

MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS AND THE SELF-PROJECTIONS OF STUDENTS IN PURSUIT OF NURSING EDUCATION



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ABSTRACT

Understanding motivating factors and scholastic experiences of nursing students are important.

Exploratory-qualitative design was used involving nursing students as informants during the key informant interview and focus group discussion.

The motivational driving forces based on the findings of the study were personal, family and relatives, community and socio-economic forces. In this order, care for self and family, interest of parents and relatives, serving the community and working abroad provides higher income were key motivational factors in choosing nursing as a profession.

As revealed by the study, culturally- sensitive environment, student assistance, peer counseling and mentoring, student clubs and socialization activities are important in meeting the needs of the students of a state university. These areas are important in enhancing student admission and retention policies that would provide more socially-acceptable and effective school environment and develop a framework for career guidance factors.

Keywords: *Benguet schooling experiences, nursing students motivations, Benguet nursing education and State University*

INTRODUCTION

The Benguet State University (BSU) is the leading state university in the Cordillera Administrative Region - most graduating high school students would want to pursue their nursing education in this institution. It was in 1990 when the University offered its Bachelor of Science in Nursing as a course. Since then, many high school graduates have been taking the college qualifying examination with the hope that they will make it to the College of Nursing. For the last 20 years, Nursing got the highest percentage of high school graduates who took the qualifying examination (BSU-CN, 2013). Further, it is also one of the colleges which has gained recognition not only for its level of accreditation but also because of its high

passing rate in the National Licensure Examination. For the nurses licensure examination given last June 2013, BSU ranked 3rd as the best performing school in the Philippines and top nursing school in the Cordillera Administrative Region (PRC, 2013). Another reason why many students want to pursue their nursing education in BSU is that it offers the most affordable tuition fee among all the universities north of Manila. Approximately 90% of students who take the entrance examination for Nursing in this State University come from low-income families and out of this, almost ten percent (10%) are scholars, and most of them come from the Cordillera Region and nearby provinces (BSU-CN, 2013).

Entering college for the first time creates mixed feelings and emotions among students. As such, students need to adjust socially, culturally, as well as economically. Moreover, to those who decide to pursue nursing education means another thing. Nursing as a career choice is a crucial decision for both the student and her family-considering the financial aspect of it. Further, Nursing involves a lot of adjustments, patience and perseverance.

However, a few studies or little information is known as to how students are motivated to take up Nursing in a State University. In order to find out what motivate students to pursue nursing education and further explore their schooling experiences, the study addressed the following questions:

1. What motivated these students to take up Nursing education?
2. What are the schooling experiences of the student nurses while going to school?
3. How can the educational system better meet the needs of nursing students who are adapting to college life in the university?
4. How would they see themselves five years after graduation?

This study aimed to know the motivation of students' decision to pursue nursing education; explore the schooling experiences of the students; know how a State University may enhance its student services to meet their needs and know how they would see themselves five years after graduation.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized an exploratory-qualitative design. Exploratory research begins with a phenomenon of interest, but rather than simply observing and describing, it investigates the full nature of the phenomenon, the manner in which it is manifested and the other factors to which it is related. Exploratory research is designed to shed light on the various ways in which a phenomenon is manifested and on underlying processes (Polit and Beck, 2012). Results of exploratory research

provide a detailed description of all the observations made by the researcher, arranged in some kind of order (Wood *et al.*, 2006).

The contents of the informed consent included the purposes of the study, voluntary decision, anonymity and confidentiality of data, withdrawal from participation anytime and the mechanics of the data collection.

Purposive sampling was utilized in the selection of participants. Criteria used were the following: they should be in their two-year residency at Benguet State University and currently enrolled first semester of school year 2013-2014; are juniors /senior nursing students who are more immersed in the practices and the culture of the university. The first batch of participants were pre-selected by reviewing their personal data in the college based on their socio-economic status (occupation and salary rate of their parents) and their ethnic origin. The researchers then called the attention of the students by sending personal invitation through letter.

An interview guide (in English) was used as instrument in data collection. However, Filipino and English languages were used interchangeably during the interviews and focus group discussions.

