyond behavior. Her explanation is based on the fact that students have different ways of perceiving and processing information. Consequently, it is of value to work on deliberately engaging students. One way of intentionally engaging

students is to teach mindfulness, which has been effective in enhancing the cognitive facet of engagement (Langer, 2000; Shreiner, 2010b). Langer (2000) has suggested that teaching for mindfulness is usually done by presenting material in relation to context and raising a feeling of wonder rather than presenting abstract facts. He also emphasized the importance of presenting information in new ways to foster mindfulness (Langer, 2000). This method of teaching affirms the necessity of involving students rather than treating them only as receivers of information. Another practical method suggested by Baxter Magolda (2012) is the learning partnership; she presented how this practice helps students become not only engaged but also “authors of their own [lives].”

I explained the ways to engage students and teach for mindfulness, I now examine efforts to improve students’ thinking. Deep learning leads to improved learning and thinking (Thomas, Seifert, Pascarella, Mayhew, & Blaich, 2014). Fostering deep learning can be done by exposing students to a wide range of reading materials, encouraging them to discuss and share their ideas. In addition to using a reflective perspective that encourages students to see application to the knowledge they gain in their surrounding context (Thomas et al., 2014).

2.6 The Intersection between Thriving, the Transition, and Learning Communities

The three different elements of thriving must be embraced in a holistic way rather than as separate clusters. Since thriving during transition is the focus of this work, the next section elaborates on the concept of *learning communities* (LC) considered through the lens of Bronfenbrenner’s developmental ecology theory and Schlossberg’s transition theory. As previously stated developmental ecology theory and transition theory both examine the interaction between students and the environment with the goal of

changing behavior. Learning communities are based on adjustment of the environment so that FYS feel safer, connected, and engaged. The choice of using the learning community model is based on two reasons. The first reason is the clear intersection found between learning communities' goals and core practices and the concept of thriving. The second reason is that learning communities foster student engagement, and an "extensive body of research on college impact suggests that focusing on student engagement—that is what students do during college—is the best way to enhance student success" (Whitt, 2006).

2.6.1 The History of Learning Communities

In 1920 the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin started a learning community that was related to a residence program (Reames, Anekwe, Wang, & Witte, 2011). The initiative linked students taking two or more courses together. These students participated in a "freshman interest group" (Tinto, 2003) led by graduate students or upperclassmen. This pedagogy, also known as "coordinated studies," allowed students to share their rich encounters through the curriculum. Learning communities became very popular, and many higher education institutions attribute the success of their students indirectly to these communities (Tinto, 2003; Engerstrom & Tinto, 2008; Pike, 2008; Rocconi, 2011). Today, various formats and settings of learning communities exist. Some LCs are related to residence halls and called "living learning communities;" these communities are meant to provide "greater peer interaction and social integration" (Wawrzynski & Jessup-Anger, 2010). Other communities more concerned with learning techniques and pedagogical approaches are known as "academically-based learning communities," (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Another type of LC, "student-type learning communities" (Zhao & Kuh, 2004), is usually designed to respond to the shared needs of a

specific target group (like “freshman learning communities”) or related to a specific cohort (“cohort learning communities”). Such communities may have various objectives, some of which are “to improve students’ critical thinking skills, overall learning, and ability to work in teams”(Beachboard, Beachboard, Li, & Adkison, 2011). Such communities do not focus only on pedagogies; they are concerned with all the needs of the targeted groups. Freshman learning communities have been established in more than five-hundred institutions, and these communities aim to “develop students’ capacity to make both academic and social connections” (Smith, McGreogor, Matthews & Gabelnick, 2004, p. 68).

2.6.2 The Characteristics of Learning Communities

Cross (1998) defined learning communities as “groups of people engaged in intellectual interaction for the purpose of learning.” Pascarella and Terenzini argued that learning communities have “two common elements: shared or collaborative learning and connected learning”(Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Shared learning occurs because they imply that students enroll in common courses, and these courses are connected because they follow certain themes (Rocconi, 2011). Tinto (2003) also identified three common features of LCs regardless of their varying setups. Shared knowing is attributed to the fact that students are asked to construct their knowledge together, to know each other and to share a learning experience. Shared responsibility relates to the fact that students participate in study groups that make every student responsible for a part of the content that would not be accomplished if the student fails to contribute (Tinto, 2003).

In other words, LCs create an environment that boosts thriving at the academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal levels. The next section investigates the core practices of LCs in order to highlight the basic elements of a well-structured LC.

2.6.3 Five Core Practices of Learning Communities.

Smith et al. (2004) identified five core practices to consider when constructing learning communities, regardless of the shape or format of the LC. The five core practices are community, diversity, integration, reflection and assessment, and active learning (Smith et al., 2004). Community is successfully built in a university when all members feel safe, included, and a sense of belonging to the academic and social environment (Smith et al., 2004). Diversity is embraced when different perspectives, beliefs, and backgrounds are respected and welcomed. Integration is the third core practice, and it usually brings a community and diversity together in a call to use knowledge with “wisdom, compassion, and love” (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010, p.38). A student is not only filled with knowledge; he or she is also prepared for the complexity of life.

The final two core practices are active learning and reflection and assessment, which are both considered to be a basis for transformative learning. The reason for their link to transformative learning is attributed to the fact that students do not learn only by attending lectures and memorizing information to use during exams. Students need to talk, write, share, create, and apply what they are learning. Active learning is a key to reaching deep learning, which is attained when information is processed deeply and moved from the working memory to long-term storage (Cullen, Harris, & Hill, 2012, p.48).

The final core practice of LCs is reflection and assessment. Reflection is a tool used to help students gain awareness about the knowledge they learned, how it affected them, their ability to apply what they know, how they feel, their own learning methods, and how they will act in similar situations.

Rocconi (2011) has argued that learning communities (LCs) have an indirect effect on student success because they directly affect student engagement. I find this argument of value because of the match between the factors that lead to motivation and the characteristics of LCs, which are known as *high impact educational practices* (Smith et al., 2004; Rocconi, 2011). Studies have found that students participating in LCs have the opportunity to make a “meaningful undergraduate experience” (Rocconi, 2011). Learning communities link the academic and social development of students, which affects holistic student development (Rocconi, 2011).

At Gouna Technical Nursing Institute (GTNI), students live and learn together for three years to earn their associate nursing degree. To an outsider, this situation may seem like an obvious learning community, yet a closer examination reveals that some of the characteristics of LCs are still absent. Since studying a “unique example of those particular students in a real situation [is] much more beneficial than presenting abstract theories or principles” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.253), a case study is most appropriate for this research.

2.7 Problem Statement

Gouna Technical Nursing Institute “through the delivery of quality nursing education, aims to empower young men and women to challenge themselves academically, to serve and to lead, promote improved health, within communities and to contribute to society within Egypt” (Gouna Technical Nursing Institute, 2011). This institute accepts around 50 students every year and offers them a fully funded scholarship that allows them to earn an associate degree in nursing. Gouna Technical Nursing Institute also ensures students employment in reputable hospitals after graduation. Although a GTNI education may be seen as an excellent opportunity for youth or to have a successful future, many challenges are faced.

One challenge is the retention of students, and this challenge is mainly due to academic or social problems. Newly enrolled students usually report a huge difference between the education system that they are used to and the new system based on critical thinking and problem solving rather than memorization. This difference relates to Bronfenbrenner’s interaction between student characteristics and the ecosystem. Students also struggle with language because the curriculum, including lectures, assignments, exams, is taught in English. More importantly, communication in the institute in general is in English. Additionally, students’ social lives are fully changed, as they move far from their families and are asked to cope with a totally new culture. The new environment requires that students act professionally by using a code of ethics and taking full responsibility for their own lives and learning. These challenges include some of the types of transitions highlighted in Schlossberg’s transition theory.

The institute addresses these challenges by offering what is called the “first semester program,” which aims to equip students with the needed knowledge, skills, and attitudes to prepare them for their further nursing semesters and for life as a student. The institution’s interventions to ease students’ transitions exemplifies Kurt Lewin’s equation ($B = P \times E$), which is the foundation for both Bronfenbrenner and Schlossberg’s theories.

The institution faces a significant challenge in supporting new students. The sense of estrangement, homesickness, and incompetence pushes students to search for comfort from peer support. The new students seek help and support from upperclassmen, who are perceived as being more experienced because these upperclassmen have struggled and found a way to adapt. The call for the creation of a safe community where students feel a sense of belonging and receive help in incorporating into the environment is necessary. Pre-university education in Egypt is rarely based on cooperation, collaboration, and teamwork (Ginsburg, & Megahed, 2008). This early education fosters competition and individual work; as a result, students’ attitudes toward helping each other usually are not positive.

Through my observations as the first semester coordinator and a faculty member teaching and working with the first-year students at GTNI, I see that the detrimental effect sometimes diverts students’ attention away from their studies or even fosters resistance to following rules. In this case, students risk remaining enclosed in their newly formed comfortable communities; such isolation hinders their ability to benefit from various support programs offered by the institute. This observation is one more reason why an

insider's view will provide more insight regarding the incompatibility of the presented environment with the characteristics of an authentic learning community.

Therefore, the need is not to craft a support program but to create an environment that responds to student needs and aims not only to ease the transition phase but also to help students develop and grow in a holistic way, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Because a clear intersection can be seen between the concept of thriving and the needs addressed, it is of value to study the students and the situations they experience in this context. Thus, approaching this research through a case study is more effective than putting forward abstract theoretical concepts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

2.8 Purpose and Research Questions

This case study is designed to present the description and analysis of the transition and development of first-year students at GTNI. The goal of this descriptive analysis is to identify clear recommendations to build a first-year learning community that provides opportunities for students to thrive rather than survive their transitions. Therefore, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by first-year student at Gouna Technical Nursing Institute?
2. What are the perceptions of students and faculty members regarding the support offered by the program through the first year?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

As a methodology, case studies “[blend] a description of events with the analysis of them” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.253). I chose this method because I sought to describe and analyze the details of the transition of GTNI’s first-year students and the effect of the environment on this transition. Additionally, I examined students’ awareness about the three aspects of their development (academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) and inspected their perceptions of the different support services offered by GTNI. Furthermore, I researched faculty perceptions of student thriving and views of the effects of different services in shaping student development. I believe that this analysis will help in creating a first-year learning community (FYLC) that suits the Egyptian context rather than pushing to implement abstract theories or concepts that have never been tried in the Egyptian context.

I collected my data through a combination of surveys (Appendix1) and semi-structured personal interviews (Appendix2) with students and faculty members. I also engaged in participant observation. I used different methods to ensure the “verification or extension of information from other sources” (Hatch, 2002, p. 92), which is known as triangulation. Since the transition phase is a complex process built on the interaction of students and the environment (Evans et al., 2010; Anderson et al., 2012), I used triangulation to ensure the validity of my research (Cohen et al., 2007).

3.1 Sample

Survey links were sent to all 2015-16 students; this group included a total of 34 first-year students and four students who were repeating the year. Gouna Technical

Nursing Institute has six fulltime faculty members working with first-year students, including an administration leader and myself. Excluding myself, I sent five links to the faculty members: two from the nursing department, two from the English department, and the administration leader. Participation in survey was voluntary for both students and faculty members (Appendix3). Of the 38 students to whom survey links were sent, 34 voluntarily participated in the survey. All five faculty members responded to the survey.

