



Students' Consideration of Choosing Nursing Career for the Future

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ABSTRACT

Nursing is a profession that demands responsibility, empathy, and sustained commitment. Despite its critical role in healthcare systems, the profession is currently facing significant global challenges, most notably a widespread shortage of nursing personnel. This shortage is further exacerbated by a declining interest among younger generations in selecting nursing as a career, raising concerns about the future sustainability of the healthcare workforce. Therefore, this study aims to explore students' considerations when choosing nursing as a future career in a private school in Batam. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews recorded using a Digital Voice Recorder. A total of 15 participants were selected based on data saturation. Four key themes were identified, including Nursing as a Noble Profession, Nurses as Role Models, Support for Becoming a Nurse, and Challenges in Choosing a Nursing Career. Students often perceive the nursing profession as noble and dignified, largely due to its dedication to caring for and helping others. The experience of being cared for and seeing nurses doing their job became students' role models in the future. Another factor was that social support was found to encourage students to pursue nursing. On the other hand, barriers such as gender stigma, the high cost of nursing education, and family economic difficulties are significant challenges in choosing this career. In conclusion, students' decisions to choose nursing are influenced by both supportive and obstructive factors. This study suggests that further investigation should be conducted using nursing theory, focusing on how clinical experiences during nursing education impact students' career goals in the context of personal, interpersonal, and social systems. Understanding these dynamics could help improve the recruitment and retention of nursing students.

Keyword: Career, Education, Goals, Nursing, Students



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1. Introduction

During adolescence, individuals face numerous choices that shape their future careers, such as selecting a high school major or an advanced college major (Kumala & Afriani, 2023). By established adulthood, individuals typically gain confidence, skills, and expertise within a specific vocational field (Goedereis et al., 2023). The process of choosing and preparing for a career is continuous and does not occur in the blink of an eye. This process often begins with an individual's interest in a particular occupation, motivating them to seek information, prepare through education, and engage in various activities, including selecting a major or study program that supports their career aspirations. This developmental trajectory also explains why students choose

a nursing career. High school students, for instance, often already possess clear perceptions and reasons for wanting to pursue nursing in the future (Indiati & Putro, 2023).

The nursing profession demands exceptional responsibility, empathy, and commitment (Mae C. Fontanilla et al., 2023a). Compared to other healthcare sectors, nursing frequently experiences more workforce-related challenges. Given that nurses constitute the largest and most critical component of the healthcare system, a shortage of nurses represents a significant issue (Hasan & Firdaus, 2022a). Beyond the current global shortage, there is also a concerning lack of interest in nursing among the younger generation (Zhu et al., 2021).

The situation in various countries reveals a significant challenge in nurse recruitment, with many countries struggling to meet workforce demands and keep pace with retirement. For instance, Morocco faces a worsening shortage of nurses annually (El Fadely et al., 2024a). Similarly, in Vietnam, the dropout rate for nursing majors is substantial at 32.2%, exceeding rates observed in the UK (20%) and Australia (10%) (El Fadely et al., 2024a). In Indonesia, specifically in Jember, research indicates that negative perceptions and a lack of desire to pursue nursing are key reasons for students leaving nursing programs. Data show that 52.6% of students have low interest, 10.3% are concerned about low salaries, and 51.5% are influenced by immediate job prospects (Ulinuha et al., 2022). This pronounced lack of interest in nursing careers is projected to heighten the country's healthcare worker shortage, potentially leading to a decline in the quality of health services and challenges in meeting community health needs. Such consequences include increased nurse workload, higher healthcare costs, and a decrease in overall community well-being (El Fadely et al., 2024b).

Several previous studies corroborate these findings. For example, a cross-sectional study conducted by Hasan in Malaysia in 2020 utilized convenience sampling to survey 155 students. The study found that, overall, respondents held positive perceptions of the nursing profession, despite some negative views on specific aspects. However, despite these positive sentiments, only 18.1% of respondents expressed interest in choosing nursing as a career, with most interested individuals being women (Hasan & Firdaus, 2022b).

Suhendra et al. (2024) conducted a descriptive study utilizing a sampling technique with 299 respondents. Their findings indicate that the high preference for nursing as a career choice among respondents is attributed to the following reasons: opportunity to travel and practice abroad (85.6%), parental influence (64.5%), and future employment opportunities (78.3%). A preliminary study conducted by the researchers on Wednesday, April 24, 2024, at SMK N 8 Batam, revealed that this vocational school offers five health-related majors, including nursing. The nursing program currently enrolls 284 students across classes X, XI, and XII.