Of the participants, seven nursing students were involved in the key informant interviews (KII) (as identified in the documents). After reviews of the transcripts, the researchers observed that the data collected were limited and through snow ball sampling- the researchers asked the KII participants who they will recommend to be interviewed and participate in the focus group discussions. The researchers were able to do six focus group discussions (FGDs) of the junior students and one FGD of the seniors. To capture their experiences, the researchers made sure that the FGDs comprised 6-10 participants. Discussions took 45 minutes to one hour.

Multiple sources and methods of data collection and investigator triangulation were employed in cross-checking information and the conclusions. This study collected data from study participants who are juniors and seniors nursing students. Key

informant interviews was utilized and focus group discussions as methods of data collection. Further, five researchers conducted the study, with varied levels of understanding of qualitative research and years of experiences in the academic setting. By triangulating and evaluating data and understanding the problem under study this could provide a basis of convergence of the truth. Using multiple methods and perspectives, as researchers could distinguish true information from information with errors (Polit and Beck, 2012).

The researchers further used member checks as external checks by asking the study participants through soliciting their reactions to the preliminary findings and interpretations. Further, while interviews and focus group discussions were being conducted, researchers asked the participants to validate the summarized data collected.

Colaizzi's (1978) method was employed for the analysis of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This qualitative study strives to expound on the motivations and experiences of nursing students who are pursuing nursing education in a State University.

Motivations

The decision to choose nursing as a course is related to an individual's self-concept (Price, 2009). Several studies revealed that individuals often referred to the image of nurses and nursing as caring, compassionate and nurturing, also regarded as a noble and well-regarded career path (MacIntosh, 2006; Gregg and Magilvy, 2001). It was also indicated in one study that students' reasons for entering nursing programs were both personal and career related, with personal being more dominant; and the reasons to study nursing were: being able to help and care for people, job security and ability to enter tertiary education and the enjoyment or love of nursing (Wilkes *et al.*, 2014).

In this study, the results revealed several reasons and perceptions of individual students as to why they enrolled in Nursing in a State University. The study implied that the reasons are necessary considering what motivated them to pursue their nursing education. Indeed, these motivations have to be sustained throughout their schooling in the State University. The four drivers of motivations to pursue nursing education in the State University are: personal-driven, family and relatives-driven, community-based driven and socio-economic driven.

Personal-Driven

As to what motivated them to take up nursing and to enroll in a state university, the following themes emerged: personal-driven, with sub themes as own choice, childhood dream, personal attraction, care of self and family and preparatory education. The following are some of the statements during the focus group discussions and key informant interviews:

Own choice. Results show that some participants took up nursing because the course has been their definite choice among other courses. As some participants mentioned, "It is a personal choice, it has always been my dream to become a nurse since high school, also, nursing is in demand and the uniform is beautiful. My parents did not approve of it, but I still pursued nursing."

"When I was in 4th year, I thought of that, it seemed that my parents gave me the idea that nursing is good- the training is good and at least I could use what I will be learning here-not only for myself but for others and can apply it to myself and to my family."

Childhood dream. Some participants however, thought of it as their childhood dream. As one participant said, "As early as kinder I thought of becoming a nurse". Another participant mentioned, "Nobody influenced me. I was determined to become a nurse- when I was still young...I told myself that I have to finish the course that they like so they can bring me to Canada as they have promised earlier... but for me, I have to stick to my plan."

Care of self and family. Some participants indicated “caring” perspective and family’s illness prompted them to choose nursing as their lifetime career, as some participants said that, “It is wonderful to be in the medical field because you can take care of yourself.”

“This is really my ultimate dream in life. I want to help my parents. All that I had thought of is the quality of education and affordability.”

... but also when my mother started to have a mental illness-she was mostly in a psychiatric ward...that’s why I want to understand what is happening to her.. I wanted to study it, so I wanted to become a nurse.”

Preparatory education. Choose Nursing as a preparatory course for further education or entering medicine in the future is advantageous. One participant reasoned out that, “because it was suggested as the best pre-medicine course before taking medicine proper.”

The personal drivers that motivated them to pursue Nursing as a career started as a childhood dream and as a personal choice and attraction. It is very interesting to note that the personal drivers as revealed are ‘grassroots’ motivation in pursuing their career. It also indicated as to how intrinsic their reasons are, the passion and inspiration to obtain Nursing in a State University. One study revealed that factors perceived to be intrinsic attractions of nursing may be as interesting and challenging work, the ability to help others and the ability to work closely with people (Mullen, 2005).