Regarding the interviews, I planned to interview six to eight students in order to include an equal number of men and women, different academic levels, and one of the repeating students. A call for voluntary participation in the interviews was addressed in a brief explanation of the research before the survey links were sent (Appendix4). A total of ten students who were interested in participating in interviews signed up in person. I chose three men and three women and worked to set convenient times and dates for the interviews. I purposefully selected different participants to collect wider viewpoints. My selection included an equal number of men and women, and each group included different levels of student performance. (Table1)

Faculty viewpoints were assessed through semi-structured interviews with a nursing faculty member, an English faculty member, and the administration leader.

<i>M-A</i>	Male student 19 years old Kafr L Sheikh First in his class
<i>M-B</i>	Male student 19 years old Damietta
<i>M-C</i>	Male student 19 years old Mansoura
<i>F-A</i>	Female student 20 years old Gharbya
<i>F-B</i>	Female student 19 years old Gharbya
<i>F-C</i>	Female student 19 years old Gharbya

Table 1: Student Interview Participants

3.2 Instruments

The survey questions (Appendix1) aimed to assess students' awareness of the aspects of their development (academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal). Secondly, they aimed to point the most prominent interventions offered by GTNI that either helped or prevented them from thriving. The survey also aimed to collect students' perceptions of the GTNI community in order to measure the extent GTNI's community matches the core practices of learning communities. Another survey was collected from faculty members who worked closely with FYS in order to understand faculty members' perspectives on students' development with the help of the interventions. The faculty members perhaps designed or helped in implementing those interventions.

Six semi-structured interviews were also conducted with students (Appendix2); the interviews included open-ended questions in order to collect more details for better interpretation of the simplified results of the surveys. In addition to the student interviews, three faculty interviews were conducted; these interviews were aimed at examining faculty members' different views of student development and the characteristics of the present living-learning community.

I engaged in participant observation throughout the 2015-16 academic year. The field notes and reflection from the participant observation were used as data for the purpose of triangulation.

3.3 Procedure

Data collection took place at the institution during summer 2016. At this time, the students were completing summer training at GTNI. This time was preferred for two reasons. First, collecting data after the completion of the first year allowed students to reflect on the whole experience. Secondly, at this point in time, the event was still recent

enough that they could describe their feelings, struggles, successes, and failures. A third unintended benefit for the students is that reflecting on the past year can help them learn from their past experiences and set goals and strategies for learning in upcoming years (Chen, 2013; Palmer & Zajonc, 2010)

As previously mentioned, data collection took place in three steps. The first step included anonymous surveys sent through Lime Survey (Appendix 1). Lime Survey is the online tool usually used at the institute; students and faculty members were familiar with it. The second step was the student and faculty interviews (Appendix 2), which were recorded. The final step was analysis of the data from the participant observation that had been conducted through my regular participation in the program.

3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

I approached the analysis using a *typological analysis* in which “the overall data was divided into categories or groups based on predetermined typologies” (Hatch, 2002, p. 152). I began my analysis by identifying four typologies: challenges, changes, support services, and the present characteristics of learning communities. But, after proceeding with the analysis and due to the depth of information pertaining to the first three typologies, I felt that it was better to analyze the GTNI environment in relation to the core practices of learning communities in a future research project. After establishing the typographies, I linked the data to each of the three identified typologies. Afterward, I proceeded by reading each typology separately in order to summarize and record the main ideas. I then proceeded to “look for patterns, relationships and themes within [the] typologies” (Hatch, 2002, p. 155) in order to visualize similarities, differences, and frequencies. Three patterns were identified in each of the typologies: academic

development, intrapersonal development, and interpersonal development (Shreiner, 2010a).

These steps were applied twice, first to students' perceptions and then to faculty members' perceptions. I then reviewed the data to check that all categories are well justified. At this point I began to identify relationships between the patterns by revisiting the theoretical framework that guided my research. Lastly, I reported my results in writing (Hatch, 2002). The theoretical framework guiding the analysis is based on Bronfenbrenner's theory of developmental ecology and Schlossberg's transition theory. The two theories are an application of Kurt Lewin's equation ($B = P \times E$) (Evans et al., 2010, p. 160). Bronfenbrenner developmental ecology components, proximal process (transition phase), person (first-year students), context (institutional setting) and time (first year), provide a full picture of the elements of the case study.

Schlossberg's transition theory was used to identify the three adaptation variables and the three components of the transition phase. The three adaptation variables are as follows: "individual perceptions of transition, characteristics of pre-transition and post-transition environment, and the characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition" (Evans et al., 2010, p.213). The three components of transition that have been used as a frame in counseling adults in transition are approaching change, taking stock, and taking charge (Evans et al., 2010). Through this frame and to achieve a more detailed analysis, taking stock of the coping resources was categorized into four categories: situation, self, support, and strategies (Schlossberg, 2012).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Student Perspectives

4.1.1 Challenges

When asked about challenges they faced, most of the students admitted that at the beginning of their journey at GTNI, the language, leaving their families, friends, and cities to live in a new place (especially like El Gouna), and adaptation to the new environment of the institute were the most common challenges encountered. It is to be expected that the use of English as the medium of instruction and in exams could be a considerable barrier at the beginning of the journey.

“We were not able to use English in a correct way” said *M-A*, especially because all students came from governmental schools where English is a subject and not the language of instruction. It is logical that the majority of the students affirmed that the English language was their greatest challenge. Additionally, nearly every student experienced stress from leaving his or her family, friends, and neighborhood. Although the stress from leaving home is a common problem for almost all students, the reasons differ from one student to another.

Stress can be caused by missing family events and loved ones or not being present to support family members in times of need. *F-C* spoke about her relationship with her younger sister: “I could not live without her. She got sick and I was not with her. I thought of going back home and quitting just to be with her. This was so difficult for me.” The stress of being away from family and friends can be even greater if a student is not outgoing. *M-A* stated that his challenge was “living away from my family, especially

as I am not a sociable person. So, I found difficulties to make friends and to be sociable.” On the other hand, some students found it easier to make new friends. But, as young adult man and women, they failed to create boundaries, which caused other stress resulting from socializing. *M-B* described how having friends affected his health: “they were coming to my room. This prevented me from sleeping. Sleeping for me is very important. I cannot function if I do not sleep well. This might be the cause of the blood pressure I had, as at home I am used to sleep as much as I want.”

Because the new environment was demanding for almost all of the students, the third challenge they spoke about was adaptation to the institutional setting. Most of the students found it difficult to adapt to the institute’s strict rules or the long study hours and busy schedule. The reason for this challenge is mainly due to the difference of GTNI as an educational setting compared to the school environment with which they were familiar. “I am not used to live between boundaries. I cannot go out anytime I want,” said *M-B*. Having boundaries and needing to ask permissions was new, especially for the men, as Egyptian culture gives a considerable range of freedom to men compared to women. The male students were used to working during summer vacation to earn their living expenses, which made them feel more independent. As a result, the men found it more difficult to abide by the rules. Additionally, that GTNI has a strict attendance policy and attendance and participation are the keys that ensure eligibility for final exams was challenging. Most students in governmental schools do not attend classes on a regular basis, and even if students attend school, teachers are frequently absent. Moreover, the active class settings were totally new for students; they were used to receiving knowledge rather than having to share and participate in classes. Also, the long class hours means

that students must sleep early in order to wake up early every day and come to class fresh and ready to learn. This sleep schedule demands a sincere daily commitment that is new to students.

“You should be responsible for your life, and your decisions control your life” added *F-C*. This responsibility was new and difficult for most students; they explained how they usually relied on their mothers to wake them up, prepare their meals, wash their clothes, and take care of their basic needs. Accordingly, it is understandable that they found it difficult to survive alone and become independent.

More complexity occurred when families did not support their children, either by criticizing the rules or not letting go of the children that they relied on for emotional fulfillment or out of habit. A lack of family support was a problem especially for students who were not naturally sociable.

Difficulty in adapting to the rules sometimes occurred because students claimed that they did not understand the reasons for some of the rules. *F-B* mentioned that she was not convinced about the phone submission policy. The phone submission policy allows the students to use their phones only for a certain time then submitting them back to the housing supervisors. She believed that this policy did not guarantee that she would not be distracted, as many other distractions existed. Another girl expressed unhappiness about not being allowed to study with her friends anytime she wanted, as they both believed that studying together allowed them to achieve more and was not distracting. *M-B* felt that the reasons for not having approval to go out were not convincing, and he only went out once during the whole first semester.

Other challenges like examination stress and fear of failure can take the place of the challenges that are usually encountered when students are aware of the effort needed to succeed. *F-A* stated, “since I was admitted here, I wanted to study in English. I also always dreamt of studying in another city since secondary school.” Although she did not experience the usual challenges, her excitement distracted her attention from studying and resulted in her failure. But, she had to manage other obstacles when she repeated the year. *F-A* added that returning was a challenge for her, as she was afraid to fail again and of new students. But, she decided to face her fears and to return to turn her failure to success.

4.1.2 Changes

All students stated that they were now aware of their improvement and expressed happiness about it. Nevertheless, they all affirmed that the process was difficult. One of the most intense changes was the level of stress (Figure1). Most students reported high level of stress at the beginning of their experience. However, a considerable decrease in the average stress level was noticed at the end of the first-year experience.

Only a few students had low stress levels at the beginning of the experience. Those students attributed these lower stress levels to what Schlossberg referred to as personal assets, which include believing in one’s self and one’s ability to adapt to change. The low stress level can also be related to some of the ways through which student feels strongly supported as praying or feels more positive and refreshed as playing football. But, the majority of students reported very high levels of stress from the new experience. The stress they suffered from was best explained by one of the students who described the experience as a “new life, new ways of learning, new community.” Another student

attributed the stress to fear, worry about studies and exams, and doubting personal abilities.

