

# Family and caregiving values: Factors influencing career choice of Filipino nursing students

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## ABSTRACT

While career choices are personal, it is also influenced by factors leading to a careful decision making process. These factors affecting a student's decision of taking up nursing may provide insights on the issue of declining nursing student numbers. The aim of this research is to explore the factors influencing first year nursing students' decision of pursuing nursing as a career choice. The study utilised a descriptive qualitative design using written accounts of first year nursing students regarding the factors influencing their decision to study nursing. The study revealed two emerging themes: (1) future for the family; and (2) caregiving experience. The theme future of the family indicated the personal and economic gains of pursuing a career in nursing and the brighter future it brings with it. The second theme caregiving experience highlighted the significance of Filipino nursing students' experience of being a caregiver for their family and relatives, wherein it is viewed that if they have prior knowledge they can do better. Filipino nursing students' career choice for nursing is influenced by Filipino values of family ties and genuine passion developed out of personal caregiving experience.

**Keywords:** career choice, caregiving value, family, Filipino nursing students

## I. INTRODUCTION

The predicted global shortage of nurses is looming in the next five to ten years (Yamaguchi, Inoue, Harada, & Oike, 2016). Factors contributing to this shortage are complex. The ageing of the nursing workforce, the increasing acuity and comorbidities as people are living longer and the declining number of students choosing nursing as a career (Goodare, 2017). The most modifiable factor for this shortage and in fact one major control-keeper of the nursing workforce is managing the intake of individuals aspiring to become nurses. In other words, the more nursing graduates produced at present, the greater is the sustainability of the workforce for future demand.

Over the years, the number of students choosing nursing as a career option follows up and down trends (Wilkes, Cowin, & Johnson, 2015). Case in point, the

Philippines, which is a major nurse-exporting country in Asia (Lorenzo, Galvez-Tan, Icamina, & Javier, 2007) have observed a huge decline of students enrolling in the nursing programs (Arends-Kuening, Calara, & Go, 2015). This decline was also observed in American nursing schools in the last few decades (Kohler & Edwards, 1990). This is also true in the nursing schools in New Zealand and in Australia. This low intake of students poses critical threats to the viability of nursing workforce with the predicted shortage in the years soon to come (Sochalski, 2002).

While career choices are personal, it is also influenced by factors leading to a careful decision making process (Brodie et. al., 2004). These factors affecting a student's decision of taking up nursing may provide insights on the issue of declining nursing student numbers. Furthermore, factors influencing career choice is a motivator of pursuing greater gains either in an individual or holistic

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level (Amundson, 1995). Exploring the factors that influence choosing nursing as a future career by students will inform nursing workforce planners and policy makers in promoting these motivators to attract individuals to pursue a nursing career. Succession planning is a very important nursing agenda for the future workforce (Buchan & Calman, 2004).

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study utilised a descriptive qualitative design using written accounts of first year nursing students regarding the factors influencing their decision to study nursing. A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study as it aims to describe a phenomenon that is not previously known. Moreover, Sandelowski (2000) proposed that qualitative description is the “method of choice when straight descriptions of the phenomena are desired”.

Purposive sampling determined the selection of the participants in this study. Ten written accounts of selected nursing students enrolled in the first year Filipino students enrolled in a New Zealand School of Nursing were used as data for this research. Purposive sampling provides the researchers a pre-requisite understanding of eligible participants through inclusion and exclusion criteria (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2005). This research extracted data for analysis from the written accounts of Filipino nursing students, who are in their first year of studying nursing. This does not include those who repeat the year or those who failed the previous year. Filipino students were utilised as participants in this study as part of the larger study aimed to highlight any possible cultural differences in terms of factors influencing their decision to study nursing in New Zealand.

After ethical approval was achieved, an advertisement was posted on the notice board. Fifteen Filipino nursing students expressed interest to participate in the study. These interested students were followed-up through email and only ten confirmed to participate. Five potential participants have withdrawn participation due to other commitments and due to personal matters. Data were obtained from the written accounts of Filipino nursing students by answering the question: What influenced your decision to study nursing? Although written accounts cannot substitute face-to-face in-depth interviews, it is the most appropriate approach in this study given the nature of nursing students undertaking research. The researchers themselves are lecturers in nursing which can influence the nursing students' decision to participate in the study and the answers they give. Written accounts in qualitative research provide a more reflective and focussed data, which is required in

this research (Handy & Ross, 2009). Two researchers from the team coded the data. The six-step thematic analytical process was utilised in identifying emerging themes where a concept map was developed as part of the theme refining the process at Level II analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Ethical approval was granted by the researchers' institutional Human Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. Consent forms were obtained and confidentiality was maintained by ensuring written submissions were anonymous and no identifiers can be traced from the documents. An independent researcher assistant facilitated the collection of written submission to preserve anonymity. Students were not pressured to participate in the research. All names mentioned were pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Demographics.** This research aimed to explore the factors affecting Filipino nursing students' decision of pursuing nursing as a career option in a New Zealand School of Nursing. The participants were ten Filipino nursing students who are enrolled in their first year of nursing study. The participants' age ranges between 19-37 years old. There are six participants who are permanent residents and four who are citizens of New Zealand. The participants are composed of six females and four males.

**Themes.** The study revealed two emerging themes: future for the family and caregiving experience. The theme future of the family indicated the personal and economic gains of pursuing a career in nursing and the brighter future it brings with it. The second theme, caregiving experience highlighted the significance of Filipino nursing students' experience of being a caregiver for their family and relatives, wherein it is viewed that if they have prior knowledge they can do better.

