

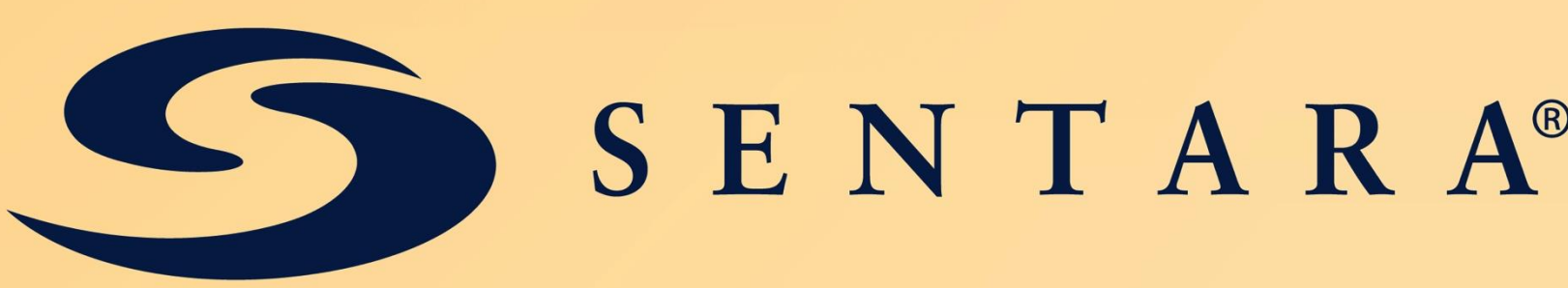


Nurses’ Self-Efficacy and Academic Degree Advancement

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Abstract

The last decade has brought about a synergy of influences for registered nurses (RN) to advance their academic preparation. Literature indicates there is correlation between self-efficacy and goal establishment and success. The purpose of this project was to evaluate the relationship between the self-efficacy and advancing academic aspirations of registered nurses. Findings indicated there was a trend towards a difference in the self-efficacy of nurses who began their career with a Diploma or Associate Degree and went on for academic advancement and those who did not.



Background

Research in the field of RN preparation and patient outcomes, the American Registered Nurses Credentialing Center’s Magnet Program®, and the Institute of Medicine’s *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, are driving a renewed focus and energy concerning the development of registered nurses’ preparation and competency. These three converging influences of outcomes, quality, and safety are creating new forces of emphasis on staff registered nurses’ professional development characteristics and goals.

Conceptual Model

Social Cognitive Theory is defined in the literature as an identified change as a function of one’s internal characteristics (perceived self-efficacy), environment (modeling), and reciprocal determinism (person-environment interaction). This theoretical model is a useful framework to understand how behavioral characteristics guide individual actions. Knowledge can lead to behavior changes, but is affected by perceived self-efficacy, which can be moderated by mastery, modeling, persuasion, and anxiety experiences. Self-efficacy then acts as a catalyst to move, or preclude, knowledge and goal setting into individual behaviors or goals. One’s self-efficacy can either aid or hinder actions towards goals.

Figure is author’s representation of relationship between self-efficacy as mediator of knowledge and behavior with influencing factors affecting intensity of relationship.



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Design and Methods

- Design: non-experimental, correlational
- Conceptual framework: Social Cognitive Theory
- Setting: Magnet® designated community hospital
- Data set: voluntary survey of RNs at setting
- Sample: N 128 RNs that began their career with an Associate Degree or Diploma

Results

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 46.1 years mean age | 17.9 years mean tenure | 92.7 % female |
| 91.9% Caucasian | 79.8% staff nurses | 25.8% subsequent degree |
| 7.3% more than one degree | 30.7% in BSN or MSN program | 28.2% hold certification |

Self-efficacy results: Respondents replied to the eight self-efficacy questions using the Likert scale provided. Items are rated on a 5-point scale from one (“strongly disagree”) to five (“strongly agree”). The results for this scale had a non-normal distribution. The self-efficacy score is the mean of the eight items equally weighted. A Mann-Whitney U test was done to compare the self-efficacy scores of the nurses with a beginning diploma or associate degree, who were pursuing or had achieved a secondary degree, versus those who did not progress. In all cases, the nurses who pursued a subsequent degree scored higher in their self-efficacy scores than those nurses who did not pursue a subsequent degree.

| Comparison of Nurses’ Self-efficacy scores | | | |
|--|--------|------|----------|
| | Number | Mean | p-value* |
| Question 1 I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself | | | |
| Nurses without subsequent degree | 90 | 4.37 | .397 |
| Nurses with subsequent degree | 31 | 4.48 | |
| Question 2 When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them | | | |
| Nurses without subsequent degree | 90 | 4.19 | .197 |
| Nurses with subsequent degree | 31 | 4.35 | |
| Question 3 In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me | | | |
| Nurses without subsequent degree | 90 | 4.28 | .037† |
| Nurses with subsequent degree | 31 | 4.58 | |
| Question 4 I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind | | | |
| Nurses without subsequent degree | 89 | 4.35 | .125 |
| Nurses with subsequent degree | 31 | 4.55 | |
| Non-responders | 1 | | |
| Question 5 I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges | | | |
| Nurses without subsequent degree | 90 | 4.22 | .021† |
| Nurses with subsequent degree | 31 | 4.55 | |
| Question 6 I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks | | | |
| Nurses without subsequent degree | 90 | 4.37 | .096 |
| Nurses with subsequent degree | 31 | 4.61 | |
| Question 7 Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well | | | |
| Nurses without subsequent degree | 90 | 4.20 | .223 |
| Nurses with subsequent degree | 31 | 4.35 | |
| Question 8 Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well | | | |
| Nurses without subsequent degree | 89 | 4.30 | .222 |
| Nurses with subsequent degree | 31 | 4.52 | |
| Non-responders | 1 | | |
| Mean of all questions evenly weighted | | | |
| Nurses without subsequent degree | 90 | 4.27 | .091 |
| Nurses with subsequent degree | 31 | 4.50 | |

Chen, G., Gully, S., & Eden, D. (2001)

Discussion

Data indicated that there was higher self-efficacy in those nurses who advanced their academic preparation, than in those who did not advance their education. A secondary purpose was to understand the relationship between perceived self-efficacy and the individual nurse characteristics of age and tenure. Data revealed that there was no significant relationship between age and self-efficacy or tenure and self-efficacy in this sample of registered nurses.

Implications to Practice

Further study of self-efficacy is warranted in non-Magnet® hospital settings to explore the phenomenon of Magnet® status on the findings. Organizational interventions will focus on assessment of self-efficacy in nurses targeted for returning to school and the impact of influence on enhancing the sources of self-efficacy, including mastery, social models, social persuasion, and stress reduction, to determine if this can increase staff’s self-efficacy to predict success with subsequent goal attainment.

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