

Research Article

Factors Influencing Students' Choice of Pursuing Nursing in Central Karachi

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Abstract: Background: The choice of pursuing nursing education is influenced by various factors that can vary from individual to individual. Determining these factors is crucial for improving the recruitment and retention of nursing professionals in the region.

Objective: This study aimed to determine the factors influencing students' choice of pursuing nursing education in central Karachi.

Materials and Methods: Cross-sectional survey was employed, and data were collected from 1st-year nursing students of Generic Bachelor of Science in Nursing (GBSN). Convenient sampling was used to select participants from two Private Schools of Nursing in central Karachi from October 2022 to February 2023.

Result: A total of 100 participants were enrolled in the study, comprising 90% males and 10% females. Most of the students 70% strongly agreed that nursing is a profession characterized by caring and helpful attributes, and 50% agreed that it is also distinguished by recognition and respect. However, concerns were raised as 70% of students who disagreed or strongly disagreed that nursing is well-paid, and 52% felt it was too difficult for them.

Conclusion: Majority of nursing students viewed nursing as a caring and altruistic profession, which is considered a positive factor influencing their career choice. However, concerns about low pay and nursing as a difficult profession were highlighted.

Keywords: Factors, Persuading, Students, Choice, Nursing, Education.

INTRODUCTION

The nursing profession is characterized by service and compassion. According to the American Nursing Association, nursing involves the preservation, enhancement, and optimization of health and abilities, as well as the prevention of disease and injury [1]. Nurses play a vital role in identifying and treating human beings, relieving suffering, and promoting care for individuals, families, communities, and populations [2]. The delivery of healthcare is not complete without nursing [3]. Nurses serve as frontline healthcare workers and hold a pivotal position in advancing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the healthcare system [4].

Nurses are essential to patient care, promoting good health, and preventing disease [5]. However, there has been a global nursing shortage, and this development is especially problematic in several nations [6], including Pakistan. To solve this shortfall and improve the general standard of healthcare services, it is essential to comprehend the factors that influence students' choices to enroll in nursing programs.

Addressing the attrition rate among nursing students is a critical factor affecting the overall satisfaction of healthcare workforce

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demand. Implementing retention strategies, especially in the initial year of undergraduate nursing programs, is a proactive approach to mitigate the challenges arising from the shortage of qualified nurses and students' satisfaction. For these tactics to be effective, it is important to have a better understanding of the factors contributing like educational opportunities, economic considerations, work conditions, family and societal influences, and the portrayal of nursing in the media, to nursing student attrition. This can be done by promoting and supporting certain affective elements linked to retention and minimizing changeable factors linked to attrition. Numerous levels, types, and causes contribute to nursing students' attrition [7]. In this regard, literature shows the scope, complexity, and uniqueness of ethnically diverse nursing students' difficulties such as societal stereotypes and misconceptions about the profession, gender-related challenges, and a lack of mentorship and role models in the field. The study findings have implications for creating methods to assist this significant at-risk demographic of students in earning their nursing degrees [8]. Furthermore, nursing students reported that their biggest worry was "confusion of identity," which was brought on by the inadequate educational environment in nursing education [9].

Numerous studies have examined why students choose nursing and pursue their career in nursing [10]. These investigations have demonstrated that various distinct motivations contributed

to this decision. The literature frequently cites several motives for individuals pursuing a career in nursing, including the desire to help others, engage in socially beneficial work, avail career opportunities and job security, hold a favorable perception of the specific role of nurses, and the influence of family or friends [11, 12].

Moreover, students understood that nursing is a caring, compassionate profession that offers a person-centered level of help. The nurse works in various settings, providing information on illness prevention and health promotion while also addressing the emotions and sentiments of those who are weak and in need of empathetic, respectful, and understanding treatment. They emphasized the significance of professional autonomy. Nursing positively impacts people's lives, yet it is still not widely known [13]. Therefore, learning, critical thinking, decision-making, self-monitoring skills, and academic motivation are vital for nursing students during their clinical education to provide quality care [14].