Interviews with seven students currently pursuing academic education showed that four students chose a nursing career due to a desire to continue their major from high school, inspiration from experiences gained during practical training in a healthcare setting, and an aspiration to become professional healthcare workers. Conversely, two students opted not to pursue nursing as a career, citing study fatigue. One student expressed a desire to continue their education but lacked sufficient funds, leading them to prioritize immediate employment in other fields.

This phenomenon led the researcher to propose the study titled "Consideration of Students Choosing Nursing Careers for the Future at SMK N 8 Batam." This qualitative study aims to gain a deep understanding of students' considerations in selecting a nursing career. By comprehending these considerations, health institutions and healthcare organizations can identify strategies to enhance student interest in the nursing field, thereby increasing the number of students who choose nursing careers and contributing to the availability of a qualified nursing workforce.

2. Methods

2.1 Study Design

This study employed a descriptive phenomenological design to explore *the considerations influencing students' choices of nursing as a future career*. Drawing upon Husserl's writings, a descriptive phenomenological approach allows for the direct description of lived experiences without the need for interpretation (Sundler et al., 2019).

2.2 Participants

Participants were selected based on the following criteria: 1) students majoring in nursing, 2) students in Grade XII, and 3) students who could clearly articulate their experiences. Purposive sampling was utilized to identify students willing to share their perspectives on career choice considerations. The research team thoroughly explained the study's purpose and methods to potential participants, who were then invited to participate. To ensure the representation of diverse experiences, a maximum variation sampling approach was

adopted, with participants selected based on age and gender. Interviewing continued until data saturation was achieved.

2.3 Data Collection

This research was conducted using semi-structured interviews at a private school in Batam, Indonesia, between June and August 2024. The primary interview questions included: 1) "What are your thoughts on a career as a nurse and becoming a nurse?" 2) "What preparations have you made to become a nurse?" 3) "How supportive are your family, teachers, and friends regarding a career as a nurse?" Additionally, researchers employed probing questions, such as "Can you explain more about this?" to further explore participants' experiences. Before the interviews commenced, participants were informed of the study's purpose and confidentiality measures, and they provided signed consent. All interviews were audio-recorded and lasted approximately 45 minutes each. Data collection continued until saturation, at which point no new themes emerged from the interviews. It is important to note that the researchers had no prior relationship with the participants.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study employed a conventional content analysis method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To ensure the quality of the transcripts, the researchers meticulously double-checked them. First, the researchers conducted a verbatim transcription of the interviews and engaged in repeated readings to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives. Subsequently, the data were coded and categorized based on identified similarities through comparative analysis and discussions. These initial codes were then grouped into more general categories, which were subsequently compared and organized into overarching themes. Finally, the research team collaboratively discussed all codes and categories to ensure inter-rater agreement and enhance methodological rigor prior to their finalization.

2.5 Trustworthiness

Data credibility was established by implementing a rigorous data collection strategy, primarily through the use of a semi-structured interview guide. The data analysis process was comprehensively described to ensure reliability, and all source material was appropriately cited. The interviews were independently coded by the researchers, who subsequently held meetings to review the initial findings and reach a consensus on the codes and themes. These meetings served to establish the conformability and consistency of the study. Furthermore, the study detailed the researchers' background, participant selection criteria, data collection procedures, and analysis methodology to enhance the transferability of the findings.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study received ethical approval from the Universitas Awal Bros ethics committee following a comprehensive ethical review process (Ethical approval number: 0110/UAB.20/SR/KEPK/07.24). The study adhered to four core ethical principles: respect, autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. The researchers clearly explained the study's objectives and procedures to all participants, and each participant provided informed consent by signing a consent form prior to their enrollment in the study.

3. Results

The study participants were 15 students (13 female, 2 male) aged 16 to 18 from SMK N 8 Batam. These participants represented diverse ethnic groups, including Batak, Minang, Malay, and Flores. The breakdown by grade level was as follows: eight students from Class XII, three from Class XI, and four from Class X. This study identified four main themes: 1) nursing as a noble profession; 2) the nurse as a role model; 3) support for becoming a nurse; and 4) challenges in choosing nursing as a career. The following is a detailed discussion of the themes.

