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14 Young people's decision to study nursing

Abstract

Introduction: Choosing a career is an extremely important decision for an individual. It is usually based on parental guidance, the decision and influence of friends, or personal desire. Often the motivation to study decreases over the years of study and consequently decreases academic success and satisfaction with the study. Therefore, it is essential to determine which factors affect student motivation.

Methods: We conducted a cross-sectional study among nursing students in Croatia and Slovenia in 2019. A questionnaire on the motivation of nursing students to study was used to collect the data. We used the R statistical software for data analyses.

Results: In total, 312 undergraduate nursing students completed the survey. The sample consisted of 233 (74.7%) participants from Slovenia and 79 (25.2%) from Croatia. Students who feel that studying takes up a lot of their time and affects their social life are less motivated to study.

Discussion: In general, study motivation is related to one's interests in the programme, goals, and wishes. Also, students with a higher level of study motivation are more successful in studying.

Conclusion: It is important to focus research on activities motivating students to choose nursing, maintaining interest and will to study, and activities focused on enhancing student satisfaction with the study. Due to the current shortage in the nursing profession, we should facilitate the motivation of students to pursue a degree already in high school.

Keywords: Nursing, motivation, education

14.1 Introduction

Nursing students' academic motivation is a broad and multidimensional concept influenced by various personal, family, social, educational, and professional factors. It is considered an important factor in academic success, satisfaction, anxiety reduction, continuing education, better learning, creativity, and skill acquisition in nursing [1]. Career choice is an individual's selection of a vocation. It is usually based on parental guidance, an individual's motivation to study, and individual's

preferences. People with good career motivation show positive attitudes towards their chosen career and career adaptability and are more optimistic about their future [2]. Mäenpää et al. [3, 4] stated that the key factor for a successful study is the motivation to learn. Students with higher motivation to learn are less likely to experience work burnout [5]. Thus, the students must enter their chosen study with a high level of motivation so that the level of motivation does not decrease.

Students with a higher level of study motivation are more successful, meaning that they achieve better study results. Wu's [6] research findings show that positive academic motivation is important for students to achieve greater academic engagement and achievement, which significantly affects students. Academic success is often influenced by student motivation regulation, study engagement, and experienced burnout regardless of the learning environment [4]. Young people perceive nursing as a career with limited autonomy, shift work, and poor working conditions. The factors influencing the young people's perception are often family and relatives, friends, media, significant others, and other personal factors [7]. Family is a powerful factor that influences students' career choice in nursing [8]. Also, family support, as well as friends' support, has a significant impact on student motivation, stressors, and the intent to leave the study [9].

It is known that nursing students often lose their motivation during their studies. Saeedi and Parvizy [10] found that few strategies could be implemented to improve academic motivation in nursing students. Strategies are directed to professors, students, clinical education, and faculty. It was shown that professors empowering and motivating students towards creating positive attitudes towards nursing, and encouraging academic achievement were assessed as effective strategies in improving students' motivation. On the other hand, novel strategies that also have the potential to motivate nursing students are available. Li et al. [11] examined the efficacy of mobile learning on satisfaction and motivation. The authors found that students showed better study performance after practising mobile learning.

It is important to assess reasons influencing student motivation to develop, evaluate, and implement activities to increase student motivation and, consequently, student's academic achievements and study satisfaction.

14.2 Methods

14.2.1 Study design

We conducted a cross-sectional study in 2019 with nursing students in Croatia and Slovenia to investigate why young people decide to enter the nursing study.

14.2.2 Participants

The study was conducted among 312 undergraduate nursing students in Croatia and Slovenia: 233 from Slovenia and 79 from Croatia. A convenience sampling method was used to include a large number of students in both groups. The following eligibility criteria were used: students studying “general nursing” program, full-time or part-time students, and students in their first, second, or third year of study. Students enrolled in master's or doctoral degree programmes were excluded from this study due to the study aim. With a total number of 625 students, the sample size was calculated using the Raosoft sample size calculator (Raosoft Inc.) using the 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level, and 50% response distribution which resulted in 239 minimum recommended size of the sample.

14.2.3 Setting

Questionnaires were distributed by the researchers online to the Croatian students and in-person prior to the lectures to the Slovenian students between April and June 2019.

14.2.4 Measures

To collect the data, we developed and validated the motivation to study nursing questionnaire [12]. The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions (e.g., gender, faculty, year of study, and employment status) and items on the nursing students' motivation (NSM) scale. The NSM scale included questions about factors to study nursing, general student motivation, general academic success, advantages and disadvantages, reasons to study nursing, and satisfaction with nursing. The response range was 1–5, where 1 represents “I completely disagree” and 5 represents “I completely agree”. Questions on the advantages and disadvantages of studying nursing were open [12].

14.2.5 Data analyses

Collected data were analysed using R statistical software version 4.1.0 [13]. Descriptive and statistical methods were used to describe sample characteristics and to check for correlations. We used the R package `corrplot` [14] to visualize the correlation matrix. There were no missing data.

