

Influencing Factors in the Choice of Nursing as Career: A Study of Students in Nursing Training Institutions in Anambra State Nigeria

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Abstract

Choice of career sometimes comes with difficulty especially the decision to choose professional courses of study. This is a descriptive study that determined the factors that influence the choice of nursing as career among students in nursing training institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria. Objectives of the study captured the influence of family pressure, peer group and personal factors in the choice of nursing as career among the students. Social cognitive theory by Lent, et al (2008) was used as basis for the study. The instrument used for data collection was researchers' structured questionnaire that was validated and tested for internal consistency with reliability index of 0.87. Sample of 207 respondents was drawn from a population of 443 students. Simple random sampling technique was applied in selecting the participants for the study. Data generated from the study were analyzed with descriptive statistics. Study revealed that nursing students in nursing training institutions in Anambra State have several factors that influenced their choice of nursing as career which include: family pressure (mean±SD=3.0±0.93). A good number of them (61.4%) were highly influenced by parental approval and some others (58.9%) by parental emotional attachment. Substantial number (45.4%) was influenced by their peer group. Personal factors such as believe that nursing will allow them focus on their dream for patient care (61.4%); that nursing is part of social commitment to the society (58.5%) with high income potential influenced their career choice. The researchers recommended that students should be guided in career choice to retain professional values and images.

Keywords: Career, choice, nursing students, training institutions

1. Introduction

In life process, it is expedient that an individual define means of livelihood for better sustenance and progression. The choice of career may require deep thought and guidance as wrong choice may amount to inability to actualize life goal. Choosing the right career requires that an individual learns about him/herself, abilities, life values and interest and determines where he/she will likely fit in properly (Dawn, 2019). Career choice is often a crucial decision in people's life and a major issue for young people (Onder, et al, 2013). Olamide and Olawaiye (2013), saw career choice as a delicate issue that requires caution and serious considerations.

In the opinion of Safarmamad (2019), the process of making a decision about a future career is a pivotal and challenging especially among the adolescents. The age of secondary school students

is sometimes too early age for determining a profession such as nursing as a career profession (Porfeli & Lee, 2012; Sheri, 2011). This notwithstanding, the right career choice plays a major role in moulding a student's future (Subait, et al, 2016). The task of choosing a career is not static but part of the developmental process (Lim & Muhtar, 2016).

Making wrong decision in choosing a career can affect the entire dimensions of an individual including the economic wellbeing (Dal, et al, 2009). The failure to choose appropriate and satisfactory career may lead to frustration in life time. In order to avoid frustration due to wrong career choice, majority of individuals including student nurses choose their career following the information they have about a particular profession, the influence of family members, friends, role models, the school and the media (Lim & Muhtar, 2016). Today most of the students in higher institutions are facing career related problems in form of either career indecision or wrong decision (Pathak, 2018).

Despite the fact that an individual can decide on appropriate choice of career or assisted in making such choice, there could be some factors that may affect the individual's choice of desired career or profession. Such factors include: socio- demographic attributes such as gender, age; socio-economic issues like poor family income and autonomy level of the individual (Onder, et al, 2014).

Many other reasons like desire to help the sick, societal value for nursing profession and student's perception of nursing, have also been isolated as reasons for choice of nursing by individuals (Dal, et al, 2009). Possibility of gaining job easily with nursing profession has also been isolated in some studies as reason for the choice of nursing as career (Dal, et al, 2009). Institutional prestige on the course of study also act propelling factor to choice of course of study including nursing (Baskale & Sercekus, 2015). Parents sometimes serve as significant interpreters to children for information about the world and children ability (Rani, (2014). This plays a crucial role in students' choice of career. Parents and children can also work together to discover that their skills, interests, and values can result in a valuable career (Liu, et al, (2015) cited in Mathatha & Chitondo, 2022). Parents' socio-economic positions and the education level may influence students' choice of nursing as career.

