



Original Research Article

## Factors Influencing Nurses' Participation in Professional Development Activities

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### ABSTRACT

Professional development activities are the means to update the healthcare providers with new knowledge and help them to provide quality care and better patient outcomes. A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted among staff nurses to explore the factors influencing their participation in professional development activities (PDA). The objective of the study was to explore the motivating and hindering factors for participation in PDA. Structured questionnaire was administered to 320 staff nurses from various hospitals. The findings showed that out of 320 nurses, for majority of Nurses the motivating factors were improvement in knowledge (96.6%), fine tuning of nursing skills (95.3%), awareness of technological advancement (95.3%), develop interpersonal relationship(92.8%) and keeping oneself up to date(86.6%). The major hindering factors identified were excessive indirect costs(62.5%), lack of relieving staff in order to attend the PDA(61.9%), lot of responsibilities at home(55.9%), cost of registration fees and difficulty to travel to a distant places(50.3%). The findings of the study concluded that there are several factors that contribute to nurses' participation in PDA. Participation of nurses in PDA is very essential to update themselves and to have the autonomy to practice excellent evidence-based nursing care which in-tern contributes to quality patient outcome.

**Keywords:** Professional development activities, Participation, Nurses, Motivating factors, Hindering factors.

### INTRODUCTION

Nurses need to face the challenges of a rapidly changing, complex health care environment. The complexity of health care system demands for specialization of nurses in various fields and updating oneself with recent health information. Nurses who are initially well prepared and then throughout their career continue to advance in their

profession are the important factor in attaining positive patient outcomes. <sup>(1)</sup>

Active participation of nurses in learning activities helps them to develop and maintain their competency and enhances professional practice. The various professional organisations like Canadian Nurses Association (1998) and American Nurses Association (2000) have been consistently insisting their nurses to update

their professional knowledge, skills, and judgments to provide competent and safe care. <sup>(2,3)</sup> Most of the developed countries like US, UK and Australia have a licensure renewal examination system and mandatory continuing professional developmental activities existing which makes the nurses self motivated towards the improvement of their competencies and results in better satisfaction. <sup>(4,5)</sup> There is no such licensure examinations existing in the Indian set up and the mandatory attendance and participation vary from hospital to hospital according to the institutional policy. <sup>(6)</sup> Failure to keep up to date with recent advances can result in poor patient care. So, it is essential to understand what motivates and prevent nurses from participating in professional activities (PDA). <sup>(7,8)</sup>

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study adopted a cross sectional descriptive survey design. A total of 320 registered staff nurses were surveyed from randomly selected hospitals of Udupi and

Mangalore. Questionnaire on demographic proforma, and factors influencing the nurses' participation in PDA were used. The questionnaire had a total of 32 items, with 15 items as motivating factors and 17 items on hindering factors. The questionnaire comprised the subareas of factors such as work related, family related, finance related, availability and accessibility of PDA, career advancement opportunities, peer support in attending PDA and personal factors. Respondents were given yes or no options against each factor. Reliability of the questionnaire was established by test retest reliability coefficient ( $r = 0.93$ ). Individual item was analysed and described in frequency and percentage. Ethical clearance was taken from the hospital ethical committee and informed consent obtained from the participants.

**Statistical Analysis:** Data analysed and described in frequency and percentage using SPSS version 16

## RESULTS

**Table1: Frequency and Percentage distribution of motivating factors that influences nurses' participation in PDA (n=320)**

Motivating Factors	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
<b>Work related factors</b>				
Compulsory attendance requirement	205	64.1	115	35.9
Break from the routine work schedule.	199	62.2	121	37.8
<b>Classes planned after duty timings</b>	254	79.4	66	20.6
<b>Family related factors</b>				
Family/ spouse support	271	84.7	49	15.3
<b>Financial related factors</b>				
Programs offered free of cost	230	71.9	90	28.1
Expenses which is refundable	197	61.6	123	38.4
<b>Availability and Accessibility</b>				
Offered by qualified resource person	250	78.1	70	21.9
<b>Career advancement</b>				
Keep oneself upto date	277	86.6	43	13.4
Entrance to other college/job	254	79.4	66	20.6
Improve knowledge	309	96.6	11	3.4
Sake of promotions	71	22.2	249	77.8
Fine tune nursing skills	305	95.3	15	4.7
Become aware of technological advancement	305	95.3	15	4.7
<b>Peer support</b>				
Have some good time with friends	255	79.7	65	20.3
Create friendship with people of various profession	297	92.8	23	7.2

**Table 2: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Hindering Factors for nurses' participation in PDA (n=320)**