Family and Relatives-Driven

Relative to the theme, family and relatives-driven include sub-themes as parents’ and relatives’ choices and family’s career.

Parents and relatives’ choice. In choosing Nursing, students consider more the interest of the parents and other relatives. As some participants said, “It is the decision of my parents and my siblings.”

“The idea that my brother finished Nursing and is doing fine and is currently stable pushed me to

take the same course.”

“It seems that my mom wants one of her children to be in the medical field for a change because education is commonly taken by girls and criminology for boys.”

“For me, this State University is really my dream school. I came here once when I was in elementary so I prepared already, and when I was in high school, I learned that most of my teachers also had their schooling in this university so I also wanted to take Education, but then my parents wanted me to take up Nursing, so I took Nursing even if it’s not my choice.”

Family’s Career. It is indicated in the statements of some students that what influenced them in choosing Nursing primarily is that they are a family of nurses. As one participant said, “I don’t know, but mine is a family of nurses, we are into the medical field, my aunt and my mom.”

The family’ and relatives’ ambition including family’s career motivations affected the decision of the students to enroll in Nursing to giving respect and honor to the requests of their parents. It has been a practice and a Filipino culture. One pursuing a career has always considered first the family’s wishes and the need to follow the footsteps of parents and/ or relatives has become major motivators. This is supported by Kersten *et al.* (1991) and Law and Arthur (2002) in their discussion that the influence of the family and relatives who are nurses are major agents as a motivator for a student’s image of the Nursing profession and making their career choice. However, as indicated in the statements, the strong motivation to taking Nursing is the family’s and supported by relatives.

Community-Based Driven

Relative to the theme, community-based driven, this included sub-themes such as, helping others, and serving the community. These sub- themes illuminated the external and outward motives of a student wanting to pursue nursing education. In a state university, this should be enhanced further and given attention because desire and sense of gratitude to work in their communities is vital.

Helping others. Some statements of participants indicated that helping others is definitely the reason for taking nursing, which prompted them to pursue this as a career. As one stated, “When I was still young- my parents and my aunt kept telling me to take Nursing. So right after my high school, I’ve thought that Nursing is a good avenue to help others. I also have an aunt abroad. I wanted to return my gratitude her.”

Serving the community. It also indicated in their statements that definitely serving their own community/barangay once they finished their nursing studies is a priority. As some participants said, “I want to go back to our place, to serve my community. I think there is only one nurse in our place, that is why.

“For me, we are not a family of nurses but maybe what influenced me also is my aunt. She runs a NGO for environmental concerns and they lack manpower, then she said she will help me if I take up Nursing. Then after graduation, I will work there.”

Community-based driven motivations among enrolled nursing students in a State University postulated the desire of students to help the community. Returning to the community and to help the people is a noble calling and commitment especially for those who need medical attention in their own places. This is another example of intrinsic motivator as internal factors in pursuing Nursing as their career. This should be the interest of high school students opting to enroll Nursing in a state university; a heart for Nursing as a motivator. This is a manifestation of one institutional outcome for Nursing graduates in a State University which should be developed and enhanced. Altruism and the spirit of patriotism motivates them to contribute to the country’s national development. Radi (2013) revealed in his study that students’ identified career, qualifications and altruism are the most common motivators for attending a State University. Further, in another study by Usher *et al.* (2013), it revealed that the image of Nursing, the desire to help others, family and friends in the profession, personal experience, security, travel opportunities and flexibility have all been identified as motivators for students to

enter Nursing.

Socio- Economic Driven

The socio-economic driven sub themes are; work abroad, peer-pressure, stable job and opportunity and professional development motivations. These sub themes were based on valuing the practicality and economic limitations in pursuing nursing as a career choice in a State University with high ranking (accreditation) and good track record (passing rate in the licensure examination). Also coming from the participants themselves, their belief that this could be a progressive stable career motivated them to enroll. Some statements of the participants were:

“The ranking here is high, When I was young, I already thought of Nursing... when I graduated in high school, it’s Nursing that I enrolled. I knew it provides great opportunity (employment)”.

