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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Identification of the components for investigation of the psychological strength of nursing applicants: A qualitative study

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Abstract

Aim: There is a lack of clarity about the components which would signify appropriate psychological strengths among nursing student candidates. This study was conducted to identify such components from the viewpoint of the clinical nurses and nursing instructors.

Design: A qualitative study.

Methods: This study comprised qualitative research using a conventional content analysis approach. Participants were 25 nurses and nursing instructors. Data were collected in audio-recorded and transcribed semi-structured interviews and were analysed using MAXQDA10 software.

Results: Analysis revealed four main categories including "anger management," "Stress/distress management," "self-belief" and "aptitude for hard work."

Conclusions: This study identified core components for future investigations into the psychological strengths of nursing applicants. This study provides specific testable hypotheses for future research endeavours. It is recommended that the researchers investigate the appropriateness of the components identified in this study to assess the psychological strength of the applicants in the longitudinal studies.

KEYWORDS
nursing education, nursing student selection, psychological strength

1 | INTRODUCTION

The selection of students for entry into the healthcare professions has become an increasingly important issue (Patterson et al., 2018). The selection and admission of candidates who possess the required characteristics for the profession are one of the major challenges for health education providers internationally. Resolution of this challenge could contribute significantly to the development of health specialist professionals, and improved health care and outcomes in the communities served (Ezeala et al., 2012). Also, US healthcare reforms have recently focused on three goals: improving individual health care, improving community health and reducing financial costs. They consider increased attention to the selection and admission of future healthcare specialist workforce to be one of the key reform strategies (Mahon et al., 2013).

Nurses are the largest single group of healthcare professionals and play an important role in individual and community health promotion (Smiley et al., 2018). However, one of the most important challenges for the nursing profession is the selection of appropriate applicants who have the greatest chance of longer-term success in fulfilling an effective role in their profession, and for the public and societal benefit (Talman et al., 2018). This issue has received serious attention in recent years, mainly due to growing concerns about the decreasing quality of nursing care, the high rate of job turnover, limited resources and students' failure to achieve an appropriate academic standard (Wambuguh et al., 2016). Also, unprofessional attitudes and behaviours of nursing students as reported by educators have led to the need to examine the suitability of applicants for the profession (Wilson et al., 2011).

In Iran, nursing applicants are judged solely on their educational achievements in much the same way as applicants for most other fields of study (Azizi Fini, 2014). However, in many studies; nursing has been classified as a difficult job that requires many specific qualities and aptitudes (Van Bogaert et al., 2017; Marcinowicz et al., 2016), and the World Health Organization (WHO) has also ranked nursing among the most demanding professions (Piquette et al., 2009). Therefore, an emphasis on the selection of students with appropriate psychological strengths to cope with the pressures of the nursing profession in the future is warranted (Wambuguh et al., 2016). Insufficient attention to the lack of congruence between these characteristics and the demands of the actual nursing professional role could have severe consequences (İspir et al., 2019). In line with this, studies suggest that in many cases, the reason behind the people's failure to effectively perform their job duties in the organization is due to a lack of technical skills or intelligence, but the inconsistency between their psychological characteristics and their job demands (Ahmadi, 2016). This may account for the phenomenon of employees who fail to reach expected levels of performance and effectiveness despite their personal knowledge and potential (Peng et al., 2014).

Additionally, studies show that deficits in the "fit" between nursing staff and the professional role and demands provide the conditions for emotional burnout. All of these factors are implicated in reduced job satisfaction and job failure (Sharififard et al., 2019), increased levels of burnout and ultimately in poor performance (Ahmadi, 2016) with indirect negative consequences for nursing care quality and financial costs (Keykaleh et al., 2018; Marć et al., 2019). Furthermore, studies have shown that while training and education, and modifications to the working environment, can develop and strengthen nurses' abilities to some extent, their psychological characteristics may remain largely unchanged (Pitt et al., 2014). Therefore, it seems appropriate to investigate whether particular psychological characteristics are relevant to job-related success and consequently also important in the process of selection of nursing student candidates (Wilson et al., 2011).