Table 1 Participant characteristics

Participant' Codes	Age	Gender	Religion	Tribe	Class
P1	17 years old	Male	Moslem	Minang	X.Ak.A
P2	18 years old	Female	Moslem	Batak	X.Ak.B
P3	16 years old	Female	Christian	Batak	X.Ak A
P4	16 years old	Male	Catholic	Flores	X. Ak A
P5	17 years old	Female	Moslem	Jawa	XI.Ak B
P6	17 years old	Female	Kristen	Batak	X1. Ak A
P7	17 years old	Female	Moslem	Jawa	XI. Ak B
P8	18 years old	Female	Moslem	Minang	XII.Ak C
P9	18 years old	Female	Christian	Jawa	XII. Ak B
P10	18 years old	Female	Moslem	Batak	XII. Ak A
P11	19 years old	Female	Moslem	Melayu	XII. Ak C
P12	19 years old	Female	Moslem	Minang	XII. Ak B
P13	18 years old	Female	Moslem	Melayu	XII. AK A
P14	18 years old	Female	Christian	Batak	XII.AK A
P15	19 years old	Female	Christian	Batak	XII.Ak C

Theme 1: Nursing as a noble profession

The first category explores participants' perceptions of the nursing profession. Participants consistently described nursing as a noble and essential role, as conveyed through the following statements:

"Nursing is a very noble profession, and nurses work together with doctors to help patients recover." (P1)

"...Some people might think, 'What does a nurse really do? Just care for sick people, set up IVs, poke this and that?' But nurses provide a great service; it's about the compassion they show and the education they provide to their patients." (P2)

"Yes, being a nurse is a very noble job; they provide a great service and help many people." (P3)

"Nursing is a very noble and beneficial profession." (P4)

"...a nurse is a professional who never seems to tire..." (P5)

"A nurse is a healthcare professional who plays an important role in hospitals and other healthcare facilities." (P8)

"Nursing is a profession that demands tireless dedication." (P9)

"For me, a nurse is a person who cares for the sick and also serves on the front line." (P10)

"Nursing is a noble job that involves helping doctors heal patients." (P12)

The second category addresses the challenges perceived by participants in the nursing profession. Participants frequently expressed that being a nurse involves numerous difficulties. Statements included:

"...there are definitely many challenges, such as a heavy workload, high stress, and various other risks." (P4)

"...the workload is heavy and the salary is low." (P11)

"...the workload is heavy and there is never enough time." (P14)

Theme 2: Nurse as role model

Participants perceive nurses as significant role models. Their motivations for choosing a nursing career can be categorized into two primary areas: career development and inspiration from role models.

The first category, career development, highlights participants' increasing motivation to pursue nursing due to diverse personal and observational experiences. This is evidenced by the following participant statements:

"...so being a nurse also offers great opportunities for the future." (P4)

"As far as I know, the opportunities for a nurse include becoming a civil servant, an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS/K3) specialist, or opening a private home care service or clinic." (P6)

"Ever since I had tuberculosis in the 8th grade, I have wanted to become a nurse." (P1)

"So, I learned from my younger brother's health problems; he was constantly in and out of the hospital and had multiple surgeries. That inspired me and motivated me to become a nurse myself..." (P2)

"When I was in elementary school, my mother got sick, and the nurse who examined and cared for her was so kind and extraordinary..." (P3)

"In 2020, during the COVID pandemic, I also got sick with the virus. It was then that I experienced firsthand what it's like to be cared for by nurses..." (P5)

"During my internship (PKL-Praktik Kerja Lapangan) there, I encountered many things I had never done before. I also grew to like the nursing environment even more." (P5)

"During my internship (PKL-Praktik Kerja Lapangan), I was very grateful to be able to jump right into the professional world as a nursing assistant." (P6)

"As it happened, I did an internship at a hospital back when I was in school, so I already had direct experience caring for patients and facing situations that required quick action." (P9)

"I was motivated by my family's experiences." (P15)

"I couldn't stand the sight of blood. Because of that, the experience became more of a challenge for me. In turn, I became even more interested in the world of nursing." (P10)

The second category is inspiration from role models. Participants reported that following certain experiences, they developed a greater interest in nursing due to inspiring figures. This is supported by the following participant statements:

"The nurse who took care of me was named Bang Fikri. It was because of him that I was motivated to become a nurse..." (P1)

"...I was inspired by my sister who is a nurse." (P2)

"...the nurse who took care of me when I had COVID." (P5)

"The person who inspired me... hmm, it was a nurse at the hospital where I did my internship." (P9)

"The person who inspired me to become a nurse was my mother." (P10)

Theme 3: Support for becoming a nurse

Another reason why students choose to be nurses is the support system. This study reveals that social support from parents, teachers, and peers plays a crucial role in encouraging participants to choose a nursing major. This support fosters motivation, enthusiasm, and self-confidence, thereby sustaining students' commitment to their nursing education. The support observed in this study can be categorized as follows:

