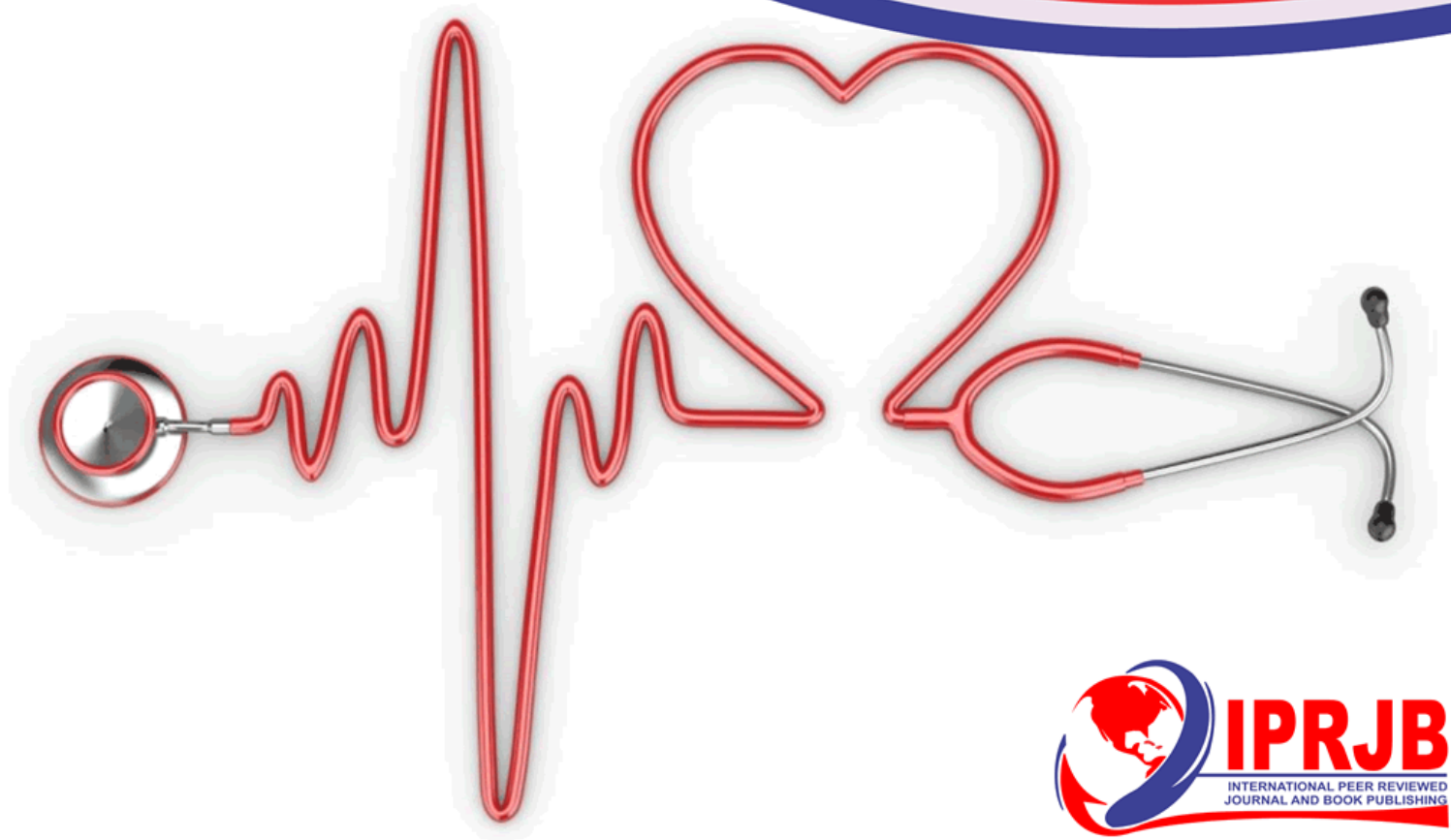


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## **PERSONAL CHARACTERISTIC AND ACADEMIC HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF BASIC DIPLOMA NURSING STUDENTS IN KENYA MEDICAL TRAINING COLLEGE, NAIROBI**

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BASIC DIPLOMA NURSING STUDENTS IN KENYA MEDICAL TRAINING  
COLLEGE, NAIROBI**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** This cross-sectional mixed survey sought to describe AHSB of basic diploma nursing students in KMTC, Nairobi, Kenya. The study examined the influence of sources of help, options of help-seeking and personal characteristics on help-seeking behavior.

**Methods:** Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (in particular, the chi-square, Fisher's Exact and binary logistic regression) were derived from the data. All statistical tests of significance were at 95% confidence level.

**Results:** the study revealed that 90.9% (n=160) of respondents were adaptive help seekers, 72.8% (n=126) preferred peers to lecturers and 75.6% (n=133) frequently sought help from fellow students, especially during group discussions. By contrast, 54.6% (n=95) of the respondents approached instructors during class or immediately after lesson; with only 24.6% (n=43) engaging lecturers privately. Adaptive help seeking was positively associated with personal factors of self-efficacy ( $p=0.034$ ), the notion that the student is of equal worth with peers ( $p=0.038$ ) and a feeling that help seeking is not a sign of weakness. On binary logistic regression, students who felt that seeking help was a sign of weakness were significantly less likely to be adaptive help-seekers. The study concludes that personal factors are significant predictors of adaptive help seeking behavior of student nurses in KMTC Nairobi.

**Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy:** The research recommends that institutions encourage students to treat peers as people of equal worth; and that seeking help is not a sign of weakness. Moreover, schools should explore ways of increasing help seeking from lecturers, especially in their offices

**Key words:** *AHSB, person-related factors, diploma nursing students, KMTC Nairobi.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Academic Help-seeking refers to deliberate actions taken by students whenever they face academic difficulties they cannot overcome on their own [15] [21]. Instead of seeking help, some learners tend to 1) persist on the problem even if they are not making progress, or 2) abandon the tough topic altogether. Newman groups these actions into adaptive and non-adaptive help-seeking behaviors [6].

Adaptive help-seeking occurs when a learner acquires help in form of explanations and hints needed, with the intent to learn independently; not to obtain the answers [20]. On the other hand, non-adaptive help-seekers may exhibit either expedient or avoidance behaviors. Expedient (executive) help-seeking entails requesting for answers, often without a genuine interest to learn to deal with future related problems independently [6] [8]. In avoidant help-seeking, students are deliberately hesitant to obtain assistance even when they know they need it [20]. Adaptive academic help-seeking actions are the most recommended because they increase students' chances of adjusting to academic demands, successfully overcoming academic challenges and attaining academic success [3, 16, 17].

However, variation in help-seeking has been noted to be due to, among others, age [20, 2], gender [9], academic performance [5], locus of control belief [14], self-esteem [22], fear of incompetence [17] and self-efficacy [4]. Other determinants are academic worries [16], helper characteristics [2], course characteristics [6] and satisfaction with the college of study [17].

Though all students are in need of assistance, some are more vulnerable and potentially at higher risk of failing if not helped. Disappointingly, those who attain substandard grades, and would benefit most if they procured help, are often reluctant to request for guidance [19]. Moreover, higher institutions, including KMTC, have sizeable student population to lecturer ratios [12]. This makes it hard for teachers to identify all students with academic difficulties for timely support. Thus, voluntary help-seeking comes in handy.

Despite the foregoing variation in help seeking , and the recommendations by the KMTC, TVETA, and NCK that learners be given academic support, little information is available on academic help-seeking among student nurses in the Kenya context, and in particular, in KMTC. It is for this reason that this cross-sectional survey sought to describe the academic help-seeking behavior (AHSB) of diploma nursing students in KMTC, Nairobi Campus; with the ultimate goal of guiding the faculty, students and education administrators on the measures they need to spend time, resources and efforts on in order to promote beneficial help-seeking to the majority of students.

### 1.1 Specific objectives

- 1) To describe the nature of academic help-seeking behavior of basic nursing students in KMTC, Nairobi.
- 2) To identify the sources of academic help for basic student nurses in KMTC, Nairobi.
- 3) To determine the person related factors that influence academic help-seeking behavior of basic student nurses in KMTC, Nairobi.

## **2.0 METHODS AND MATERIALS**

### **Study design, study population and sampling procedures**

This was a cross-sectional survey. The study population was all the 410 basic diploma nursing students of KMTC Nairobi, Kenya. A sample of 199 respondents was recruited using a table of random numbers from a list of students who were in session during the period of data collection. Those who were involved in the pretest were also excluded from the actual study. Respondents who declined to participate, or who could not be reached for any reason after several attempts, were replaced by the next available respondent from the list of random numbers until the desired sample size was arrived at.

### **Data collection and analysis**

Approvals for the study were obtained from Kenya Methodists University Scientific and Ethics Review committee (KeMU SERC); the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI); Kenya Ministry of Education; the office of the Principal, KMTC Nairobi Campus; and the Head of Nursing Department, Nairobi KMTC. Further, written informed voluntary consent was obtained from the respondents after reading the cover letter accompanying the questionnaires.

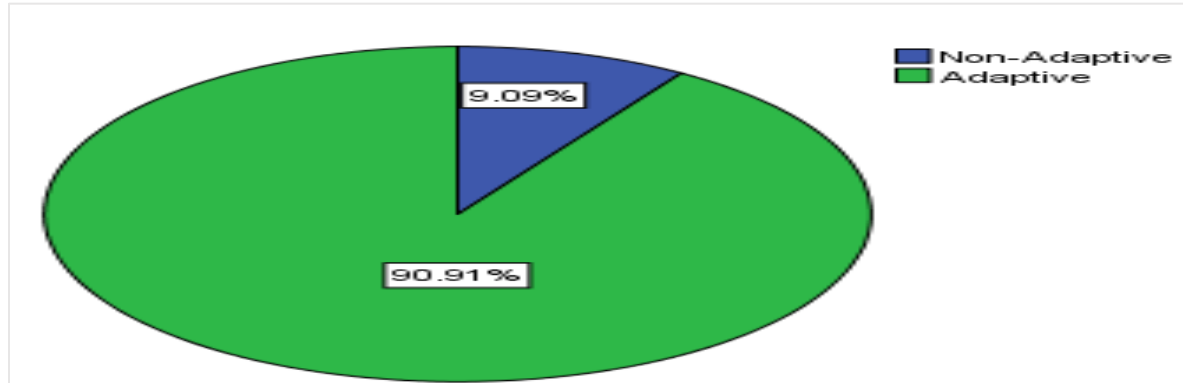
The study utilized a semi-structured self-administered questionnaire to collect quantitative and qualitative data. To ascertain validity of the tool, most items were adapted from similar studies elsewhere and guided by the research objectives. In addition, the questionnaire was subjected to expert review. Besides, a pretest was done in the same campus prior to the actual study; and the tool was revised accordingly. Data collection was spread over the four weeks of February 2019. One hundred ninety nine (199) questionnaires were distributed. On average, 47 questionnaires were administered per a week. However, 23 respondents returned incomplete questionnaires. This variation explains the response rate of 88.4% (n=176). The dependent variable was the nature of help-seeking behavior as reported by the student. The independent variables were 1) Person related factors, and 2) sources and 3) options of help seeking.