Currently, nursing schools have been faced with challenges in assessing the psychological strength of the applicants in the student selection phase (Haavisto et al., 2019; Traynor et al., 2017). There is not enough consensus on the components of the psychological strength which the applicants should be examined in the multiple mini interviews or the situation judgment tests (Pitt et al., 2014; Wood, 2014). The question of what exactly should be examined, remains unanswered (Haavisto et al., 2019; Shulruf et al., 2011), and it requires further research evidence to identify the components of psychological strength required for undergraduate nursing (Zamanzadeh et al., 2020). To measure a concept such as psychological strength, first the defining characteristics or components must be identified to pave the way for the measurement of this criterion in selecting the nursing applicants.

Given the above context, this study aimed to identify, from the perspective of clinical nurses and nursing instructors, the components related to psychological strengths that are associated with suitability for the demands of the nursing role. Because the clinical nurses and nursing instructors could provide rich data in the field of study, due to their knowledge and working experience the findings of this study could be used by higher education institutions to improve the nursing students' admission system.

2 | METHODS

2.1 | Design

Since the purpose of the study was to identify components of psychological strength required to enter the field of nursing from the perspective of experienced nurses and nursing educators, a qualitative research approach using a conventional content analysis approach was utilized. Content analysis is a qualitative research method in which data is described in a conceptual form in order to develop knowledge, gain new insight and develop practical guidance (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

2.2 | Sample and setting

The research sample consisted of $N = 25$ individuals comprising 19 nurses (12 clinical nurses, four head nurses, two supervisors and one nursing services manager), four nursing instructors and two nursing students. The criteria for the inclusion of the clinical nurses and the nursing instructors in the study were having work experience in the clinic or nursing management for at least 2 years and willingness to share their experiences with the researcher. The criterion for the inclusion of the students in the study was having enough experience in this field. So, senior students were selected as the sample. They were selected purposively from the educational and therapeutic centres and the nursing and midwifery faculties of the three major provinces in the west of Iran. Sampling also considered the need to maximize diversity. Recruitment continued until the data was saturated. When no new information was obtained, data were

saturated after twenty-three interviews. Three additional interviews were conducted to confirm the data saturation. In the last three interviews, the data analysis led to the emergence of repetitive codes and no new code was obtained. Also, the decision to achieve data saturation was made through reviewing the codes and categories by the research team members and two experts other than the research team.

2.3 | Data collection

Individual face-to-face interviews were used to collect data. Initial interviews were conducted with nine participants in an unstructured manner. The analysis was conducted iteratively and in parallel with interviews such that as themes emerged they were incorporated into interview schedules in order to gather more comprehensive and complete information. Thus, as the study progressed, interviews became semi-structured and an interview guide was used to ensure that all topics were addressed. All interviews with clinical nurses were conducted in person at a time set in advance by participants in private hospital rooms. Interviews with nursing students and instructors were conducted in a classroom at their convenience.

Interviews lasted between 40 and 55 min (Mean = 52 min). Recruitment of the participants was achieved through professional communications by holding a meeting with gatekeepers as well as sending the invitations and emails in which the objectives of the study had been described. Before starting the interview, the researcher explained the interview process including arrangements for recording and transcription and obtained written, informed consent. At the beginning of each interview, after a few warm-up questions, the participants' demographic information was requested, and then the interview began with a general question. The main question of the study was as follows: "In your experience, which psychological characteristics do you consider necessary for the nursing applicants to ensure that they could cope with the work pressures in the nursing profession?" Also during the interview, some probing statements were made to encourage participants to expand or provide further clarity on their responses. Examples included "Explain for me more about this," "What does [x] mean?" and "Could you give an example of this." Towards the end of each interview, further questions were asked such as "Do you think there's anything left that you haven't said yet?" Recruitment and interviews continued until the data were saturated (i.e. no new themes were emerging from the analysis). All interviews were recorded using a voice recorder. In a single case, the participant was reluctant to allow audio recording and written notes were taken from the conversations instead. One interview was conducted with each participant with two exceptions; interviews with participants (No. 4 and No.15) were repeated to complete and clarify ambiguities that became apparent in the analysis. Data collection lasted approximately 8 months, and the entire study was conducted during the period November 2018 to November 2019.