The first category is parental support. Participants consistently reported receiving substantial support from their parents. Illustrative statements from participants include:

"My parents are very supportive of me." (P5)

"My parents are happy to see that their child wants to become a nurse." (P6)

"Yes, they are supportive. Whatever choice their child makes, they are happy with it and support it." (P10)

The second category is teacher support. During their education, students also received considerable support from their teachers. Evidence of this support is reflected in the following statements:

"The teachers also support us students. We are guided by the teachers here as well." (P10)

"They were very supportive; I even passed my university entrance exam thanks to them." (P9)

"When we are practicing, the teachers here will teach us until we finally get it." (P7)

"The teachers here often give us motivation." (P4)

The third category is friend support. Participants indicated that their friends provided valuable support. Examples of this peer support include:

"With my friends, we often talk about things like where we want to go to college, whether or not we'll continue our nursing education, and what kind of nurses we want to be in the future." (P3)

"With my friends at school, we also study together." (P4)

"Yes, we also help each other with our studies. We also remind one another." (P9)

Theme 4: Challenges in choosing nursing as a career

Participants identified significant obstacles hindering their pursuit of nursing careers, which broadly fall into two categories: lack of social support and financial constraints.

The first category highlights the insufficient support from individuals in the participants' social circles. Students' statements illustrate this point:

"The problem is, my friends don't like the idea of me becoming a nurse. I tell them, 'It's okay for a guy to be a nurse.'" (P1)

"...I was going to be a nurse, but my parents told me not to pursue it for the time being..." (P13)

"...But it's actually my friends outside of school who look down on me because I'm a guy majoring in nursing." (P4)

The second category is financial. Economic factors presented substantial obstacles for students aspiring to choose nursing as their profession, as evidenced by these participant statements:

"...my family's financial situation still couldn't afford to send me to school." (P14)

"Yes, because of the cost. If you want to continue your studies in nursing, it's expensive..." (P13)

"...I also know that nursing school is expensive." (P12)

4. Discussion

4.1 Nursing as a Noble Profession

This study's findings indicate that participants generally hold a positive view of the nursing profession, perceiving it as a noble, meritorious, and tireless occupation that plays a crucial role in the healthcare system.

Consistent with these findings, research by Che Hasan et al. (2020) on student perceptions of nursing careers revealed that students view nursing as a profession characterized by a high level of care, requiring skills and knowledge to assist others, particularly the ill. Furthermore, nursing students demonstrated a high perception of the nursing role's function. Similarly, students majoring in nursing perceive it as a highly noble profession due to its focus on serving and caring for patients. A primary reason for this positive perception is the essential role nurses play in improving health through education (Neumbe et al., 2023).

Based on King's theory, students, as open systems within the personal system aspect, interact and exchange energy and information with their environment. Their perceptions of the nursing profession are influenced by past experiences and acquired information. The researchers assume that students view nursing as a way to express their values of caring and service to others. They generally hold a good perception of nursing, recognizing it as a noble profession vital to the community, and often consider it a selfless job.

However, research by Shafiei et al., (2024) highlighted the challenges associated with being a nurse, as reported by students in interviews. These challenges include heavy workloads, work-related stress, fatigue from nursing duties, insufficient rest and vacation, and low salaries.

The researcher therefore hypothesize that nursing presents specific challenges distinct from other professions, particularly concerning workload, stress, and well-being. Consequently, these challenges may contribute to students' reluctance to choose nursing as a career.

4.2 Nurses as Role Models

From the research results, it is clear that the participants' decision to choose a nursing major was strongly influenced by their personal experiences, specifically those stemming from illness and Field Work Practice. These experiences cultivated a strong interest and motivation for a career in health. Career Development is defined as how individuals actively shape, manage, and enhance their career paths. It involves exploring various opportunities to enhance knowledge, skills, and competencies, and integrating acquired work experience to achieve higher professional goals (Fadilla & Abdullah, 2019).

Research by Sari et al. (2021) demonstrates a relationship between motivation and personal experience. Similarly, Ghani et al. (2023) found that role models influence students' career choices, with positive role models providing examples of career paths and professional conduct. Learning experiences enable individuals to interpret and plan their future careers, offering an organized perspective to guide their chosen profession. Furthermore, Fontanilla et al. observed that students' interest in nursing stems from their experiences and skills gained in hospital settings. Students are motivated to provide care and support to patients during recovery, often forming strong bonds and witnessing firsthand the positive impact they can have on individuals (Mae C. Fontanilla et al., 2023b).

