

Reading Interest of Student Nurses in Sri Lanka: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This case study was undertaken to examine the reading interest of student nurses of a reputed private hospital in Sri Lanka. *Methodology:* This case study employed a survey research method. The sample included ninety percent of the student nurse population using random sampling technique. A total of 70 questionnaires were distributed and 58 completed questionnaires were returned. *Results:* The study found that the majority of student nurses were more interested in reading, and identified it as a crucial factor. Mostly, they allocated their leisure time for reading especially when they were in hostels. Respondents used the libraries on limited basis. *Conclusion:* The valuable findings of this study will help create a better understanding and further insight into the reading interest of and student nurses. Further, it may be useful to principals of training schools, lecturers, and hospital administrators to enhance a reading culture inside the training schools. Suggestions and future research directions were included in this study.

Keywords: Reading habit; Reading interest; Student nurses; Sri Lanka.

INTRODUCTION

Reading as a practice makes our life valued in many ways. It strengthens us mentally, socially and spiritually. Reading makes a person feel more confident and alleviated from stress. As a human being there is no better opportunity for learning than from reading. It ameliorates our knowledge and we can share others' experiences through reading. Adebayo [1] states that one of the major avenues for acquiring information is reading and considers it as the foundation upon which the other academic skills are built. Reading contributes not only to an individual's well-

being, self-development and progress, but also of the whole nation and the world.

Fong [2] states that reading helps to develop workplace literacy and supports in completing job tasks smoothly, overcoming problems and issues at workplace. He clearly expresses that reading makes the person informative and offers vital contribution within the workplace context for enhancing activities. There is no exception for nursing and it is applicable for nurses in broadening their knowledge to perform efficiently & optimally.

Nursing is a healthcare profession focused on the care of individuals, families, and communities so they may attain, maintain, or recover optimal health and quality of life from birth to death. Nursing Science is a field of knowledge based on the contributions of nursing scientists through peer-reviewed scholarly journals and evidence-based practice. Therefore, information is a very salient tool for nurses for optimal work performance. For professional nurses, seeking new knowledge and acquiring more information through the habit of reading is very important.

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OBJECTIVES

The present study is an endeavor to explore the reading habits of student nurses with the following objectives:

- To determine how often student nurses read
- To examine the type of materials they read
- To examine their purpose for reading
- To find out their reading preferences and interests
- To determine the usage of libraries
- To suggest ways to improve reading among student nurses

RRESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a survey research method, which utilized a questionnaire in order to collect data from a random sample of student nurses of a hospital in private sector in Colombo.

A structured questionnaire was designed in August 2010 to elicit reading interest of respondents. The questionnaires were distributed among 70 student nurses, of which 58 were returned and analyzed. The response rate was 82.8%.

Review of literature

Literature describing the information - seeking behavior of nurses is plenty but reading interest is sparse.

Doyle [4] has written a scholarly article titled "reading maketh a full nurse." She states that "reading maketh a full man, wrote Bacon in 1625, and so sound in the principle underlying this thought that is as valid today as at the time of its expression."

Further, she identified three reading problems confronting nursing education, and recommended some solutions:

1. To develop in the nurse-student or graduate, an appreciation of the value of reading; to assist her in acquiring good habits and effective techniques of reading; to prepare her for rational utilization of the materials which she has read in the opportunities which are constantly being presented to her.

2. To bring faculty members to the realization of the importance of collateral and supplementary reading, both for their own preparation and for student preparation.

3. To impress upon nursing school administrators and trustees the fact that well-equipped, well-staffed library is the "heart of an educational institution." It means a new world of spiritual adventure for the student and untold increase in resources and power for the teacher. It means a new vision of intellectual things for the school and a unifying force of the highest significance.

Armstrong and Gessner [5] conducted a comprehensive research using registered nurses in Colombia. The research subject was, "Is reading part of the lifelong learning process for registered nurses?" The results emphasized reading is part of the lifelong learning process for registered nurses. They state that reading professional literature keeps the nurses more informed about technology, research, and patient care.

Vaz [6] engaged in an investigation to find out the usage of the periodical literature of nursing by staff nurses and nursing administrators. This study mainly focused on periodical literature and not on the other information sources. The results showed that nurses in the beginning or latter parts of their careers and those in small hospitals read more periodical literature.