Many youths in Nigerian seem to make wrong career choices due to ignorance, inexperience, or reputation attached to certain jobs without adequate vocational guidance and career counseling (Salami, 2007). Peer pressure has been isolated to have great influence on career decision making and career opportunities among youths (Ogunleye, 2018; Mtemeri, 2020). The need to introduce career guidance and counseling early in school will possibly demystify the influence of peer pressure on career decision making among students (Ogutu, et al,(2017). Mentor relationship is an intimate learning alliance that happens naturally which may occur at any age and may pave way for career determination for the mentee (Foster & MacLeod, 2004).

Dal, et al (2009), found out that 60.6% of student nurses have nurses either in their families or among their relatives and had some information about nursing in advance before choosing it as course of study in school. They also concluded that the most important factors for nursing

students in choosing nursing profession are the wish of helping and caring for people, the possibility of finding employment easily and the value given to the profession by the society respectively. Olaosebikan and Olusakin (2014), reported that parents' line of business has traces of influence on students' career choice. Olamide and Olawaiye (2013), reported that personality of the students and opportunity the students see were evidence factors for choice of career. Arrigoni, et al (2014), disclosed that students' motivations to choose nursing degree programme include: feeling of usefulness (80%), the desire to help and to care for people (78%), and compassion to the suffering people (66%). Turner (2011), indicated that career education helps children to develop career interests and substantiate the importance of exposing students to practicing nurses as a key strategy to stimulate interest in nursing to help maintain a steady recruitment of young people into the future nursing workforce.

A cross sectionnai study conducted by Poreddi, et al, (2012), revealed that nearly 48.8% of their subjects agreed that social prejudice has a great influence on nursing students in choosing nursing profession as their career, 34.1% of the subjects agreed that they enrolled in nursing to improve their financial situations.

Despite the propelling factors to the choice of nursing, Shiroor, et al, (2017), reported that minimal number of their study population (5.2%) preferred nursing as their future job with majority (94.8%) citing long working hours, high workload compared to other jobs as reasons for preventing them from becoming a nurses. Hatamley and Sario (2017), reported that about 60% of their study population indicated less interest in nursing as career choice. This was attributed to personal decision on career choice and family influence.

Whether a student was mandated or influenced by the family members, friends, or acted under the influence of role model in choosing nursing as a career or profession of study, the questions that may constantly come to the mind could be, is the student expressing satisfaction with the course of study? How well is the student performing in his/her academic programme? Or is there prospect for the student at the end of the training? In the whole turn of event, wrong career choice or error in the choice of career has several detrimental effects on the students which include but not limited to lack of interest in academic programm, poor attention span during lectures, poor academic performance, and others.

The researchers being teachers in different nursing training institutions have noticed with dismay, the existence of the aforementioned among the study population which triggered some questions on whether these students chose nursing as course of study by self-will or were influenced to study the course by external forces? It is at the backdrop of these that the researchers were engineered to embark on this study to determine what informed the choice of nursing as career among students in selected nursing training institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the influence of family on the choice of nursing as career among students in nursing training institution in the Anambra State, Nigeria
2. To determine the influence of peer group on choice of nursing as career among the students
3. To determine personal factors that influence choice of nursing as career among nursing students.

2. Materials and Methods

Design

Descriptive research design was used to determine the factors that influence the choice of nursing as career among students in nursing training institutions in the Southeast Nigeria. The researchers adopted this design because it allows for data collection on what informs the choice of nursing as career among the participants without control.

Study Setting

The study was conducted in four selected nursing training institutions include: one Department of Nursing Science and three Colleges of Nursing owned and managed by Federal, State and Mission Systems in Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria. Each of the institutions has been fully accredited for training nurses by the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria and have graduated students over the years.

Study Population

The population for the study comprised of final year students in the four selected nursing training institutions. The population of the students as provided by the respective institutions at the time of this study was 443. These students were left with two months to sit for their Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria final qualifying examination for General Nurses at the time of this study.