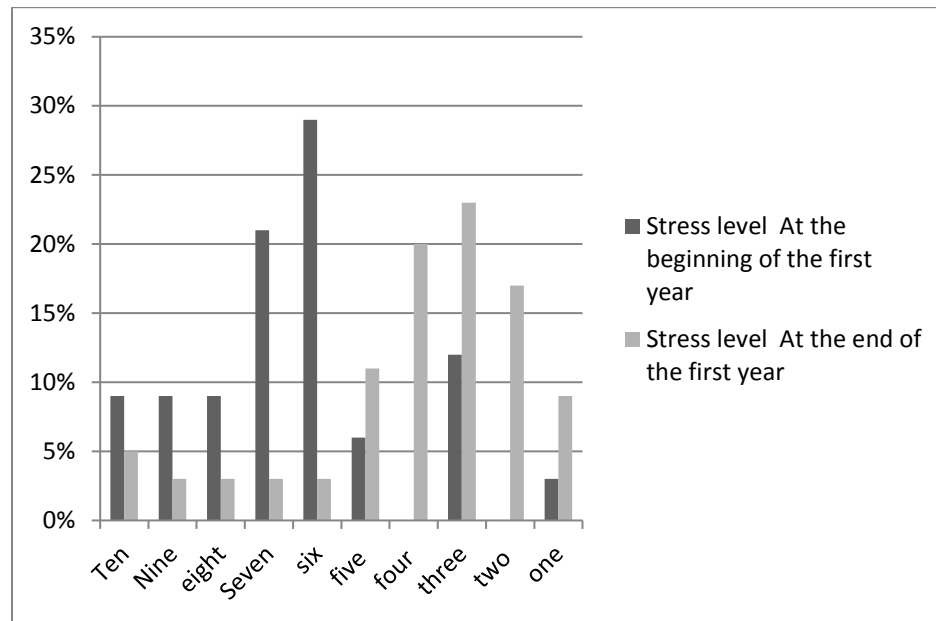


Figure2:Level of Stress at the Beginning and End of the First Year

A small number of students linked their decreased levels of stress after the first year to their increased awareness. One of the students stated “I have developed awareness more than before, and GTNI help me to improve.” Other students reported that this increased awareness was the result of the knowledge gained from stress management techniques learned in nursing lectures. Through the surveys one of the students mentioned “I learned to trust people around me. This helped me to build lots of relationships. Also, the curriculum is more familiar to me now. Everything is clearer.”

Conversely, some of the students experienced an increase in their stress levels because of their poor academic performance by the end of the first year, which demonstrated to them that their strategies were not successful. Few students maintained the same level of stress due to their struggles to adapt to the environment.

Interestingly, the changes experienced by the students corresponded with the three aspects of thriving. Intrapersonally, *F-A* clearly displayed optimism, hope, and motivation when she stated “when I went home, I thought more deeply, and I put my goals again. I thought about what I should do. I found that my way through the last semester was completely wrong.” Accordingly, she affirmed that she benefited significantly from the year that she repeated. She thrived on more than one level when she returned to her repeated year. Her academic performance improved considerably, her positive attitude toward learning and the rules was noticed, and her cooperation with and support of her new classmates was seen daily.

Another milestone was reported by *M-B* who stated that “I am now convinced that what is happening to me can happen to anyone. God is not punishing me. He actually loves me, so he is putting me in stressful situations to get experience and to learn. I started to experience this acceptance after an advising session.” *F-C* reported that, “I got to learn to pass through problems without the help of my mom and without having her around. I was sick and I could handle it without her.” She also mentioned that she adapted to living far from her sister but reinforced that “when I go back home for vacation, I give her all my time just to make it up to her.” She also had a different point of view about nursing; previously she thought that nurses could not make a difference. After her first year, though, she came to believe that nurses are very important. She added that, “it is really nice to see the patient smile and to feel that I rescued him. I did something!”

Additionally, *M-C* stated that, “my lifestyle changed. I do not sleep a lot like old days. I sleep for five hours now.” This change occurred after the significant difficulties he

faced adapting to the new environment and the frustration he felt. *M-C* reported his frustration and confusion at the early weeks that he reacted to by locking himself in his room and crying.

In terms of changing students' perspectives, it was clear that some of the rules, such as the submission of phones, were seen as obstacles, and students displayed unhappiness or frustration and rebelled about. However, by the end of the semester, many of them no longer felt these rules were a problem. "I used to use my phone for Facebook and What's app all day long. But, now it has been three days I did not use it, as I was busy in summer training. But, I am totally fine. I do not mind at all," said *F-C*, although she was against the rule and struggled to abide by it. She actually admitted that "my problem is that I am not used to be told what I should do. I used to take my decisions by my own". This reason is why she opposed the phone rules.

In regards to the interpersonal level, another student reported that he became more sociable and a responsible man. *M-A* mentioned that, "I was alone all my life, but when I came here I asked myself why to be alone anymore. Also, group activities helped me a lot to be sociable." *M-C*, speaking about communication with his peers and the faculty, added that "my way of dealing with people changed, and I became much more careful with my communication." He is more aware of the consequences of his actions and behavior. Additionally, some of the students, like *F-A*, mentioned having increased flexibility shaped by not rejecting feedback and perceiving it as beneficial and helpful for improvement.

As for the academic level, most of the students mentioned the change in their way of thinking. They affirmed that they did not think that studying was necessary at

university and that they would just receive a degree. Now they know that they need to work diligently. They discovered that they needed to fully engage in their studies and not just pass the days in order to receive a degree at the end. The determination to change reached a level that *M-A* mentioned: “I said to myself, ‘you are alone now. What are you going to do?’ So I started to make a plan for my life, and now I am doing better and I am achieving some goals.” Creating goals and leading one’s own life, especially after discovering the requirements for success, is a component of the academic determination necessary for academic thriving (Shreiner, 2010b).

4.1.3 Support

Most of the students found the environment at GTNI to be very supportive or mostly supportive (Table2). None of the students reported that the environment was not supportive at all. Only few found it to be somewhat supportive, and fewer found it neutral. It is worth mentioning that the various forms of support services offered through the first year to support students personally, socially, and academically were mentioned and meaningfully evaluated by the students.

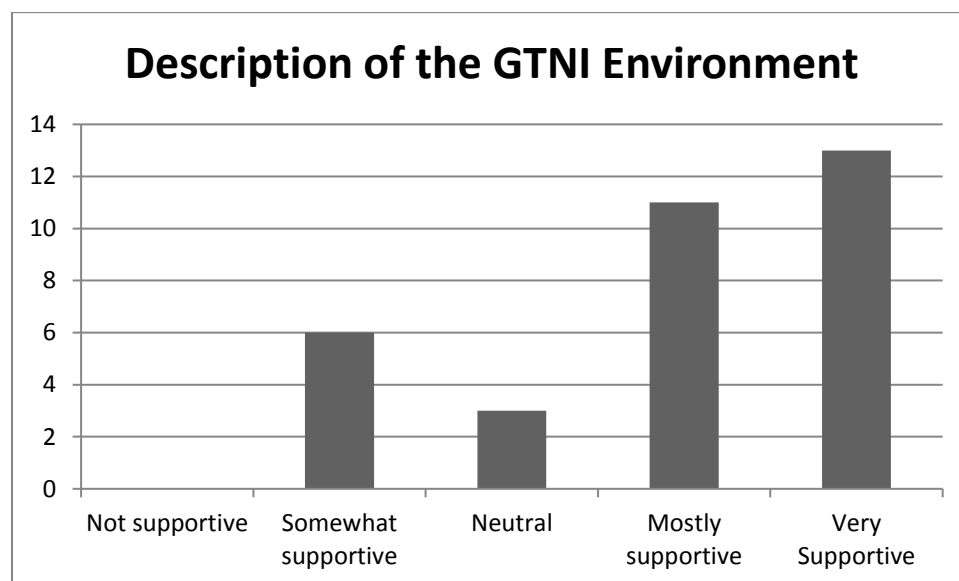


Figure 3: Descriptions of the GTNI Environment

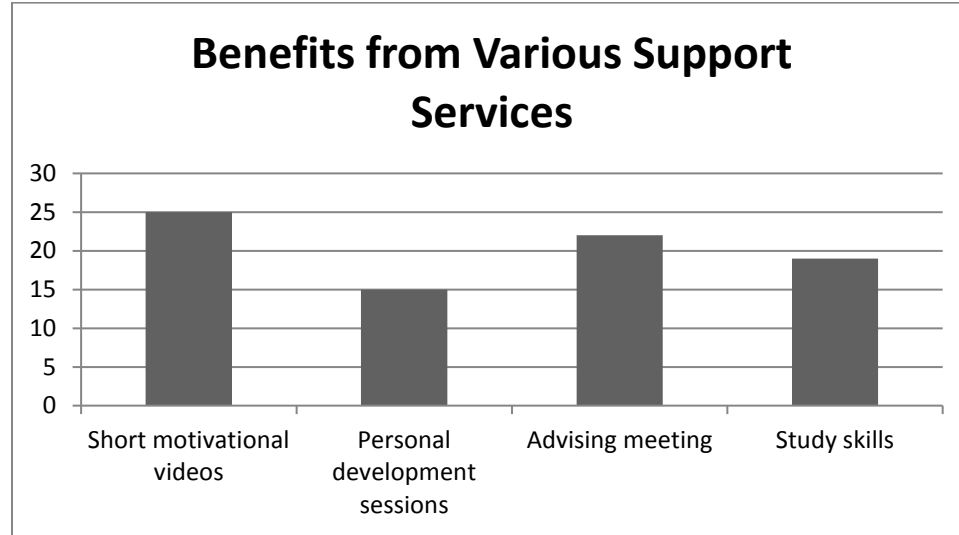


Figure 4: Benefits from Various Support Services

Twenty five students identified the short motivational videos as the most supportive service. Twenty two students found the advising meetings inspiring and helpful, and some of the students found the personal development sessions to be of value. Fifteen students reported that they benefitted from learning general study skills. Of all the skills learned, many students testified that the research and presentation skills were the most useful, and some benefited most from referencing and citation training.

In addition, many students described how the faculty supported their academic needs by offering explanations of difficult subject matter, extra hours for laboratory nursing skills training, resources such as textbooks and articles, and strategies for studying new subjects. Most of the students affirmed that they learned much from class activities, presentations, and group work; they appreciated the active settings. *F-C* affirmed that, “it could be stressful, but you are supported ‘till you discover that you can do it.” Students also expressed the inspiration they usually get from the faculty members which had a great effect on their motivation to learn and on their orientation about the

norms, values and expectations that unofficially govern the interaction and communication (Crisp, 2015).

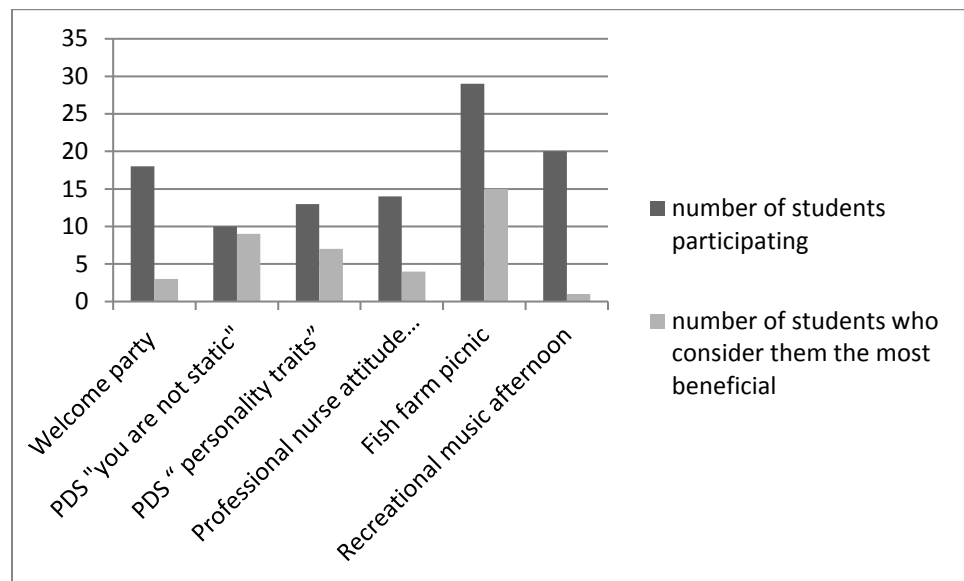


Figure 5: Participation in and Benefits from Co-curricular Activities

As for the co-curricular activities, the majority of the students found the picnic outing to be the most pleasant and beneficial activity, as it gave them the opportunity to communicate and share with their colleagues in planning. This outing actually helped them escape from the usual stress they experienced and learn a life skill like cooking and organizing events. One of the students stated that, “this was the best weekend throughout the whole semester.”

