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Perception on Objective Structured Clinical Evaluation Method among First Year Nursing Students at Selected Government Nursing Schools in Sri Lanka

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Background: One of the essential components of learning and educational program is evaluation or examination. Among the various methods for evaluating clinical skills, Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) has been recognized as the most reliable method for evaluating clinical skills. Due to lack of objective clinical assessment, competency in clinical assessment in government nursing schools in Sri Lanka has become compromised. Only few nursing schools have introduced this method at the end of their introductory clinical procedures. As an important group of stakeholders, the feedback of the students who experienced OSCE, is important in improving it as an evaluation method in basic nursing diploma programme.

Objectives: To evaluate the students' perception on OSCE method among first year nursing students of selected government nursing schools in Sri Lanka

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional survey with a randomly selected 387 first year nursing students at Schools of Nursing, Kandana and Kurunegala was conducted. Data collection was done with a pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire prepared by the researchers within two weeks of completion of the OSCE. Data were described using descriptive and inferential statistics. Significance was set as $p < 0.05$.

Results: Response rate was 92%. The mean (\pm SD) age was 22 (\pm 1) years. Majority of nursing students were females ($n = 360$, 94.6%), Sinhalese ($n = 385$, 99.5%) and Buddhists ($n = 372$, 96.1%). Results indicated that the view of most of the students regarding OSCE test was good; good perception (48.6%) and relatively good perception (50.9%). OSCE test has been good in terms of fairness (46.8%), suitability (52.2%), comprehensiveness (67.2%) and accessibility (31.3%). Socio-demographic factors did not significantly associate with students' perception about OSCE ($p > 0.05$).

Conclusions: Nursing students positively perceived the OSCE as a good evaluation method of clinical examination in terms of fairness, suitability, acceptability and comprehensiveness. The Nursing schools should use OSCE more often in evaluating students, initiate those who never used OSCE and in enhancing quality of the test.

Keywords: *Evaluation, Government nursing school, Nursing education, Nursing students, Objective structured clinical examination*