



Original Research Article

Environmental Factors Influencing the Choice of Nursing Career and Nursing Institutions Among Nursing Students in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the environmental factors affecting the selection of nursing careers and institutions among nursing students in Imo State, Nigeria. A descriptive study design was utilised, informed by three research questions and their accompanying hypotheses. The study population consisted of 2,484 nursing students, from which a sample size of 380 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. The data were gathered by a researcher-designed structured questionnaire comprising four sections that examined demographic parameters, individual factors, socioeconomic factors, and environmental factors affecting students' selection of a nursing career and institution. The test-retest method was used to find out how reliable the instrument was, and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyse it. The reliability index was 0.90. The research questions were answered by looking at mean scores and standard deviation. To evaluate the hypotheses, multiple linear regression was used at a 0.05 level of significance.

The results showed that environmental factors, like the state of the economy, the number of jobs available, the need for nurses, industry trends, and the location of the institution, had the biggest effect on students' choice of nursing career and institution (mean = 3.14). Individual characteristics, such as personal interest, enthusiasm, talents, values, academic strengths, personal aspirations, health state, and prior job experience, significantly impacted profession choice (mean = 3.11). Socioeconomic determinants, including parental income and educational achievement, educational expenses, cost of living, social class, and perceived career options, were identified as having a significant impact (mean = 3.09). Additionally, demographic variables such as age, gender, parental occupation, parental education, and family income strongly predicted the environmental, individual, and socioeconomic factors impacting nursing career choice ($p < 0.05$). The study suggests that contextual factors, in conjunction with personal preferences, ought to be pivotal considerations in career advising initiatives, institutional planning, and student recruitment tactics to foster informed decision-making and retention within the nursing profession.

Keywords: environmental factors, nursing career, nursing institutions, nursing students, imo state

Introduction

Choosing a career is an important life decision that will affect your happiness, professional advancement, financial security, and social position for a long time. In modern culture, this choice has become more difficult because there are more career possibilities, the job market is changing, and people expect more from their professional accomplishment [1]. For students, choosing a professional path is more than just an academic interest; it also affects their future lifestyle, job happiness, and exposure to the demands and perils of the job.

Nursing is a very important and hard job in the healthcare field. The World Health Organisation says that choosing a career as a nursing student is a big and often hard choice because of the physical, emotional, and moral duties that come with being a nurse. Nursing necessitates enduring dedication, empathy, technical proficiency, and resilience, so rendering

educated career decision-making especially crucial. As a result, students' opinions and preferences about nursing are shaped by a mix of environmental, individual, and socioeconomic factors [2,3,4].

Environmental variables significantly influence nursing career choices, particularly in underdeveloped nations like Nigeria. Students' choices of both career and school are greatly affected by things like job prospects, job security, the economy, the reputation of the school, the location of the training institution, and the overall state of the healthcare system [5]. Identified job availability, institutional image, and societal expectations as significant environmental factors affecting nursing students' career choices have been reported [6]. In the same way, [7] said that the training environment and how students see their professional prospects have a big impact on how committed they are to nursing. Evidence indicates that numerous students enter nursing programs lacking a comprehensive understanding of the profession and its contextual reality. It has been reported that many students, including those in nursing schools, don't know what they want to do with their lives. Even if there aren't enough nurses around the world, students are less likely to want to become nurses and stay in the field because of things like bad working conditions, heavy workloads, lack of resources, and low pay. It has been stressed that environmental influences, when paired with personal incentives and economic pressures, have a big effect on career sustainability and job satisfaction [8].

Reports indicate a diminishing interest in nursing among secondary school graduates and a rising attrition rate among nursing students in Nigeria [9]. Some of the reasons are bad career advice, not enough access to proper information about nursing, financial problems, institutional barriers, and society's low opinion of nursing compared to other health-related jobs [10, 11]. These environmental and contextual obstacles highlight the necessity for empirical information to inform initiatives designed to enhance recruitment and retention in nursing education.

Even though contextual factors play a big role in choosing a nursing career, there isn't much research that looks at nursing students in Imo State particularly. Consequently, this study examined the environmental factors affecting the selection of nursing careers and institutions among nursing students in Imo State, Nigeria, while also analysing the interplay of individual and socioeconomic factors. The results are meant to give evidence-based information that may be used to improve nursing education and workforce development through career counselling, institutional planning, policy making, and other measures.

