

PRE-EMPLOYMENT READINESS AMONG FINAL YEAR STUDENT NURSES

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Abstract

This study is to describe the factors that can affect the readiness of the final year student nurses toward the nursing profession. Aim of the study is to identify the readiness for the employment as a Registered Nurse. Besides that, this study also try to determine the the level of the student readiness toward nursing profession and to identify the appropriate action to be implemented by the institution. Results of this study show that the majority of students are ready to hold a registered nurse post. However, the confidence and motivation level is detected to be at low satisfactory level. Preparations in terms of pre-employment also less complete. Conclusion of study indicates that, these students needs assistance in order to raise the level of motivation and confidence. Guidance and assistance is also required in order to explain to them the appropriate way to prepare for the needs of pre-employment process.

Keywords: *pre-employment readiness, student nurse, motivation.*

PRA PEKERJAAN KESEDIAAN ANTARA TAHUN AKHIR JURURAWAT PELAJAR

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Abstrak

Kajian ini menghuraikan faktor-faktor yang boleh menjejaskan kesediaan pelajar jururawat tahun akhir terhadap profesion kejururawatan. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti kesediaan untuk bekerja sebagai jururawat berdaftar. Selain daripada itu, kajian ini juga cuba menentukan tahap kesediaan pelajar terhadap profesion kejururawatan dan mengenal pasti tindakan yang bersesuaian untuk dilaksanakan oleh institusi tersebut. Keputusan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa majoriti pelajar bersedia untuk bekerja sebagai jururawat berdaftar. Tetapi selain daripada itu, keputusan juga menunjukkan tahap keyakinan dan motivasi yang kurang memuaskan. Persediaan dari segi pra pekerjaan juga kurang lengkap. Kesimpulannya, pelajar-pelajar ini memerlukan bantuan untuk meningkatkan tahap motivasi dan keyakinan. Bimbingan juga diperlukan bagi menerangkan kepada pelajar tentang persediaan keperluan untuk proses pra pekerjaan.

Kata kunci: *kesediaan pra pekerjaan, pelajar kejururawatan, motivasi.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, programme of Nursing Diploma will be offer to the individual especially candidates who passed their Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examination with specific qualification. Majority of these candidates are teenagers and based on this, probably few will have fewer working experience before they enter this program. As we know, program of nursing diploma will train students for three years duration. All subjects taught in this program will help to equip students in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude for them to become a professional trained nurse.

Theory based subjects in Nursing Diploma are including Behavioral Sciences, Nursing Sciences and Health Sciences. Whereas, in practical part, the students will be expose with the skills in the implementation of nursing procedures. Besides that, the students will also be exposed to real environment of clinical. Therefore, students will be able to learn comprehensively and indirectly which help to prepare them in becoming a professional trained nurse.

However, transition process definitely will take place on the new students who is just venturing this nursing field. As it is known, not all the students who join this field on their own interest and willingness. There are students who are not ready for this field. So as according to Kathryn Ann Lever (2010), as stated in National League for Nursing, 2004, 'Nurse Educators are encouraged to use innovative to recruit, retain, and educate students about nursing as a career'. Therefore, the task of educators is not just focused on teaching activities only, but they are also serves to help the students to go through the process of adaptation to new environment. In spite of this, the task which we seen are not as easy as mentioned. Due to this, the educators need to play their multitask role. As additional, as said by Katryn Ann Lever (2010), 'Stimulating interest and understanding in didactic courses can be especially challenging when students are undecided about their academic focus or have little knowledge of what is actually involved with the nursing profession'.

Nursing is a unique field. In nursing, there are 3 things that are crucially emphasized that are knowledge, skills and attitude. To become a qualified nurse, these three components must be available so that the quality of nursing care as well the nurse itself is controlled and secured. Moreover, nurses' duties and activities will affect human lives. According to Leininger (1991), 'Nursing refer to a learned humanistic and scientific profession and discipline which is focused on human care phenomena and activities in order to assist, support, facilitate, or enable individuals or groups to maintain or regain their well-being (or health) in culturally meaningful and beneficial ways or to help people face handicaps or death'. Therefore, throughout 3 years of the program, the institutions will design the appropriate content that related to this program. The entire curriculum for nursing programme was designed based on the guidelines by the Malaysian

Nursing Board, Malaysian Qualification Agency and as well as by the Ministry of Higher Education. This is to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning are recognized. Students will be given the input from simple to complex and from general to specific. This is to encourage the students to receive the input accordingly and organized way and helps them to understand the subject effectively.