Nine students found the personal development session called, “You Are Not Static,” that encouraged students to take the lead in their lives and raised their awareness about their abilities to change and develop of benefit. Additionally, seven students found the personality trait session to be the most beneficial, as it helped them to change their behavior and to understand their feelings. Only four students rated the session about the professional attitude of nurses as the most beneficial, as it introduced some concepts of

professionalism that they felt were very important for nursing. And three students enjoyed the welcome party the most, especially as it gave them the opportunity to present their talents. As few as two students found the recreational music afternoon to be the most beneficial as a stress reliever. Other student mentioned that playing football with colleagues, passing useful time together, and playing nursing scenarios were the best recreational activities.

In general, the students found that their academic, personal, and social needs (Shreiner, 2010b) had been mostly responded to and, accordingly, described the GTNI environment as a safe place. Eighteen students attributed this safety to the different facilities and the fact that the community is small and everyone is known by name. In other universities, students are often known by numbers. Twelve students credited their feeling of safety to living in the housing and to the institute's rules and regulations. Though the students objected to the rules at first, they came to believe that the rules were for the best.

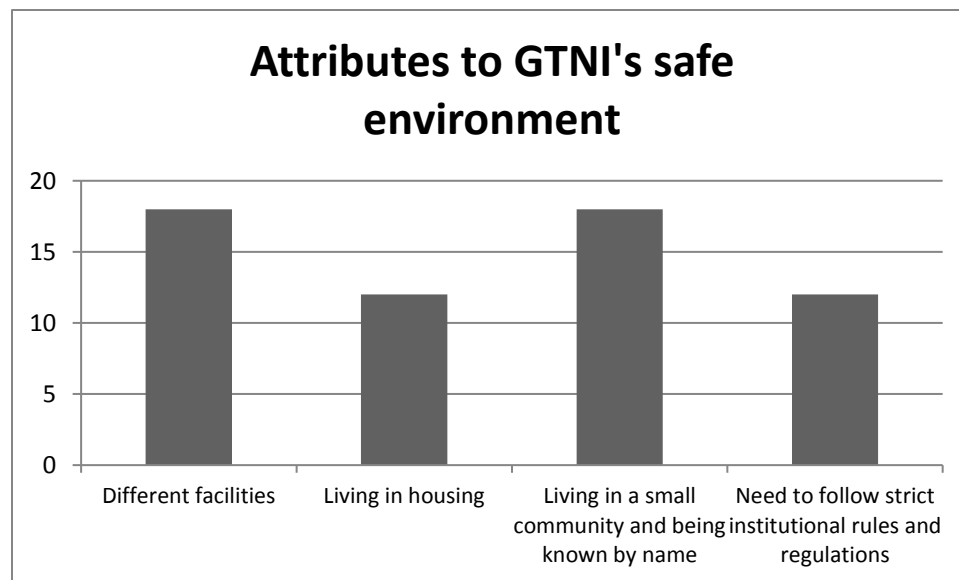


Figure 6: Attributes of GTNI's Safe Environment

Eighteen students felt that they were completely involved. “GTNI became my second home. I did not want to leave it before the last vacation. It is an amazing place,” explained *M-A*. Only two or three students felt like outsiders, and none of the students felt indifferent toward the GTNI community (Figure 7). A sense of involvement was felt when students made decisions together, like deciding on spring vacation, summer training dates, and Thursday outings. The institute also responded to other physical needs, like maintenance issues, which made students feel cared for and important.

This involvement was also attributed to the active learning setting. “Here the faculty members are more open minded and are open to discussion, which makes you feel you have a value in the class. The class would not work without you,” explained *M-A*. Although *M-B* showed great resistance to his studies, he mentioned that, “I would never find a place like GTNI. I never saw education like what is found at GTNI.” As for *F-C*, she described how she felt like she was living in a large family: “I know that my friends will be there for me.” But unfortunately, she thinks that “sometimes the institute does not encourage this a lot as it was seen as time distracters which puts me in a bad mood with no communication, no phone this was not inviting to study.”

In contrast, *F-B* spoke about her neutral feelings toward GTNI as just a place she studied. She mentioned that her neglect to study and her pessimism or depression may have been the result of missing outings with her friends because of her presence at GTNI.

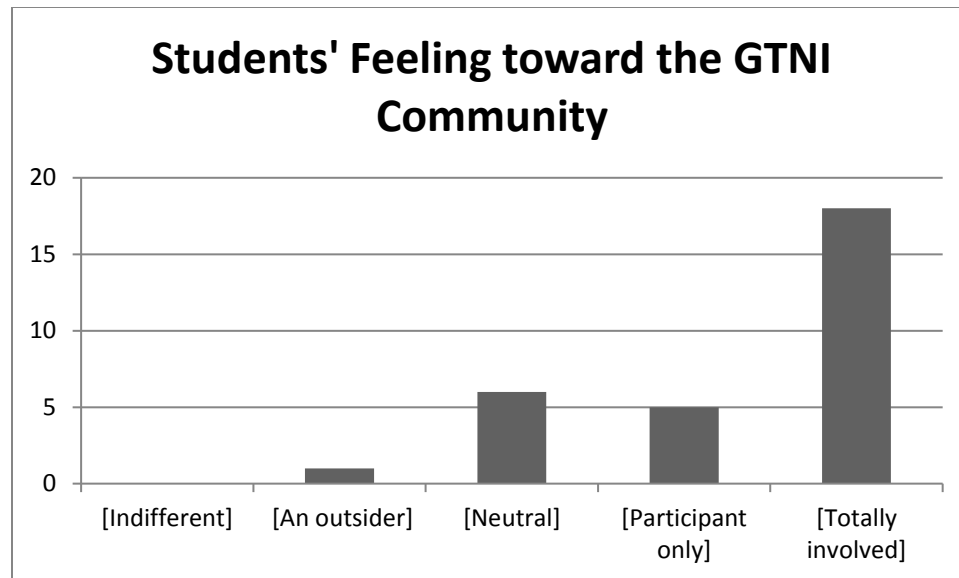


Figure 7: Students' Feelings Toward the GTNI Community

Furthermore, some students mentioned that some of their needs had not been met, like their needs to study at the institute during the afternoon, use their phones at any time of the day, or study with their roommates since those issues have been considered as a time waster by some of the faculty members. Some students felt that the institute neglected their opinions about food menu items and changing rooms in the housing or their wish to have Arabic explanations of the subject matter in lectures.

In many cases, students mentioned that they resisted the rules because they felt not happy or comfortable. "I use to pretend as if I am studying just to show the housing supervisor, but the truth was that I was not. I was just holding the books but doing nothing. But, when my needs were responded to, I started to feel I want to study," recalled *M-B*. *F-C* added, "I wish we can have more girl time, laugh, and be loud." Students believe that the care for not losing time and to stay productive is good but need a range of flexibility to get the stress out. Interestingly *M-B* mentioned that, "here at GTNI there is too much care" that he was not used to. Even when he struggled he found it

stressful to be asked to benefit from support. He preferred taking time alone and deciding to ask for help when he wished.

It is clear how most students' perspectives changed at the end of their transition journey. The dissatisfaction and stress that sometimes pushed them to rebel against the rules were mostly transformed into acceptance when they realized that the rules changed them. The rules actually enabled the students to thrive. However, in a few cases, students refused all efforts to accept and abide by the rules, which negatively influenced their academic performance, satisfaction, and happiness.

4.2 Faculty Members' Perspectives

4.2.1 Challenges

Most faculty members hinted at the same challenges mentioned by students; they also elaborated on the reasons for these challenges. Interestingly, the challenges fit the same themes: English as the medium of instruction and communication, students being separated from their families, and difficulties adapting to the environment.

Regarding language, one of the English faculty members explained that some of the students were culturally unwilling to use another language for cultural reasons. These students fought even the idea of communicating in English. Accordingly, they had difficulties advancing at the same pace as other students. The reason for this difficulty may be simply that they had different types of intelligence that do not include appreciation for literature. The students in this group also insisted on translating English to Arabic in order to understand every word, and they failed to understand the real meaning of the faculty members' explanations. It is important to consider that English had always a subject rather than a language for these students. As a result, they perceived

their problems with the language differently. They felt that the problem lay with the language and not themselves; they made little effort to improve. These students rarely practiced reading, listening, or writing independently. Because the majority of the students at GTNI have the same socio-cultural background and pass through the same public education system, a considerable percentage of students at GTNI fit in this group. Additionally, students usually struggle with studying and living independently. This change is usually their first encounter far from their families, friends, and neighborhoods. Travelling and leaving their home villages may even be the first time for some students. Consequently, they are stressed from missing the emotional support of their families and stressed by needing to be independent because they have never done so before. The students need people to depend on to take care of their daily needs and for their studies.

At an early stage of transition to higher education setting GTNI's students find huge discrepancy between the characteristics of their lives before the transition and the characteristics of their post-transition environment. In this environment students must take care of their own daily needs, such as eating, sleeping, cleaning, and sharing rooms with peers they have never met before. Students must develop a healthy sleep pattern in order to abide by the housing rules and wake up early for lectures beginning at eight. Students must also adopt a morning routine that includes a healthy breakfast, which they must prepare for themselves. In addition, students must be trained to start their days with necessary personal hygiene measures, like showering, washing, and dressing professionally. Students must make their beds and leave their rooms in good condition to remain eligible for use of the housing facilities.

The problem students' face in coping with this environment, as described by one of the nursing faculty members, is that they are not privileged by their previous personal experiences. She explained that basic life skills are usually taught at home, but because these students did not have the chance to learn the skills at home, they struggle to developing healthy sleeping and eating patterns. This lack of basic life skills hugely impacts their academic performance.

The academic aspect of this alien environment is even more challenging for students, since it demands constant important work. In this environment, "students must work on their education", said an English faculty member. He added that the students have never worked hard on their studies through their secondary education and accordingly they do not feel this is pleasant. The English faculty member explained that being intrinsically motivated at the students' age is rare, and most of the students work when they must or are under pressure. On the other hand, he believed that the pressures faced by GTNI's students might be greater than those of other students because of the culture change students experience when joining GTNI and because of the change in community.

According to the interviewed administrator, one of the shocking facts encountered by the students is the seriousness of the faculty members and their commitment to challenging students to learn. She stated that the students could not imagine that teachers can be assertive and the rules would be enforced for everyone. Because they grew up in a culture that accepts alternative ways to round the truth in order to please authority, they now face a different truth where the only way to proceed is to commit to work.