Hindering factors	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
<b>Work related factors</b>				
Lack of relieving staff	198	61.9	122	38.1
No off time from the duty schedule	145	45.3	175	54.7
<b>Family related factors</b>				
Difficult to leave children at home	72	22.5	248	77.5
Prefer to spend time with family	125	39.1	195	60.9
Responsibilities at home	179	55.9	141	44.1
<b>Financial related factors</b>				
Cannot afford the cost of registration fees	161	50.3	159	49.7
Excessive indirect costs	200	62.5	120	37.5
Unnecessary expenditure	130	40.6	190	59.4
Availability and accessibility				
<b>Difficulty to travel</b>	161	50.3	159	49.7
<b>Personal factors</b>				
Topics which are difficult to understand	120	37.5	200	62.5
Lack of personal satisfaction	110	34.4	210	65.6
Lack of confidence in learning	50	15.6	270	84.4
Previous experience was disappointing	70	21.9	250	78.1
Difficulty in the language	62	19.4	258	80.6
Inappropriate to clinical practice need	99	30.9	221	69.1
<b>Carreer advancement</b>				
Not essential for experienced hands	61	19.1	259	80.9
<b>Peer support</b>				
Less Encouragement from peer group	101	31.6	219	68.4

The sample characteristics showed that majorities (84%) of the participants were in the age group of 22 to 31 years, 92.8% of them were females and 42.2% were married. Among these registered nurses 82% were General Nursing and Midwifery nurses and 18% were graduate nurses. 60% of the nurses were working in general ward and 40% were working in critical care unit, emergency unit, dialysis, and cardiac catheterization unit and operation theatre. 73% of them had one to five years of clinical experience and 21% had worked more than five years as a staff nurse.

Data on factors motivating nurses' participation in PDA is described in table 1 and the hindering factors are given in the table 2.

## DISCUSSION

Participation in professional developmental activities is very essential for nurses who are frontline health workers. This enables the nurse to have sufficient up-to-date knowledge and skills to maintain and

improve quality of patient care. There are various factors which may motivate the nurses to actively participate in these activities and few hindering factors which may prevent nurses in attending PDA.

In this study the most common factors which motivated nurses' to participate in PDA were improvement of knowledge (96.6%), fine-tuning of nursing skills (95.3%), technological advancement (95.3%), creating friendship with people of various profession (92.8%) and keeping oneself up-to-date (86.6%). A cross sectional descriptive study conducted by Chong et al. among government hospital and health clinics nurses of Malaysia found that, improving clinical practice skills (mean 4.34), updating knowledge (mean 4.31), improving skills in communication (mean 4.27), and attaining professional status (mean 4.21) were the motivating factors to them for participation in PDA. (9) Study conducted by Nalle et al, revealed that 43% of the nurses expressed primary reason for their participation in PDA is personal and professional interest followed by

licensure requirements (15%) and advancement in the career (12%).<sup>(10)</sup> Findings are also supported by a study conducted by DeSilets, Villanova University that PDA keeps nurses abreast of new developments in nursing and helps to be more productive in their career.<sup>(11)</sup>

This study found that cost of registration fees (50.3%) and excessive indirect costs (62.5%) were the perceived hindering factors. Findings are consistent with previous study found that the barriers for attending the PDA's were cost of the programme (74%), lack of funding (54%) and travel requirements (49%).<sup>(10)</sup> In-order to have better participation in PDA, the topics should be relevant to the area of work. In the present study 30.9% nurses found that the activities of professional development were not appropriate to their clinical practice. Similar findings reported by Nalle et al were 25% nurses found that these programs were not relevant.<sup>(10)</sup> Meta-analysis conducted by Schweitzer et al found that most common hindering factor for participation in continuing education activity were the fees for attending and unable to get relieved from work.<sup>(12)</sup> This finding supports the present study were 61.9% responded that they are unable to attend the PDA due to lack of relieving staffs.

Qualitative study to identify Public Health nurses (PHNs) needs and barriers for attending continuing education revealed that travelling a long distance was the main barrier (98%). Inadequate information, minimum support from administrative leaders and family issue were the other major barriers expressed by the PHNs.<sup>(13)</sup> In the present study 50.3% nurses responded that difficulty in travelling deterred them from engaging in PDA. The finding of the present study is consistent with the reports of a descriptive study conducted by Cullen which revealed that the primary reason for non-participation was other higher priorities

(mean 3.54) no time (mean 3.48) inconvenient timings (mean=3.45) and location of programs (mean=3.43).<sup>(14)</sup>

Nursing is a female dominating profession. Nurses will have to balance between the work place and family responsibilities. In the present study 92.8% of nurses were females and 42.2 were married. 55.9% said that responsibilities at home were the hindering factors for involving in PDA. Other factors were preference to spend time with family (39.1%) and difficulty in leaving the children at home (22.5%). Meta-analysis conducted by Schweitzer et al also supported this finding.<sup>(11)</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Nurses need to be up to date in their knowledge and competent in skills. Participation of nurses in professional development activities helps the nurse to bring evidence based best practice in patient care and be aware of recent advances in technologies in health care system. The administrators and nurse educators need to motivate the nurses in attending PDA and find means to overcome the hindering factors.

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