2.4 | Ethical considerations

The study described here comprised part of a Ph.D. thesis in the nursing field at Tabriz University of Medical Sciences which was approved by the ethics committee of the university (IR.TBZMED. REC.1397.583). Before the start of the study, the approval of the managers of the sampling centres was obtained. After selecting the participants at the beginning of the interview, the aims of the study were explained to them and their verbal and written informed consent was obtained to participate in the study and for the audio recording. Participants were assured that the recordings would be used anonymously and that the recorded audio would be deleted after the conversation was transcribed, and their name would not be mentioned in any of the publications resulting from the study. Participants were also given sufficient information regarding the review of the data by the other researchers in order to confirm the findings while maintaining confidentiality. Participants had the freedom to refuse to continue the interview, and there was no harm or loss to them.

2.5 | Data analysis

Data were analysed using the conventional content analysis approach using steps proposed by Wildemuth (2016): first, the transcript of each interview was read several times by a researcher to gain familiarity with the data and to develop a preliminary understanding of the related concept. Then, the data were coded into the semantic units (at words, sentence and paragraph level). The semantic units were compressed and amalgamated while their content was maintained. Finally, using continuous comparison, evaluation, feedback and interpretation, the codes were compiled to form the categories and subcategories. MAXQDA10.0R250412 software was used to manage the data.

2.6 | Rigour

In this study, to assure the trustworthiness of the data, criteria including credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability, as proposed by Lincoln & Guba (1985), were used. To ensure the credibility of the data, the researcher had a long-term relationship with the participants, which aided trust and openness. During the study, the interview transcripts, the semantic units and the extracted codes were presented to the participants to control their consistency with their experiences. All reasonable attempts were made to ensure that as a group the participants had maximum diversity in terms of their experience, length of service, age, gender and job positions. Dependability was determined through review of data and coding by a co-worker. Two external examiners with Ph.D. in nursing who had experience in qualitative research were asked to review the interview transcripts, the initial coding and the

categories. Any disagreements were discussed in a meeting and consensus achieved among the research team about the correct coding. Regarding transferability, the characteristics of the research population and the research process were described clearly and accurately, to make it possible to follow the research path and key decisions made in the analysis. The confirmability of the data was established by the researchers actively putting aside their thoughts and assumptions about the topic, accurate recording of the research procedure and documentation, refraining from the deep review of texts. This was all assisted by input from the rest of the research team.

3 | RESULTS

Data analysis revealed four main categories encompassing eleven subcategories that were perceived to be required components of psychological strength for nursing student candidates. The categories were as follows: "anger management," "Stress/distress management," "self-belief" and "aptitude for hard work." Each category comprised two or more subcategories (see Table 1).

3.1 | Anger management

The participants reported "anger management" as one of the most important psychological strengths related to nursing. According to them, an inability to manage anger leads to disruption in providing high-quality nursing care and to communicate with the patient, their friends and relatives. In this regard, one of the head nurses of the ward stated:

> The first and most important element that the nursing faculties must examine the applicants of this field is the anger management skill. We offer a lot of training courses on anger management for our nurses, but still there remains a challenge, and I see that they must

have had this skill from the beginning because it's really an individual characteristic. Meanwhile, it makes us not to spend all our time and energy learning this skill to our nurses

> (Participant.9).

This category comprised two subcategories: "Self-Control to Reducing Aggression" and "Ability to recognize and regulate any revenge impulse".

The nurses believed that the ability to internally control one's anger in the face of expressions of anger by others should be considered as one of the important components when investigating the psychological strength of the nursing applicants. In this regard, one of the clinical nurses stated:

> The nursing requires morale that if someone yells at you, try to keep calm, not to lose your temper. On the contrary, some people in our field lose control and start insulting, after a little anger by the patient's companion. Our field does not need such people and they degrade the dignity of the profession

> (p.13).

