

## **The Barriers to Continuing Higher Education among Nurses: Observations of a Preliminary Study among Registered Nurses Working in a Tertiary Care Hospital**

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### **Abstract**

It is critical for nurses to advance their basic education to higher levels to foster professional growth, yet the trend of continuing advanced nursing education is stagnant in Sri Lanka. The current factors influencing nurses not to continue higher education remain unclear, therefore as a preliminary approach, a descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted aiming to identify the barriers for Sri Lankan nurses for abandoning higher education. Randomly selected 327 registered nurses attached to the National Hospital Kandy were selected and with informed consent, personal, socio-cultural, and managerial factors affecting continuing higher education were gathered using a pre-tested self-administered questionnaire. Data analysis was done using SPSS software version 26 and the frequencies with percentages of such affecting factors were calculated. According to the results, 310 were female nurses (94.8%) and 17 (5.2%) were male nurses with the majority (n=223,68.8%) belonged to 31-40 years of age. Only 107 (32.7%) had bachelor's in nursing degree while the rest (n=211,64.5%) had Diploma in Nursing. Though 313 (95.7%) were aware that continuing higher education is essential to become competent, 229 (70%) expressed of job dissatisfaction and heavy workload (n=307,93.9%) as barriers for continuing higher education. About 197 (60.2%) were afraid of expenditures for higher education and 196 (60%) expressed that during academic work, they would not receive any peer support to manage patient care. Moreover, only 39 (12%) stated that they would be supported by the administrative staff to continue higher education. In general, nurses view that the load of responsibilities, lack of peer support and motivation by administrative staff as impediments to continue their further education, therefore addressing such barriers will be beneficial for stakeholders to take necessary actions to motivate nurses to engage in higher education thus improving the quality of nursing care.

**Keywords:** *Nurses, Higher education, Barriers, Impediments, Workload, Peer support*