

Original Research Article

Carrier preference after graduation among AIIMS nursing students: higher education or government job as nursing officer

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ABSTRACT

Background: Career by choice means that a student chooses a career of their own choice according to their interests and the demands of time. The present study aimed to investigate the preferences of pursuing government jobs or higher education among final-year nursing undergraduates and perceived barriers to pursuing higher education in nursing.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional web-based study was conducted among 207 final-year B.Sc. nursing students from May 2021 to June 2021 at the various All India Institutes of Medical Sciences of India. Data collection was done using total enumerative sampling techniques by self-structured questionnaire. A descriptive statistic was applied to prepare the results.

Results: Findings suggested that the government job after graduation was the priority among students (63.3%), and only (30.4%) of students were highly motivated to pursue higher education in nursing. The majority (42.9%) of respondents given a reason to choose a nursing course were not selected in NEET-UG. Further data revealed that the reason for choosing the job over higher education was financial independence. Findings also reported that the student's perspectives towards the nursing profession were a lack of respect as compared to other medical professions, stigma in society, socially less accepted professions, fewer opportunities in research and education, and gender discrimination in the profession.

Conclusions: The findings necessitate the need for a sensitization program to develop awareness of the benefits of pursuing higher education. This may change the stigma and improve the social image of the profession.

Keywords: Nursing students, Preference, Career choice, Graduation

INTRODUCTION

Career by choice refers to a student's choice of a career based on their interests. A variety of factors influence students' career choices, including their educational background, socioeconomic background, opportunity, personality, motivation, and environment.¹ Student perceptions are the most important factor influencing decision-making opportunities to choose a particular profession.²

According to Virginia Henderson, modern nursing defined nursing as "the unique function of the nurse is to assist the individual, sick or well, in the performance of those activities contributing to health or its recovery (or to peaceful death) that he would perform unaided if he had the necessary strength, will or knowledge and to do this in such a way as to help him gain independence as rapidly as possible".³ Nursing is viewed as a job that requires compassion, patience, and strength.⁴

Auxiliary nurse and midwife (ANM), general nursing and midwifery (GNM), and bachelor of science in nursing (B. Sc. nursing) are the entry-level nursing courses in India. After completing their basic nursing education, nurses have the option of continuing their studies and pursuing a career as a teacher in a nursing institution. This gives individuals more freedom in their work, as well as enhanced job satisfaction, professional recognition, and higher compensation. Nurses can also work in a variety of settings, including bedside nursing, community or public health nursing, and nursing administration. Nursing is generally regarded favourably due to its ability to provide job security and a consistent income as reported by Mooney et al.⁵ Job security was the primary reason for choosing nursing as a career option. The nursing profession continued to grow after the establishment of the Trained Nurses Association of India (TNAI) and the Indian Nursing Council (INC).

The majority of nursing students in India are thought to have a negative attitude toward the profession. Several factors contribute to students' negative attitudes, including the profession's low reputation, a lack of autonomy, no definite job description for nurses, and no opportunities in various administrative positions in nursing.⁶⁻⁹ Some studies also reported the altruistic, caring and serving nature of the nursing profession however, Lai et al reported that nursing students (65.4) would not choose nursing as a career after graduation.¹⁰ Many recent studies have revealed that most college students have little knowledge of the variety of nursing career opportunities in teaching, management, and administration.^{11,12} It is important to investigate the nursing student's perceptions of the nursing profession, as well as the factors influencing their choice of work setting after graduation. So, the current study was conducted to investigate nursing students' career preferences and perceived barriers to pursuing higher education in the final academic years of B.Sc. (nursing).

METHODS

Study design

A descriptive cross-sectional online web-based survey was conducted from May 2021 to June- 2021 among selected All India Institute of Medical Sciences located at Jodhpur, Delhi, Bhopal, Rishikesh, and Bhuvneshwar of India, to investigate nursing students' career preferences and perceived barriers to pursuing higher education among AIIMS, Nursing students. Inclusion criteria were students who were willing to participate, available during data collection time and studying in the final academic year of B.Sc. nursing were recruited as participants. Students suffering from any mental illness and who were not willing to participate were excluded from the study.

Data collection procedure

A self-structured online survey was sent among 207 final-year undergraduate nursing students through WhatsApp

and e-mails. Online consent was taken after explaining the purpose of the study. They were given the freedom to withdraw at any point in time during data collection. Following the principle of total enumerative sampling, self-structured questionnaires were administered that consisted of four sections, section A contains socio-demographic details, section B contains items related to the assessment of career preferences, section C contains open-ended items regarding students' perspectives regarding the nursing profession and section D is related to perceived barriers in pursuing higher education. Self-structured questionnaires were validated by 5 nursing experts and found reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.88$).

Ethical consideration

Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional ethics committee and online consent was taken after explaining the participants' information sheet.

