

# The perceived employer related barriers to the diploma nurses' decision to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree in Nairobi County

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## Abstract:

**Background:** The Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree has been linked by researchers to safety and better patient outcome within settings in healthcare. However, a proportion of nurses globally exceeding 60% start the practice without a Bachelor's Degree. Therefore, policy makers in the nursing profession have been under pressure to have the level of education of the nurses possessing a diploma advanced to a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree.

**Materials and Methods:** the study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive design. The study was conducted in three select Sub-Counties in Nairobi County, Kenya. The target population was 1, 131 nurses with a Diploma in Nursing and employed by the County Government of Nairobi. a sample size of 286 nurses was selected using Cochran's Formula. Data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire. data analysis was through SPSS version 24.0. Analysis was through descriptive statistics which comprised of frequencies and percentages and Chi-Square Inferential Statistics.

**Results:** 59.5% (frequency=160) of the respondents indicated that their employer provides study time for nurses enrolled in BSN program, 76.6% (frequency=206) indicated that their nurse manager does not value BSN degree and gives priority to BSN nurses when offering management responsibilities, 91.4% (frequency=246) of the respondents indicated that their employer does not provide financial support to nurses pursuing a BSN degree, and 91.8% (247) indicated that nurses with a BSN degree are not given priority in promotions and salary increase. 59.1% (frequency=159) of the respondents had made a decision to pursue BSN degree while 40.9% (n=110) had not made a decision to pursue a BSN degree. The Chi-Square results showed that provision of study time by employer ( $\chi^2= 63.03$ ,  $p\text{-value}<0.0001$ ), provision of financial support by employer ( $\chi^2= 3.956$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.047$ ) and priority in promotions and salary increment ( $\chi^2= 10.02$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.002$ ) had a significant relationship with decision to pursue a BSN by nurses.

**Conclusion:** Nurse Employers provide adequate study time for nurses enrolled in a nursing degree program, a nursing degree is not valued by the management and when assigning responsibilities, the employer does not provide financial support to nurses pursuing a nursing degree and that nurses with a nursing degree are not given priority in promotions and salary increment. It can also be concluded that most nurses have made a decision to pursue a nursing degree. Provision of study time, financial support and priority in promotions and salary increment by the employer are the significant barriers to nurses' decision to pursue a nursing degree.

**Key Words:** barriers, employer, BSN, decision.

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## I. Introduction

Traditionally, the perception was that the nursing career did not require university training.<sup>1</sup> Over the years, this has changed due to the difference that education has made in provision of nursing care and patient outcome.<sup>2,3,4</sup> In September 2013, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) released a report which outlined how patients, employers, and the profession would benefit when nurses advance their education.<sup>2</sup> With the roles played by nurses demanding the need for registered nurses to provide care along a continuum, work as peers in interdisciplinary teams, and to integrate clinical expertise with knowledge of community resources; the scope of the nursing complexity has widened. As a result, the nursing workforce requires personnel with ability to adapt to change, think critically in problem solving and one with a firm foundation in a wide range of scientific knowledge. These requirements can be best fulfilled through Bachelor of Science in nursing [BSN] education due to its broader and stronger scientific curricula.<sup>2</sup>

Researchers such as <sup>5,6,7</sup> have specifically linked the BSN degree with safety and better patient outcome within the health care setting. Similarly, the findings of <sup>8</sup> indicated that hospitals with higher percentage of registered nurses with a Bachelor of Science degree had lower congestive heart failure mortality, decubitus ulcers, failure to rescue, post-operative deep vein thrombosis and shorter length of stay. Subsequently, recommendations by the leading health care and nursing organizations have proposed that entry into nursing practice should be at the bachelor's degree level.<sup>3,4</sup>

However, over 60% of practicing nurses globally enter the practice at the diploma level.<sup>9</sup> Thus, pressure has been rising globally on the policy makers in the nursing profession to have the level of education of the diploma nurses advanced to Bachelor's Degree level.<sup>3,10</sup> According to,<sup>4</sup> rapid growth in the numbers of diploma nurses seeking to increase their education level to Bachelor of Science in nursing would be a crucial component in expanding the numbers of Bachelor of Science Nurses providing the direct patient care. Much emphasis is being made on the need for seamless transition from diploma to Bachelor of Science in nursing degree.<sup>3,4</sup>

Statistics in the health sector in Kenya demonstrate that only 4.4% of the registered diploma nurses have gone through the upgrading program so far.<sup>11</sup> In Nairobi County, 11% of the total nurses have upgraded their nursing education to BSN level.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore important to find out why the diploma nurses are hesitant to upgrade to BSN education. So far there is Paucity of documented studies on this issue globally and more so in Kenya.

