

**FACTORS INFLUENCING UPGRADING OF NURSES TO HIGHER LEVELS OF
NURSING EDUCATION AT MERU LEVEL FIVE HOSPITAL- KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Upgrading in this study refers to the process of nurses improving their initial basic educational qualification in the nursing profession. It enables nurses to add to their knowledge and skills, rise in value and esteem and be rated higher within the nursing cadres. There are two levels of upgrading in Kenya namely diploma and degree level of upgrading. The number of nurses upgrading to diploma and degree levels have continued to increase over the years. This study therefore, sought to identify the factors influencing nurses to up-grade to higher educational levels at the Meru Level 5 Hospital (ML5H). The study objectives were: To determine the socio-cultural, economic, professional and personal factors influencing the upgrading of nurses to higher levels of nursing education. The study design was a descriptive cross-sectional survey. The study site was ML5H. Data was collected over a period of three weeks among 160 nurses using a structured self-administered questionnaire which had been piloted at Chuka District Hospital to test for reliability and validity. The data collected was checked for accuracy coded and analysed using STATA Version 10. Age and Initial qualification significantly influenced upgrading with a *p* value of 0.000 and 0.004 respectively. Seventy four (47.7%) had upgraded while 32 (20%) were currently upgrading. The main economic factors that made nurses at ML5H to seek upgrading were better remuneration by 83% of the respondents. The Socio- cultural factors was desire for empowerment by 54.3% of the respondents. Career progression and to acquire more knowledge and skills were cited as the professional factors with 71% and 90%, respectively while, the personal factors included desire to actualize with 59.8% and to boost their confidence and self-esteem at 66.7%. The major challenges that nurses faced when upgrading were financial constraints, marriage/family constraints, difficulty in balancing work and studies, technological challenges, inadequate time and other family responsibilities besides their studies. In conclusion, more than half of the nurses have sought upgrading. The factors that made them to seek upgrading are better remuneration, desire for empowerment, institution being near their residence, to acquire more knowledge and skills, career progression and to boost their confidence and self-esteem. Financial constraints, strain on family and marriage, balancing work and study and inadequate time were the major challenges cited by the majority. The researcher recommends that more awareness be done on the importance of up-grading; promote culture of intellectualism through CMEs and role-modelling. Flexible scheduling of duties to those nurses who are upgrading and encouraging nurses to take up upgrading through distance learning will also go a long way in seeing more nurses' upgrade.