Sample Size Calculation/Sampling Procedure

A sample size of 207 was drawn from a population of 433 Using Taro Yameni formula for sample size calculation. Proportionate simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants per institution. This was done to ensure that each institution was proportionately represented while simple random selection gave equal opportunity for participation for all the students in each institution. Balloting without replacement was applied to randomly select the participants per school until the expected sample size was reached.

Research Instrument

Data for the study were generated with researchers' structured questionnaire which was validated by experts and pre-tested for internal consistency with Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis with an index of 0.87. The questionnaire was structured in close-ended four point scale of high influence, moderate influence, mild influence and no influence.

Procedure for Data Collection

Data were collected by the primary investigators with three research nurses as research assistants. The research assistants received one day training on the contents of the questionnaire, data collection procedure, research ethics, seeking for consent from the respondents and the administration of the questionnaire. Administration of the instrument was done through face to face method which lasted for twenty (20) weeks.

Variables Selection and Measurement

Three factors of interest were considered in this study to influence career choice: family, peer and personal. The researchers considered the influence of family in the choice of career. The family size, family system, and others at value of 1-4 point scale. The highest point of four (4) denotes highly influential while lowest score of one (1) denotes non-influential.

This measure was also applied in the other variables of interest in this study. The mean value of the scores was computed and respondents that scored below the mean value of 2.5 were classified to have low influence; otherwise, we classified the respondent as having been influenced by the variable under consideration.

Statistical Analysis

Data generated from the study were entered into an Excel spread sheet and transported into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows, version 25.0. The analyses were undertaken in frequency and simple proportion. Mean age, standard deviation and percentage guided decision making on the result.

Ethical Considerations

Selection of participants was based on inclusion criteria for the study and willingness to participate in the study. Informed consent was obtained from the participants before data collection, so participation was voluntary and selection was done without bias.

Confidentiality of information from the respondents was maintained and no form of harm (physical or psychological) was inflicted on any participant. Anonymity of information was maintained as only coding was used as means of recognition of participants' individually filled questionnaire.

3. Results

Table 1: Socio-demographic Data of the Respondents

Item	Frequency	Percentage
N=207		
Age (Years)		
a. 15 – 19	36	17.4
b. 20 – 24	107	51.7
c. 25 – 29	43	20.8
d. 30 - 35	21	10.1
Sex		
a. Male	14	6.8
b. Female	193	92.2
Institution		
a. DONS, UNIZik	62	30.0
b. SON, NAUTH	55	26.6
c. CONSA	39	18.8
d. SONI	51	24.6
Estimated family annual income (₦)		
a. 10,000 – 90,000	95	45.9
b. 100,000 – 500,000	75	36.2
c. 600,000 – 1, 000000	23	11.1
d. 1000 000 and above	14	6.8

Mean age=22 years, SD±7.4

Table 2: Influence of family on the choice of nursing as career

Item	High influence (%)	Moderate influence (%)	Mild influence (%)	No influence (%)	Mean SD score X
Family size (few/many siblings)	75(36.2)	20(9.7)	84(40.6)	28(13.5)	SD±0.84
Family system	45(21.7)	13(6.3)	72(34.8)	77(37.2)	2.1±0.66
Parents' life experiences about nursing profession	105(50.7)	60(30.4)	27(13.1)	12(5.8)	3.2±1.00
Parents' educational status	101(48.8)	57(25.1)	43(20.8)	11(5.3)	3.2±1.00
Parental approval	127(61.4)	49(23.7)	23(11.0)	8(3.9)	3.4±1.06
Family culture where only parents determine their children's career	65(31.4)	31(15.0)	74(35.7)	37(17.)	2.6±0.81
Family economic status	85(41.1)	51(24.6)	19(9.2)	52(25.1)	2.8±0.88
Family values	121(58.5)	46(22.2)	16(7.7)	24(11.5)	3.3±1.03
Parent's attitude when I decided for another course instead of nursing	98(47.3)	63(30.4)	14(6.8)	32(15.5)	3.1±0.96
Emotional attachment to parents in doing their will	123(58.9)	43(20.8)	36(17.4)	6(2.9)	2.9±0.91
Parental consistent positive support	133(64.2)	32(15.5)	10(4.8)	32(15.5)	3.3±1.03