Statistics

Data was collected and coded in master data sheets. Statistical analysis was done using statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 20 software. Only descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) were used in the analysis.

RESULTS

A total of 207 final-year nursing students participated. The first part of the results section discussed the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondent, the second part reported career preferences after B.Sc. (choice for bedside nursing or pursuing higher education) and the third part consisted of the student's perspective towards the nursing profession. The final part discussed perceived barriers to choosing higher education.

Section A: socio-demographic profile

Table 1 explains the demographic characteristics of the students. The majority of the students were Hindu (82%) and most of the students were unmarried (99%). The majority of the students' monthly family income was between 25000-50000. One-fourth of the (27.1%) student's mother was illiterate. The majority of student's (40.1%) father was in govt. job followed. In this study, almost half of the students (45.4%) were the eldest one. Around three-fourths (76.3%) of the student's family has no member in their family in the nursing profession.

Section B: career preference

A majority (63.3%) of the students responded government job as a nursing officer after graduation. Then the researcher explored the preference for work areas in a hospital and found that 26.57% of the students preferred to work in the intensive care unit, followed by 27.05%, 25.60%, 5.3%, and 15.45% in the operation theatre,

general wards, outpatient department, and emergency department, respectively. Only 30.4% of respondents were motivated for higher education in nursing however 13.5% of the students weren't sure what career path they should take. After graduation, only a small percentage (1.4%) wished to obtain experience by working as a tutor at a teaching institution (public or private). After exploring the reasons behind choosing government jobs as a priority were financial independence (52.65%) and financial crisis (20.8%) in families. Only (14.49%) of students had only interest in bedside staffing in hospitals. Some (12.07%) of the students said there was no advantage to pursuing an M.Sc. and this influenced their decision not to pursue

advanced nursing education. Of those students (30.4%) chose higher education as a priority, some reported that the reasons behind them were career growth (11.59%), interest in teaching (4.34%) and don't like bedside nursing (11.59%). Some students (2.8%) responded to choose higher education only if they don't get a government job just after their B.Sc. and students (66.7%) will choose a job over higher education if they get both (higher education, government job) at the same time. Medical-surgical nursing emerged at the top for approximately 45% of the respondents among postgraduate specialization. Half of the students (52.17%) reported being very likely to choose work in India only (Table 2).

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of final-year students regarding their demographic characteristics (N=207).

Category	Percentage (%)
Age	
20-22	30.7
22-24	50.8
24-26	10.9
>26	7.6
Religion	
Hindu	82.2
Muslims	3.2
Christian	10.6
Sikh	2.4
Others	1.7
Habitation	
Rural	23.9
Urban	76.1
Marital status	
Married	1
Unmarried	99
Family Monthly income	
<10k	12.4
Between 10-25k	23.2
Between 25-50k	30.3
>50k	34.1
Father's educational status	
Illiterate	2.4
Primary education	13.9
Secondary education	6.9
Senior secondary	24.2
Graduation	35.7
Post-graduation	16.9
Father's occupation	
Agriculture	24.2
Private job	18.8
Govt. Job	40.1
Self-employed	16.9
Mother's educational status	
Illiterate	27.1
Primary education	25.1
Secondary education	19.1
Senior Secondary	20.2
Graduation	2.7

Continued.

Category	Percentage (%)
Post-graduation	5.8
Siblings	
One	45.4
Two	27.5
Three	20.3
>Three	5.2
Nil	1.6
Birth order	
Elderly	45.4
Second elder	24.2
Third elder	15.9
Younger one	14.5
Nursing personnel in the family	
Yes	23.7
No	76.3

Table 2: Assessment of career preference after graduation.

Items	Frequency (%)
Reason for opting for nursing as a career	
Serving community	38 (18.35)
Parental choice	26 (12.6)
Self-interest	38 (18.4)
Didn't get selected in NEET-UG	89 (42.9)
Job security	9 (4.3)
Social status	7 (3.3)
Preferences after B.Sc.	
Govt. job	131 (63.3)
Higher education (M.Sc.)	63 (30.4)
Teaching experience	3 (1.4)
First, come get	22 (10.6)
Not decided yet	28 (13.5)
Preference in clinical setting	
ICU	55 (26.57)
OT	56 (27.05)
General ward	53 (25.60)
OPD	11 (5.3)
Emergency dept.	32 (15.45)
Reason to choose job over higher education	
Family financial crisis	43 (20.77)
No benefit of higher education (M.Sc.)	25 (12.07)
Interested in staffing only	30 (14.49)
Financial independence	109 (52.65)
Reason to choose M.Sc. after graduation	
Career growth	24 (11.9)
Interested in teaching job	9 (4.34)
Don't want to be a bedside nurse	24 (11.59)
Only if I get it before govt. job	6 (2.8)
Not interested in M.Sc. (nursing)	144 (69.37)
Most preferred speciality in M.Sc. nursing	
Medical surgical nursing (MSN)	92 (44.44)
Pediatrics nursing	31 (14.97)
Mental health nursing/ psychiatry	40 (19.32)
Community health nursing (CHN)	11 (5.31)

Continued.