Many participants cited "regulation of revenge impulse" as one of the important components of anger management. Improper behaviour of nurses, particularly in the context of aggression or perceived disrespect, such as vindictiveness or retaliation to the patient and his companions could be counterproductive. It could disrupt communication between themselves, the patient, and their friends and relatives, and it could undermine their trust in the nurses. In this regard, one of the participants said:

> Given the time I've worked, it's very important for a nurse to have the morale of forgiveness. Some of us seek revenge instead of forgiveness. The individual should have the morale of forgiveness. I mean he

TABLE 1 Illustration of subcategorizes, categorizes, and a theme

Theme	Category	Subcategory
Psychological strength	Anger management	Self-control to reducing aggression
		Ability to recognize and regulate any revenge impulse
	Stress/distress management	Situational stress control
		Distress tolerance
		Situational tolerance
	Self-belief	Assertiveness
		Trusting one's knowledge and abilities
		Openness to criticism
		A positive self-attitude
	Aptitude for hard work	Sustainability in getting things done
		Acting beyond the limit

should be able to forgive the disrespect of others, which are really unintentional most of the time and ignore them

(p.20).

3.2 | Stress/distress management

All participants stated that the nursing profession has a high degree of stress due to its nature, and that deficits in effective stress management could lead to the decrease in job satisfaction, contribute to job turnover, student dropout rate and decreasing nursing care quality. One of the participants said:

> If people with the stress management skill are selected to take the responsibilities of the nursing profession, they are less likely to experience stress and perform their duties well, which in turn can lead to the job satisfaction and the lower rate of job leaving

(p.5).

This category comprised three subcategories: "Situational stress control," "Distress tolerance" and "Situational tolerance."

In almost all the interviews, the participants described "Situational stress control" as an important component of stress management. The ability to control one's rate of stress, tolerating pressure and stressful situations, and maintaining composure in stressful situations was recognized as the most important individual characteristics for entering the nursing profession. This subcategory has been represented in the following quote:

> The stressed person is not good for the nursing profession. Those who come to this field should scrutinize themselves to see if they are really able to control their stress in stressful situations. They should see if they could really tolerate the stress and pressure or not

(p.11).

The participants talked about the ability of the nursing applicants to tolerate distressing situations, and they argued that having adequate control over the personal feelings is important for working in the nursing profession. After describing the problems caused by the lack of this ability in some nurses, one of the head nurses stated:

> In this field, at any moment one may witness the death of a human. You may have to take care of patients who endure a lot of pain. For example, some cry with the least amount of the patient's pain, and this interferes with the nursing job. They must be able to control their emotions when dealing with those who are in pain. Otherwise, they will damage the care system and even it is harmful to the nurse too

(p.18).

One of the most important characteristics of the nursing applicants emphasized by the participants was "Situational tolerance." The students of this field must be able to tolerate the sight of blood, wounds, people's pain and the unpleasant odours in the hospital environment. One of the participants talked about his experiences:

> The hospital is a treatment place. It is a place for patients and people's pain and wail. Therefore, a person who wants to enter such a place must see whether she is ready to deal with the pain, the wail of the patients, or whether she can tolerate the sight of blood and wounds

(p.3).

3.3 | Self-belief

The participants believed that the "self-belief" of applicants for nursing courses should be considered as one of the important components for entering this field. According to the participants' viewpoint, the entry of people with self-belief into the nursing profession can play a major role in the professionalization of this field. One participant talks about her experience:

> People with self-belief exercise their authority in the profession, but a nurse who is weak in this respect cannot exercise well with the same authority

(p.22)

The components of this category include "assertiveness," "trusting one's knowledge and abilities," "openness to criticism" and "a positive self-attitude."

"Assertiveness" was one of the components most emphasized by the nursing instructors and the nurses. According to the participants, the nursing profession needs people who can say "no," express their opinions and ideas freely, and defend what is right despite resistance from others and the system. In this regard, one of the participants stated:

> The nature of the field of nursing is so that there is no place for the passive people. Sometimes a nurse should be able to defend her/his patient's rights. There should not be always yes or alright. Some people just say yes, that's it! to everything said to them. They can't say no. In fact, being decisive is one of the personal characteristics of a nurse which brings it with herself/himself to the field and ultimately causes a nurse to play her/his supportive role for the patient

(p.7).

