The purpose of this study was to clarify the relationship between quality of ethical behavior and attributes of nurse researchers, and to discuss future tasks for improving the quality of ethical behavior among nurse researchers.

Methods

The instruments used in the present study were the ‘Self-Evaluation Scale on the Ethical Behavior of Nurse Researchers’ (Scale) and a questionnaire on nurse researchers’ attributes. The Scale is composed of 30 self-evaluation items rated on a four-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicate a higher quality of ethical behavior. The reliability and validity of the Scale have been confirmed. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach’s α. The reliability of the scores was assessed based on test-retest reliability. Construct validity was also assessed by testing hypothesized relationships using the ‘known-group’ technique.

Subjects were Nurse researchers whose work as a first author had been published in a peer-reviewed journal in the previous 2 years. The questionnaire on nurse researchers’ attributes was developed to investigate 14 variables extracted from a literature review regarding the relationship between nurse researchers’ attributes and the quality of ethical behavior for nurse researchers. The content validity of both the Self-Evaluation Scale on the Ethical Behavior of Nurse Researchers’ (Scale) was confirmed in a pilot study and by a panel of experts.

In total, 517 packets were returned, among which valid data from 492 nurse researchers in which respondents answered at least 28 (question items 1 to 28) out of the 30 question items were analyzed. The respondents were 440 (89.4%) female and 46 (9.4%) male nurses, excluding 6 non-responders, 195 (39.7%) nurses working in hospitals, and 253 (51.4%) members of university nursing faculties with varying ages, education levels, research areas, and research designs.

The total scores for 28 question items (1 to 28) on the Scale ranged from 61-111 points, with a mean of 95.95 ± 9.53. The distribution of the total scores was normal based on a histogram and a normal Q-Q plot. Among 14 variables on the questionnaire, 11 variables (Figure 2) showed a significant relationship with the quality of ethical behavior of nurse researchers (p<0.05). However, years of nursing practice, age, and gender showed no significant relationship with the quality of ethical behavior of nurse researchers.

Conclusions

The following 11 variables showed relationship with quality of ethical behavior and the attributes of nursing researchers: existence of research continuation; weekly research time; number of published research articles within the past 3 years; experience of giving lectures on research ethics; degree of knowledge about research ethics; frequency of learning about research ethics; academic background; and institutional membership.

To improve the quality of ethical behaviors of nurse researchers in Japan, continuing research activities and learning about research ethics appear to be the most important tasks.

Reference