As written by Poldevaart (2010), according to Borbasi, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2005; Fitzpatrick, 2007, 'Nursing instructors are leaders. They lead students to become nurses. Through learning, nurses influence the care through which they lead patients. To prepare nursing students to integrate into the discipline of nursing, nurse education leaders must achieve a balance between methodological purity in education and practical clinical application'.

The process of study in nursing education will include classroom teaching for theory; follow with simulation method in skill laboratory and exposure to the real clinical situation. According to the research by Poldevaart (2010), 'nursing, by design, is a tactile profession requiring critical thinking. Lecture classroom structures do not allow growth of the student curiosity and self – reflection that will develop quality students into quality nurse.' Students will be providing with the knowledge input in stages like other educational institutions. They will be taught with core sciences subject such as basic medical sciences, behavioral sciences, research and statistic and nursing sciences. The complexity of the study will increase in accordance with the year of study. Indirectly, this will foster the element of responsibility and higher thinking order among the students. This is the uniqueness of the nursing program.

Other than knowledge and skills, students are given the responsibility to meet their objectives, in practical areas. This will train them to be more responsible towards their action because they need to integrate the theory part into practical situation. In between of this, the element of affective domain will take place and this will resulted with positive attitude to be a person called a humanistic nurse which equipped with empathy and sympathy. Consequently, the elements of knowledge, skills and attitude will be more developed and improved because students were taught about caring for patients with abnormal conditions of body systems. In addition, third year students, especially in final semester, they will be equipped with input related to the management and research. This can be considering as their final preparation in their 3 years study before they start to enter the real working environment.

Assessment of students is not only focusing on measurement of the theory but their competency is also will be considered. Here showing that, exposure to the real clinical environment is also will be tested. The implication of this will indirectly help the students to familiarize themselves in actual working environment beside of fulfilling their requirement to the subject. As according

to Duncan. K. (1997), 'Student nurses typically learn about organizations through their clinical and work experiences'. A past clinical experience with an employee has been found to be an effective method of recruitment and retention for hospitals (Labig, 1990; Pelletier et al., 1994).

2.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to Heslop, McIntyre, & Ives, (2001), 'Students in their senior year felt unprepared for larger caseloads, caring for patients with complex health problems and communicating with physician'. Most new nurses "did not feel adequately prepared for the challenges of nursing" (Lindsey & Kleiner, 2005). As written Susan Albert Kassim in MStar (2010), 'the unemployment rate among graduates of Malaysia is small, about three to four percent from 2001 to last year compared to Australia, Japan and Indonesia'. Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin (2010) said, according to a study conducted last year; about 50.4 percent or 87.908 graduates had secured jobs within six months after graduation. While in Kosmo Online dated November 20, 2011, reported that 'There are many vacancies in the country, but a lack of quality applicants, especially to communicate in English are still a major factor why job seekers are not being employed.' Additionally, Kosmo Online (2011) also reported that, 'Product Marketing Manager Jobstreet.com Sdn. Ltd. Roslinda A Ghani said, the assumption that the number of new graduates is not matched with vacancies in this country is not true. "We alone have about 24,000 vacancies in our database now. So the jobs in this country are not restricted, but only the applicant does not have the necessary quality of the employer"'.

Therefore, the specific problem which can be categorized under qualitative method that using application of phenomenology research design is to identify the causes of Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka nursing graduates who have not yet employ as a registered nurse. Some problems have arisen in which the college found that there were nursing graduates could not get the position of nurses either in the government sector nor the private sector. Some of them only managed to get a call to work after two years of graduation. Few of them were working in an area that is not related to their specialization such as promoter. There is also a nurse graduate to become entrepreneurs as well as clerical staff. In addition, some of them were employed as assistants in the clinics. Such work is indeed related to the nursing profession, but this graduate is having diploma qualifications and licenses that allow them to do nursing practice legally. Clearly here, those jobs are not commensurate with their qualification.

This research problem was created intentionally to study few issues and among that, the prominent issue seen is graduates are not willing to work outside their hometown. They prefer to stay and work within their boundaries. Some areas are not really engage with the rapid development economically and this will limit

the opportunities of being employ by the healthcare organization. According to Zakaria. M. R in Malaysian Parliament Bulletin Article 36, 'Unemployment in this country is due to the prospective employers which do not have the skills and qualifications that required by employers, the attitude is too selective in seeking a job, lack of interest in work outside or away from home and demand in high salary'.

