



KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND BARRIERS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AMONG NURSING OFFICERS IN TEACHING HOSPITAL KARAPITIYA

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ABSTRACT

Continuing professional education programs are highlighted in most of the health-related disciplines, including nursing with the growth in the profession. Continuing education will be important for the nurses in order to update their knowledge, to improve skills and to perform evidence based practice which will be beneficial to the society. Although there are nearly 30,000 nursing officers in Sri Lanka, only 6000 of them study for a BSc. Nursing Degree. Hence, we thought as it would be worth to assess the knowledge and attitudes of the nursing officers regarding higher educational opportunities and to identify the barriers/obstacles for continuing higher education. This was a descriptive cross sectional study conducted in Teaching Hospital Karapitiya. A convenient sample of 200 nursing officers was recruited to the study and sample size was calculated using a formula published previously. A pretested self-administered questionnaire developed by the chief investigator with expert knowledge was used to collect data and it contains questions under four sections which explored demographic characteristics, knowledge, attitudes and barriers/obstacles for higher education. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze demographic data and level of knowledge, attitudes and barriers. Non-parametric statistics as Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis H tests was used to analyze associations using SPSS 20th version. Approval was obtained from the Ethical Review Committee of Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna. Mean knowledge score of the participants was 6.8 (± 2.04) out of 12. The level of knowledge of them was significantly associated with level of education ($p < 0.01$). There was a significant difference in level of knowledge between Grade I and II nursing officers ($p < 0.05$). 97.5 % of nursing officers had positive attitudes regarding higher education. The work experience of the participants was significantly associated with the attitude related to need to obtain higher education ($p < 0.05$), the level of education with the attitude of importance of higher education for evidence based practice ($p < 0.05$) and nursing grade with the attitude of importance of higher education to prevent getting infections with routine work ($p < 0.05$). Identified barriers for the opportunities for higher education were distance for higher education centers (85%), lack of information about higher education (81.5%), lack of organizational support (79.5%), lack of time (79.5%) and poor scheduling of continuing education programs (78.5%). The age was a barrier to focus on higher education due to other (employment/personal) responsibilities ($p < 0.05$). The barriers like previous unsatisfied continuing education programs ($p < 0.05$) and lack of organizational support ($p < 0.05$) was significantly associated with age of the participants. The barriers as cost of the higher education courses ($p < 0.05$) and lack of time to continue higher education ($p < 0.05$) was significantly associated with nursing grade of the participants. It can be concluded that the nursing officers had positive attitudes regarding continuing education but lack of knowledge and barriers for higher education have hindered their commitments in continuing higher education. Hence, we recommend new approaches to improve their higher education opportunities and additional measures to minimize obstacles in continuing education.

Keywords: Nursing Officers, Knowledge, Attitude, Barriers, Higher Education