14.3 Results

14.3.1 Descriptive characteristics of the sample

Three hundred and twelve undergraduate nursing students fulfilled questionnaires and agreed to participate in the study: 233 (74.7%) were from Slovenia and 79 (25.2%) from Croatia. There were 256 (82.1%) female and 56 (17.9%) male participants. Most of the students ($n = 218$, 69.4%) studied full time.

14.3.2 Student motivation

Students were asked to evaluate their general motivation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 meant entirely unmotivated, and 5 meant entirely motivated. The mean value for motivation was 14.28 ($SD = 2.61$), with a minimum score of 5 and a maximum of 21.

14.3.3 Influences of various factors on motivation to study

Participants were asked about persons who influenced their decision to enter nursing studies. About 78.3% ($n = 246$) participants stated that no other person influenced on their decision, 11.1% ($n = 35$) stated that parents had influence, and 4.5% ($n = 14$) stated that friends had influence. Moreover, student motivation was assessed using the following items: thinking about quitting study if having bad grades, thinking about other study programmes, choosing nursing even if the nursing study would influence social life, thinking about quitting study if studying took more than 60 h per week, and regretting if did not choose nursing as a study program. The data distribution of items is shown in Fig. 14.1.

In Fig. 14.2, the data distribution of each scale component is presented.

The correlation between various factors (gender, high school, and influence) and motivation to study is presented in Fig. 14.3. A positive correlation is marked with blue and a negative correlation with red. An insignificant correlation is not marked with colour.

Student motivation is higher in students who were sure they wanted to study nursing and did not consider entering other studies ($r = 0.68$). Also, the correlation is strongly positive between student motivation and items describing that they would regret if they did not choose nursing as a study program ($r = 0.61$). There is a correlation between student motivation and study influence on social life ($r = 0.62$). Students with many obligations are less successful in their studies ($r = -0.32$).

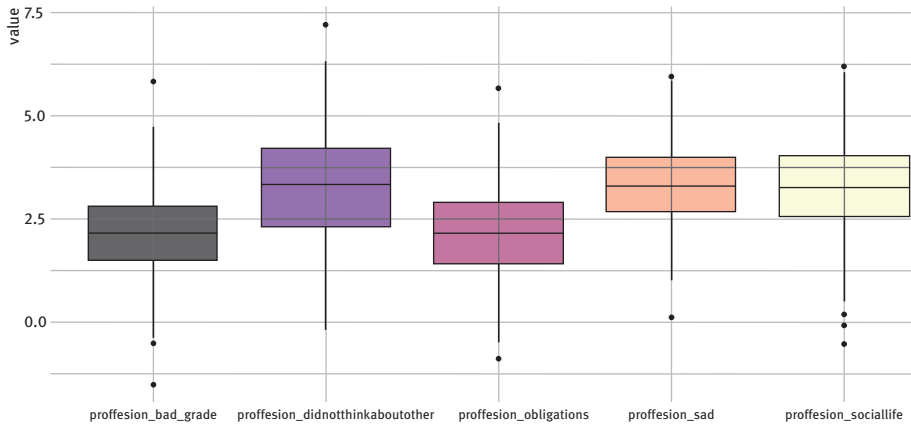


Fig. 14.1: Data distribution among student motivation items.

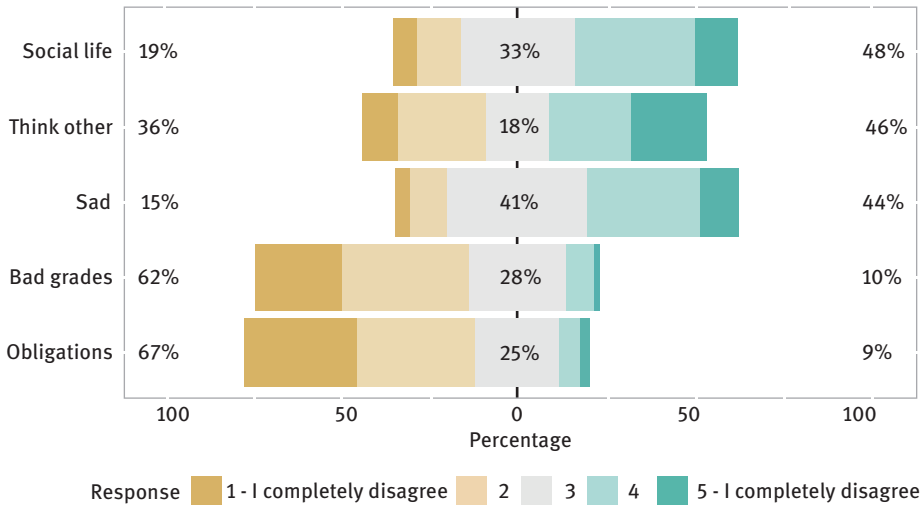


Fig. 14.2: Likert-scale response distribution for student motivation items.