Furthermore, private hospital that have own nursing training school will produce their own. This situation will reduce the chances of getting a job as a trained nurse. Besides that, private healthcare organization also will focus in hiring nurses with experiences in which this will affect the chances of newly graduates. To be employed, graduates must not only meet the criteria set by the hospital but they had to do more for their competitors which may be far more experienced or eligible than them.

Dialysis centre is also one of the healthcare organizations that need nursing staff to run the service. However, this type of centre is having a limited number of staff which means the opportunity is also limited and the entry requirement usually will consider the candidates who possess renal post basic certificate.

Next issue that will be discussed is regarding duty hours. Nurses' duty hour in Malaysia mainly is shift duty which is 3 – shift rotation based. Most of the graduates preferred for normal working hours 8am to 5pm and off day on weekend. As we know, as a nurse, dedication and sacrifice in carry out the duty is highly needed. This is because, nursing is a most noble profession and the nurse is also responsible for maintaining patient comfort and aid in healing. Patients need nurse noble services at uncertain times. Majority of healthcare organization applying 3 – shift duty rotation based nurses, especially in active clinical area for instance in the wards. Areas which often need normal working hours are in administration department, outpatient department and other passive area such as Central Sterile Supply Department (CSSD).

As a student, they are exposed and familiarized to shift duty hours that is morning shift from 7am to 2pm, afternoon shift from 2pm till 9pm and as well as night shift from 9pm till 7am. Each time the students went for practical, they will be assigned in shift duty throughout three years in this program with total 60 weeks of practical. Clearly here, students are having enough experience with shift duty. In fact shift duty has an advantage in which employee will be given more rest day compare to normal working hours 8 am to 5 pm. In addition, working on shift duty can provide effective clinical experience, especially for new graduates' nurses because they can learn to be independent in decision-making.

The following issue that were identified is regarding family. Family influences also play a role in job selection. Sometime their family is not allowing them to seek for a job outside from their hometown due to security issue and there

are also graduates are getting married right after they complete study. This will affect their chances to get a proper job. They are willing to wait for the offer of employment from local healthcare organization that exists in their hometown and this will delay jobless period. For that reason, while waiting an offer from those healthcare job vacancies, they will just look for a part time job in any facilities such as shopping complex. Eventually, graduates will feel disappointed when they have wait too long and start to decide in choosing other areas to work. This is quite disappointing because the nursing profession in the country deserve a lot of labor to accommodate the growing number of patients.

The subsequent issue which is identified as a forth problem is lack of motivation among the graduates in getting job. When the motivation level is reduced, it will affect the level of effort in searching for a job that appropriates with their qualification. The main cause that lowered down their motivation is that the ambiguity of their carrier after graduation. Some of them are not really ready to work in the real situation. During their study in three years, all of their activities are monitored by the lecturer, clinical instructor, head nurses, matrons and trained nurses on duty. Any mistakes that made by student will be discussed crucially by the lecturer, clinical instructor and other staff that involved. On the other hand, while holding the status as a student, they are not solely responsible to patients and too dependent to others. Once student completed and graduate, they are responsible to their own job and action and this makes graduates feel less confident to have a job as a nurse and hold full responsibility as a nurse.

There was a study conducted by Wolff. A. C, Regan. S, Pesut. B and Black. J (2010) entitled 'Ready for What? An Exploration of the Meaning of New Nurses' Readiness for Practice', which they have received feedback saying that, 'New graduates were expected to "hit the floor running" in such a way that their performance is equivalent to that of experienced nurses'. This kind of statement will cause the graduates become less enthusiastic to grab the pose of staff nurse.

Apart from the problems mentioned those graduates were identified lack of proficiency in English. This makes them get less attention from the employer. Lack in English language proficiency among nursing graduates is one of the critical problems. Most of them unable to master this international language fluently. English is the main language that use as a medium in health care organization. This issue has been published by Kosmo Online which dated November 20, 2011, that written, 'There are many vacancies in the country, but a lack of applicants quality, especially to communicate in English is still a major factor why job seekers are not being employed.

The main purpose of the article is to explore the readiness level among final year student nurses in their pre-employment preparation by identifying the readiness for the employment as a Registered Nurse, determining the level of the student readiness toward nursing profession as well as identifying the appropriates action to be implement by the institution.

