

# Self-Directed Learning Readiness among Nursing Students: A Cross Sectional Study

**Manoj Kumar L**

*Assistant Professor, St Thomas College of Nursing, Changanassery, Kerala*

## Abstract

Learning brings about changes in the way we act, think and feel. The changes in method in learning, changes the quality of learning. It may be positive or negative, as in how we adopt it. A descriptive study was conducted on readiness towards self-directed learning among nursing students, in Sree Gokulam Nursing College, Venjaramoodu with the objectives; to assess the readiness towards self-directed learning among nursing students, to compare SDLR score across various streams in nursing and to determine the association between readiness towards self-directed learning and selected socio demographic variables. The study used a quantitative approach and was conducted among 200 subjects recruited by total enumeration sampling technique. Data was collected using a socio demographic proforma and Fisher's self-directed learning readiness scale with reliability of 0.8, after concerning the ethical considerations. The results show that majority (72.5%) had high SDLR score and 55(27.5) had low SDLR score, there was significant association between readiness towards self-directed learning and previous exposure to self-directed learning enhancement program ( $p=0.010$ ).

**Key words:** *Readiness, self-directed learning, nursing students, SDLR*

## Introduction

Learning is the act of acquiring new or modifying and reinforcing existing knowledge, behaviors, skills, values, or preferences which may lead to potential change in synthesizing information, depth of knowledge, attitude or behavior relative to the type and range of experience.<sup>1</sup> The ability to learn is possessed by humans, animals, plants, some machines. Progress over time tends to follow learning curve. Learning does not happen all at once, but it builds upon and is shaped by previous knowledge. To that end, learning may be viewed as a process, rather than a collection of factual and procedural knowledge. Learning produces changes in the organism and the changes produced are relatively permanent.<sup>2</sup>

The factors involved in academic failure can be classified in three categories of;

1. Individual factors (components like having a goal, motivation, anxiety, *studying method*, intelligence, attention),
2. Internal organizational factors (professional characteristics of instructors, space and proper facilities

and equipment)

3. External organizational factors (parents' education level and their dealing with students' academic failure, socioeconomic status of families and unclear and uncertain occupational prospects)

Self-Directed Learning, in its broadest meaning, describes a process in which individuals take the initiative with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying resources for learning, choosing and implementing learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes<sup>3</sup>.

The literature on SDL asserts that self-directed learners demonstrate a greater awareness of their responsibility in making learning meaningful and monitoring them. They are curious and willing to try new things (Taylor, 1995). Taylor also found them to be motivated and persistent, independent, self-disciplined, self-confident and goal oriented<sup>4</sup>.

Self-directed learning allows learners to be more effective learners and social beings. And it is the ability to search for information in multiple texts, employ different strategies to achieve goals, and to represent

ideas in different forms (drawing and writing). With proper planning and implementation, self-directed learning can encourage students to develop their own rules and leadership patterns<sup>4</sup>.

A cross sectional descriptive study on readiness towards self-directed learning was conducted at the college of nursing at one of the largest Governmental University in Saudi Arabia. The data collected from 230 students by using self-directed learning readiness scale. The participant self-control recorded the highest mean score (56.72+ 9.17) followed by the self-management (45.90+ 9.17) subscale, with desire or learning readiness. The lowest mean score is (45.04+ 7.32). the current study, the subscale of self-control, self-management and desire to learn, as well as the general score SDLR, were likely lower than those reported in a previous study conducted at Agiuf University. The study found that the nursing students were autonomous learners and those most demonstrated a strong desired to learn<sup>5</sup>.

Self-directed learning has become a focus for nursing education in the past few decades due to the complexity and changes in nursing profession development. Many medical and non-medical professional education systems has inculcated SDL as a learning method, this study explores students readiness towards SDL as a learning method supplementing their traditional learning methods.

## Materials and Method

This study used a quantitative research approach using a descriptive research design. Objectives were to assess readiness towards self-directed learning among nursing students and to find out association between readiness towards SDL and selected socio personal variables. All nursing students in selected nursing college will be the sample, recruited using total enumeration sampling technique. 200 subjects were recruited for this study from the selected setting.

### Tools and techniques

- **Socio demographic data**

This section collects baseline data regarding subjects, such as; age ,sex, year of study ,previous pattern of education ,medium of previous pattern of education, Educational level of father ,educational level of mother .

- **Fisher's Self Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS)**

It is a standardized 40 item 5 point likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree to strongly disagree', with three domains – self management, desire for learning and self-control. Reliability of SDLRS is 0.87. The total score ranges from 40-200, scores above 150 denotes a higher SDLR and below 150 indicates lower SDLR<sup>6</sup>.

### Data collection procedure

1. Clearance from the institutional ethical committee
2. Formal permission from the head of institution from selected nursing college
3. Selected sample through Total Enumeration Technique
4. Brief introduction of the study objectives
5. Informed consent was obtained after ensuring confidentiality of the data
6. Administered tools:
  - Socio demographic data
  - Fisher's self-directed learning readiness scale

Data was analyzed using SPSS V20.0. Descriptive (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistical techniques (Chi square and Kruskal wallis Anova) was used to analyze data in order to meet the objectives.