14.4 Discussion

This study aimed to determine which factors influence students' motivation to choose a nursing degree programme. Career planning is a demanding process where every decision has its consequences. Students' skills and intentions may change completely depending on the type and specific career choice [15]. The motivation of the students who participated in this study is slightly higher than average. Motivation included processes

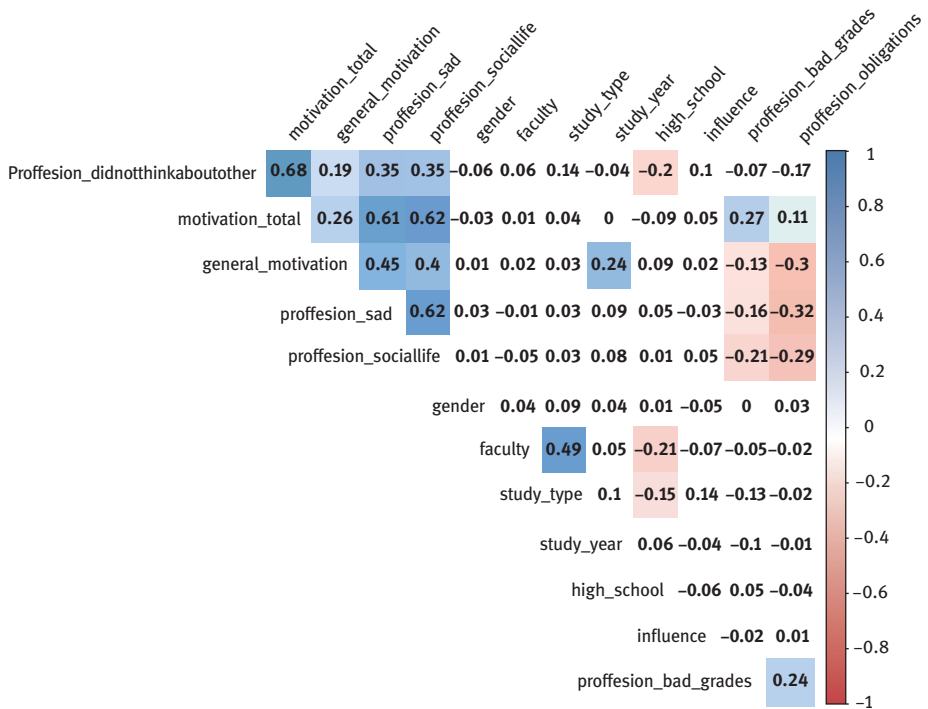


Fig. 14.3: Correlations between motivation to study nursing and various factors.

to promote and sustain goal-directed activities. Motivational processes can be internal influences that lead to outcomes such as choice, effort, persistence, or success. Important internal motivational processes include goals and self-evaluations of progress, self-efficacy, social comparisons, values, expectations of outcomes, attribution, and self-regulation [16]. The largest number of students indicates that no one influenced their decision to enrol in nursing, while a smaller number of respondents indicate that their parents and friends influenced them; high parental expectations are positively associated with adolescents' academic success and depression. Complex parental expectations and a mediating role can be very detrimental for young students [17]. Students convinced of their decision to study nursing were more motivated and did not regret choosing this course. Self-efficacy belief is a motivational product. When students can manage their problems and choices, their self-efficacy increases, and they become more motivated to achieve academic success [18]. Motivation is lower in students where education and many commitments interfere with social life or the other way around. Student life balance is an important predictor of student mental health. Educational institutions should emphasize helping students find a balance between student life and personal life so that students can improve their faculty experience [19], and too much workload can lead to dropping out of studies. Motivation is higher among

students who did not think about other study programmes or vice versa. Nursing programmes are becoming increasingly popular in many countries [20]. One major reason for choosing nursing is that people want a secure, stable, and respected career with various opportunities [21]. In the same way, motivation is higher among students who would regret that they did not choose nursing as a study programme or inversely.

Motivation is also higher among students who would choose nursing, even if the study would influence their social life or vice versa. A study aimed to determine the prevalence of sleep disorders among nursing students found that chronic sleep deprivation is indirectly responsible for decreased social life in nursing students [22]. However, a high workload and lack of time for social life remain factors in nurses' turnover [23]. However, students who believe that nursing study would affect their social life would still choose to study and would regret it if they did not choose or inversely. The other variables were not as strongly correlated.

However, our study has some limitations regarding study design, sample, and sampling method. Our study was cross-sectional, so it reflects phenomena at a single time point. A longitudinal design might be necessary to explore the phenomena over an extended period and possible changes over time. Another limitation regards our convenience sampling method as it may not represent the typical population, for example, in our sample, 80% of the participants were female, and the results cannot be generalized. In further studies, this might be improved by using a more complex sampling method, such as random stratified sampling. Furthermore, recall bias could also be present, as the higher year students were asked to answer questions about the things from their past. In addition, the disproportion of sample size could have influenced statistical testing.

14.5 Conclusion

In Slovenia, Croatia, and the rest of the world, there is a large shortage of healthcare personnel, which can consequently affect the quality of patient care. Students must recognize the significance of nursing. Furthermore, they must develop a positive attitude towards their profession. Despite various factors that may reduce students' motivation to study, we want them to maintain their highest possible motivation with different support methods and to remain in the nursing profession after graduating.

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