Students are not prepared with the academic skills or strong attitude needed to gain new skills. They prefer to depend on a more experienced person, whether a family member or a tutor, to take the responsibility for their learning. The administrator explained that the students' dependency is a result of the pre-university education system. The public education system rarely trains students to work independently or gives them the right to speak up or have a point of view. Through their school years, students depend on private tutors to collect information. As a result, it is difficult to train the students to study and act independently.

The dependency may also be a result of their lack of motivation to study, as most students mentioned that their motive for joining GTNI was to earn a degree to become a nurse and ensure employment after graduation. Some were even less motivated and saw GTNI as the only chance for them. Other students found it easier to blame their previous education system, even if they continued to exert minimal effort. Therefore, they found it difficult to work independently.

Since it is new for students to be part of a structured standardized educational institution, they usually begin their journeys by doubting the instruction, the rules, and the system in general. Accordingly, they find it difficult to gain new skills because they do not trust the system or their capabilities.

Considering these challenges, it is important to understand that today, a considerable percentage of young people do not take education seriously and respond sarcastically to any serious commitment to studying by their friends and colleagues. At this critical transition phase, GTNI students face significant negative influences from

their old friends attending other universities. As old friends contact them and share university experiences, GTNI students come to understand a difficult reality. They realize that university students usually have a certain range of freedom that is not provided to students at GTNI. Additionally, old friends enrolled at other universities do not need to study as intensely as GTNI students. Because GTNI grants an associate degree in nursing, many students question whether the degree is worth their effort. This lack of motivation to exert effort might also be caused by a lack of respect for technical education in general and nursing as a career in particular.

4.2.2 Changes

Reflecting on the changes that take place in the students' lives, the English faculty member believed that the students do not fully change after the first year. But, all faculty members affirmed that students' awareness of their problems and the consequences of some of their actions is clearer. Although, the faculty places value on raising students' awareness which they described as a form of improvement, their expectations were higher.

In this vein, the English faculty member added, "I am not trying to be negative, but with the effort we are exerting, the facilities we are providing, with the human touch that we are adding to the communication with them, we would have done much better." He stated that the students' social backgrounds and the rapid changes occurring in the greater Egyptian community undermine the efforts exerted, especially as he believed that the change is much more complex than it appears.

Over the years, it has become clear that students resist high expectations, and that they responded more positively when they are listened to or when they are indirectly supported. The implementation of this support method requires passionate informed faculty members capable and ready to assume this demanding responsibility.

The interviewed administrator elaborated more on the complexity of the change, stating that it concerns not only students but also team members. The faculty members managing the curriculum must adopt an inspiring perspective to support students. Adopting such a perspective is difficult for some of the faculty members. The administrator emphasized the need for everyone to believe in the vision, mission, and philosophy, since GTNI is a unique learning community in Egypt. In this community, both students and faculty members are challenged. Both groups are encouraged to improve themselves, learn, and apply their knowledge and skills to serve the country.

A nursing faculty member expressed a more positive view, stating that by the end of the first year, the students change notably in their understanding of professionalism. She believed that if the students did not change, the educational process would be a failure. “This is what education is all about!” she exclaimed. She described the change as a gradual process that is different for each student. In addition, she considered the students’ excitement to go to the hospital, feelings of pride in wearing the uniform, and recognition of their ability to deliver quality care to their patients as proof of the students’ development. This feeling of pride usually occur at summer training, when students begin to view themselves as professionals, realize how special they are, and understand the impact they can have on the healthcare sector in Egypt.

4.2.3 Support

Most of the faculty members felt responsible for supporting students not only academically but also socially and emotionally. They all clearly stated that they are responsible for holistic student support and not just academic support.

Intrapersonal and interpersonal supports were viewed by some of the faculty members as a personal responsibility. These faculty members are ready to support students personally and socially even though they know that this responsibility might drift their minds from their academic main role. “I think when I first came to work here, GTNI’s administration made me feel that I am responsible for [students] as persons,” said the English faculty member. Generally, the interviewed faculty members’ beliefs about a responsibility to support students were clearly demonstrated in all of their comments. Some faculty members actually expressed a wish to have more staff members in their departments so they could have more time for student support outside of the classroom.

Other departments viewed social and emotional support as a part of their professional duties. The nursing faculty member explained that, “it is about changing as a person, as they will be nurses who will be dealing with people and saving life.” Accordingly, they approached intrapersonal and interpersonal student achievements as clear course requirements that need to be assessed and achieved in the same way as any academic course requirement. It is possible that because the students come from closed communities and are suddenly exposed to an unfamiliar environment, support services are needed to ease the transition.

Gouna Technical Nursing Institute’s administration emphasizes co-curricular activities in easing this transition. These activities are perceived as the key to making

students feel valued, which in turn reduces their stress and pushes them to change. The English faculty member explained that because students are different, the methods of supporting them must also be different. Most faculty members agreed that the picnic outing and recreational music afternoons were of value in supporting students' intrapersonal and interpersonal development. Others viewed the personal development sessions as valuable. But, sharing activities with the students made the students feel accepted and eased some of the stress they felt throughout their demanding journeys.

In this particular educational model, students will respond to support only when they feel cared for, especially because Egyptians are highly emotional. One of GTNI leaders revealed that the only way to transform students is by touching their emotions and nurturing them; in turn, the students start to develop a strong inner will to change. Listening to students is of exceptional importance in order to learn their beliefs and strengths, analyze their needs, and respond with suitable support services. Yet it is important to remember that some students truly want to change; these students exert all efforts to change. Others act as though they have changed; these students do not tolerate constant challenges. Accordingly, being close to students is important, but acting as authority figures should not be neglected.

It was interesting to see the extent to which faculty members were willing to play two different roles; they felt responsibility for students' academic achievements and intrapersonal and interpersonal thriving. The faculty members strongly believed that taking students out, away from the curriculum and academic achievement, helps them to grow internally and psychologically as human beings. Accordingly, faculty members commit to sharing activities with students despite their awareness of the students'

different perceptions and the fact that some students are distracted by the excitement of outings.

As for the curricular activities, most of the faculty members rated advising meetings as the top academic support service. The faculty members believed that the “availability of the academic staff to listen to students’ personal and academic problems as well as for giving advice” has incomparable value. The advising meetings offer a deeper level of support for students on their journeys of self-discovery and train the students to reflect. The ability to reflect is necessary in order to respond to the challenges students face when coping with the new system in which the only way to succeed is to work diligently.

In addition to advising meetings, the faculty members valued some of the study skills taught, like note taking, presentation skills, learning through the lectures, and research skills. From the administrative perspective, the new approach of teaching study skills by incorporating the skills into regular course work and assignments was much more successful than teaching the skills in a separate course. Students at that early phase of their transition must be supported academically in an indirect way, as they become overwhelmed with the amount of information they receive and are expected to apply.

Later in the first year and specifically in the second semester, other academic support services are introduced. The simulation labs and role playing viewed as beneficial and pleasant curricular activities are clear examples of academic support. The nursing faculty believed that these situations are excellent learning tools for students and that students learn better when they are involved and find the experience fun. Another

academic support service that fosters academic thriving by physically and psychologically engaging students is the active-learning settings in which students present information and discuss together rather than hearing a lecture.

Due to all of the efforts exerted to listen to students and react to their needs, it is clear how various support services create an environment where students can thrive academically, intrapersonally, and interpersonally. Though faculty members' expectations were too high for students to meet, acceptance and commitment to continuously support the students was present throughout all of the faculty comments.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

GTNI's Students Transitions in the Context of Schlossberg and Bronfenbrenner's Theories

In this section, the thriving and challenges experienced by GTNI students are discussed from the perspectives of transition theory and developmental ecology theory. Most students pass through the first phase of the transition without being aware of the challenges they will encounter. They may anticipate that leaving their families would require them to be independent. But, students do not anticipate the features of the new environment to which they needed to adapt. The new environment in which English is the medium of communication and rules govern all daily tasks is alien to new students. In addition, their challenges are doubled as they participate in an educational system that values students and changes them on a personal level. This environment is new for students, and they usually experience doubts, confusion, and even a lack of trust. They meet faculty members who follow an educational plan and commit to challenging students in order to get the best out of them. The collection of all these unanticipated events overwhelms students and intensifies their stress. Other students suffer from non-event transition when they miss family events due to remaining at GTNI throughout the semester. Consequently, at the beginning of the semester the stress levels of these students are considerably high.

As soon as the students stop perceiving the challenges as obstacles, they begin what Schlossberg calls “taking stock of their transition.” This process occurs when students begin finding ways to cope with challenges by using resources like external

support from faculty or colleagues or recently discovered personal assets. The use of resources is aligned with the faculty's commitment to listen to and care for students on a personal level after taking time to build personal relationships with them.

Following this phase and specifically near the end of the first year at summer training, the third phase of the transition can be visualized. The phase of taking charge of the transition begins when the students' perspectives are reframed so that challenges are seen as opportunities to improve rather than obstacles. At this time faculty and students both reported changes on the academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal levels; changes were no longer seen as new or problematic. In other words, this phase began when most of the young women reported no longer having problems with submitting their mobile phones or to depending on themselves.

Students can reach this phase of taking charge of their transitions at different paces. *F-A* exemplified the phase of taking charge of her transition when she directed her efforts toward utilizing the resources discovered in her first year, which enabled her to transform her failure into success. She may have needed more time to cope with the transition, especially as her challenges differed from those usually reported. Her excitement about interpersonal relationships and satisfaction with her freedom occupied all of her attention in the first year. After this time passed, her awareness and determination to shape her future increased considerably, and at this point, she began to focus on turning her failure into to success (Schlossberg, 2011).

This phase began for the male students when they demonstrated more flexibility and tolerance in communicating and when their sleeping patterns changed. It was also

experienced when *M-B* changed his pessimistic perspective, began accepting challenges as positive, and adopted a positive explanatory style (Shreiner, 2010a). This change in perspective denotes that optimism can be taught to students by forming positive relationships with them and listening to and supporting them in times of need.

Three variables that shaped students' adaptation to the transition are exemplified in the students' experiences. The first variable is the huge discrepancy between the characteristics of their lives before the transition and the characteristics of their post-transition environment (Evans et al., 2010, p. 213). In the new environment the students found themselves to be fully responsible for their lives, and their constant contribution to daily duties was required.

The second variable is the students' or families' perceptions of the transition; these perceptions had a major impact on students' adaptation to the transition. An example of this variable was when negative family support increased students stress and hindered the coping efforts of the students and the institute.

The third variable is students' personal traits. The same support services were viewed differently, and challenges were seen as either obstacles or opportunities to grow. Some students welcomed certain rules, while others rebelled against some or all of the rules. This behavior is best explained by Bronfenbrenner's different instigative characteristics, which explain different adaptations to transition, or "the proximal process," as described by Bronfenbrenner.