Quantitative data was entered into SPSS version 23 for windows. Descriptive statistics (such as mean, frequency and percentages) and inferential statistics (in particular, the chi-square, Fisher's Exact and binary logistic regression) were derived from the data. All statistical tests of significance were at 95% Confidence level. Qualitative data was thematically analyzed.

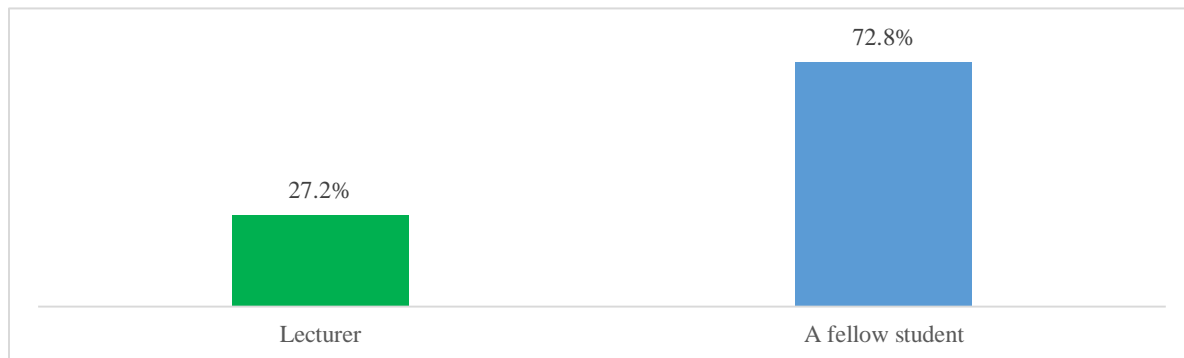
## **3.0 RESULTS**

### **3.1 Preferred Source of help and Nature of help-seeking**

As shown in Figure 4.1, majority 90.91% (n=160) of the students displayed adaptive help seeking behavior. In addition, the greatest number, 72.8% (n=126) of the students were inclined to ask for assistance from peers whenever they had a problem, while 27.2% (n=47) wished to seek help from lecturers (See figure 1).



**Figure 1: Respondents' Help Seeking Behavior**



**Figure 2: First person student prefers to seek academic help from**

When asked why they preferred peers over lecturers, various reasons were advanced. One student typically stated, *'a fellow student is easy to approach and is available'*. Another student retorted that lecturers are challenging to find if not during lessons. Someone else asserted that most reading is done (for instance at night) when the lecturers are not around for consultations. Besides, peers found it easy to connect and relate with each other. The students' sentiments were, for example: *'we share a lot in common [with a fellow student]*. Thirdly, students felt that their peers took time to explain concepts when approached, and there was room to clarify or exchange views. The students characteristically responded thus, *'we can always discuss and debate concepts. Lecturers take a very short time with you, as if wasting [their] time'*. Lastly, some students pointed out that seeking help from a fellow student was in furtherance of student centered learning.

On the other hand, the few respondents who mentioned tutors as their first choice cited the lecturer's knowledge and experience as key considerations. Other justifications were 1) the lecturer is clearer in explaining than a fellow student and 2) a peer may have misunderstood and therefore may give distorted information. Unlike many direct entry learners, one upgrading learner believed that the lecturers were friendly, confidential and trustworthy.

### 3.2 Reported frequency of utilizing formal and informal sources of help

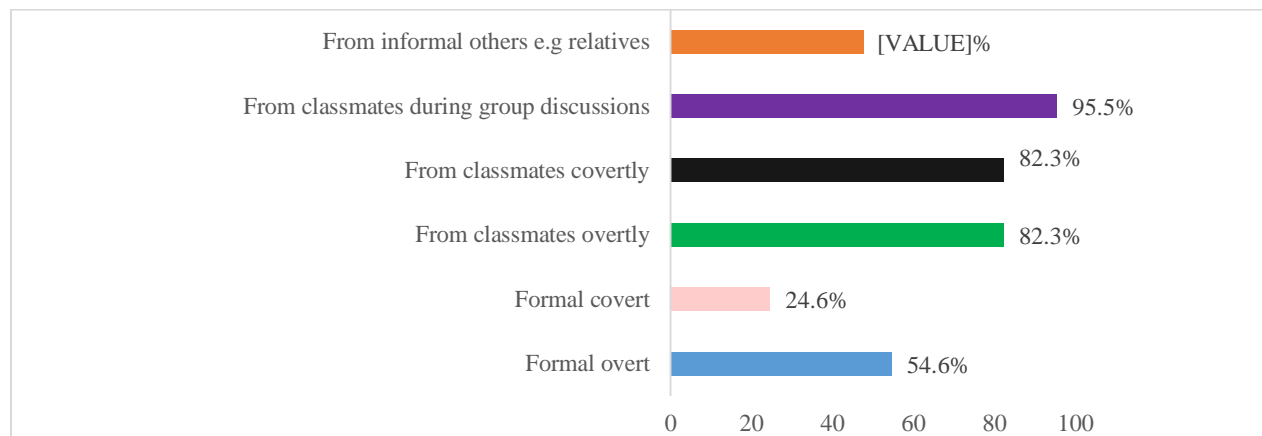
As presented in Table 1, a greater number (75.6%, n=133) of the students frequently utilized informal sources of help in different situations, for example during group deliberations or individual private peer to peer consultations.

