

Need of Specialized Courses in Advance Nursing Education in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

Nursing specialization and certification of skill contribute nursing professionalism that improve nursing practice in an identified specific area within the entire field of professional nursing.

Methods

A descriptive cross sectional survey was used for assessing the need of specialized courses in advanced nursing. Data was collected from January to March 2022 through an online survey among 354 nurses working in Nepal. Collected data was entered into SPSS version 16 and expressed by using descriptive statistics.

Results

The findings showed that more than half (54.5%) of the participants were age group of 20-29, 99.4% were females, 50.3% had bachelor's degree, 60.7% worked in government and 70.3% had working experience less than 10 years. Almost all (98.8%) felt importance of specialized courses in higher education and the needs of advanced courses (72.9%) and especially in critical care (53.1%) Almost all respondents (95.2 to 90.7%) perceived these courses increase self-esteem and morale, promote quality patient care, increase confidentiality and creditability, ensure competency, validate nurses' knowledge and expertise, advancement of professional career ladder and clinical expert and increase professional accountability. Majority of them perceived (77.4%-57.6%) that specialty courses increase access to job-related power, obtain noticeable financial benefits and perform excellence services. Almost all (91.0%) of them perceived that it is beneficial to maintain professionalism.

Conclusion

This study concluded that almost all graduate nurses felt specialty courses in masters degree for personal and professional development. Thus it is strongly recommended to initiate different specialized courses at the postgraduate level.

Keywords

Advance nursing education; need; specialized courses

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INTRODUCTION

Nurses are the frontline healthcare professionals, who are providing care for people and in diverse settings.¹ Demographic shift especially increasing ageing population, increasing prevalence of chronic illness patients, complex health care systems, nursing shortage are the challenges of health care system. These challenges are becoming complex by an ageing nurse workforce, shortage of nursing faculties and nursing manpower leading to scarcity of nurses, globally.² Transformation of nursing education improve the status of nursing profession.³ Postgraduate education produces nursing workforce who can play roles of caregivers care coordinator, client educator, case manager, counselor, client advocator, consultant, researcher, administrator, manager, staff educator, and expert witness.⁴

Evidence shows the expectation of stakeholders from graduate as the clinically and professionally competent nurses having managerial and leadership skills who can facilitate for sound clinical judgment and decision making with high level of professionalism.⁵ The need of higher education in nursing is mandatory for improving the current standard of health care and meet modern challenges.⁶ There are positive relationships between postgraduate education and professional and personal qualities of nursing that could provide direct benefit to patients.⁷ Clinical master's degrees place emphasis on nurses' clinical skills and their ability to obtain and apply new knowledge.⁸ Similarly, the pressure of training in the National Health Service affects the development of patient-centered curriculum.⁹ The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) emphasized the inclusion of knowledge, skills and competencies for thriving in increasingly complex clinical environment in the postgraduate nursing education.¹⁰ Postgraduate education and nurses with postgraduate qualification are instrumental to the professionalization of nursing. It is believed that master's study produced well equipped nurses having specialty skills and knowledge that improved greater reflexivity in morality, problem solving ability and increase capacity to inter-professional collaboration. Post-graduated nurses could demonstrate effective clinical leadership through working as change agents.

Likewise, after obtaining higher education in nursing, certification is a mark of skill and professionalism that increases recognition and respect of nurses that enhance professional opportunities, foster confidence, increase retention of nursing manpower and improve patient outcomes.¹² Accreditation and individual graduate certification reinforced used of similar curriculum across institutions (AACN, 2008, 2010)¹³. The nurses' perceived value of certification as it promotes the professional development of clinical nurses through specialty certification by

minimizing known and perceived barriers¹⁴. Among certified nurses, 95% report a change in their nursing practice after becoming certified. Nurse Managers prefer to hire nurses who've achieved specialty certification¹⁵. The advanced degree in specialized courses help the nurses to prepare delivery of safe, evidence-based care that is targeted toward quality patient outcomes^{16,17}. For meeting the latest global action plans (2013-2020) has given priorities on reduction of shared risk factors of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as well as 25% relative reduction in premature death due to NCDs by 2025¹⁸.

For addressing the burden of diseases in Nepal, new health policy was developed by focusing on NCDs, concepts of urban health and coordination of the ministry of health with other ministries and increase ratio of health workers¹⁹. Being a member of WHO, Nepal revised its health policies to achieve universal health care coverage through establishment of the super specialized hospital in each province²⁰. Nepal also need to produce certified nurse practitioners in critical care, oncology, cardiac, emergency and trauma, renal replacement therapy or in gerontology to meet the global health action plans. Therefore, preparation and accreditation of postgraduate nursing personnel are becoming mandatory to meet the policy and strategies of Nepal.

