

## OP 110

### WORK-RELATED BARRIERS FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO UNDERGRADUATE NURSES

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**Background:** University education is a key initiative for nursing higher education. The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) is the pioneer in providing graduate education for nurses from 1994 through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Sri Lanka. However, only very few graduate nurses pass out each year, despite some attempts taken by the government to facilitate university education. Understanding barriers for this may contribute to designing degree programs to maximize success. Furthermore, knowing the barriers in ODL will aid development and orientation of these programs. Work-related barriers are identified as accountable for failures in international context. However, many studies have not been done with this regard in Sri Lanka.

**Aim/s:** To assess work related barriers related to engagement in Open and Distance Learning among undergraduate nurses.

**Methods:** Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires from a convenience sample of 225 Registered Nurses (RNs) at OUSL Nawala. Cross sectional descriptive design was used for the study and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

**Results:** The response rate was 97%. The results highlighted that attendance for lectures on a regular basis was 53.8% among the participants. Majority of them (46.8%) were not allowed duty leave. When working hours are considered; 45.1% participants work 50-60 hours per week, 26.3% participants work 40-50 hours per week, 16.5% participants work more than 60 hours per week and only 13.2% nurses work less than 40 hours per week. Additionally, 60.4% of the participants indicated that overtime is compulsory in their work places. Consequently, 73.3% spend less than 10 hours per week for their studies.

**Conclusion:** It was found that nurses were having many work related barriers for participation of lectures and to engage in studies. Results highlighted that strenuous duty schedule and less organizational support seem to be affecting negatively on nurses' higher education. This resulted in a deprivation of opportunity for higher education. Therefore, nurses should be provided with continuous support to reinforce positive factors and to overcome barriers to engage more effectively in university education.

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