Participants repeatedly stated one of the most important strengths in candidates for entry into the nursing field is their "trust in their knowledge and abilities." According to the participants, the necessary

characteristics to work in the nursing profession include the ability to apply knowledge at different times and places, and self-belief in their capabilities to overcome the presenting challenges. From the participants' perspective, this characteristic could be linked to making good care decisions for the patient. One participant mentions his experience as follows:

> One must see what is the individual's perception of his/her abilities? That is, when he takes care of a patient, he should not have any doubt to see if he/she was right or wrong, he/she must trust his knowledge and abilities. He/she must be a person that trusts himself/herself and is not afraid of anything. This is influential on the decision he makes to take care of his/her patient
>
> (p.17).

According to the participants, the nursing applicants need to have "an instinctual attitude of openness to criticism" for effective performance in the profession. In this regard, one of the participants said:

> People having Jobs like nursing, in which the human communication is very important, could be criticized by different people. When some of our nurses are criticized about their work and behavior, they automatically start defending themselves and become defensive. Criticism is done to improve the person's work and even better patient care, and perhaps in the system, correcting a behavior will be very effective, so it is not permissible that our nurses to be indifferent to the principled and correct criticism
>
> (p.7).

"A positive sense toward oneself" was another component on which the participants emphasized. They believed that this characteristic is also manifested in the individual's reactions and affects the nurse's thought, feeling and performance when providing care services. In this regard, one of the participants states:

> You have to enter the qualified people into the system. First of all, they have to value themselves. I mean, they have to see themselves valuable and respectable. In this way, they also value their job. Some of our nurses feel that others are better than them in their work. Take into account these factors while selecting the nurses. The future of nursing will be damaged by this characteristic of nurses
>
> (p.16).

3.4 | Aptitude for hard work

The final category described the need for candidates to have an ethos of working hard. Sustainability in getting things done and

acting beyond the limit are among the important components of this category. The following quotes support this category:

> The nursing profession is not suitable for people with so-called weak heart. One must have an iron will to become a nurse and ultimately being successful in it. One must be willing and diligent to do something that is even discouraging or difficult; he must tolerate standing without complaining against it
>
> (p.14).

> The nursing is not an easy job, so the resistant people are needed for this field. The loungers are not good for the nursing, so one must see whether the candidates who want to enter the nursing field put themselves under pressure to do something that is somehow beyond their ability
>
> (p.3).

4 | DISCUSSION

Nursing education institutions are required to select candidates who have the academic aptitude and physical abilities, along with the necessary non-cognitive abilities. The literature review showed that psychological strength is one of the important non-cognitive abilities in the selection of nursing students, so that the students would have the potential to cope with the working pressures of the nursing profession in the future. The content of each admission criteria must be specified before developing the student selection methods. This study identified the components of the psychological strength which could be used to examine the nursing applicants from the viewpoint of the clinical nurses and nursing instructors.

This research is the first qualitative study using a content analysis approach that identifies the components of psychological strength perceived to be necessary to enter the nursing profession. Data analysis showed that the nurses and nursing instructors indicated that anger management, Stress/distress management, self-belief and an ethos of hard-working are the key elements. The results from this study were consistent with the results of some previous studies (Haavisto et al., 2019; Rankin, 2013). However, our description of the components of the psychological strength required for the nursing profession is more specific and accurate.

Findings showed that anger management is perceived to be one of the important components for successful nursing profession candidates. Rankin (2013) and Haavisto et al. (2019) also indicated that those who can control their emotions including anger should be selected for the nursing profession. Nurses are exposed to relevant problematic behaviours including anger and violence (Hyland et al., 2016) and this reinforces the participants' views.

The inappropriate expression of anger can be destructive in care environments, leading to reduced quality of care, reduced work efficiency, increased absenteeism and burnout, high turnover

miscommunication with co-workers and family, and direct and indirect financial burden on health services and subsequently on society as a whole (Honarvar et al., 2019).