**Table 1: Frequently utilized sources of help**

Source	Response	(n)	%
Frequently utilize informal sources of help	No	43	24.4
	Yes	133	75.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Frequently utilize formal sources of help	No	153	86.9
	Yes	23	13.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### 3.3 Frequently utilized options of help seeking

Figure 3 shows the utilization of various options of help seeking. The most frequently utilized options were seeking aid from classmates openly (that is to say during group discussions) at 95.5% (n=168), and consulting peers (overtly and covertly) tying at 82.3% (n=144). By contrast, 54.6% (n=95) of the respondents approached instructors during class or immediately after lesson; with only 24.6% (n=43) engaging lecturers secretly. This is expected because, when asked why they preferred fellow students to lecturers, most responded that the lecturers were rarely available outside class; implying that students thought it was futile to go to the instructors' offices for consultations. Conversely, they stated that peers were often available throughout and therefore could be talked to instantly.



**Figure 1: Percentage of students that frequently utilized the option of help seeking stated**

### 3.4 Bivariate analysis of preferred sources, utilized options and help seeking

Bivariate analysis was done to assess whether 1) the preferred source of help seeking, 2) the sources utilized, and 3) the options of help seeking had an influence on help seeking behavior. The results are shown in Table 4.2. Even though univariate analysis had shown that most

students, 72.8% (n=126), preferred to seek help from peers compared to the 27.2% (n=16) who leaned towards their lecturers for assistance, on cross-tabulation, this difference was not statistically significant (p=0.762). Further, frequently seeking assistance from informal sources did not have a statistically significant influence on help seeking behavior (P=1.000). Likewise, frequently utilizing formal sources was not a significant determinant of the help seeking behavior of the student (p=0.698).

Considering the options of help seeking, the results revealed that overtly talking to formal or informal sources was not a significant determinant of help seeking behavior ( $\chi^2=0.150$ , df=1, p=0.698). By the same token, covertly seeking help from informal sources did not considerably affect the behavior displayed by the student ( $\chi^2=1.109$ , df=1, p=0.292). On that account, a student who is inclined to be adaptive is not swayed by the options of help seeking available.

**Table 2: Bivariate analysis of sources and options of help cross-tabulated with and help seeking behavior**

Source and options		Non-Adaptive		Adaptive		N	Significant at $p \leq 0.05$
		n	%	n	%		
First person student prefers to approach for Academic Help	Lecturer	3	20.0	44	27.8	44	Fisher's Exact P=0.762
	A fellow student	12	80.0	114	72.2	128	
	<b>N</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>173</b>	
Overall frequently seeks formal help	<b>No</b>	15	93.8	138	86.2	153	Fisher's Exact P=0.698
	<b>Yes</b>	1	6.2	22	13.8	23	
	<b>n</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>176</b>	
Overall frequently seeks informal help	<b>No</b>	4	25	39	24.4	43	Fisher's Exact P=1.000
	<b>Yes</b>	12	75	121	75.6	133	
	<b>n</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>176</b>	
Overall seeks formal help overtly	No	8	50.0	71	44.9	79	$\chi^2=0.150$ , df=1 p=0.698
	Yes	8	50.0	87	55.1	95	
	<b>N</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	
Overall seeks informal help overtly	No	5	31.2	32	20.0	37	$\chi^2=1.109$ , df=1 p=0.292
	Yes	11	68.8	128	80.0	139	
	<b>N</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>176</b>	

### 3.5 Person related factors that influence help seeking behavior

#### 3.5.1 Distribution of Demographic variables

Table 3 shows the distribution of the sample according to demographic characteristics. The mean age was 22.93 years (SD=3.043). On the aspect of gender, the female students were as twice in number as their male counterparts. In respect of religion, the protestants were the most represented in the sample at 58.4% (n=101). In reference to performance in their most recent examinations, 66.6% (n=114) of the respondents had registered between a pass and a credit, while 10.5% (n=18) had registered a distinction. Students who had just finished first semester

and were yet to get their results constituted 22% (n=38) of the sample. Only 0.6 % (n=1) reported a referral in their latest assessments.

### 3.5.2 Univariate analysis of self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, fear of embarrassment, academic worry and internal locus of control

Table 3 presents the frequency distribution of the respondents based on their academic worry status, academic self-efficacy, internal locus of control and self-esteem. Overall, a large part, 91.5% (n=161), of the learners had high academic self-efficacy. Taking everything into account, 87.5% (n=154) of the respondents had high self-esteem. Moreover, in general 93.8 % (n=165) reported that they were not embarrassed to seek help and 65.9% (n=116) were least worried of academic demands of the nursing course. Nevertheless, 82.2% (n=114) of the respondents were considerably apprehensive about exam failure. The table further shows that, on the whole, most students 93.2% (n=164) attributed their grades to own actions, effort and ability. In addition, 96.6% (n=169) acknowledged that seeking help would boost their score