## II. Materials and Methods

**Research Design:** A cross sectional descriptive design was adopted for the study.

**Study Location:** The study was conducted at three select Sub-Counties in Nairobi County with the largest proportion of nurses employed by the County Government of Nairobi.

**Target Population:** The target population for the study was 1, 131 nurses with a Diploma in Nursing and employed by the County Government of Nairobi.

**Sample Size:** The sample size for the study was 286 nurses.

**Sample Size calculation:** The sample size for the study was determined using Cochran (1963) formula, defined as  $n_0 = \frac{z^2pq}{e^2}$ ; the computed sample size was adjusted using the formula  $n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{n_0}{N}}$  with  $n$  being the study's sample size.

**Sampling Method:** Multistage sampling technique was used for the study.

**Inclusion Criteria:** All the nurses with a Diploma in Nursing, employed by the County Government of Nairobi, stationed in the three select Sub-Counties and had worked for a minimum of two years by the time of the study.

**Exclusion Criteria:** All the nurses with a Diploma in Nursing, employed by institutions partnering with the County Government of Nairobi, not working in the three select Sub-Counties and had managerial responsibilities.

**Data Collection Tools:** A self-administered questionnaire adapted from Bellfield & Gessner (2010) and slightly modified to suit the variables under investigation.

**Statistical Analysis:** Data collected was cleaned, coded and then entered into SPSS version 24.0 for analysis. The data was analyzed through descriptive statistics which comprised of frequencies and percentages and through Chi-Square inferential statistics. The study's results were presented using tables. A significance level of 5% was set for the Chi-Square test statistics.

## III. Results

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Out of the 286 questionnaires distributed, 269 were returned and deemed satisfactory for analysis. This represented a response rate of 94.1%. The findings in Table 1 indicate that 48.7% (frequency=131) of the respondents were aged 40-49 years and 40.1% (frequency=108) were aged 30-39 years; with the mean age being 42.5 years. Majority of the participants were female as shown by a response of 79.2% (frequency=213). The findings also show that 66.5% (frequency=179) of the respondents were married.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

Socio-demographic characteristics	Frequencies (n=270)	Percentages (%)
<b>Age in years (mean=42.5 years)</b>		
30-39	108	40.1
40-49	131	48.7
50-59	30	11.2
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	56	20.8
Female	213	79.2

Marital status		
Married	179	66.5
Single, divorced, widowed	90	33.5

### Perceived Employer Related Barriers to Pursue a BSN Degree

To assess the perceived employer related barriers, the respondents were asked to rate the extent of agreement/disagreement on the status of some mentioned barriers. Table 2 shows that half of the respondents, (50.2%, n=135) agreed that their employer provided study time for the diploma nurses enrolled on RN to BSN program. With regards to managers valuing BSN degree, 41.3% (frequency=111) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the nurse manager valued BSN degree and gave priority to BSN nurses when giving management responsibilities. Further, majority, (56.2%, n= 150) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that their employer provided financial support to diploma nurses pursuing a BSN degree. With regards to promotion, majority, (53.9%, n=145) of the nurses disagreed that nurses with a BSN degree are given priority in promotions and salary increase. Majority, (66.2%, n=178) strongly disagreed to the statement that it was a policy that all the diploma nurses upgrade their education to a BSN level. With regards to discouragement, 41% (frequency=110) disagreed with the statement that “many of my colleagues discourage me from pursuing a BSN degree”.