“My friends and I decided to enroll in nursing because of peer pressure, but unfortunately they failed when we were first years.”

“It provides great opportunity for me to find a stable job and it promotes professional development, I was then motivated to enroll.”

The socio-economic driven motivations on why the students selected Nursing as a course include the following sub-themes; working abroad, peer-pressure, having a stable job and opportunities, and professional development. The motivations of these students (want to work abroad, peer pressure and having a stable job and opportunity) in choosing Nursing as a course, are evidences of the effect of the desire of their relatives and friends who have stable jobs here and overseas. It indicated as extrinsic motivators influence by external factors opposite to personal desire in pursuing nursing as a life career. Two separate studies by Williams *et al.* (1997) and Law and Arthur (2002), projected that the most frequently cited reason for choosing a career was job opportunity/security. Further, their studies posit that it was the desire for a profession with job security where they could work with people and capitalize their interest in science, was included as a motivating factor. As for professional development, as indicated by the participants,

the desire to grow in their chosen profession and their interest in science were factors they as well considered. They further described these as beneficial in pursuing the Nursing profession, which is the opposite of the study of Lippincott *et al.* (1992) where they considered that one of the barriers for not attaining Nursing education is the difficulty they might experience in studying science.

In the College of Nursing, this should be treasured as a motivational factor among high school graduates. Pursuing Nursing education in a State University is very practical and should be advocated considering their socio-economic standing. Conversely, in one study, it showed that nursing remains a career of choice for young and mature students entering State University. Further, it is seen to provide security, interest and an opportunity to help and care for others (Wilkes *et al.*, 2014).

Schooling Experiences

Exploring their schooling experiences further give more evidences in their continuing motivations while pursuing Nursing in a State University. In the qualitative data gathered, there were both positive and negative aspects encompassing their social, cultural and economic backgrounds. The schooling experiences of the student nurses call for the attention of the school administration having considered the positive and negative impacts of being a student in a State University. Moreover, it is wise for the university administrators to note the positive schooling experiences of the students as well as their negative experiences, as these most likely can either motivate them or not to continue their studies.

Positive experiences

Positive experiences denoted optimistic adjustment and helpful factors while studying in the State University, having considered their cultural and ethnic backgrounds, economic means and location of the school. Valuing the positive side of experiences and situation compensate the adversities therein in choosing to enroll in a government school. As one participant said, "It is more okay. I get to save since my home from the university is walking distance".

Participants said that they enrolled in a State University because of several attributes such as the feeling of belongingness because most of the faculty and students are *Igorots*. Their conservative attitude are treasured considering the culture and social aspects. As some participants explained that, "culturally, yes because for us *Ibalois*, we are shy nature".

"Socially, yes, if you are good in relating to others, doing the requirement becomes easier, more so if you are working with fellow *Igorots*".

"It is easier to get along with people here, conservative, not liberalized, no shorts, no make-up compared to other schools-not so extravagant to look at, because, there are those rich in here yet they seem equal. They do not dress that showy. It is like you cannot feel the gap between instructors and students. You are free to ask questions and they are simply there when you approach them."

As indicated in their statements, the positive experiences revealed were experiencing excitement and pleasure, the quality of education, conservative environment, the feelings of comfort and availability of scholarships. Almost all participants mentioned the positive impacts having enrolled in a State University and also acknowledged the contributions of a Nursing School. In a State University, these are necessary attributes to enhancing a culturally and socially-acceptable environment among nursing schools.

Negative experiences

Despite positive attributes identified and their motivations, some students experienced negative experiences in terms of financial, social and cultural reasons in a State University. They have to overcome these adversities while enrolled in a State University. The motivations simply triggered them to pursue nursing; however, negative experiences eventually hinder them from continuing their Nursing education in the University. Some of the negative experiences identified their qualitative data include financial difficulties, victim of bullying and discrimination, declining performance, family concerns, culture shock and poor interpersonal relations.

As some participants said, “Two school years ago, I stopped; I have to leave because of financial reasons.”

“Problems because of cultural background.... I am Tagalog (Filipino) that’s why..it is really different with highlanders... especially in the community.. I was culture shocked..it has two effects on me, positive and negative. Negative- they are different from us because we are romantic and thoughtful which has an effect in relating with others. Positive side, because when I am with the *Igorots*, I became more ingenious.”