**Table 3: Univariate analysis of demographics characteristic of nursing students**

Characteristic		Frequency (n)	Percent
Year of Study	First Year	58	33.0
	Second Year	66	37.5
	Third Year	52	29.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Age (Years)	18-23	113	67.7
	24-29	47	28.1
	>=29	7	4.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Gender	Female	115	65.3
	Male	61	34.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Religion	Protestant	101	58.4
	Muslim	23	13.3
	Catholic	49	28.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100.0</b>
KRCHN Program	KRCHN (Direct Entry)	151	85.8
	KRCHN (Upgrading)	22	12.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>98.3</b>
Average Score in Most Recent Semester Exams	Fail (<49%)	1	0.6
	Pass (50-64%)	51	29.8
	Credit (65-74%)	63	36.8
	Distinction (≥75%)	18	10.5
	Post 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	38	22.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100.0</b>



**Table 4: Univariate analysis of academic self-efficacy, fear of embarrassment, academic worry and internal locus of control**

Self-Efficacy Subscale item		Frequency (n)	Percent	
I am able to handle any problem	No	42	24.0	
	Yes	133	76.0	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
I can solve even the most difficult if I try hard	No	14	8.0	
	Yes	162	92.0	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Has confidence will pass	No	17	9.8	
	Yes	157	90.2	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Overall Self-Efficacy Levels</b>	Low	15	8.5	
	High	161	91.5	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Self Esteem Subscale item</b>				
	Thinks is as worth as the rest of the students	No	9	5.1
		Yes	166	94.9
Beliefs is not a failure academically	<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
	No	12	6.8	
	Yes	164	93.2	
<b>Overall Self Esteem Levels</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
	Low	22	12.5	
	High	154	87.5	
<b>Embarrassment subscale items</b>				
	Seeking help an admission of inadequacy	No	147	84.0
		Yes	28	16.0
Fears "looking stupid or weak" before helpers	<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
	No	160	90.9	
	Yes	16	9.1	
Overall, embarrassed when seeking help	<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
	No	165	93.8	
	Yes	11	6.3	
<b>Academic worries subscale items</b>				
	Academic demands worry levels	Low	107	60.8
		High	69	39.2
Fear of exam failure worry levels	<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
	Low	31	17.8	
	High	143	82.2	
Overall level of Academic Worries	<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
	Low	116	65.9	
	High	60	34.1	
<b>Internal locus of control subscale items</b>				
	Student attributes performance to ability	No	11	6.3
		Yes	164	93.7
Student attributes grade to effort	No	33	18.9	
	Yes	142	81.1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Student attributes performance to own actions	No	7	4.0	
	Yes	169	96.0	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Seeking help improves performance	No	6	3.4	
	Yes	169	96.6	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Overall student has internal locus of control	No	12	6.8	
	Yes	164	93.2	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

### **3.6 Bivariate analysis of person related factors and help seeking**

#### **3.6.1 Demographic factors and help seeking**

Table 5 shows cross-tabulation of demographic factors and help seeking behavior. There was no statistically significant relationship between help seeking behavior and the various demographic variables under consideration; namely age, seniority in training, age, gender, program and academic performance ( $p>0.05$ ).

#### **3.6.2 Help seeking behavior and Self-efficacy, self-esteem, fear of embarrassment, academic worries and internal locus of control**

Cross-tabulations of help seeking behavior with self-esteem, self-efficacy, fear of embarrassment, internal locus of control and academic worries are shown in Table 4.6. The analysis was done at two levels: at the individual subscale items level and at the overall subscale stage.

With respect to the overall self-efficacy subscale, the study established that 93.1% ( $n=149$ ) of students who demonstrated adaptive help seeking behavior had high academic self-efficacy, as opposed to 6.9% ( $n=11$ ) who were different. This disparity was statistically significant ( **$p=0.034$** ). As regards the entirety of the self-esteem subscale, there was a higher percentage of students with high self-esteem in the adaptive group compared to the non-adaptive class. Nonetheless, this dissimilarity was statistically inconsequential ( $p=0.120$ ). At the individual item level, the percentage of students who believed they were not of equal worth with their classmates was higher in the non-adaptive lot, 18.8% ( $n=3$ ), compared to 3.8% ( $n=6$ ) in the adaptive group. This variation was statistically important ( **$p=0.038$** ). Further, self-efficacy had a strong positive association with self-esteem ( **$\chi^2=11.338$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.001$** ). On aggregate, 94.4% ( $n=151$ ) of the students who portrayed adaptive help seeking behavior were not embarrassed to seek help, compared to 5.6% ( $n=9$ ) who were. However, this difference was not statistically significant ( $p=0.263$ ). Among the respondents who demonstrated adaptive help seeking behavior, 86.2% ( $n=137$ ) stated that seeking help was not an admission of weakness, compared to 13.8% ( $n=22$ ) who thought it was. This was statistically significant ( **$\chi^2=6.057$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.014$** ).

When the academic worries subscale was considered, 68.8% ( $n=11$ ) of students who demonstrated non-adaptive behavior had low academic worries, compared to 31.2% ( $n=5$ ) in the same group who reported to be disturbed. This was statistically insignificant ( $p=0.801$ ). Likewise, individual subscale items did not have statistically major effect on the help seeking behavior ( $p>0.05$ ). Though the relationship between self-efficacy and academic worries was statistically trivial, it was observed that most respondents, that is 94% ( $n=109$ ), who demonstrated low academic worries had high self-efficacy.

On the internality of locus of control subscale, 94.4% ( $n=151$ ) of the adaptive students ascribed their academic performance to self-related issues (namely effort, ability, own actions and help seeking). However, this was not a significant predictor of help seeking behavior ( $p=0.082$ ). Similarly, each subscale item did not have a statistically significant association with help seeking behavior ( $p>0.05$ ).