As to comprehend more about this issue, according to Merriam-Webster (2011), the term of 'pre' is refer to 'earlier than' or 'prior to'. While the term of 'employment' is refer to an activity in which one engages or employed. And according to Dictionary.com (2011), 'pre-employment refers to being required or accomplished before an employee begins a new job.' If referring to BusinessDictionary.com (2011), 'readiness is a state of preparedness of persons, system or organizations to meet a situation and carry out a planned sequence of actions. Readiness is based on thoroughness of the planning, adequacy and training of the personnel and supply and reserve of support services or systems.' Besides that, the study which conducts by Wolff et al (2009) obtained few meaning for readiness in term of practice that are, readiness for practice means that new graduates attain entry – level competencies that prepare them for a global world as well as some job – specific capabilities to meet immediate workforce need. Readiness for practice also means that new graduates are competent to provide safe client care in the context of today's realities as well as adapting to new and changing circumstances in health care, nursing and the provision of the client care. And more according to Wolff et al (2009), readiness also means that new graduates nurses possess a balance of doing, knowing, and thinking to ensure safe care.

Therefore, pre-employment readiness can be considered as a state of readiness in terms of mental and physical which includes knowledge, skills and behavior in a specific field before they are hired. Pre-employment preparation is important because it can help to improve their level of confidence and then able to compelling the employer's trust to let them hold the pose State Registered Nurse. However there are still statement which saying that nursing graduates are not ready enough as reported by Romyn et al (2009), reports that new nursing graduates are not sufficiently prepared to enter the nursing workforce are the source of concern for educators, employers and other key stakeholders'.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Kuroda, T., Kanoya. Y., Sasaki. O. A., Katsuki. T & Sato. C. (2009) has conducted study regarding the level of novice nurses anxiety and agreed that novice nurses tend to be anxious when they first enter the workforce because of their lack of knowledge and technique regarding care of the patients. This study also has list out few methods which can help the novice nurses to reduce their anxiety level that is preceptor ship, internships, peer systems, on the job training and supportive assignments.

While also, Romyn et al (2009) also has conducting a study which to gain deeper understanding of the process of making the transition from student to graduate nurse as there is reports that new nursing graduates are not sufficiently prepared to enter the nursing workforce are a source of concern for educators, employers and other key stakeholder. Often this lack of 'practice readiness'

is defined as new graduates' inability to 'hit the ground running' and is attributed to a 'gap' between theory and practice. And due to this, Romyn et al also said that some also argue that the lack of practice readiness reflects the nature of the work environment. Experienced nurses frequently referred to new graduates as students suggesting that differences in the practice of senior students and entry level nurses evolve and become more evident over time. Despite how this gap was characterized, participant agreed that responsibility for solving the problems encountered by new graduates entering the workforce belonged to all nurses, including clinicians, educators, union leaders and managers. With this, it does appear that all related parties are needed to play a role to help nursing graduates to enter the workforce. Nursing graduates who have practice licensed which issued by Malaysian Nursing Board has their right to get a chance to practise their skills and knowledge. They are categorized as a novice nurse, and they need guidance at the beginning of their participation in this workforce. But Romyn et al also say that, high patient acuity and chronic staff shortages were reported to create an atmosphere akin to 'running a non-stop marathon' in many acute areas. There is no longer time for pulling them along, or for easy transitioning they consistently talked about their "fear" of not doing a good job. Missing some critical piece of information, or making mistake. This also causes graduates to be too selective in employment. Moreover according to Romyn et al, of concern to some was the 'preference' of new graduates to work part time and to avoid evening, night and weekend shifts.

Other than that, there are also where graduates have successfully found a job but left the job in a short time. Another study which is related with mentioned statement and conducted by Duncan. K. (1997) said that the transition from student to new staff nurse has been characterized by stress, conflict and withdrawal which results in high rates of turnover. This is quite disappointing because it shows that they do not have enough mental strength. However, Duncan. K (1997) also state that, the transition from new graduate to new nurse may begin before graduation while the student is learning about nursing and how it is practiced in an organization. Another opinion in Duncan's study supports the opinion of the study conducted by Romyn et al in which he said the responsibility in helping graduates are not only lean on the graduates only but the parties such as clinician, nursing educators, union leaders as well as managers.