“In decision making- we are different; in terms of social aspects, those who are together, those more in number, they become more dominant in decision making. There are more problems, contributions, many disagreement and even those who don’t have money-but not always because even those who have lots of money, they too complain- and they bargain. Conflict occurs because of their personal differences among others and attitudes.”

Looking at these negative experiences identified, it may serve as a challenge for the State University to further enhance the students’ support programs and make it a culturally-sensitive environment. Beyond their positive experiences, side by side with their negative experiences, it seems very important to give more attention to the factors that would let them continue their Nursing careers in the State University. However, it is more distressing in the Student Affairs Office on how to handle situations that prompt students to stop their studies.

Perception of University Services

Based on their schooling experiences, themes identified, a follow-up question was how can the State University better meet the needs of Nursing students. The following are the perceptions revealed from the transcripts. The suggestions include, culturally-sensitive environment, student assistantship, peer counseling and mentoring, student clubs and socialization activities. Some of the statements are:

“There are activities during the Foundation Day. They should give time for the students to mingle with other students and during the orientation it

may be a good idea to include the different ethnic origins of the students.”

“Engage students in organizations, sports, singing and dancing clubs to boost confidence.”

“The school should have committees/offices that cater to the concerns and needs of new students. As to culture, open mindedness, because of the different cultures: respecting the cultures of others. That again must be emphasized during orientation, mentoring and facilitating peer counseling.”

Enhancing the student services of the university, maintaining a socio-culturally acceptable environment and partnerships with the students and their families have to be established in meeting the needs of the students. The Gender and Development Programs has the thrust of improving student relations by stressing relevant and sustainable programs about gender equality and making it appealing to different stakeholders (students, parents, community counterparts).

Projection of Self

Lastly, based on the motivational factors, positive and negative experiences and their perceptions of university’s services, the Nursing students were asked as to their status five years after their graduation. They were confident that they would become successful institutional (hospital/clinic) and community health nurses, nurse educators, entrepreneurs and some to undertake continuing education.

The directions of the graduates should be marked in the university’s recruitment efforts and to underscore the increasing awareness of the positive attributes of the nursing career. Looking at their answers, it indicated a need to focus on analyzing the institutional systems and processes. The College of Nursing has to align their projections to the curriculum. With their answers, this can be supported by the study of Law and Arthur (2002) which highlighted positive attributes of the Nursing profession like career opportunities, marketing the personal satisfaction, employment opportunities and income potential. The Nursing career can be used in actively targeting potential students who view the Nursing more positively. However, in

studying the Nursing graduates' future endeavors, more career planning, tracer-studies and enhancing partnerships with private and public institutions are encouraged. Importantly, future collaboration with international partners must be established. As indicated in one study, universities must focus on this as they develop programs for a generation where multiple changes of career appear inevitable during their lifetime. The nursing profession needs to look at career pathways after graduation that provides these challenges within nursing itself (Wilkes *et al.*, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, motivational factors of students enrolled in Nursing in a State University were determined. The intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of the students in pursuit of Nursing education may serve as a basis for future plans of the Nursing course in the State University. High school students should plan and consider State Universities in pursuing a Nursing career, taking into account their social, cultural and economic footing in life. However, their schooling experiences and how the University can better address their needs relevant to their social, cultural and economic backgrounds are worth considering. The results may give great impact to recruitment and retention policies of students enrolled in the Nursing course and also would bring significant changes in the market demand and supply conditions in Nursing especially graduates of the state university. The commitment to Nursing profession has to be highlighted not as a preparatory education to other medical courses rather- it should be a calling and has to be treasured once one enters the profession.

Further, results of the study would help in enhancing the students' admission and retention policies of the college of Nursing; providing a socially and culturally-acceptable school environment to all stakeholders; and will develop a relevant framework for Nursing career guidance. The results may also be submitted to Office of Student Services to serve as their reference in counseling intervention for high school students interested in taking up Nursing as a course.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers would like to acknowledge Benguet State University and the College of Nursing for the support since the start until the realization of this research. The unwavering participation as well of the senior and junior student nurses is highly appreciated.

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