**Table 6: Bivariate analysis of demographic factors and help seeking behavior**

Demographic factors	Non-Adaptive		Adaptive		N	Significant at $p \leq 0.05$
	n	%	n	%		
Seniority in training	Junior	3	18.8	55	34.4	Fisher's Exact p=0.270
	Senior	13	81.2	105	65.6	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	
Age (Years)	18-23	12	75	101	63.1	Fisher's Exact p=0.421
	$\geq 24$	4	25	59	36.9	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	
Gender	Female	9	56.2	106	66.2	$\chi^2 = 0.642$ , df=1 p=0.423
	Male	7	43.8	54	33.8	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	
Religion	Protestant	9	56.2	92	58.6	$\chi^2 = 0.033$ , df=1 p=0.856
	Muslim/Catholic	7	43.8	65	41.4	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100</b>	
KRCHN Program	KRCHN (D)	12	75.0	139	88.5	Fisher's Exact p=0.126
	KRCHN (Up.)	4	25.0	18	11.5	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100</b>	
Performance in recent exams	$\leq$ Pass( $\leq 64$ )	5	35.7	47	39.5	$\chi^2 = 0.075$ , df=1 p=0.784
	$\geq$ Credit( $\geq 65$ )	9	64.3	72	60.5	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Table 7: Bivariate analysis of help seeking behavior and self-efficacy, self-esteem, fear of embarrassment, academic worries and internal locus of control**

Characteristic	Non-Adaptive		Adaptive		N	Significant at $p \leq 0.05$
	n	%	n	%		
<b>Self-efficacy subscale items</b>						
I am able to handle any problem	No	4	25.0	38	23.9	Fisher's Exact p=1.000
	Yes	12	75.	121	76.1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100</b>	
I can solve any difficulty if I try hard	No	2	12.5	12	7.5	Fisher's Exact p=0.620
	Yes	14	87.5	148	92.5	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	
Has confidence will pass exams	No	3	18.8	14	8.9	Fisher's Exact p=0.124
	Yes	13	81.2	144	91.1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100</b>	
Overall Self-Efficacy level	Low	4	25.0	11	6.9	Fisher's Exact <b>p=0.034</b>
	High	12	75.0	149	93.1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Self-Esteem subscale items</b>						
Thinks is of equal worth with classmates	No	3	18.8	6	3.8	Fisher's Exact <b>p=0.038</b>
	Yes	13	81.2	153	96.3	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100</b>	
Belief am not an academic failure	No	1	6.2	11	6.9	Fisher's Exact p=1.000
	Yes	15	93.8	149	93.1	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	

Characteristic		Non-Adaptive		Adaptive		N	Significant $p \leq 0.05$	at
		n	%	n	%			
Overall Self-Esteem level	Low	4	25.0	18	11.2	22	Fisher's Exact $p=0.120$	
	High	12	75.0	142	88.8	154		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>176</b>		
<b>Help seeking Embarrassment subscale items</b>								
Help seeking admission of inadequacy	No	10	62.5	137	86.2	147	$\chi^2=6.057$ , df=1 <b><math>p=0.014</math></b>	
	Yes	6	37.5	22	13.8	28		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>175</b>		
Makes you look stupid before helpers	No	14	87.5	146	91.2	160	Fisher's Exact $p=0.643$	
	Yes	2	12.5	14	8.8	16		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>176</b>		
Overall student is embarrassed	No	14	87.5	151	94.4	165	Fisher's Exact $p=0.263$	
	Yes	2	12.5	9	5.6	11		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>176</b>		
<b>Academic worries subscale</b>								
Worry due to academic demands	Low	9	56.2	98	61.2	107	$\chi^2=0.153$ , df=1 $p=0.698$	
	High	7	43.8	62	38.3	69		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>175</b>		
Exam failure worry levels	Low	5	31.2	26	16.5	31	$\chi^2=2.172$ , df=1 $p=0.141$	
	High	11	68.8	132	83.5	143		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>		
Overall, Academic worries levels	Low	11	68.8	105	65.6	116	$\chi^2=0.065$ , df=1, $p=0.801$	
	High	5	31.2	55	34.4	60		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>176</b>		
<b>Internal locus of control subscale</b>								
Performance due to own ability	No	1	6.2	10	6.3	11	Fisher's Exact $P=1.000$	
	Yes	15	93.8	149	93.7	164		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>175</b>		
Attributes grade to effort	No	4	26.7	29	18.1	33	Fisher's Exact $P=0.488$	
	Yes	11	73.3	131	81.9	142		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>175</b>		
performance depends on own actions	No	2	12.5	5	3.1	7	Fisher's Exact $P=0.124$	
	Yes	14	87.5	155	96.9	169		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>175</b>		
Help will lead to improved performance	No	2	12.5	4	2.5	6	Fisher's Exact $P=0.095$	
	Yes	14	87.5	155	97.5	169		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>175</b>		
<b>Overall has Internal Locus</b>	No	3	18.8	9	5.6	12	Fisher's Exact $p=0.082$	
	Yes	13	81.3	151	94.4	164		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>176</b>		

### 3.6.3 Logistic regression

After bivariate analysis, a logistic regression was done to assess the likelihood of help seeking behavior occurring given the various person related issues. Only those factors that were

significant at  $p \leq 0.05$  during bivariate analysis were fed into the model. The results are shown in Table 7.

In bivariate models, self-efficacy status, a sense of equal worth and a feeling that help is a sign of incompetence were significant predictors of help seeking ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). However, in the logistic regression model, one variable remained significant at  $p = 0.05$ : the feeling that help seeking is a sign of incompetence.