*Average means score, SD = 3.0±0.93

Table 3: Peer group factors that influence the choice of nursing as career

Item	High influence (%)	Moderate influence (%)	Mild influence (%)	No influence (%)	Mean score SD
Most of my friends decided to study nursing and i took same step	86(41.5)	49(23.7)	50(24.2)	22(10.6)	3.0±0.94
My friends rated nursing higher than other professions	94(45.4)	43(20.8)	32(15.4)	38(18.4)	2.9±0.91
Suggestion from my friends made me to decide to study nursing	89(43.0)	32(15.5)	37(17.8)	49(23.7)	2.8±0.88
Relationship existing between me and my friend who is a nurse.	92(44.4)	42(20.3)	46(22.2)	27(13.1)	3.0±0.94
Close association with my friends was such that i decided to study the course they planned to study	55(26.6)	48(23.2)	63(30.4)	41(19.8)	2.6±0.81
Attached with my study partners	47(22.7)	43(25.6)	64(30.9)	43(20.8)	2.2±0.69

*Average mean score = 2.8±0.87

Table 4: Personal factors that influence the students' choice of nursing as career

Item	HI (%)	Mo I (%)	Mi I (%)	NI (%)	Mean Score SD
I do not like dealing with uncertainty and nursing will held to reduce my uncertainty as far as career is concerned.	91(44.0)	32(15.5)	63(30.4)	21(10.1)	2.8±0.88
Nursing will provide me with flexibility at work place.	75(36.2)	46(22.2)	49(23.9)	37(17.9)	2.8±0.88
Nursing will permit me to have acceptable hours of practice.	63(30.4)	50(24.2)	68(32.9)	26(12.6)	2.7±0.84
Nursing will give me ample time for other schedules.	83(40.1)	33(15.9)	50(24.2)	41(19.8)	3.3±1.03
Nursing will allow me to focus on patient care which has been my desire.	127(61.4)	43(20.8)	18(8.7)	19(9.1)	3.3±1.03

Establishing long term relationship with the sick will be achieved in nursing as desired.	56(27.0)	47(22.7)	67(32.4)	37(17.9)	2.6±0.81
Being a nurse is part of social commitment to the study.	117(50.5)	48(23.2)	18(8.7)	24(11.6)	3.2±1.00
I have interest in promoting health care service to humanity and nursing professional will help me to achieve this.	121(58.5)	56(27.1)	11(5.3)	19(9.2)	3.3±1.03
Nursing has high income potential.	92(44.4)	67(32.4)	53(25.6)	5(2.4)	3.3±1.03
Nursing will provide me with high social status in the future.	99(47.8)	47(22.7)	52(42.5)	9(9.2)	3.2±1.00
Nursing has a more stable/secure future than other career choices.	87(42.0)	13(6.3)	88(42.5)	19(9.2)	2.8±0.88
I prefer to see immediate results and nursing will allow me to experience this.	92(44.4)	20(9.7)	43(20.8)	52(25.1)	2.7±0.84
Expected easy promotion on the job.	49(23.7)	72(34.8)	48(23.2)	38(18.4)	2.2±0.69
An expected less competition in future practice	52(25.1)	67(32.4)	62(30.0)	26(12.6)	2.7±0.84
Nursing is suitable for my personality.	109(52.7)	52(25.1)	22(10.6)	24(11.6)	3.2±1.00
Nursing has always been my dream and aspiration from childhood.	122(59.0)	69(33.3)	12(5.8)	4(1.9)	3.5±1.09

NB: HI- High influence, MoI= Moderate influence, MiI= Mildly influence, NI, No influence;*Average mean score SD=3.0±0.93

4. Discussion

4.1 Influence of family on the choice of nursing career among nursing students Anambra State

Findings from the study revealed that most of the students were influenced by family pressure in their choice of nursing as career with average mean score and SD of 3.0±0.93. A good number of them (61.4%) were highly influenced to choose nursing as career by parental approval; 58.5% of them decided for nursing because of their family values, yet still 58.9% were highly influenced by parental emotional attachment and 64.2% was due to parental consistent positive support.