METHODS

A descriptive cross sectional survey was used for exploring the need of specialized courses in advance nursing. Data was collected from January to March 2022 by using non-probability sampling technique. Data was collected by online survey among 354 nurses working in diverse setting by using electronic medias. According to Nepal Nursing Council, there were 67022 registered nurses²¹. Among them, nurses who were willing to participate in this study, available at the time of data collection, who were living in Nepal and who had internet access only included.

After selection of research proposal from Research Management Cell, Maharajgunj Nursing Campus, ethical approval was obtained from Institutional Review Committee of Institute of Medicine. Anonymity was maintained throughout the study by coding the data and confidentiality of the collected information was maintained by using obtained information for research purpose only. Data was collected within 4 weeks. Data analysis was done according to the objective of the study. Collected data was analyzed by using SPSS version 16, only descriptive statistics was used for analysis.

RESULTS

Respondents' mean age was 30.9 years with \pm 8.2 S.D. Almost all (99.4%) of them were female,

59.9% were married, and half of them had a Bachelors' degree education. Greater than 2/5th of the respondents had managerial work and 70.3% had 10 years of work experience. Almost all (98.8%) felt a need for specialized courses in nursing. In this regard, almost 3/5th of them felt a need for academic advance courses while, half of them identified a need for critical care nursing (Table 1).

Regarding the benefits of these courses, almost all (95.2 to 90.7%) of respondents agreed for increasing self-esteem and morale, promoting quality patient care, increasing confidentiality and credibility, ensuring competency, validating nurses' knowledge and expertise, advancing professional career ladder, becoming expert and increasing accountability. Likewise, majority (89.2 % to 80.5%) of them agreed their perceived individual benefits as obtaining high knowledge, competence and performance to peers, patients, supervisors and administrators, high satisfaction level and enjoying in work, increasing personal recognition and credibility, increasing opportunity for employment and value given by employers, peers and consumers. Beside these, majority (77.4%-57.6%) of them agreed that increasing access to job-related

power, obtaining tangible financial benefits and performing excellence services (Table 2). Regarding the professional benefits, majority (91.0% - 70.6%) of them were agreed for maintaining standard and stability, increasing professional accountability and professional value, building professional confidence and credibility and demonstrating dedication to nursing profession and recognizing nationally and internationally and demonstrating positive impacts in accreditation and grants respectively. Likewise, the majority (89.3% - 80%) of them agreed that specialties education is necessary for providing quality patient care, protecting the public by competent professional service, affirming patient's advocacy and receiving individualized care and reducing medical errors and treatment cost (Table 3).

DISCUSSION

This findings depicted that more than half (54.5%) of the participants were age of group 20-29 with mean age \pm S.D:30.9 \pm 8.2; almost all were females; more than half were married; from nuclear family; half of them had bachelors' degree and 64.4% were graduated within five years. Similarly, more than

Table 1. Respondents' perceived need of specialized courses

Variables	Number	Percent
Perceived need of specialized courses	350	98.8
Types of specialized courses:		
Three months training	28	7.9
Six months training	38	10.7
One year course	29	8.2
Academic advance course	258	72.9
Other*	1	0.3
Preferred specialty courses:		
Critical care	188	53.1
Cardiac care	53	15.0
Oncology	39	11.0
Emergency	56	15.8
Others	18	5.1
Rationale for specialty courses*		
Obtain greater knowledge	260	73.4
Improve quality of service	230	65.0
Obtain better career opportunity	223	63.0
Build and lead collaborative inter-professional care teams	188	53.1
Translate evidence into practice	188	53.1
Design innovative nursing practices	185	52.3
Get proficiency	169	47.7
Increase opportunity for self-reliance	163	46.0
Advance a culture of excellence	151	42.7
Navigate and integrate care services	140	39.5
Secure job	113	31.9
Increase salary	108	30.5

*multiple responses

Table 2. Respondents' perceived Individual benefits of specialized courses

Individual benefit*	Responses					
	Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Increase self-esteem and morale	12	3.4	5	1.4	337	95.2
Promote quality patient care	11	3.1	11	3.1	332	93.8
Increase professional confident and credible	17	4.8	7	2.0	330	93.2
Obtain professional competency	18	5.1	10	2.8	326	92.1
Validate scientific knowledge and expertise	11	3.1	18	5.1	325	91.8
Become expert	16	4.5	15	4.2	323	91.3
Ensure Professional Opportunity	9	2.5	22	6.2	323	91.3
Increase accountability	9	2.5	24	6.8	321	90.7
Advance knowledge, competence & performance to different categories of stakeholders	24	6.8	14	4.0	316	89.2
Ensure high satisfaction and enjoy in work	16	4.5	34	9.6	304	85.9
Obtain personal recognition and credibility	16	4.5	36	10.2	302	85.3
Increase opportunity for employment	23	6.5	39	11.0	292	82.5
Value by employers, peers and consumers	11	3.1	58	16.4	285	80.5
Possess increased access to job-related power	24	6.8	56	15.8	274	77.4
Ensure high payment	35	9.9	103	29.1	216	61.0
Render excellent performance	31	8.8	119	33.6	204	57.6