Highly efficacious students were more likely to seek help compared to those low in self-efficacy ( $B = 0.115$ ,  $OR = 1.122$ ,  $p = 0.904$ ,  $95\% CI = 0.174-7.226$ ). Similarly, respondents who felt they were as equal as their classmates were five times more likely to seek adaptive help compared to those who thought otherwise ( $B = 1.645$ ,  $OR = 5.179$ ,  $p = 0.092$ ,  $95\% CI = 0.766-35.035$ ). However, students who held that seeking help was a sign of weakness were significantly less likely to be adaptive help-seekers ( $B = -1.700$ ,  $OR = 0.183$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ,  $95\% CI = 0.050-0.671$ ).

**Table 7 Binary logistic regression coefficients of various factors associated with help seeking behavior**

Predictor variable	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	OR	95% C.I	
High Self-efficacy	0.115	0.950	0.015	0.904	1.122	0.174	7.226
Feels equal to peers	1.645	0.975	2.843	0.092	5.179	0.766	35.035
Feels help a sign of weakness	-1.700	0.664	6.556	<b>0.010</b>	0.183	0.050	0.671
Constant	-1.453	1.354	1.153	0.283	0.234		

### 3.7 Discussion

This investigation revealed that majority, 90.91% ( $n = 160$ ) of the students in KMTC were adaptive help seekers, that is, they sought help that could help them overcome learning challenges. A small portion, 9.09% ( $n = 16$ ) displayed non-adaptive behavior; by either avoiding help or exhibiting executive behavior. These results are inconsistent with the null hypothesis that KMTC students do not exhibit adaptive help seeking behavior. They are also in contrast with those of [20] who found out that majority of the students shun assistance. However, these findings are in sync with those of [2] where the bulk, 87.3% of students procured the needed assistance.

This study did not find sufficient evidence to support the alternative hypothesis that preferred sources of help influence help seeking behavior ( $p = 0.762$ ). Though not significant, majority (72.8%,  $n = 160$ ) of the students preferred peers to lecturers for help. These outcomes agree with other studies [2, 11] which have reached similar conclusions that most students prefer peers to lecturers for assistance. The open ended questions shed some light on this. Some respondents

stated that lecturers appeared busy, were harsh, unavailable, and looked as if they did not want to be disturbed. Other students opined that seeking help from peers advanced independence. However, unlike [20] who asserted that help seeking from peers tends to be executive, this research did not find any significant connection between frequently utilized source and help seeking behavior ( $p>0.05$ ).

Regarding options of help seeking, the widely used options were group discussions (at 95.5%,  $n=168$ ) and overtly or covertly seeking help from peers (both at 82.3%,  $n=144$ ). Consulting lecturers secretly as well as seeking assistance from relatives scored poorly. Nevertheless, the options utilized did not appear to significantly predict help seeking behavior of the learners ( $p>0.05$ ). These findings concur with a Jordanian study [11] which established that 61% of the students sought formal help overtly, compared with 9% who obtained assistance from lecturers privately. In addition, the investigation noted that informal sources (covert and overt) and formal overt sources were frequently utilized. Seeking help from lecturers openly, could be occurring in class or immediately after class, since a sizable portion of students found it frustrating to reach a lecturer outside class sessions. This observation has been made before [19].

### **3.7.1 Person related factors that influence help seeking.**

The null hypothesis of this research was that person-related factors do not influence academic help-seeking behavior of student nurses in KMTC Nairobi. This was premised on the fact that past studies had come up with mixed findings regarding, for instance, the link between demographic factors and help seeking behavior of students [16, 20].

With regards to age, majority of the respondents were between 18-23 years old, with mean age of 22.93. This was expected since majority of the respondents were direct entry students (admitted soon after finishing form four). There was no significant connection between help seeking behavior and age of the student ( $p=0.421$ ). Further, the association between age and source of help was insignificant ( $\chi^2=0.448$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.503$ ). This could be because the respondents were almost of the same age bracket. Ryan and Shim [20] observed that as students mature, they tend to seek help more from peers than their lecturers; and the help sought was often non-adaptive in nature.

Seniority in training did not significantly explain variations in help seeking behavior of students ( $p=0.270$ ). This conclusion is contrary to the findings of A-Ansari [2] which established that junior students seek help more than their older counterparts.

Although more women (66.2%,  $n=106$ ) than men (33.8%,  $n=54$ ) respondents sought useful help, this was not statistically significant ( $p=0.423$ ). The observed variance in help seeking between men and women was probable, since nursing being a female dominated profession, women had a higher probability of representation in the sample. That notwithstanding, past surveys have revealed that women are more adaptive than men [17]. The tendency for men to demonstrate help avoidance has its roots in the masculine social expectation for men to remain independent and self-reliant [1]. Further, neither religion nor program of study (that is to say upgrading or direct entry program) were seen to significantly influence help seeking ( $p>0.05$ ).

With regards to academic performance, there were more students who recorded a credit (and above) in the adaptive group than those who scored a pass (and below). However, this was not significant. Past studies have reported that higher academic achievers seek help more than the lower achievers [5]. This could be because most students in this study attributed their academic performance to internal factors like effort, seeking help and ability. In past studies, lower academic achievers were found to attribute performance to external stable factors [4, 14]; thus seeking help would have been waste of time and effort.