**Future of the Family.** This theme presents Filipino nursing students' vision for the future, which are deeply embedded towards family goals. Filipino first year nursing students' decision of taking up nursing is influenced by looking at the future they believe nursing career can bring to their families and to their own future. This theme has been consistent across the written accounts of all participants and is best expressed in the following excerpts.

One of the participants mentioned about his expectations after finishing nursing study:

I will be able to buy things for our family like our own house, if I have a stable job as a nurse. I know in the future New Zealand will be short of

nurses, so I am assured for jobs. (John)

This theme is also further exemplified by a participants' motivation that through nursing a chance of family reunification is possible. A female participant's concern towards her family not only those who are already in New Zealand but also those who are still in the Philippines:

It (nursing) will give you a stable income after studying and by such time, I will be able to bring my whole family here in New Zealand and we will be reunited. (Sophie)

One participant also mentioned about her dream activities and goals after finishing nursing and this again involves the family:

Nursing will allow me to work anywhere else in the world as it will be in demand. And I will be able to bring my family with me and we can explore places all over the world. Also New Zealand registration can be used in Australia, it will be easier for us to migrate there. (Jamie)

Another participant seconded this notion of being able to travel and live life that their family have dreamt and looking forward to achieve this in anticipation of a secured job opportunities in nursing:

Nursing offers you a whole lot of opportunities. I promised my wife that we will go for a cruise in the Caribbean once I have saved money from a reliable nursing career. (Peter).

The idea of spending time together for a holiday with the family is one of the main motivators for nursing students as they looked at the brighter future working as a nurse. And this has been noted in one participant, who is very straightforward and accounted her observations of a friend who is a nurse:

I am enticed into nursing because honestly it pays better than working in the supermarket and opportunities that await you are amazing. You can go travelling with my family quite a lot with the money you are making. This is what I have seen from my friend who is a nurse. (Cindy)

**Caregiving Experience.** Previous caregiving experience is another theme that emerged from this study. The decision to take up nursing motivated them to pursue the career to improve previous experience. This caregiving

experience is explained in the context of looking after their sick family members or relatives in the past. Also this theme is exemplified by the nursing students' experiences of being the primary caregiver of family members or significant others living with disabilities and chronic conditions.

Margaret mentioned about the challenges she experienced, which motivated her to become a nurse:

I looked after my mother in the hospital before she passed way from terminal cancer of the colon. It was hard-work for us and was very emotionally draining. I have noticed that the nurses who looked after my mom were very nice and very passionate. They are very calm and they really know how to comfort us in those trying times. I thought I would like to be like them, so here I am hoping for the best of years to come. (Stephanie)

Some participants have drawn their experiences from being mothers and having that nurturing or caring maternal instinct in them already that made them decide pursuing studies that shares aspects they can readily relate:

I am ammother, and being a mother you already have that caring attitude towards others. That gave that spirit in thinking I can do nursing (Janice).

Patricia, also affirmed the previous narrative accounts in saying:

I think I am a caring person, as I have looked after and cared so much for my children and my family as a whole. This drives me to believe that because nursing is a caring profession, I will not have a difficult time adjusting to the nature of the job in the future. (Martha)

On the other hand one male participant mentioned about a being part of providing assistance and care during an emergency situation, which inspired him to study nursing:

I stopped by a road accident and the people were badly injured. I was there to help and provided reassurance and for the person stuck in the car not to panic while waiting for the ambulance. When the ambulance crew arrived,

one of them has a name tag, NURSE/PARAMEDIC. I was so inspired with what they did, so I decided to take up nursing (Matthew)

**Discussion.** This research aimed at exploring the factors that influence nursing students' decision in pursuing nursing as a career choice. The study employed a thematic analysis of the written accounts of Filipino nursing students on a question asking what motivated them to study nursing. Two themes emerged from the analysis, which are future of families and care giving experience.

Filipino nursing students' motivators to study nursing is rooted from an innate passion towards nursing and from a personal level. By values, Filipinos give special value to family ties and relationships (Miralao, 1997). This characteristic were found true amongst nursing students' motivation affecting the decision in choosing nursing as a career as it enables positive personal and economic gains in the future. Nursing students anticipated the shortage of nurses in the future which signals a promising career in having secured job opportunities. However, it is not clear if they are aware that at the same time patient acuity increases and workload becomes heavier than expected. Nursing specialty will be in demand in the future (Buchan, 2002). Career decision making most of the time is influenced by factors that lead to personal progression and achievement (Pool, 2012). The factors identified by this research are evident for Filipino nursing students. Motivation circles around family welfare and ties, which defined Filipino values.

Filipino nursing students also considered their exposure to healthcare and caregiving the impetus of their ambition to become nurses. It is noted that this is a very powerful and deeper of level motivation as it connotes personal experience and the attachment they had on those experiences that motivated them to become nurses. In other words, for this cohort of Filipino nursing students, choosing nursing as a career option is not only for economic gain but also it is embedded from an emotional experience. Such motivators increase attachment and passion to nursing. These kinds of motivators for career choice are genuine and will most likely produce positive outcomes (Murphy, 2006). Nurses who are passionate about what they do feel self-fulfilment with the job.

This study revealed both benefits for the family and inner passion from the caregiving experience as factors influencing one group of nursing students in their decision of pursuing nursing as a career. These findings highlight the need to address and determine the balance

in these aspects as individuals are attracted to a brighter future the career brings towards family and experiencing self-fulfilment with the job.

The study is a small-scale research of one group of nursing students, therefore transferability and generalizability of the results are limited.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Filipino nursing students' career choice for nursing is influenced by Filipino values of family ties and genuine passion developed out of personal caregiving experience. Filipino nursing students choose to study because it brings brighter future to families and fosters self-fulfilment.

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