In addition, Wolff et al (2010) also stated in the results of their study that meanings of readiness reflected four common themes, in which participants identified readiness as: (a) having a generalist foundation and some job-specific capabilities, (b) providing safe client care, (c) keeping up with current realities and future possibilities, and (d) possessing a balance of doing, knowing, and thinking. And due to this according this study, new graduates were expected to 'hit the floor running' in such a way that their performance is equivalent to that of experienced nurses '...critical thinking – the ability to make careful and exact judgements about the client's condition – is a key component of readiness.' As mentioned by

Duncan in her study, the transition from new graduate to new nurse may begin before graduation, so related to this also, Wolff et al state that an underlying assumption of this perspective was that nursing education prepares individuals to enter their nursing careers with competencies that are foundational to their practice and transferable across diverse practice setting and client populations. Here is also clear that, graduates who have completed their studies, passed the Nursing Board Malaysia examination should be ready to become a registered nurse and full of knowledge which enables them to go through the pre-employment process and to convince employers to employ them. However, again and again there are certain opinions as mentioned in the study of Heslop, McIntyre, & Ives, (2001), students in their senior year felt unprepared for larger caseloads, caring for patients with complex health problems, and communicating with physicians.

The issue of unemployed of nursing graduates is not only happening in our country but also occurred in countries such as those reported Henderson. M, (2010) saying that unemployed new graduate registered nurses (RN's) are increasing in number, and their joblessness is a contradiction to widely publicized nursing shortage. Graduates unemployment issue is getting the attention of parliament in which an article on this issue included in the bulletin of parliament. As written in Malaysian Parliament Bulletin Article 36, according to Zakaria. M. R, 'Unemployment in this country is due to the prospective employers which do not have the skills and qualifications that required by employers, the attitude is too selective in seeking a job, lack of interest in work outside or away from home and demand in high salary'. Therefore, nursing graduates are advised to be proactive in finding employment opportunities as said by Goulette. C, (2011) new graduate nurses must be precepted (trained and mentored) before they can work independently. Hospitals are hiring experienced nurses who don't require time consuming, expensive training of new graduates. Here clearly tell that these graduates have to compete with experienced nurses.

However there is also statement that says by Nashvilledcitypaper.com (2010) 'there's still a huge need for nurses' as argued by Sharon Adkins, executive director of the Tennessee Nurses Association. The nursing home and home health industries for example, still RN's. 'New graduates aren't probably going to get their first job, the ideal job. They're probably going to have to look a little harder to find something initially she said.' New graduates with no past experience may do more surveying, interviewing, and evaluating of potential employers than new graduates who accept offers from employers where they have past experience. Therefore, the graduates should not be too selective in jobs because experience is something that is always asked to get a better job.

4.0 CONCLUSION

As overall students are ready to cope with the working environment as a registered nurse because they have been exposed to an adequate clinical experience over three years of study. Moreover, most of them have had work experience prior to the study program even though non-nursing. However, there are also some students who still feel stressed, especially during clinical placements. Feedback obtained from a clinical instructor of the matter is, most students lack preparation in terms of knowledge which affect the presentation of their nursing skills. Most of the students are willing to assume responsibility as a nurse, but obviously they need to improve their level of knowledge widely accordance with the current trend of health pattern. In addition, they are also showing a great potential to participate in the nursing profession. The excitement to involve in real situation is there they need to be motivated more. Reduced motivation level can be detected when some of them reflect the hesitating feeling of their direction after graduation.

However, in those who are ready to join the nursing profession, they have a spirit of enthusiasm to join this profession and they are also keen to go further in this profession with enhancement of their knowledge and skills. But then again, their preparation in entering the working environment needs guidance and assistance. Besides of knowledge and skills, final year students are also must take into consideration on their level of employability in which from the aspect of communication and appearance. Once the level of readiness is increased, automatically the quality of the nurses will be leveled up and indirectly this can improve the professionalism of nursing. These young people are rich in creative ideas which we can shape into positive and proactive direction. The most important thing to do from the beginning is to foster the responsibility attitude with soft skills to the students.

The role of nurse educator is also crucially important in enhancing the level of student's motivation. Nurse educators need to continue to put more efforts to increase student motivation from time to time. In addition, the quality of teaching and learning should also be enriched. Learning and teaching methods need to diversify further to attract students to study hard and motivate them to keep learning. As reported by Duncan. K (1997) which state that, the transition from new graduate to new nurse may begin before graduation while the student is learning about nursing and how it is practiced in an organization. Another opinion in Duncan's study supports the opinion of the study conducted by Romyn et al (2009) in which he said the responsibility in helping graduates are not only lean on the graduates only but the parties such as clinician, nursing educators, union leaders as well as managers.

As mentioned above which are stated in the study of Duncan. K (1997) and Romyn et al (2009), the college is recommended for regular sessions each year to explain for the preparation to complete the pre-employment requirements. Such sessions can be filled with seminars and workshops in motivation from the relevant experts.

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