Items	Frequency (%)
Gynecology and obstetrics	33 (15.94)
If you get both opportunities (govt. job and M.Sc.), you will prefer	
Govt. job	138 (66.7)
M.Sc. nursing	51 (24.63)
Can't say anything	18 (8.69)
Want to switch profession from nursing	
Yes	98 (47.34)
No	109 (52.65)
Future vision	
Work in India only	108 (52.17)
Abroad	51 (24.63)
Not sure	48 (23.18)

Section C: student's perspective towards the nursing profession

This section was investigated through some open-ended questions. Participants disclosed some administrative issues in the nursing profession like gender discrimination (80:20 reservation) in recruitment for NORCET, not considering higher education for promotion, and 3 years of teaching experience as eligibility criteria for tutors for M.Sc. candidates as well. Apart from administrative issues students also reported a lack of respect stigma, socially less accepted profession, and fewer opportunities for research and education in the nursing field as compared to other medical professions. The study also reported that the majority of nurse administrators lack higher positions in their workplaces. The executive board of hospitals and academic institutes consist of members from various disciplines other than nursing. Only a few nursing administrators hold positions on the Executive Board and among those who hold positions, they hold less authority and do not play a significant role in the decision-making process which ultimately has no purpose likewise, responsibility without authority to carry out assigned duties is useless.

Table 3: Perceived barriers to pursuing higher education (personal and administrative factors).

S. no.	Perceived barriers	Percentage
1	Not beneficial in career advancement in the clinical setting	9.1
2	Cost of programme	5
3	Non-consideration of higher education as a promotion in a clinical setting	21
4	Job scarcity in teaching	7
5	Low wedges in private teaching sectors	3.9
6	Financial crisis	43
7	Less stipend for PG students in nursing college	11

Section D: perceived barriers to pursuing higher education (personal and administrative factors)

The study also investigated some barriers to pursuing higher education like financial crisis, less stipend for PG students in nursing colleges, not being beneficial in career advancement in the clinical setting, cost of the programme, non-consideration of higher education as a promotion in a clinical setting, low wedges in private teaching sectors, job scarcity in teaching (Table 3).

DISCUSSION

A nurse is one of the most significant frontline healthcare workers in a medical setting. Since everyone entering the nursing field believes they are serving people, nursing is one of the occupations that is regarded as a service to humanity. The impressions college students have of the nursing profession are influenced by a wide range of good and negative factors. College students are at the age where they need to decide which safe career path to go. This study aimed to evaluate nursing students' career preferences after graduation. The data used in this study were solely collected from female nursing students since only female students are allowed to enrol in the bachelor's degree in the study setting. The majority of earlier research likewise presented similar information on female dominance.^{10,13,14}

In contrast to research, which found that over half of undergraduates (52.9% and 65.3% in the B. Sc. (N) and PB B. Sc. (N) groups, respectively) were interested in teaching after graduation, the current study found that over half of the students (66.7%) wanted to choose a government job as nursing officers.¹⁵ This finding highlighted the need to sensitize these students to pursuing higher education.

The current study found that most students (71.4%) became nurses because they failed to get into NEET-UG admission, in contrast to our findings, a study showed that students select the nursing profession because it is a respectable career, are self-motivated, and want to honour their parents' desires.¹⁶ According to the results of the current study, over half of the students (52.7%) prefer

to settle only in India, while one-fourth of the students (24.6%) want to settle abroad for the duration of their careers. This runs counter to the results of earlier research which showed that most students were drawn to immigrating abroad in the hopes of obtaining better career possibilities and a higher standard of living.¹⁷ Consistent with previous research our results verified that undergraduate nursing students' employment decisions were significantly influenced by their family's monthly salary.^{18,19} The majority of nursing students, according to the current study, had little interest in switching jobs; this conclusion runs counter to other studies that have been published, whereas another study reported that 41.2% of the nurses would leave their line of work due to lack of autonomy in their working area.^{15,20} The strength of the study includes a multicentric approach. On the other hand, studies also have some limitations, such as the use of cross-sectional research design, which limits the assessment of longitudinal variations in the mental status of the participants. Due to the online nature of the survey (what's app and emails), there can possibility of systematic sampling bias and participants' self-selection. We had only included AIIMS students which could decrease the generalizability of the study.

CONCLUSION

According to this report, the majority of nursing students in their final year choose to become nursing officers in central institutes since doing so will allow them to live better lives and become financially independent. This study also showed that the professional opportunities following further education are roughly equivalent to those following a bachelor's degree. Students did not want to focus significantly on higher education since they believed that they would rarely receive further benefits in their professions, even after earning a higher degree.

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