The different instigative characteristics are the different characteristics of students that shape their reactions to the transition; whether in a positive or a negative

way (Renn& Arnold, 2003). Three of the four different groups of developmentally instigative characteristics were displayed by GTNI's students. The students reacted to the environment by either inviting or avoiding development. *M-A* invited development in his efforts to communicate openly with his colleagues and become more sociable. In fact, being sociable was not the only goal he pursued; he also worked diligently in all of his courses, regardless of whether or not liked them. Additionally, when *F-A* decided to return after failing her first year, she turned her failure into success by accepting all of the rules she had rebelled against in her first year. Or when *F-B* neglected her learning and failed her exams as a way to express her dissatisfaction about the institute rules. She resisted all the efforts made to get her to focus on her studies in order to prove that she could be distracted even when she submitted her phone. Some students resisted certain rules but accepted others. *M-C* decided to selectively focus on the nursing course in which he excelled and disregarded any other courses; this decision impacted his academic achievement.

The third group included students who created new features in the environment. For example, *M-B* welcomed friends into his room to be surrounded by them, which prevented him from sleeping and negatively impacted his health and performance. Students belonging to this group also chose to adapt to the proximal process by playing football, praying, or considering their faculty and colleagues as family. Students in this group were positively encouraged and supported by the new features that they added to the environment to which they wanted to adapt.

Throughout the students' encounters, the effect of the context on the proximal process was clear. Students' interactions with faculty members and one another

through living together, sharing same rooms, and eating together were the reason the students described GTNI as feeling safe. According to Bronfenbrenner, the interactions at this level system are known as a microsystem. In addition, because students shared rooms in the housing, they formed a mesosystem. Despite the positive effect of this second-level system in increasing students' feelings of involvement through study groups, students also wished to have more time to enjoy together. Furthermore, an exosystem clearly affected the transition when *M-A* received negative family support that lengthened the time of his transition until he decided to make the decision to shape his future. An exosystem was also sensed when students contacted their old school friends enrolled in other universities who had a considerable range of freedom in choosing whether to attend lectures or not. The negative opinions of their old friends were of exceptional influence, especially when their old friends criticized the rules of the institute. The macrosystem effect includes the massive change in the Egyptian community at large. Unfortunately, the notion of working diligently to learn is not accepted by a substantial percentage of young people. They usually do not display consistency and perseverance. In addition, the lack of respect for the nursing career and associate degrees made students less willing to exert the effort required at GTNI.

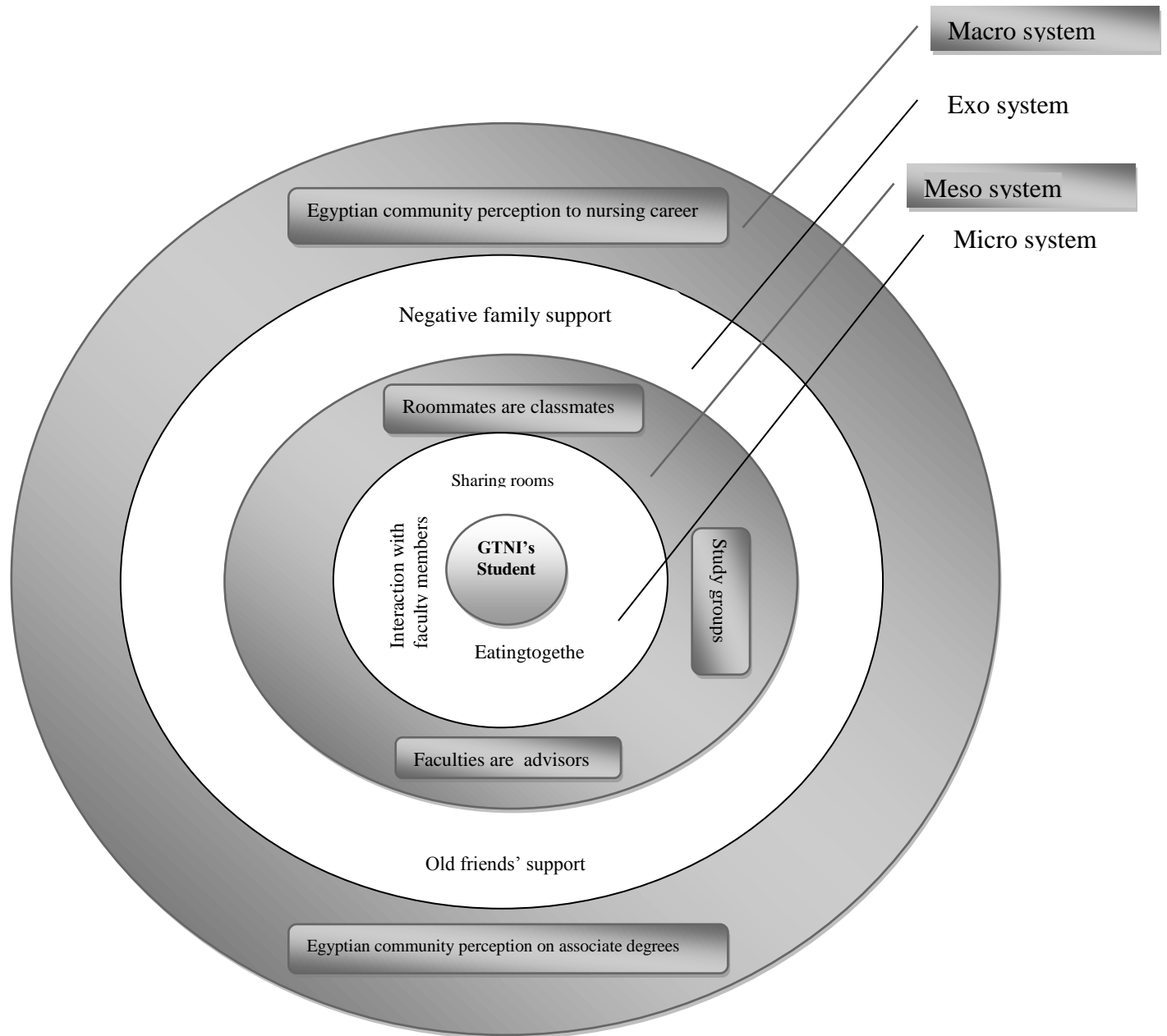


Figure 8: GTNI's Students' Interaction with Bronfenbrenner's Levels System

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In summary, a review of literature reveals that the higher education experience is much more meaningful than exposing students to knowledge and skills. In view of this revelation, students' transitions to the higher educational settings must be approached with the same depth.

This study presented an Egyptian model of higher educational that aims at holistic student development. The students in this model are closely assisted from the beginning of their journeys. Given that surviving the transition is not the aim of this particular educational model, the thriving concept was discussed extensively. The academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal aspects of thriving were discussed in depth. The challenges faced by students and their perceptions of GTNI's first-year support services were also analyzed. This analysis was achieved by collecting the opinions of students and the faculty members in order to study the different aspects of this educational environment in an authentic way and triangulate the data.

This research also applies two student development theories to the transition of first-year students at an Egyptian technical nursing institute. The theories applied are Schlossberg's transition theory and Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecology theory. The adaptation of the theories and their effectiveness to this case study indicates that they are applicable to institutions other than four-year Western universities. These theories offer a frame through which Egyptian students can thrive through their transition to two-year middle or four-year higher technical institutes. The call to use these theories in relation

tomiddle and higher technical institutions is due to the belief that their use can reshape the future of post-secondary education in Egypt.

Gouna Technical Nursing Institute has clearly adopted a holistic approach to student development. At the institute, efforts are made to create a welcoming atmosphere for first-year students in which they feel safe, included, and a sense of belonging to the academic and social environment. These feelings are coupled with the sense of belonging and inclusion also felt by faculty members. The aim of GTNI is to help all community members to develop a sense of shared identity (Smith et al., 2004).

Meanwhile, students' diverse needs are intentionally responded to. This response is guided by clear policies governing the community of learning. The integration of consistent systems and compassion in daily interactions aims to create ground rules and a code of conduct by which all community members must abide. These efforts spread the seed to prepare students to manage the complexity of real life and impacts students' intrapersonal and interpersonal thriving.

The academic aspect of the GTNI community is characterized by a well-structured and challenging curriculum taught in active learning settings. In this academic atmosphere, students are assisted in constructing knowledge in a gradual and well-assessed way. Students are indirectly equipped with the various necessary academic learning skills they lacked at their admission through the preparatory semester courses.

The social aspect of the GTNI community is supported by the administration and faculty members. It is important that the members of this community play more than one role; classmates are roommates, and faculty members are advisors and, in some cases,

housing supervisors. This situation helps students to build stronger relationships that, in turn, helping their adaptation to the new environment.

It is exceptionally important that faculty members value their close interactions with students and welcome the idea of having a role in their social lives through efforts such as taking charge of many student activities in the institute, the housing, and situations outside of the institute. This solid informed belief explains the ability to affect students' intrapersonal and interpersonal thriving in addition to their academic thriving.

On the leadership level, that the institute leaders have adopted a shared vision and commitment to develop both students and faculty members is also a remarkable feature of this institution. The mission of GTNI requires believers who feel called to develop students and can inspire and motivate others to have the same mission. The recruited believers' are patiently inspired and supported until they prosper.

In response to this support, faculty members develop a determination to assist students in their demanding transition. This determination is usually exemplified by faculty members' positive attitudes toward daily challenges. In addition to their determination, the faculty members' engagement is apparent in their sense of responsibility for the social and personal aspects of their students' lives. In addition, the faculty members' honor and respect for the institution that helped and facilitate their own development motivates them to stay acquainted with the recent trends in their subject matter, teaching methodologies, and student development strategies.

On a broader level, Egyptian culture effect on the student development is considered a problem. The perception of nursing in Egypt negatively affects students' motivation, as they are not enthusiastic to exert the massive effort needed to obtain an associate nursing

degree. On the same level, it is also clear that the unstable political atmosphere affecting Egyptian families causes young men and women to struggle with finding their identities, beliefs, and values and harms their motivation. Unfortunately, the students have never tried to work to reach a goal, which makes it difficult for them to adapt to the new environment.

6.1 Recommendations

Because this case study aimed to produce clear recommendations to build a first-year learning community that provides opportunities for students to thrive rather than survive the transition, this section outlines important recommendations. Some recommendations relate to practical strategies to be used with students; others concern leadership visions. General recommendations and important advice for the application of this educational model in other Egyptian settings are also provided.

6.1.1 Practical Strategies for Student Support

It is valuable to find approaches to support students indirectly rather than exposing them to institutional expectations, which can lead to resistance and frustrations. On an academic level, incorporating study skills in course materials in the preparatory semester is more valuable than offering a study skills course. Through this integrated learning approach, faculty members must coordinate to ensure that the skills are learned and correctly practiced. One way of supporting students can be by mentoring, advising, motivating, connecting and empowering students (Crisp, 2015). This intervention aims for introducing students to the set of unwritten norms that unofficially govern the interactions is known as “the hidden curriculum” (Crisp, 2015).

Additionally, efforts should be made to foster students' engagement and determination. Training students in active learning settings where they feel involved and included in the learning process can foster engagement. Group assignments, presentations, and peer assessments are of great help in cultivating students' engagement in learning. Furthermore, presenting information in relation to the context in which students live fosters the cognitive aspect of academic engagement, also known as teaching for mindfulness. It is worth mentioning that mindfulness not only calls for cognitive academic engagement but also enhances the psychological presence of students.