The results of this study revealed that participants were motivated to choose a nursing major due to inspirational figures. These figures included nurses who had provided care to them or nurses encountered during internships. Such individuals served as role models, providing strong motivation for a career in the health sector.

The nurse figure, acting as a role model, fostered positive and inspiring nurse-patient interactions, thereby

encouraging participants to select a nursing major. Thus, Imogene King's Theory emphasizes the significance of interaction in achieving health outcomes. Specifically, the interpersonal system aspect of her theory addresses the involvement between two or more interacting individuals or groups. Therefore, the engagement of nurses in students' lives—as mentors, friends, or influential figures—can significantly impact their career choices.

Drawing from the aforementioned theory and related research, it is evident that career and skills development can provide opportunities, shape an individual's identity, values, and life goals, ultimately guiding them toward career choices aligned with their interests and passions. Furthermore, inspiration plays a crucial role in attracting young individuals to the nursing profession. Positive interactions between nurses and patients, coupled with exemplary behavior from nurses, can inspire individuals to pursue a career in healthcare.

4.3 Support to Become a Nurse

The results of this study indicate that social support from various sources, including parents, teachers, and peers, plays a highly significant role in motivating participants to choose a nursing major. This support fosters motivation, enthusiasm, and confidence, enabling participants to pursue their education in nursing.

The availability of social support from parents, teachers, and friends is a critical factor in individuals' career choices within nursing. Specifically, the findings reveal that social support from these sources is essential in influencing students' career decisions. Students with robust social support networks tend to exhibit stronger confidence in their career plans (Suyitno et al., 2024). Furthermore, research by James et al. (2023) identified parents and friends as the most influential factors guiding students toward a nursing career.

Based on King's theory, the interpersonal system aspect emphasizes the involvement of two or more interacting individuals or groups. Therefore, the engagement of nurses in students' lives—for example, as mentors, friends, or influential figures—can significantly impact their career selection. The findings of this study further underscore that social support is the primary, or most dominant, factor influencing an individual's decision to pursue a nursing major. This type of support provides robust intrinsic motivation for individuals to achieve their professional goals.

4.4 Challenges in Choosing Nursing as a Career

The research revealed that several barriers prevented individuals from pursuing a nursing career. Specifically, two male participants reported experiencing a lack of support and stigma from their social environment. Additionally, participants mentioned the high cost of nursing education and their families' poor economic conditions as significant obstacles.

Financial challenges emerge as a primary factor influencing career attainment. Furthermore, the study found that students, on average, perceive their families as playing a significant role in career planning. While both socioeconomic status and family influence are important, the influence of the extended and nuclear family is notably high, accounting for 91% of responses. Conversely, a lack of support from one's social circle hinders career advancement (Armansyah, 2021).

The Goal Attainment Theory proposed by Imogene King shows that personal, interpersonal, and social systems can influence an individual's ability to achieve their goals. This theory helps in identifying obstacles and challenges to goal attainment. Based on this, researchers assume that positive social support and stable financial conditions are essential. With such support, individuals are more likely to achieve their career goals, particularly within the context of nursing education. economic disparities, to facilitate a precise analysis.

5. Conclusion

The study revealed that students hold a positive perception of the nursing profession, viewing it as a noble, meaningful, and dedicated career. This perception is rooted in personal values that emphasize care and service to others, aligning with the concept of personal systems within Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment. Nurses serve as influential role models, a perception often formed through personal experiences of receiving nursing care or through encounters with exemplary nursing figures who establish benchmarks for future aspirations. Social support, including encouragement from parents, educators, and peers, has proven to be a significant factor encouraging students to pursue nursing as a future career. This support not only motivates but also instills confidence in students to continue their education in this field.

Conversely, challenges in choosing nursing as a career include a lack of environmental support, particularly for male students who may encounter gender stigma. In addition, the high cost of nursing education and unsupportive family economic conditions present substantial barriers for students aspiring to become

nurses. Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment offers a framework to assist students in selecting a future nursing career. By understanding students' needs, desires, and beliefs, nurses can provide effective support and guidance in helping students achieve their goals and fostering the development of successful nursing careers.

Future research could focus on further investigations utilizing nursing theory, specifically exploring how clinical experiences during nursing education influence students' career goal achievement within the context of personal, interpersonal, and social systems. Such a study could delve into how direct interactions with patients and healthcare teams reinforce or alter students' motivation to pursue a career in nursing.

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