Materials and methods

Area of Study

The area of study is Imo State. Imo State is one of the 36 States of Nigeria, located in the southeast region of the country. Imo State is bordered by Abia State on the east, Delta State to the West, Anambra State on the north, and Rivers State to the south. The state capital, Owerri, is often described as the entertainment capital of Nigeria. The state lies within latitude 448N and 718N and longitude 680E and 28E with an Area of around 8100sq Km. Imo State is a predominantly Igbo speaking state, with Igbo people constituting an estimated 98% of the state population. The population is mostly engaged in agriculture; yams, taro, corn (maize), rice, and cassava (manioc) are the staple crops, and oil palm is the main cash crop. Imo is also one of the chief onshore petroleum-producing areas in the country; other mineral resources include coal and natural gas. The research was carried out among accredited Nursing (institutions) in Imo State, Nigeria. There are seven (7) accredited nursing institutions in Imo State with five private and two government schools) all located within the three Senatorial Zones of the State. In alphabetical order, they include College of Nursing, St. Mary's Joint Hospital, Amaigbo, College of Nursing, Holy Rosary Hospital, Emekuku, College of Nursing St. Mary's Joint Hospital, Mbano, College of Nursing, Our Lady of Mercy Hospital Umulogho, Dept of Nursing Sciences Imo State University, Orlu, Ezeala College of Nursing, Orlu Imo College of Nursing, Orlu.

Target Population

The population targeted was all student nurses in the seven (7) Nursing institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. The total population is about two thousand four hundred and eighty-four (2,484) student nurses (Director of Nursing Sciences State Ministry of Health, 2024).

Inclusion criteria

Willingness to participate in the study

Sample Size and Sample Technique

The Taro Yamane method is selecting sample size was used to select three hundred eighty (380) nursing students from the seven (7) Nursing institution in Imo State.

Sampling Procedure

Stratified random sampling technique was used to divide population in seven (7) strata. Seven (7) institutions were randomly selected.

Secondly, simple random sampling technique was used to select participant within each institution.

Stage one: a basket containing folded pieces of paper written 'Yes' or 'No' were reshuffled for the participant (student nurses) in each institution. Those who picked 'Yes' were selected until a total number of three hundred and eighty (380) nursing students were reached which represents the 15.3% of population of each school sample size.

Ethical Consideration

Ethics is a code of conduct. It is a moral principle that controls or influences the behaviour of a person. A letter of permission was collected from the principals of Schools of Nursing which was read to the student nurses on the day of collection of data which permitted the researcher to carry all the study. The consent of each volunteered student was sought before they were used for the study thereby not infringing on their rights (as their participation was voluntary). The researcher ensured absolute confidentiality of all private information of the subjects as this was used only for the purpose of the study as the respondents' names were not included on the questionnaire. Equally, they retained the right to withdraw at any time.

Instrument for Data Collection

The data was collected using the questionnaire which was constructed by the researcher based on the study. The questionnaire was reviewed in line with relevant literature, and approved by the research supervisor. It was constructed to allow respondents choose and tick answers which they feel are most appropriate to their lived experience.

The questionnaire contains on twelve (12) items on environment factors influencing nursing career choices and choice of nursing institutions.

Validity of the Instrument

The research instrument was developed and was given to the project supervisor for constructive critics and to assess whether it was capable of collecting the required data, thereafter corrections were made. The questionnaire was returned to the project supervisor for approval.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was checked for reliability over time, and that the contents have internal consistency. The test-retest reliability was used to measure the correlational coefficient between the variables, where a pre-test also used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. Ten copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the student nurses in Merit School of Nursing, Orlu who are not part of the study population (respondents) and same were collected after. Ten days later, the same but fresh copies of the questionnaire were distributed again to the same student nurses. The results were collected, tallied and analyzed using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient which yielded positive correlation with value of 0.90 which indicates high reliability.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher intimated the heads of nursing institutions in Imo State the purpose for carrying out a study in their schools. With the permission of the heads, and letter of approval from them, the researcher ensured that the letter of approval was read to student nurses before the administration of the instrument. The researcher also introduced herself to the student nurses, and explained the purpose of the study to them. An informed consent from volunteering respondents was obtained before administering the questionnaire to them. The total number of three hundred and eight (380) questionnaires were distributed manually and electronically to the student nurses in all seven (7) Nursing institutions in Imo State, 380 of them responded for the questionnaire, making the response rate of 100%.

Statistical Analysis

The responses to the questionnaire were tallied and coded manually by the researcher. The data collected were organized and analyzed using tables, frequencies, percentages and charts to show the distribution of items in each response. The chi-square analysis was used to determine the significant relationship between the variables. This enabled the researcher to either accept or reject the research hypotheses.

RESULTS

Table 1: environmental factors influencing nursing career choices and choice of nursing institution among nursing students in Imo State, Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	S. D	Remark
1	Economic conditions	263	58	30	59	3.43	0.96	Agree
2	Industry trends	174	176	30	0	3.37	0.62	Agree
3	Job availability	174	147	29	30	3.22	0.89	Agree
4	School location	116	176	58	30	2.99	0.88	Agree
5	Reputation and quality of the educational institution	116	147	59	58	2.87	0.28	Agree
6	Accreditation status of the school	203	89	59	29	3.22	0.97	Agree
7	Availability of financial aid e.g scholarship	116	205	59	0	3.15	0.66	Agree
8	Job stability	145	118	117	0	3.07	0.82	Agree
9	Globalisation of nursing career	116	176	88	0	3.07	0.72	Agree
10	Job market demand	116	176	88	0	3.07	0.72	Agree
	Cumulative mean					3.14		

Factors influencing their choices of nursing career and institutions. All the responses have their mean scores above 2.50 which is the cut off mean for a four point likert scale. The standard deviations are very low, indicating that the responses are spread apart from the mean and the cumulative mean is given as 3.14. This implies that majority of the respondents agree that economic conditions, industry trends, job availability, school location, job market demand etc. are environmental factors that influence their choices of nursing career.