Furthermore, student's perceptions of nursing were influenced by the qualities of a nurse, the nature of their duty, and nursing career options. Survey respondents overwhelmingly prioritize strong general education, in-depth knowledge, and favorable attitudes and character traits as essential prerequisites for success in the nursing field. Nurses were seen working in multi-professional teams, and their duties were explained regarding their caregiver position [15]. Decision-making in nursing was thought to be restricted. While some applicants may not have fully recognized the career prospects or future educational opportunities in nursing, they perceived it as a stable profession with diverse career options. Their views on specific requirements were influenced by various factors such as the media, input from friends and family, personal circumstances, and career counseling received at school [16].

A study suggested that students enroll in nursing bachelor's degree programs primarily to help people with health issues, advance their careers, and find jobs [17]. Most research showed that students had favorable perceptions of the nursing profession. A negative association between environmental and professional factors and students' views was found. Furthermore, it was shown that a person's attitude could impact their professional, academic, and physical well-being [11, 18]. Hence, the objective of this study was to determine the factors influencing students' choice of pursuing nursing education in central Karachi.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was used to examine the factors influencing students' decisions to pursue nursing education in central Karachi and analyze data from 1st-year GBSN students from the two Private Schools of Nursing from October 2022 to February 2023, (HSNHS/2023/345). Participants were selected through convenient sampling. First year nursing students were included in the study. Students who repeated or retaken the semester were excluded from the study. A structured

questionnaire modified from a prior study conducted in Nepal by Kalpana Shrestha and Abja Sapkota in 2021 [2] was used to collect the data. There were two sections to the questionnaire: a. demographic data: this component gathered data on the age, gender, religion, marital status, and cast of the participants. while section-B collected data regarding students' decisions to pursue nursing. This part contained eight statements describing various criteria students consider while deciding whether to pursue nursing. Participants were provided a 4-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. The scale included options such as "1" for strongly disagree, "2" for disagree, "3" for agree, and "4" for strongly agree.

Before beginning the study, the researchers requested approval from the administrators of the two selected nursing schools. Every participant was provided informed consent after receiving a clear explanation of the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality assured for their responses. The research project asked the appropriate institutions for study approval. The study's goals, the voluntariness of participation, and the confidentiality of the responses were all explicitly disclosed to the participants. Before deciding to participate in the study, they were asked to give informed consent. The researchers took care to keep the identity of every participant private. No specific participant was identified in published publications or findings, and data were securely stored.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

For analysis, the data gathered by the questionnaire were entered into SPSS version 26. Demographic information and section B were compiled using descriptive statistics and expressed as frequency and percentage.

RESULT

One hundred research participants' demographic information is shown in Table 1. 90% of participants were male and 10% were female.

Table 1 Demographic Information n=100.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	90	90%
Female	10	10%
Age		
18-21 years	80	80%
More than 21 years	20	20%
Religion		
Muslim	87	87%
Hindu	1	1%
Christian	12	12%

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Marital Status		
Married	5	5%
Unmarried	95	95%
Cast		
Pashtoon	85	85%
Punjabi	3	3%
Sindhi	6	6%
Balochi	6	6%

According to the age proportion, 80% of the participants were between 18 and 21, a relatively young age range frequently encountered among nursing students. The study comprised predominantly Muslim participants (87%), followed by Christians (12%), while the majority (95%) were unmarried, with a small

minority (5%), according to the current study. The participants' ethnic backgrounds were diverse, with Pashtoon accounting for the majority (85%), followed by Sindhi (6%), Punjabi (3%), and Balochi (6%).

Table 2 outlines the factors impacting students' choice to pursue nursing education. Most study participants (70%) highly concurred that being a nurse is a kind and helpful job. Many disagreed (50%) or strongly disagreed (30%) that nursing is a well-paid career, raising worries about the salary component. A significant portion (30%) of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed, despite 50% of them feeling that nursing is recognizable and respected. Additionally, a significant proportion (70%) believed that nursing education costs are beyond the payable range. 52% of participants also expressed reservations about the difficulty of nursing. However, the majority (67%) were optimistic about nursing offering opportunities to work globally.

Table 2. Factors Influencing Student's Choice of Pursuing Nursing Education.