**Table 2: Level of Agreement on Perceived Employer Related Barriers to Nurses' Decision to Pursue BSN Degree**

Characteristic	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
My employer provides study time for the diploma nurses enrolled on RN to BSN program	21 (7.8%)	49 (18.2%)	39 (14.5%)	135 (50.2%)	25 (9.3%)
My Nurse manager values BSN degree and gives priority to BSN nurses when giving management responsibilities	52 (19.3%)	111 (41.3%)	43 (16.0%)	52 (19.3%)	11 (4.1%)
My employer provides financial support to diploma nurses pursuing a BSN degree.	151 (56.2%)	82 (30.3%)	16 (6.0%)	15 (5.6%)	5 (1.9%)
Nurses with a BSN degree are given priority in promotions and salary increase	144 (53.9%)	73 (27.1%)	29 (10.8%)	12 (4.5%)	10 (3.7%)
It is now a policy that all the diploma nurses upgrade their education to a BSN level	178 (66.2%)	62 (23.0%)	23 (8.6%)	5 (1.9%)	1 (0.4%)
Many of my colleagues discourage me from pursuing a BSN degree	53 (19.8%)	110 (41%)	43 (16%)	58 (21.6%)	4 (1.5%)

From the Likert Scale responses, the employer related were categorized into two category, whether they were available (indicated with a “Yes”) and whether they were not available (indicated with a “No”). The results in Table 3 showed that 59.5% (frequency=160) of the respondents indicated that their employer provides study time for nurses enrolled in BSN program, 76.6% (frequency=206) indicated that their nurse manager does not value BSN degree and gives priority to BSN nurses when offering management responsibilities, 91.4% (frequency=246) of the respondents indicated that their employer does not provide financial support to nurses pursuing a BSN degree, and 91.8% (247) indicated that nurses with a BSN degree are not given priority in promotions and salary increase.

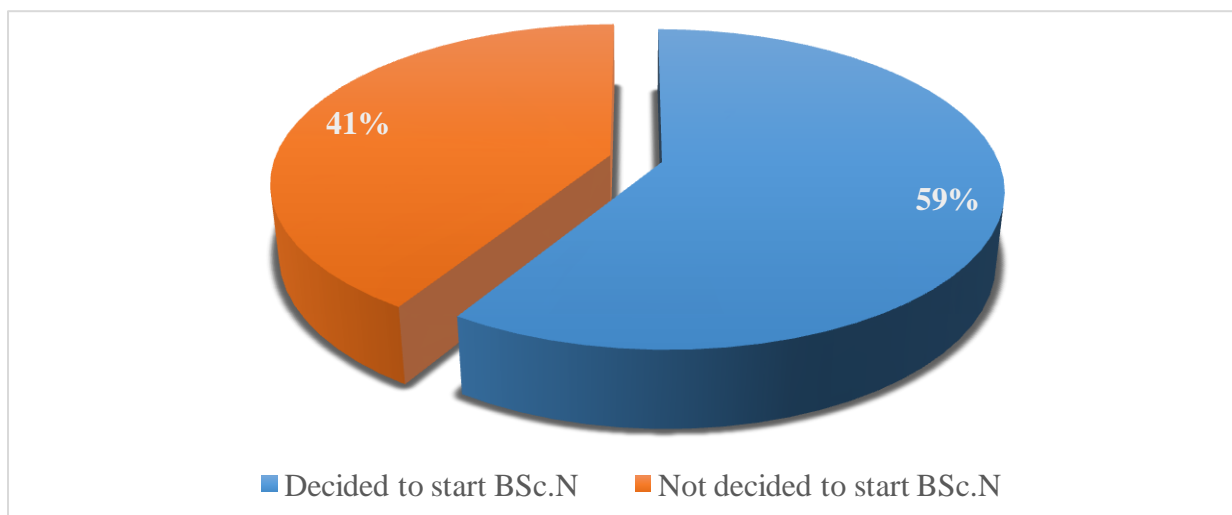
**Table 3: Presence of Perceived Employer Related barriers**

Employer Related Barriers		Frequency	Percent (%)
Employer provides study time for nurse enrolled in BSN program.	Yes	160	59.5
	No	109	40.5
Nurse manager values BSN degree and gives priority to BSN nurses when giving management responsibilities.	Yes	63	23.4
	No	206	76.6
Employer provides financial support to nurses pursuing a BSN degree.	Yes	23	8.6
	No	246	91.4
Nurses with BSN degree are given priority in promotions and salary increase.	Yes	22	8.2
	No	247	91.8

### Overall Decision to Pursue BSN among the Nurses

The overall decision to pursue BSN degree was measured using the decision to pursue scale. The scale was a composed of eight (8) Likert items. The score 1 represented the option “strongly disagree” while score 5 on the scale represented the category ‘strongly agree’. The overall score was generated by aggregating the scores. The maximum attainable score was 40. A percentage score was generated and classified as ‘Decided to pursue’ (above 50%) and ‘Decided not to pursue BSN degree’ (below 50%). The decision to pursue was coded either yes or no as per the indicated classification. From the findings in Figure 1,

59.1% (frequency=159) of the respondents had made a decision to pursue BSN degree while 40.9% (n=110) had not made a decision to pursue a BSN degree.