This finding is in line with findings of Olaosebikan & Olusakin (2014) who investigated the effects of parental influence on adolescents' career choice on secondary schools students, where they concluded that 48.36% of their respondents agreed to parents influencing their career choice. This finding however does not agree with the findings of Zotorvie (2016), where it was noted that less important factors included influences of advertisement, peers and parents or family members contributed to the career choice of his study population.

4.2 Influence of peer group on the choice of nursing as career among the students

Findings from the study showed that substantial number of the students was in one way or the other influenced by their peer group in their choice of nursing as career with mean score and standard deviation of 2.8 ± 0.87 respectively. A good number of them (45.4%) decided to go for nursing because their friends rated nursing higher than other professions. Substantial number (41.5%) did so because their friends wanted to study nursing or because their friends suggested it to them. This finding also contradicts the findings of Zotorvie (2016).

4.3 Personal factors that influenced the students in their choice of nursing as career

Findings from the study showed that the students were highly influenced by personal factors in their choice of nursing as career with average means score and standard deviation of 3.0 ± 0.93 respectively. Majority of them (61.4%) were highly influenced because they believe that nursing will allow them to focus on patient care which has been their desire. Some others (50.5%) believe that nursing is part of social commitment to the society and a lot more, (58.5%) saw nursing to have high income potential. Majority (59.0%) were highly influenced based on the ground that nursing has always been their dream and aspiration from childhood and they want to better their lots in life.

This is in line with Alkaya, et al (2017), who concluded that American students considered primarily fitness of the profession to themselves and their goals, while Turkish students primarily thought of their living conditions. This also agrees with the findings of Poreddi, et al (2012), report that their study population enrolled in nursing out of their own interest and also to improve their financial situations. On the other hand the findings did not tally with the conclusion of Arrigoni, et al(2014) where they discovered that the students' choice to enter a Nursing Degree Program is not supported by clear ideas and strong motivations. It did not also tally with the findings of Shiroor, et al (2017) on knowledge and attitude regarding nursing as a career among adolescence which revealed that only minimal number (5.2%) preferred nursing as their future job because of long working hours, high workload compared to other jobs.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, the researchers concluded that most students in nursing training institutions in the Southeast Nigeria chose nursing as career due to family, peer group and personal factors. Those that chose the profession as personal factors believed that they want to help the society through the profession but desired status and financial recognition.

In this regard, the research concluded that it will be good to let the students know that nursing is more of service to humanity and calling and that anybody that decides to be a nurse should be ready to save lives and serve with self devotion and caring.

Career choice and guidance should be included in the curriculum for primary and higher schools and efforts should be made by the teachers to let the pupils and students know that they should not be influenced into any career by external forces.

Parents should be encouraged to stop dictating the choice of career for their children but to find out what they want and help them build the zeal so that they will have continuity of interest as they continue in the training and thereafter.

Implication of the Findings

Choosing a career due to external pressure may not bring out the best in the student and the personal factors that were identified among the students are more of issues that bring about human ego and improvement on social status. If this is not checked, nursing profession may be flooded with nurses who do not have passion for the profession, rather persons that are more interested in remuneration and quest for ego may infiltrate the profession which will likely affect quality and care outcome in the profession. This will affect the image of the profession and health system generally. This assertion was based on the ground that nurses are life savers, patients' advocates and care givers that will ever give their best to save life without placing remuneration as priority.

Limitations of the Study

This study used cross-sectional descriptive design which may not be easily generalized. Again, it is a school-based study and findings may not apply to the general population of student nurses. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution despite the fact that it provided information that is useful for guiding choice of course of study among people seeking admission into institutions of higher learning.

Conflict of Interest

The researchers hereby declare that there was no conflict of interest among the researchers with respect to the research, authorship and publication.

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