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Nursing is a caring and helpful profession	0 %	0 %	30 %	70 %
Nursing is a lowly paid profession.	8 %	12 %	50 %	30 %
Nursing is a recognizable and respectful profession	10 %	20 %	50 %	20 %
The cost of nursing is payable Range	70 %	20 %	5 %	5 %
Nursing is too difficult for me	52 %	30 %	8 %	10 %
Nursing is a stressful and demanding Profession	3 %	19 %	56 %	22 %
There is advancement in the nursing career or nursing education	45 %	30 %	13 %	12 %
Will be able to work around the world	5 %	5 %	23 %	67 %

DISCUSSION

Present findings show that 70% of participants strongly agreed that Nursing is caring and helpful. Our findings align with the perspective in Turkey, where nursing is perceived as a profession characterized by self-sacrifice, compassion, and a commitment to helping others [19].

Moreover, the findings revealed that 50% agreed that Nursing is a recognizable and respectful profession. Another study found that 56% of participants agreed with this statement [2].

The present findings also highlight that 70% strongly disagree with the statement Cost of nursing is within the payable range. Another study result is that 61% of the participants strongly agreed [2]. Based on these findings, educational institutions and governments can create targeted financial support programs or regulations to make nursing education more accessible and inexpensive for aspirant students by better understanding the context and factors impacting participants' views of the cost of nursing education. A study suggested that educational institutions and governments can improve the affordability and accessibility of nursing education by understanding the factors that shape students' views on its cost [20].

Present findings also show that 45% strongly disagreed that there is advancement in the nursing career or nursing education. Similarly, another study found that Chinese nursing students need assistance among medical majors because most patients desire a medical degree, and nursing is not their first choice. Consequently, it is crucial to help nursing students determine whether their professional goals are realistic and how to create a plan to reach them. A strategic career choice and planning approach must be formed during nursing education. Nursing educators should support students in pursuing nursing-related occupations such as nurse practitioner, and nursing skills expertise, and motivate them to actively plan their careers while pursuing their degrees [21]. In contrast, another study found that most students think that nursing is a good choice for men and persons with academic ability who want stable jobs, even though they believe nursing is physically demanding and that there is not enough respect for or acknowledgment of nurses [22], but the current study findings indicate that 70% of participants concur that nursing is held in high regard.

Present findings demonstrated that 56% agreed that the nursing profession is stressful. Another study result is aligned and shows 86% agree with this statement [23]. Another study found that students face academic stress for various reasons, including having a heavy course load, performing excessive homework,

continually preparing for tests, worrying about receiving an unjust score and having communication issues with their teachers [24]. Stress in nursing must be addressed with multifaceted approaches. Giving nurses the right kind of assistance, such as access to counseling services and stress-management courses, might make it easier for them to handle the demands of their jobs. Additionally, adopting nurse-patient ratios and improving work schedules might lessen the stress brought on by the workload [25].

Similarly, a study from Pakistan identified different factors that female nurses are preferred due to cultural norms. Concerning the social and cultural issues that the nursing profession is currently confronting, four main themes are: 1) Gender segregated professions; 2) incorrect media portrayals; 3) problems with marriage settlement; and 4) religious identity [26].

These conflicts affect nurses' professional image. Additionally, these ongoing challenges significantly contribute to the persistent shortage of nurses within Pakistan's healthcare sectors, affecting and discouraging potential students' decisions to pursue a career in nursing.

STRENGTH AND LIMITATION

The generalizability of the findings is limited by the small sample size from a single private institute, necessitating cautious interpretation of the results. The use of self-reported methods may have introduced social desirability bias, and the structured data collection might have restricted the exploration of some perspectives.

However, the current study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing students' choice of pursuing a nursing profession. Additionally, it lays the groundwork for further research.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed the factors influencing students' choice of pursuing nursing education among most students of nursing as a caring and helpful profession. However, concerns about low pay, recognition, and nursing as a difficulty profession were highlighted. Efforts should focus on improving the nursing profession's image, addressing salary issues, providing financial support, offering guidance, and promoting career advancement opportunities to attract and retain students in nursing education.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

- **Muhammad Hasnain Shaikh:** Manuscript writing, Data analysis, Manuscript supervision.
- **Rizwan Ali:** Manuscript writing.
- **Afsha Bibi:** Data collection, Manuscript writing.
- **Ismail Khan:** Help in data analysis.
- **Shamsher Ali Khan:** Data collection entry.
- **Waqar Ahmad and Dar-I- Islam:** Help in data collection.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Declared none.

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