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First Year Nursing Students' Adjustment to the New Learning Environment at Government Nursing Schools in Sri Lanka as Percieved by Nursing Educators

Wijayasundara W.M.S.K.^{1#}, Meegoda M.K.D.L.²

¹*School of Nursing, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka*

²*Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka*

#Corresponding author: srimathiwijayasundara@gmail.com

Background: Adjustment to the college as a freshman is crucial for the future academic progress, for a successful career and for life of an individual. To be an effective nurse in the future, the students should enjoy the optimal level of mental and physical well-being, spiritual sense of serving the society, best practice of study and work. The situation of schools of nursing reveals students drop rate as 7.5%, 5.3%, 17.4% and 1.5% respectively in schools of nursing Ampara, Batticaloa, Jaffna and Vavuniya which is higher compared to the drop rate of nursing students in all over the country (1.5%) during past six years. Thus, understanding context-based extent of the educational, social and psychological adjustment of first year students to life in nursing school is both timely and necessary.

Objective: To explore the perception of nursing educators on first year nursing students' adjustment to the new learning environment at Government nursing schools in Northern and Eastern provinces

Methods: A qualitative phenomenological study was used. In-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected nursing educators (n = 8) in school of nursing Ampara, Batticaloa, Jaffna and Vavuniya, using a semi-structured interview guide. Data were analyzed by qualitative content analysis.

Results: Categories identified were clinical practice, theoretical training, social life and personal traits. The themes for clinical practice were sources of stress from trainer, nurses, other clinical staff and theory practice gap. The themes under the theoretical training category related to trainer, own and other students. Themes for social life category included accommodation, school life and relationships of the school. Lastly, themes for personal traits were self-confidence, controlling emotions and health problems.

Conclusions: It was found that both internal and external factors influence on nursing students' adjustment to the new learning environment. Continuous learning support, supervision and socialization programs needed to be strengthened in nursing school environment and in the clinical learning environment for the beginners.

Keywords: *Government nursing school, Learning environment, Nursing students, Nursing educators*