Motivation of nurses to undergo a Master's Program: a descriptive study

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ABSTRACT

Originated from the project of the Academic Masters in Health Care Sciences of Fluminense Federal University. **Primary Aim:** To determine the motivations of nurses to undergo a Master's Program and its relationship to professional development. **Specific Aims:** To describe the profile of Masters students; to correlate the motivations of nurses with social recognition, social compromise and the scientific characteristics of the profession and; to compare the motivations of nurses who studied the academic Master's program compared to those who decided to choose the professional Master's program. **Method:** this is a descriptive study, with a qualitative approach, whose subjects are nursing Master students of the Nursing School at Fluminense Federal University in Niterói, Brazil. To collect the data, a questionnaire for the socioeconomic characterization of the interviewees, and semi-structured interviews will be used. The data will be treated through content topic analysis, and interpreted based on the theoretical analysis of Gary Becker.

Descriptors: Motivation; Nurses; Education, Nursing, Graduate; Education, Nursing

PROBLEM SITUATION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

To appropriate himself of the role of a working citizen, the nurse needs to understand the social and political context in which he is operating. He will then become able to adopt a sociopolitical, critical-reflexive position, in order to achieve success in his work, and consequently, obtain professional recognition[1].

With the incorporation of new understandings and scientific instrumentalization, the nurse can acquire greater professional autonomy and promote significant changes in his work practices, thereby achieving a higher quality of life. This condition can motivate his participation in graduate programs.

Throughout the years, nursing understanding has followed the path of scientific investigation. Some nurses have invest time in *strictu sensu* graduate programs, in order to acquire social recognition and to reinforce the scientific characteristics of the profession. However, although *strictu sensu* courses have been growing in number in the last few decades, and are establishing themselves within Brazilian education and in scientific education, there are still only a small number of Masters and Doctoral programs when compared to the total population of Brazilian nurses[2].

With the aim of finding articles that mention the motivation of nurses to undergo Master's programs, there was a bibliographical search on the Virtual Health Library (VHL), with the Lilacs and Medline databases being used, between the months of May and June 2013. The following descriptors were used in this search: motivation; nurses; nurse graduate education; nursing education and; graduate education. It was seen that, on the Lilacs database, there was a lack of articles linking motivation to *strictu sensu* graduation programs. The majority of the articles dealt with the motivation of nurses to undergo *strictu sensu* courses in order to improve their professional practice. The majority of the articles seen in Medline mentioned the motivation to undergo undergraduate nursing courses. Only one article mentioned the motivation of British and German nurses to enroll on a Master's program, indicating that nurses in Germany searched for a Master's program as a personal and professional challenge. This search was not associated with the valorization of their careers. On the other hand, United Kingdom nurses underwent Master's programs to update their understanding and ability, and to increase their credibility in their country, all of which generates personal fulfillment[3]. However, based on the data gathered, it was clear that there was a lack of articles that dealt with the topic in the Brazilian context, and it was confirmed that the topic of this present study requires further investigation, given its importance in helping define education policies and permanent education programs in the area of nursing.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What is the profile of the nursing graduate student? What is the motivation of the nurse with regard to undergoing a *strictu sensu* graduate program? Does the nurse project the *strictu sensu* graduation program as means of social recognition and professional development? What is the contribution of graduate status to social recognition and professional development in the nursing profession?

AIMS

The primary aim is to determine the motivations of nurses to undergo a Master's program,

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and their relationship with professional development. The specific aims are to describe the profile of the students in the Master's program, to correlate the motivations of nurses in terms of social recognition, social compromise and the scientific characteristic of the profession, and to compare the motivations of the nurses who have undergone academic Master's program to those who have undergone professional Master's programs.

METHOD

This is a descriptive and exploratory field research, adopting a qualitative approach. It will be performed in the Aurora de Afonso Costa Nursing School at Fluminense Federal University, located in the Brazilian state of Rio de Janeiro, with nurses who are undertaking the Academic Master's Program in Health Care Sciences, the Professional Masters in Nursing, and the Professional Masters in Education in Health. All students enrolled in the courses just mentioned, from the 1st to the 4th semester, will be included in this research. The criteria for exclusion are students in suspended enrollment status, audit students, and other non-nursing professionals. There are an estimated 40 subjects. To perform data collection, the following instruments will be used: a socioeconomic characterization questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The data obtained will be analyzed using content topic analysis, and interpreted in terms of the theoretical analysis developed by Gary Becker. The authors of this study are committed to following the ethical principles that support research with human beings. This project was sent to the Ethics in Research Committee, of Antonio Pedro College Hospital, at Fluminense Federal University, and the researchers are awaiting a response.

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