## Results

### a. Socio demographic characteristics

Majority of nursing students i.e. 64% were the group of 18-20, and 92% belongs to females. Most of the students are (82%) BSC nursing and 90.5% students studied state syllabus. In the education pattern of father, majority (44%) belongs to SSLC and below category and among them 48.5% belongs to self-employment category. In the education pattern of mother, majority (38.5%) belongs to SSLC and below and among them 69.5% belongs to unemployment.

### b. Distribution of subjects based on readiness towards Self Directed Learning (SDLR)

**Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution, mean self-directed readiness score of subjects (n=200)**

SDLR	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)	Mean SDLR score	Standard deviation
Low SDLR	55	27.5	160.54	± 15.598
High SDLR	145	72.5		
Total	200	100.0		

Table 1 reveals that 145(72.5%) subjects had high SDLR score and 55(27.5%) had low SDLR score.

**c. Association between readiness towards self-directed learning and selected socio personal variables**

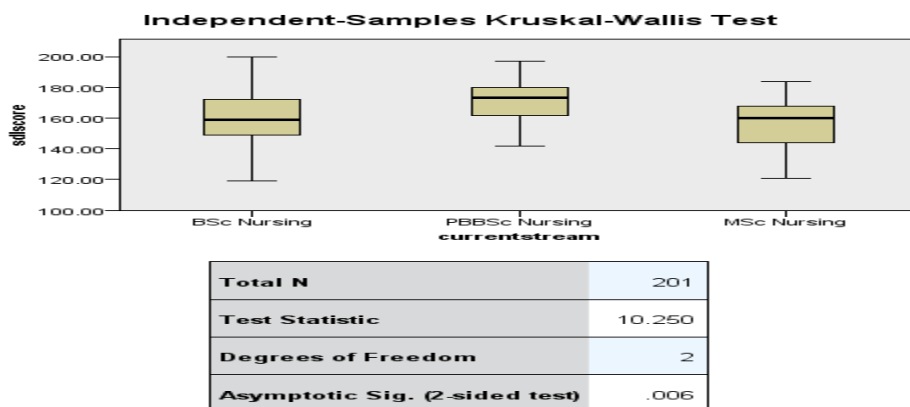
**Table 2: Chi square value, degrees of freedom and P value (n=200)**

SI. no	Variables	Chi square value	df	P value
1	Age	5.418	2	0.067
2	Gender	0.123	1	0.726
3	Current stream of study	3.917	2	0.141
4	Previous pattern of education	2.351	2	0.309
5	Education of father	1.223	3	0.747
6	Occupation of father	3.180	3	0.365
7	Education of mother	4.920	3	0.178
8	Occupation of mother	1.395	3	0.707
9	Previous exposure to SDL enhancement program	6.657	1	0.010**

\*Significant at P value less than 0.01 level

Chi square test was used to analyze association between readiness towards self-directed learning and selected socio demographic variables. There was statistically significant association between readiness towards self-directed learning and previous exposure to previous learning enhancement programs p value <0.05 (p=0.010).

**d. Distribution of SDLR scores across streams of nursing**



1. The test statistic is adjusted for ties.

**Figure 1: Independent sample Kruskal wallis ANOVA with grouping variable current stream of nursing**

The distribution of self-directed learning readiness score is the same across categories of current stream of study in nursing at P value <0.05 level.

## Discussion

The study revealed that 145(72.5%) subjects had high SDLR score and 55(27.5%) had low SDLR score. Many studies published across world revealed congruent findings as noted below.

A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted at Peshawar, Pakistan in 2010 to examine the self-directed learning readiness among nursing students of four nursing institutes. Fisher's self-directed learning readiness scale (SDLRS) for nursing education was used to collect data from 91 nursing students who were recruited conveniently for the study. The findings from the study showed 60% of students have positive attitude towards self-directed learning, i.e. having a score above 150 in SDLRS<sup>7</sup>.

A descriptive correlational study was conducted in school of nursing, Fujian Medical University, China in 2014 to determine the relationship with SDLR and nursing competency. 519 undergraduate nursing students were recruited for this study and assessed using SDRL scale and nursing competency inventory. The results revealed that the mean score was 148.55 with SD 18.46 indicating and intermediate SDLR and also a strong positive correlation with nursing competency<sup>8</sup>.

### Implications

- Nurses should be able to identify the learning skills and learning difficulties
- Nurses should act as role models to empower their students to become independent learners by modeling their own self-directed learning and applying a number of techniques in supporting their students in becoming ready for self-directed learning
- Further experimental studies on effect of self-directed learning among nursing student.
- More research should be conducted on various psychological and nursing interventions for the management of learning difficulties among students
- Improve facilities for identification and supportive management of patients with learning difficulties.
- Provide opportunities for nurses to attend learning enhancement programs

**Ethical Considerations:** 1. Ethical clearance was

attained from institutional ethical committee of Sree Gokulam Medical College and Research Foundation.

2. Setting permission from the head of the institution.

3. Written informed consent was obtained from the study participants prior to the study after explaining objectives of our study and ensuring the confidentiality of the data collected..

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**Conflict of Interest-** Nil

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