**Figure 1: Decision to pursue a BSN degree**

**Chi-Square Test on the Relationship between Decision to Pursue a BSN Degree and Employer Related Factors**

The relationship between decision by nurses to pursue a BSN degree and employer related factors was evaluated using Chi-Square Statistics. From the results in Table 4, provision of study time by employer ( $\chi^2= 63.03$ , p-value<0.0001), provision of financial support by employer ( $\chi^2= 3.956$ , p-value=0.047) and priority in promotions and salary increment ( $\chi^2= 10.02$ , p-value=0.002) had a significant relationship with decision to pursue a BSN by nurses.

**Table 4: Chi-Square Results**

Employer Related Barriers		Yes Frequency (%)	No Frequency (%)	Chi-Square Statistics
Employer provides study time for the diploma nurse enrolled in BSN program.	Yes	126	34	$\chi^2= 63.03$ , df=1, p<0.0001*
	No	33	76	
Nurse manager values BSN degree and gives priority to BSN nurses when giving management responsibilities.	Yes	37	26	$\chi^2= 0.000$ , df=1, p=0.999
	No	121	85	
Employer provides financial support to diploma nurses pursuing a BSN degree.	Yes	18	5	$\chi^2= 3.956$ , df=1, p=0.047*
	No	140	106	
Nurses with BSN degree are given priority in promotions and salary increase.	Yes	20	2	$\chi^2= 10.02$ , df=1, p=0.002*
	No	139	108	

**IV. Discussion**

From the findings of the study, a significant relationship was found between provision of study time by employer and decision to pursue a BSN degree. These findings aligned with <sup>13</sup> who conducted a study in Malaysia and found that tight working schedules and heavy workload prevented Malaysian Nurses to not pursue a degree in Nursing. The participants in Malaysia cited difficulties in obtaining free time in terms of leave or time off for purposes of studying. Employers may also not be flexible in allocating time schedules and allowing for time off for nurses to attend training.<sup>9</sup>

From the study, provision of financial support by the employer had a significant relationship with decision by nurses to pursue a BSN degree. In most institutions, the financial resources required to pursue a BSN Degree surpasses the financial capacity of the nurses; therefore, many nurses cannot financially support themselves in achieving a BSN requirement.<sup>14</sup> Further, <sup>9</sup> highlighted lack of financial support from the employers as a major barrier to the nurses in pursuing a BSN degree. Similarly, <sup>15</sup> underscored lack of financial support by employers as a major hindrance to the nurses' decision to pursue a degree related to nursing owing to the fact that

health related education has many requirements that demand for extra financial resources. Nurses who receive financial support, which can be in form of tuition fees or reimbursements from the employers for the cost incurred while pursuing a BSN are more likely to pursue higher education as compared to those who do not receive.<sup>16</sup>

A significant relationship was also found between priority by employer to offer promotions and salary increment to nurses with a BSN degree and decision to pursue a BSN degree. From the study, majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the employer did not prioritize nurses with a bachelor's degree in promotions and salary increment. Lack of differentiation between various qualifications in nursing such as through job description, acknowledgement or salary act as a barrier in nurses' decision to pursue more training.<sup>10</sup> When nurses are provided with clear career ladders and financial incentives by the employer, there is a high likelihood that they will seek to pursue qualifications such as BSN that offer guarantees of climbing up the career ladder.<sup>17</sup>

## V. Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that employers provide adequate study time nurses enrolled in a BSN program, a BSN degree is not valued by the management and when assigning responsibilities, the employer does not provide financial support to nurses pursuing a BSN degree and that nurses with a BSN degree are not given priority in promotions and salary increment. However, most nurses have made a decision to pursue a BSN degree. It can also be concluded that provision of study time, financial support and priority in promotions and salary increment by the employer have a significant relationship with decision to pursue a BSN degree.

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