Another way to encourage student engagement and determination is through small motivational videos shown to students on an informal basis. Watching such videos is more valuable than having students sit in prepared sessions where they feel overwhelmed with information and frustrated with their sense of incompetency. Having close interactions with determined faculty members also allows students to find role models that inspire them. As a result, it is important that faculty members maintain the balance between challenging and supporting students. This equilibrium helps students to advance at their own pace and build on their own strengths.

In regard to the social level, having a well-structured co-curricular program that responds to diverse student needs and aims to help students enjoy their talents and discover strengths is of great importance. Unscheduled informal activities are also recommended, but within a certain limit, so that students can develop more mature interpersonal relationships. A wide range of freedom is not recommended at the early

phases of their transitions. More freedom must be granted in time when students become more aware of their rights and responsibilities.

In addition, having upperclassmen peer leaders is of great help in easing the stress of adapting to a new environment. Peer leaders easily gain students' trust because these peers share previously encountered difficulties with the new students. But, a first-year faculty member must support these peer leaders in order to ensure safety for both first-year and senior students.

6.1.2 Recommendations for Leadership

It is vital that institutional leaders possess the ability to listen and collect information from all levels, so that their decisions and interventions are of value. Seeking alternative strategies to communicate with students and faculty members is also crucial. This communication may include communicating with students' families in order to stay informed about the positive or negative impacts the families may have on their sons and daughters.

It is important for the leaders to ensure that the purpose of the rules is clearly explained to students and faculty members. This clarification conveys respect for all community members and, in turn, invites them all to act as leaders. Knowing the purpose of the rules also creates a shared vision of the principles to be adopted in educational institutions. Additionally, implementation of rules should follow a clear set of procedures to avoid confusion.

Building on the strengths and talents of students and faculty members is more valuable than focusing on filling gaps and improving weaknesses (Braskamp, 2006). Focusing on strengths will spread a positive feeling of acceptance and self-confidence

that, once reached, will make the journey of improving weaknesses much easier and more acceptable.

It is important to search for and recruit faculty members who believe in the mission of the institute and who will become enthusiastically involved in accompanying students on their own journeys by acting as facilitators rather than authority figures. One way to maintain the enthusiasm and inclusion is by creating collaborative and participatory relationships through which informal working groups can initiate change and sustain development. These informal working groups or faculty learning communities will have a positive effect on strengthening student learning and in connecting with other faculty members (Ferren, Dolinsky, & McCambly, 2014)

At the same time, inspiring other team members is more valuable than planning and allocating tasks. Ideally, leaders need to be patient enough to allow team members to try new strategies within a safe range. Although it is safer to depend on more experienced faculty members but enabling faculty members to have part in institutional change even without a formal leadership authority will create future leaders who are able to continue the mission (Ferren, Dolinsky, & McCambly, 2014).

6.1.3 General Recommendations

Generally speaking, organized coherent efforts that follow a clear developmental model must be adopted by all faculty members, administrators, student affairs leaders so that underprepared students are supported until they become engaged and determined students.

Because collaboration between all team members is necessary, informing everyone on the team with knowledge about student development theories and concepts may have

a positive effect on more than one level. The shared knowledge will create a common language through which the team can communicate more easily. Additionally, knowledge about student development theories will ensure that the team's perceptions of priorities for intervention are synchronized and not subject to personal perspectives. These staff development opportunities can also inspire other team members to find research topics that will benefit the person and the institution.

6.1.4 Recommendations for Replicating This Educational Model in Other Institutions

This case study demonstrates that Western student development concepts can also be applied in the Egyptian context. Accordingly, Egyptian middle or higher technical institutions that are willing to reshape their environment may benefit from such an inspiring model. For other institutions to benefit from this model, two additional recommendations should be considered.

First, it is important to note that student thriving is more easily facilitated in residential institutions where all students share housing. Residential settings make it easier to facilitate thriving because the personal, social, and academic aspects can only be coherently approached when students live in the same setting. Secondly, limiting the number of students to 30 to 50 is optimal to ensure appropriate personal support and quality education especially because smaller number would be more manageable especially at the beginning.

6.2 Limitations

As the coordinator of the first-year program, I attempted to present details about the different aspects of the first-year experience, but my research has limitations. Due to the

rich data collected through the surveys and interviews and due to time limits, this case study does not analyze the characteristics of GTNI's present environment in relation to the core practices of learning communities, as was planned at the start of the project. Additionally, the small number of faculty members on the first-year team made it difficult to obtain diverse data.

6.3 Further Research

Based on the information collected in this case study, some recommendations can be made for future research. The characteristics of GTNI as a learning community are an ideal topic for future research, since this case study did not provide insight on this topic. The need for deeper exploration of the learning community aspects is based on the evidence revealed in the literature review about the intersection between the core practices of learning communities and the transition, retention, and thriving.

Additionally, future research can be conducted on the leadership level to explore ways through which the concept of thriving can be incorporated in the strategic plans of institutions of higher education. The holistic student development approach must be formalized and adopted in all higher education settings.

I cannot claim that any recommendation or strategy will always suit the diverse needs of students during their demanding first-year experience. Educators working with first-year students must have the resilience and patience to accompany the students until they discover their own strengths. This assistance should embrace students intellectually, personally, and socially and needs to be changed and adapted in accordance with student needs.

Institutional leaders should adopt the same resilience and be willing to reshape the educational environment so that all students feel safe and included. Such an environment will help students to have a meaningful higher education experience. Higher education institutions should be safe environments where obstacles are seen as opportunities to grow and informed support is consistent and inspiring. Higher education institutions should foster the academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal thriving of students.

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APPENDIX-1

Students Survey Questions

- 1) Describe your feeling toward GTNI community?
- Indifferent
 - An outsider
 - Neutral
 - Participant only
 - Totally involved
- A. What influenced this rating? (Check all what applies)
- Living in the Housing
 - Eating together in the cafeteria
 - Co-curricular activities
 - Informal activities with peers
 - Study groups with colleagues
 - Others.....
- B. Who helped you feel this way?
- Colleagues
 - Roommates
 - Faculty members
 - Housing supervisor
 - Administration member
 - Personal attitude
 - Others.....
- 2) On a scale 1-10, with 1 being the most dangerous and 10 being the safest, how do you feel GTNI is a safe place for you to live and learn?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- A. If you chose 5 or above, what are the influential reasons that made you feel that GTNI is a safe place for you?
- Different facilities
 - Being Away from home
 - Living in housing
 - Being exposed to a new small community like El Gouna
 - Living in a small community and being known by name

 - Need to follow strict institutional rules and regulations
 - Others.....
- B. If you chose 4 or below, check all the items that made you feel GTNI is not a safe place for you to live and learn
- Different facilities
 - Being away from home
 - Living in the housing
 - Being exposed to a new community
 - Living in a small community and being known by name
 - Need to follow strict institutional rules and regulations

- Others.....
- 3) Do the classroom instructions consider different learning styles?
- Yes
- No
- A. Why? Or why not?
-
- B. Description of the lectures
- Formal and stressful
- Formal but not stressful
- Active, based on students interaction but stressful
- Active, based on students interaction and pleasant
- C. In general, how do you see the lectures you attended through the whole year?
- Challenging, difficult and not helpful
- Challenging and difficult but helps me to learn
- Neutral
- Easy and boring
- Very easy
- D. Your attendance to the lectures was because
- I didn't want to exceed my absence limit
- I didn't want to stay alone in the housing
- I didn't want to appear as not interested but I was not enjoying the lectures
- It helped me understand the subject matter
- I enjoyed attending the lectures
- E. Was reflection helpful in your learning experience?
- Yes
- No
- Why or Why not?
- 4) Did the last year experience helped you understand yourself and raised your awareness about your way of knowing?
- Yes
- No
- A. What helped in raising this awareness?
- Living in the Housing
- Relationship with housing supervisor
- Relationship with faculty members
- Relationship with classmates
- Relationship with roommates
- Eating together in the cafeteria
- Activities
- Studying with your colleagues
- Others.....
-
- B. What hindered your awareness
- Living in the Housing
- Relationship with housing supervisor
- Relationship with faculty members
- Relationship with classmates
- Relationship with roommates

- Eating together in the cafeteria
- Activities
- Studying with your colleagues
- Others.....

5) Did you participate in any of co-curricular activities throughout the last year? (Check all that apply)

- Welcome party including talents presentation (poetry, drawing, acting)
- Sessions for personal development “ you are not static”
- Session for personal development “ personality types”
- Session of Professional Nurse Attitude “Details orientation”
- Fish Farm Picnic
- Recreational music afternoon
- Others.....

A. What was the most beneficial activity for you? Why?

.....
Does the first year program takes into consideration the differences between the students in planning co-curricular activities?

- Yes
- No

Why? Or why not?

.....
B. Was reflection helpful in enhancing your benefit and enjoyment from the co-curricular activities?

- Yes
- No

C. Which support offered through the first year you consider most helpful? Why?

- Sessions for personal development
- Study skills offered through first semester
 - Exams taking skills
 - Concept mapping
 - Note taking
 - Using a textbook
 - Research skills
 - Referencing and citations
 - Presentation skills
 - Learning through the lectures
 - Time management and using agenda
- Meeting with faculty members
- Short videos or motivational videos
- Activities
- Others.....

6) Do you consider the environment at GTNI supportive to your needs?

- Not supportive at all
- Somewhat supportive to my needs
- Neutral
- Mostly supportive
- Very supportive to my needs

A. List a need that has been responded to? How?

.....

B. List a need that has not been responded to? Why?

.....
On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being non-existing and 10 being the most intense, Rate your level of stress at the beginning of the academic year?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

A. If 5 or higher, what were the causes of this stress?

.....

B. If 4 or below, what helped you to feel that way?

.....

7) On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being non-existing and 10 being the most intense, Rate your level of stress after the completion of your first year?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

A. If 4 or below, what helped you to manage your stress?

.....

B. If 5 or above, what is the reason of your stress?

.....

Faculty Survey Questions

8) How do you feel toward GTNI community?

- Indifferent
- An outsider
- Neutral
- Participant only
- Totally involved

C. What could be influencing this feeling?

.....

D. Who helped you feel this way?

- Colleagues faculty members
- Students
- Administration member
- Personal attitude
- Others.....

9) Do you consider different learning styles in your classroom instructions?

- Yes
- No

F. Why? Or why not?

.....

G. In general, how do you think the students perceive the lectures?

- Challenging, difficult and not helpful
- Challenging and difficult but helps me to learn
- Neutral
- Easy and boring
- Very easy

H. What do you attribute the students attendance to the lectures

- They didn't want to exceed their absence limit
- They didn't want to stay alone in the housing
- They didn't want to appear as not interested but they were not enjoying the lectures
- lectures helped them understand the subject matter
- They enjoyed attending the lectures

10) Do you believe that reflection helped students through their learning experience?

- Yes
- No

Why or Why not?

.....

A. Do you feel that the last year experience(2015-16) helped the students understand themselves and raised their awareness about their own way of knowing?

- Yes

- No

Why or why not?

.....
 What might have been contributing to that?