Among the adaptive help seekers, 94.4% (n=151) of them attributed their grades internally (to ability, effort, own actions or seeking help). Though, the relationship between internal attribution and help seeking was not significant ( $p=0.082$ ), this study observed that most students have internal locus of control. Furthermore, it is vital to pay attention to the fact that majority of the adaptive help-seekers believed that obtaining assistance would lead to improved performance. These findings are not unique. Elsewhere, researches have established that internal locus clearly interrelates with adaptive help seeking and superior academic performance [4, 14]. This is because getting aid is considered to be within the students' control; and a path to success.

As for self-esteem subscale, a significantly higher number of students who demonstrated adaptive help seeking felt they were of equal worth with classmates. Carmon [4], in her study of Willingness to seek academic help in preclinical nursing students, noted that perceived threat to self-esteem determines whether a student will seek help and from who. A student who is low in self-esteem may keep away from assistance so as to avoid being perceived as incompetent [17].

Another factor that was investigated is self-efficacy. Highly efficacious individuals were found to be strongly adaptive ( $p=0.034$ ); and had a good sense of self-esteem ( $\chi^2 =11.338$ ,  $df=1, p=0.001$ ). In a study among college students, Yazon [22] noted a substantial relationship between self-efficacy and self-esteem. Trainees with low self-efficacy avoid help probably because they are hopeless [18]. These findings contradict the conclusions by Ofori and Charlton (2002) that highly efficacious students tend to avoid help; perhaps because they over-rely on self-ability to succeed [6].

In this research, fewer students (34.1%, n=60) reported to be very troubled about the academic difficulties of the nursing course. However, there was no major association between academic worries and help-seeking behavior ( $\chi^2 =0.065$ ,  $df=1, p=0.801$ ). It was also observed that among the non-adaptive help seekers, individuals with low academic worries were predominant. Bivariate analysis of academic worries with self-efficacy revealed that most (94%, n=109) individuals with low academic worries were highly efficacious. This, however was not significant ( $\chi^2 =2.702$ ,  $df=1, p=0.100$ ). Comparably, Ofori & Charlton [16] demonstrated a negative relationship between self-efficacy and academic anxiety.

Help seeking may evoke a feeling of inadequacy, and therefore counter any effort towards seeking assistance. In this study a significantly higher percentage (86.2%, n=137) of adaptive help seekers said that seeking help was not an admission of inadequacy ( $\chi^2 =6.057$ ,  $df=1, p=0.014$ ). Perhaps the environment was supportive and therefore the feeling of inadequacy minimized. To put this into perspective, most students said that they did not hide from peers

when seeking help from lecturers. A similar finding has been reached before [4]. Mahasneh et al. [11] as well established that students who feel that help seeking portrays them as incompetent, dependent and weak are likely to be averse to assistance.

#### **4.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **Summary**

This investigation found out that self-efficacy, a feeling in the student that is of equal standing with peers and a conviction that help seeking was not a sign of inadequacy were important predictors of help seeking among nursing students.

It was also observed that most students frequently sought help from peers, especially when in group discussions or during one-on-one private consultations. Few learners approached tutors for help; and those who did, preferred to ask questions in class or immediately after lessons. Fewer students sought help from teachers in their offices.

##### **Conclusions**

The investigation found out that most students were adaptive help seekers. Thus, the null hypothesis that Nursing students in KMTC Nairobi do not exhibit adaptive help seeking behavior was rejected.

Regarding preferred source of help, nursing students preferred to seek help from fellow classmates. Further, the results revealed that learners often sought help from classmates overtly and covertly; with group discussions dominating. The few students who sought help from lecturers, did it overtly; perhaps during class, since most students reported that lecturers are difficult to find out of class. However, the sources and options of help seeking did not seem to impact help seeking behavior. Therefore, no matter the source and option, the student was likely to be adaptive. For these reasons, the study upheld the null hypothesis that sources and options of help have no association with adaptive or non-adaptive seeking behavior.

Person related characteristics that were investigated include demographic factors, self-efficacy, self-esteem, help-seeking embarrassment, academic worries and internal locus of control. None of the demographic factors under consideration (namely age, seniority in training, gender, religion and performance) significantly influenced help seeking behavior. High self-efficacy was a major predictor of adaptive help-seeking. Additionally, students who felt as worth as their peers were highly likely to portray adaptive help seeking from classmates. However, those who believed that seeking help was an admission of weakness were significantly less likely to seek necessary help. Internal locus of control and academic worries did not have a significant influence on help seeking. Therefore, the null hypothesis that person related factors do not determine help seeking behavior was rejected on the basis that there was an association between help seeking behavior and self-efficacy, 'a feeling of equal worth with classmates', and a sense that 'seeking help is an admission of weakness'

##### **Recommendations**

To motivate and sustain adaptive help seeking behavior, the study recommends that;



Students be encouraged a) that seeking assistance is not a sign of inadequacy; and b) to treat each other with mutual respect and as people of equal worth. This will reduce the associated threat to help seeking. This, in essence will strengthen peer to peer consultations, in particular, group discussions; which were found to be useful strategies to learning.

Opportunities of increasing help seeking from lecturers be explored. One area to look at is lecturer availability for real-time consultations. One way is by harnessing newfound technologies for timely response to students' issues. Also, dedicated office hours for students' support may help. The other issue is the negative perceptions of the lecturer as being harsh or in a hurry. Further, effort should be made to increase trust so that students could be more open with lecturers on personal issues. The more the trust, the more the students are likely to portray adaptive help. Lastly, the KMTC policy on lecturers' time for consultations could be revisited.

Ways be explored to address the notion that help seeking is an admission of weakness; or lack of intelligence. This was noted to negatively affect help seeking.

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