Table 2: Multiple Linear Regression model summary table showing significant relationship in the mean responses on environmental factors influencing nursing career choices and demographic variables/predictors (gender, age, parents' occupation, parents' level of education and family income)

Sample Size (n), Multiple linear regression/relationship Coefficient (r), Coefficient of Determination (R^2), Percentage Coefficient of Determination ($\%R^2$), F- Statistics (F), p-value, Magnitude of Relationship (MR) and Remarks

	R	R ²	%R ²	MR	F	p-value	Remark	
	380	0.726	0.567	0.521	High relationship	83.429	.000	Significant

Beta coefficients: gender=4.34, age= -8.10, occupation= 7.34, education= 9.55 & family income= 5.78 P is significant at $p < 0.05$

Data on table 2 show the multiple linear regression analysis model summary for relationship between demographic variables and environmental factors influencing nursing career choices. The joint relationship between the demographic variables/predictors (gender, age, parents' occupation, level of education and family income) and student nurses' mean responses on environmental factors influencing their choice of nursing career is given as 0.726 which is a high and positive relationship. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($\%R^2$) is given as 0.521 which implies that 52.1% of the variations in the student nurses' mean responses on environmental factors influencing choice of career can be predicted by gender, age, parents' occupation, level of education and family income. Also, the p-value is given as .000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected since $p < 0.05$ and it is concluded that the environmental factors influencing student nurses' choice of career is significantly related to demographic variables of gender, age, parents' occupation, level of education and family income.

DISCUSSION

Research Question Three's findings showed that environmental factors, like the state of the economy, trends in the healthcare industry, job availability, job market demand, and the location of nursing schools, had a big impact on nursing students' choice of career. This was shown by a high mean score (mean = 3.14). This indicates that students' profession choices are significantly influenced by external factors, rather than only by personal interest or academic aptitude. When job prospects are unclear, students usually choose fields that offer job security, stability, and chances to work both in

their own country and abroad. Students seem to see nursing as a stable career choice that can weather changes in the economy because it is a well-known and highly sought-after field around the world [12].

The availability of jobs and the need for workers in the labour market show that students are becoming more practical when it comes to choosing a career. They are choosing careers that will ensure them a job after graduation. The geographic location of nursing institutions is a significant environmental issue, since closeness to home, accessibility, cost of living, and perceived safety of the institution's environment might influence students' decisions to register in a specific nursing school. These environmental factors are part of the bigger social and economic picture that students are a part of. They also show how important institutional and labour market contexts are in making decisions about nursing careers [13,14].

The matching hypothesis revealed a statistically significant correlation between environmental factors affecting nursing profession choice and certain demographic variables, including age, gender, parental occupation, parental educational attainment, and parental income ($p < 0.05$). This research indicates that students' background characteristics interact with environmental variables to shape the perception and evaluation of employment options. For instance, students from families with less money may be more likely to choose nursing because they think it will give them more financial security and a faster way to get into the workforce. On the other hand, students whose parents have more education may know more about job trends and nursing opportunities around the world [15, 16].

These findings align with study [17], which indicated that job availability and labour market demand were significant factors influencing students' profession choices. In the same way, it was found that employment availability had a big effect on profession choice and that there was a strong link between parental demographic factors and students' career preferences [18]. The alignment of the current findings with existing literature highlights the significant influence of environmental factors on nursing career decisions, especially in areas facing economic instability, healthcare workforce shortages, and a rising demand for skilled health professionals. This underscores the necessity for policymakers, educators, and career counsellors to integrate labour market dynamics and environmental [19] considerations into career advising and nursing education planning to facilitate informed and sustainable career decisions among nursing students.

Conclusion

Motivations for selecting nursing as a profession are predominantly uniform across empirical studies and qualitative reports about nursing students and practicing nurses. Individual factors, including personal motivation, academic strengths, and prior job experiences, are significant; yet, this study underscores the pivotal significance of environmental influences in shaping nursing career choices. Students' decisions to become nurses are greatly affected by the state of the economy, job prospects, the global need for nurses, and the features of the institutions they attend. The social context in which pupils are raised, including family socioeconomic level and parental educational background, has a critical effect in promoting or discouraging career choices. The growing popularity of nursing as a career choice is also due to the growing need for nurses around the world and the ongoing efforts to recruit nurses from other countries. In light of these findings, it is imperative that nursing students maintain a focus on professional development, irrespective of their initial motive for pursuing a nursing career. Nurse educators and training institutions must also offer high-quality education and supportive learning environments to properly educate students for the demands of the profession. Addressing environmental impacts through effective career guidance, policy support, and improved institutional conditions can boost informed decision-making, professional dedication, and long-term retention in the nursing workforce.

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