*multiple responses

Table 3. Respondents' perceived benefits of specialized courses

Statements	Responses					
	Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Professional Benefits*						
Maintain standard & stability	12	3.4	20	5.6	322	91.0
Increase professional accountability	11	3.1	22	6.2	321	90.7
Increase professional value	10	2.8	25	7.1	319	90.1
Builds confidence and credibility	12	3.4	30	8.5	312	88.1
Recognize nationally & internationally	14	4.0	38	10.7	302	85.3
Obtaining accreditation and grants	26	7.3	78	22.1	250	70.6
Benefits to patients*						
Render quality patient care	11	3.1	27	7.6	316	89.3
Protect the public	11	3.1	40	11.3	303	85.6
Affirm patient's advocacy	16	4.5	42	11.9	296	83.6
Receive individualized care	22	6.2	42	11.9	290	81.9
Reduce medical errors & treatment cost	28	7.9	43	12.1	283	80.0

*multiple responses

one third (35.9%) were staff nurses and nearly two third (60.7%) worked in government; with more than half (53.1%) working in hospitals and majority (70.3%) had working experience up to 10 years.

Almost all (98.8%) of them felt the need of specialized course in higher education. Majority (72.9%) felt the needs of academic advance course and more than half (53.1%) preferred critical care nursing. Similarly, majority (73.4%) of them stated

the importance of specialized courses as to obtain advanced knowledge. This finding is relevance with the findings of reviewed studies conducted in China, which stated that master's education for nurses may improve the current standard of health care and meet modern challenges⁶. Likewise, the findings of qualitative study done among post graduates on 127 advanced courses, resulted that the master's degree education are undergoing a

consolidation stage, under developing process as well as this is in the creation of hard technologies and innovation that are essential for the development of innovative professional practices and articulate the health care and educational areas²². A study done in Bangladesh showed that 90% of the participants reported that master of nursing program need for clinical competency and the most preferred courses were nursing management and education. This results indicated a strong motivation to enroll in a postgraduate program for increasing confidence in clinical competence and high demand programs²³.

Regarding perceived individual benefits of specialized courses, almost all (95.2- 90.7%) of the participants agreed that specialized courses increase self-esteem and morale, promote quality patient care, increase confidentiality and creditability, ensure competency, validate nurses' knowledge and expertise, advancement of professional career ladder, experts in particular field and increase accountability. Likewise, majority (89.2 % - 80.5%) agreed that individual benefits as obtaining high level of knowledge, competence and performance to peers, patients, supervisors and administrators, increasing satisfaction level and enjoying in work, increasing personal recognition and credibility, increasing opportunity for employment and increasing value given by employers, peers and consumers. Beside these, majority (77.4%-57.6%) of participants agreed that increasing access to job-related power, obtaining tangible financial benefits and performing excellence services. The findings of systematic review depicted that the five common theme emerged regarding master's level educations are education that may ultimately affect patient care; increased confidentiality and self-esteem, improved communication, personal and professional growth, increase application of knowledge and theories into practice and thinking analytically and making proper decisions⁷.

The findings of a qualitative study depicted that the informants expected that master education broaden scientific language and critical thinking ability necessary for professional advancement in knowledge and skills that would reflect in presentations and interactions with other professionals and application of evidenced-based practice. After completion of postgraduate education, nurses would be highly competence and satisfied in using evidence based practice. Practice oriented courses could provide high level skills and theoretical knowledge as specialist training²⁴.²⁵. Evaluation of active pedagogical strategies is a feasible and applicable evaluation method for graduate monitoring systems, and it allows knowing the relationships between training and work²⁶.

Regarding professional benefits majority (91.0% - 70.6%) of the participants stated the importance

of specialty courses for maintaining standard and stability, increasing professional accountability and professional value, building confidence and credibility and professional dedication and national and international recognition and positively impacts in accreditation and funding grants. Likewise, majority (89.3% - 80%) of respondents agreed for providing higher quality patients care, protecting the public, affirming patients' advocacy, receiving individualized care and reducing medical errors and treatment cost. In a reports of systematic reviewed done by Audet et al. (2018), evidence suggests that higher nurse education is associated with lower risks of mortality and failure to rescue, longitudinal studies are needed to better ascertain these associations and determine the specific thresholds that minimize risks²⁷

Data was collected by using online questionnaire, those nurses who did not have internet facilities could not participate in this study. Even though nature of study seems to follow qualitative study, the researcher explored their ideas through quantitative method.

CONCLUSION

This study findings concluded that almost all nurses felt need of specialty courses in master level for obtaining greater knowledge; job opportunities and provision of quality nursing services with increasing inter-professional teamwork. Majority of them perceived personal, professional growth that ultimately provide quality care for the patients after obtaining advanced nursing courses. So it is recommended to initiate specialized courses in postgraduate level.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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