Spath [7] conducted a research to explore the information and research needs of acute-care clinical nurses. Looking at the reading behavior of respondents found that majority of respondents were reading up to three professional journals regularly.

Armstrong [8] et al, conducted a study to examine the impact of graduate education on reading for lifelong learning. The respondents

were registered student nurses entering graduate school as well as graduate school alumni. The results of the study revealed that reading professional literature was 10 hours and 50 minutes for the entry group and six hours for alumni group. Entry students had a higher total commitment to reading than alumni nurses.

Data Analyzing and Interpretation

Demographic Characteristics

All the student nurses who participated in the survey were women. The majority of them were between the ages 21-23 years (Table 1).

The largest category in terms of main subject stream was science. Basically, most science students would like to apply for nursing as the syllabus of nursing programmes are related to science subjects keeping in mind that they can follow the course without difficulty.

Consulting library facilities

Almost half (53.4%) of the student nurses consulted the library facilities available in their own training schools to fulfill their reading requirements. Out of 31, only four (12.9%) used the library for borrowing purposes. On the other hand 27 student nurses mentioned that they had no library facilities in their own training schools. It was difficult to comply with this result and the researcher personally visited the nursing schools regarding this matter and found that there was not a separate library for student nurses, but only a cupboard filled with books and used as a library.

Source of reading materials

The study revealed that 67.2% nurses purchased books for reading. In addition they borrowed books from friends outside 53%, from other libraries 34.5%, and from colleagues 12.1%.

Time allocation for reading

Majority of the respondents (75.9%) mentioned that they spent their leisure time reading and 82.7% respondents did not have a particular time for reading. This implies that they read when they felt it necessary. Point to note is that all respondents allocated less than one hour per day for reading. This result corroborates their positive attitude towards reading.

Interest of reading

A total of 45 respondents (77.6%) were willing to read general literature other than occupational related literature. This result is consistent with the study of Armstrong [9].

Types of reading materials

Table 2 shows the channels the students used to gather general literature and professional literature. Among the general literature, news-papers were the staple material used to read and clinical books were the most popular occupational literature.

Purposes for reading

It was discovered that majority of respondents (60%) read to be aware of current development while 43 percent read for pleasure. Only one mentioned that she read for writing assignments.

Location for reading

Most respondents spent their leisure time in hostels. Results showed that 47 respondents used hostels as location for reading; four respondents read in the library of training school; two respondents who followed the course were coming from their own houses and they indicated that they mostly read at home; only one stated that she used training school for reading.

General attitude for reading

This study explored the general attitude towards reading. All respondents (100%) believed that reading is an important factor and not a boring activity.

Motivation for reading

The results indicated that the course lecturers motivated the students for reading. Forty eight respondents confirmed that their lecturers motivate for extra reading.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nurses need to be more competent in their career with new knowledge acquired through reading. The findings of this survey make us conclude that the nurses who participated actively in this study were avid readers. But the reading facilities available to them are not satisfactory within the institute premises and hostels.

It was discovered that majority of respondents read in order to be aware of current development. It is a good trend and there needs to be a conducive learning environment and facilities to motivate the reading habits. Based on the results, the following recommendations are made for

further improvement of the reading habit of student nurses.

- Faculty should encourage their students to read books, not only to gain subject knowledge but general knowledge too.
- The administration of the training schools should draw their attention towards providing reading atmosphere, library facilities, and allocation of library materials for the welfare of the students.
- There is need to recruit qualified library staff to promote reading habit among the community of the hospital.
- The government should tie up with administration to establish library facilities within the nurses' training schools in private sector.

In all, the findings of this survey conclude that student nurses need to improve their reading habits more while training schools should provide more convenient reading atmosphere within the hospital premises.

This study focused only on a private hospital selected from a number of other private hospitals available in Sri Lanka. This limitation may affect generalization of this study, thus learning room for another researcher to expand this research more.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of student nurses participating in the study

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-20	17	29.3
21-23	41	70.7
24-26	00	0
Total		58
Education (Main Subject stream)		
Arts	16	27.6
Commerce	17	29.3
Science	24	41.4
Mathematics	01	01.7
Total		58

Table 2. Types of reading materials used

Type of material	Frequency	Percentage
General literature		
Newspapers	31	53.4
Magazines	06	10.3
General books	08	13.8
Novels	13	
Occupational related literature		
Clinical books	25	43.1
Clinical journals	01	01.7
Health related newsletters	20	34.5

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