- Living in the Housing
- Relationship with housing supervisor
- Relationship with faculty members
- Relationship with classmates
- Relationship with roommates
- Eating together in the cafeteria
- Activities
- Studying with colleagues
- Others.....

11) From all co-curricular activities offered what do you think was the most beneficial for students?(Check all that apply)

- Welcome party including talents presentation (poetry, drawing, acting)
- Sessions for personal development “ you are not static”
- Session for personal development “ personality types”
- Session of Professional Nurse Attitude “Details orientation”
- Fish Farm Picnic
- Recreational music afternoon
- Others.....

Why?.....

D. Does the first year program takes into consideration the differences between the students in planning co-curricular activities?

- Yes
- No

Why? Or why not?

.....
 Was reflection helpful in enhancing the students benefit and enjoyment from the co-curricular activities?

- Yes
- No

Why? Or why not?

.....
 As a faculty member do you see value of having co-curricular activities?

- Yes, I see value for co-curricular activities but do not believe the students see it the same way
- Yes, I see value for co-curricular activities and believe that the students are benefiting from participating

- No, I believe that the students are in need to concentrate more on their studies
- Other.....

E. Which support offered through the academic year 2015-16 for the first year students you believe was the most supportive?

- Sessions for personal development
 - Study skills offered through first semester
 - Exams taking skills
 - Concept mapping
 - Note taking
 - Using a textbook
 - Research skills
 - Referencing and citations
 - Presentation skills
 - Learning through the lectures
 - Time management and using agenda
 - Meeting with faculty members
 - Short videos or motivational videos
 - Activities
 - Others.....
-
- Why?.....

12) As a faculty member what do you believe is the most important support the institution needs to give to the first year students? Why?

.....

APPENDIX-2**Students' Interview Questions**

1. List at least three challenges you faced through your first year?
Do you still consider them challenges so far?
If yes why?
If no, what helped you to get over them?
2. How far did you change throughout the past academic year?
Do you like this change?
Was it an easy process?
3. What helped you through this first year experience?
4. If you have the chance to go through this first year again, what would you do differently?
5. How do you feel toward GTNI?
 - Belonging
 - Safe place to live and learn
 - A place where rules are strict and my voice is never heard
 - Other
6. How far you feel that the environment at GTNI embraces differences, and welcomes diversity?
7. How far do you feel that environment at GTNI calls for using knowledge with compassion?
8. Have you ever had the chance to reflect on your learning?
9. How far the assessment helped you improve your learning?
10. Do you feel you are learning in an active setting or you are receiver to the knowledge?What do you think about it?

Faculty Members' Interview Questions

11. As a faculty working in close proximity with first year students list at least three challenges encountered by your students whether they report them or you assume your students struggled with through the past academic year?
Do you believe they got over their challenges?
If yes, what helped the students to get over those challenges?
If no, what hindered that?
12. How far you can say that the students changed throughout the past academic year?
Do you like this change?
Was it an easy process?
13. Among all the curricular and co-curricular activities offered through the past academic year, which one you think was the most helpful for your students?
14. If you have the chance to go with your students through this first year again, what would you do differently?
15. How do you feel toward GTNI?
 - Belonging
 - Safe place to live and learn
 - A place where rules are strict and students voice is never heard
 - A place that respect differences
 - A place that cares only for academic learning
 - Other
16. How far you feel that the environment at GTNI embraces differences, and welcomes diversity?(this applies to you as well as to your students)
17. How far do you feel that environment at GTNI calls for using knowledge with compassion?
18. Have you ever helped the students to reflect on their learning?
Do you see that this was of benefit for the students?
19. Do you believe that the assessment helped the students improve their learning?
How?
20. Do you believe that the students enjoy being active learner?

APPENDIX – 3

SURVEY CONSENT FORM



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Documentation of Informed Consent for Participation in Research Study

Project Title: Thriving rather than Surviving the Transition: A Case Study of Building First Year Learning Community in a Nursing Institute in Egypt

Principal Investigator: *Sylvia Adel Basta*

*You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is to present a description of the first year students' transition and development at GTNI (Gouna Technical Nursing Institute). It also seeks to analyze the challenges faced by first year students as well as to explore their perception regarding the various support offered by the institute.

The procedures of the research will be as follows: Electronic survey, Semi-structured face-to-face interviews. This consent form pertains to the survey participation.

*There are no risks involved with this survey.

*Potential benefits will be felt by including the students because when their voices will be heard and referred to through building a first year learning community, their feeling of belonging will be fostered.

The information through the survey is confidential as this will be done through electronic surveys.

"Questions about the research and your rights, should be directed to (Sylvia Basta) at (sylviabasta@aucegypt.edu)."

*Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or the loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature _____

Printed Name _____

Date _____

P.I. signature _____

Printed Name _____

Date _____

Please let the principal investigator know if you would like a copy of this signed consent form.

APPENDIX – 4

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Documentation of Informed Consent for Participation in Research Study

Project Title: Thriving rather than Surviving the Transition: A Case Study of Building First Year Learning Community in a Nursing Institute in Egypt
Principal Investigator: *Sylvia Adel Basta*

*You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is to present a description of the first year students' transition and development at GTNI (Gouna Technical Nursing Institute). It also seeks to analyze the challenges faced by first year students as well as to explore their perception regarding the various support offered by the institute. This exploratory analysis will be used to inform the practice. The procedures of the research will be as follows: Electronic survey & Semi-structured face-to-face interviews. This consent form pertains to interview.

*There may be certain risks or discomforts associated with this research. Participants might feel stressed toward being interviewed. Also reflection on their experience might be stressful. But support will be given before the interview to encourage them to share with their own viewpoints without being intimidated or concerned as information asked are not personally sensitive and are for the purpose to evaluate an education setting.

*Potential benefits will be felt by including the students because when their voices will be heard and referred to through building a first year learning community, their feeling of belonging will be fostered.

The information through the interview is confidential due to the fact that the researcher will take precautions in assuring that specific comments will not be linked to specific individuals.

"Questions about the research and your rights, should be directed to (Sylvia Basta) at (sylviabasta@aucegypt.edu)."

*Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or the loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature _____
Printed Name _____
Date _____
P.I. signature _____
Printed Name _____
Date _____

Please let the principal investigator know if you would like a copy of this signed consent form.

APPENDIX -5

IRB APPROVAL

CASE #2015-2016-175

 THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

To: Sylvia Basta
Cc: Dena Riad
From: Atta Gebril, Chair of the IRB
Date: June 12 , 2016
Re: Approval of study

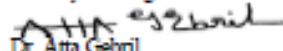
This is to inform you that I reviewed your revised research proposal entitled "Thriving rather than Surviving Transition: a case Study of Building First Year Learning Community in a Nursing Institute in Egypt" and determined that it required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" heading. As you are aware, the members of the IRB suggested certain revisions to the original proposal, but your new version addresses these concerns successfully. The revised proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

This approval letter was issued under the assumption that you have not started data collection for your research project. Any data collected before receiving this letter could not be used since this is a violation of the IRB policy.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor, Dr. Amr Salama. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.

This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

Thank you and good luck.



Dr. Atta Gebril
IRB chair, The American University in Cairo
2046 HUSS Building
T: 02-26151919
Email: agebril@aucegypt.edu


Institutional Review Board
The American University In Cairo
AUC Avenue, P.O. Box 74
New Cairo 11835, Egypt.
tel 20.2.2615.1000
fax 20.2.27957565
Email: aucirb@aucegypt.edu

APPENDIX-6

CAPMAS APPROVAL

جمهورية مصر العربية



الجهاز المركزي للتعبئة العامة والإحصاء

قرار رئيس الجهاز المركزي للتعبئة العامة والإحصاء
بالتفويض
رقم (٢٧٨٣) لسنة ٢٠١٦

في شأن قيام الباحثة / سيلفيا عادل حنا بسطا - المسجلة لدرجة الماجستير كلية الدراسات العليا في التربية / الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة - بإجراء دراسة ميدانية بعنوان: (الأزدهار في المرحلة الانتقالية: دراسة حالة لبناء مجتمع تعلم لطلاب العام الدراسي الأول في معهد فنى للتمريض بمصر).

رئيس الجهاز

- بعد الإطلاع على القرار الجمهوري رقم (٢٩١٥) لسنة ١٩٦٤ بشأن إنشاء وتنظيم الجهاز المركزي للتعبئة العامة والإحصاء.
- وعلى قرار رئيس الجهاز رقم (٢٣١) لسنة ١٩٦٨ في شأن إجراء الإحصاءات والتعدادات والاستفتاءات والاستقصاءات.
- وعلى قرار رئيس الجهاز رقم (١٣١٤) لسنة ٢٠٠٧ بشأن التفويض في بعض الاختصاصات.
- وعلى كتاب كلية الدراسات العليا في التربية / الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة - السوارد للجهاز في ٢٠١٦/٥/١٥.

ق ر ر

مادة ١: تقوم الباحثة / سيلفيا عادل حنا بسطا - المسجلة لدرجة الماجستير / كلية الدراسات العليا في التربية / الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة / بإجراء الدراسة الميدانية المشار إليها عاليه.

مادة ٢: تجري الدراسة على عينة حجمها (٤٤) أربعة وأربعون مفردة موزعة كالتالي:
٣٨ مفردة طالب وطالبة - ٦ مفردة من السادة أعضاء هيئة التدريس وذلك بالمعهد الفنى للتمريض بالجونة/ بمحافظة البحر الاحمر.

مادة ٣: تجمع البيانات اللازمة لهذه الدراسة بموجب الاستمارتين المعدتين لذلك والمعتمدة كل صفحة منها بخاتم الجهاز المركزي للتعبئة العامة والإحصاء وبياناتهما كالتالي.
الإستمارة الأولى : اسئلة المسح الاستقصائي الموجهه لأعضاء هيئة التدريس وعدد صفحاتها خمس صفحات.

الإستمارة الثانية : اسئلة المسح الاستقصائي الموجه للطلاب وعدد صفحاتها ست صفحات.

مادة ٤: يقوم المعهد الفنى للتمريض بالجونة - وتحت إشراف إدارة الامن به - بتسيير إجراء هذه الدراسة الميدانية - مع مراعاة الضوابط الخاصة بتقييم درجة سرية البيانات والمعلومات المتداولة مسبقاً بمعرفة كل جهة طبقاً لما جاء بخطة الامن بها.

مادة ٥: يراعى موافقة مفردات العينة - مع مراعاة سرية البيانات الفردية طبقاً لأحكام القانون رقم ٣٥ لسنة ١٩٦٠ والمعدل بالقانون رقم ٢٨ لسنة ١٩٨٢ وعدم استخدام البيانات التي يتم جمعها لأغراض أخرى غير أغراض هذه الدراسة.

مادة ٦: يجري العمل الميداني خلال ستة أشهر من تاريخ صدور هذا القرار .

مادة ٧: يوافي الجهاز المركزي للتعبئة العامة والإحصاء بنسخة من النتائج النهائية لهذه الدراسة.

مادة ٨: ينفذ هذا القرار من تاريخ صدوره.

صدر في: ٢٠١٦ / ٥ / ١٥.


محمد ممدوح محمد
مدير عام الإدارة العامة للامن

