

PP 104

Perception towards continuing education among nursing students at Nurses’ Training School, Mulleriyawa, Sri Lanka

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Background: Continuing education creates new opportunities for nurses to achieve their higher educational qualifications in a health-related field. It is the key to improve skills and apply new technologies in providing better services. Continuing education is required for nurses to increase their ability to influence patient care positively, deliver optimal care, and improve patient outcomes.

Objective: This study aimed to assess perceived motivational factors, benefits, and barriers towards continuing education among nursing students at Nurses’ Training School, Mulleriyawa.

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 191 nursing students using systematic random sampling. Second and third year nursing students were included in the study while first year students were excluded. A pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis using SPSS (version 25.0). Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of KIU.

Results: Among the 191 nursing students, 92.7% were female. The majority (79%) of the students belonged to 25-30 years of age. As perceived by them, improvement in confidence (99%) was the main benefit of continuing education followed by ability to plan career pathway (98.4%), acquire additional qualifications (98%) and to become a clinical instructor (96%). Among the motivational factors for continuing education, the majority (92.1%) were encouraged by the family members to continue education. Lack of proper staff development plans by the training schools and hospitals (84.3%), and lack of information regarding opportunities for continuing education (76.4%) were identified as main barriers.

Conclusion: Despite of the presence of several motivational factors and benefits, the students have reported that there are several barriers which may interrupt their continuing education. Hence, it is essential to conduct regular awareness sessions for nursing students to increase the awareness regarding opportunities for continuing education while implementing proper staff development plans for nurses.