Despite the numerous actions and interventions which have been provided by the healthcare services around the world to help nurses better self-regulate emotions including anger, it remains a major challenge (Fute et al., 2015). In some studies, individual and personality traits have been considered as the most important factors, when investigating the factors influential on anger (Hyland et al., 2016). Therefore, nursing education institutions should consider anger management skills appropriately when selecting candidates suitable for entry into the nursing profession.

From the perspective of participants of the present study, stress/ distress management was also of considerable importance. This skill was emphasized in most interviews with participants. In his study, Kechagias (2011) described stress management as the most important non-cognitive skill in the process of selecting the students of the healthcare professions.

Our finding is also congruent with those of two studies examining the required individual characteristics for being success in medical education. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) found that stress management skills be considered a required soft skill for admission into the medical discipline (Koenig et al., 2013; Mahon et al., 2013). Because nursing is one of the most stressful professions, and nurses are constantly exposed to stress due to the sensitive nature of their job, so stress management is similarly an important skill for this profession (Alvarez et al., 2019).

Having the working morale in the care environments is another important component that was mentioned in this study. The participants' experiences showed that working in the nursing profession requires that the people's morale be compatible with the care environment, including the hospital.

Whitehead et al. (2007) have pointed out tolerating the sight of blood and the ability to tolerate the others' death as the characteristics required for becoming a nurse, in line with the results of the present study. It is difficult to work in a situation where the client is a patient who has lost his/ her physical health and his/ her morale, subsequently.

The nurses must endure the patients' pain, working with incurable patients or the death of patients, and the cry and sadness of their companions; otherwise, they will suffer from the reduced mental health and job burnout. In line with the present study, the results of the other studies reported the ability to control and regulate emotions as the criteria for selecting the nursing student (Haavisto et al., 2019; Pitt et al., 2013). Therefore, one of the components that the nursing education institutions must consider in order to achieve the appropriateness of the individual with the nursing profession is the morale of working in the care environments.

Self-belief was one of the important components reported by the nurses and nursing instructors. The subcategories of this component were assertiveness, trusting one's own knowledge and abilities, openness to criticism, and a positive feeling towards oneself. In line with the results of the present study, one could mention the

results of Pitt et al. (2014) who reported confidence and courage to be key individual characteristics necessary for the nursing practice. In this study, the examination of these two characteristics has been emphasized as the criteria for selecting the students to enter the nursing education. The subcategory of assertiveness covers the ability to say no, expressing the opinions and ideas easily, and telling the truth powerfully, and the subcategory of trusting one's knowledge and abilities covers confident, as in the nursing field, the ability to provide the appropriate decisive response in the critical situations is a vital skill which saves the patients' life (Pitt et al., 2014). According to Begley and Glacken, in the 21st century, healthcare centres need decisive nurses to meet the needs of their clients (Larijani et al., 2010).

The ethos of openness to criticism has been reported as an important feature of this category, which according to the participants was important for effective performance in the profession. In Gholampour et al. (2018), openness to criticism was reported as an important personality trait of nurses. Katz et al. (2004) also demonstrated the ability to receive critical feedback as an important attribute of nursing students. Due to the wide range of communication required in the nursing profession, nurses must be able to receive critical feedback in the workplace and in relation to patients, co-workers and authorities in order to perform effectively.

Having a positive feeling towards oneself was another characteristic emphasized by the participants of this study. The relationship between self-efficacy, the ability to establish good interpersonal relationships and the quality of nursing care is undeniable (Ni et al., 2010). Studies show that nurses with high self-efficacy provide better care services to clients, feel more confident about their skills and effectively cope with challenging situations (Feng et al., 2018; Pandey & Chalise, 2015). Therefore, it is important to examine this characteristic in nursing applicants.

The hard-working ethos was the final category identified. Participants emphasized the need to investigate applicants' attitudes to getting things done and to doing beyond what is required. Studies show that hard-working nurses can provide good healthcare services despite job stresses. This characteristic prepares them to face the daily challenges of the nursing profession and to overcome them (Cope et al., 2016). In the study of Rapson (2016), such an ethos of hard working has been reported as an important characteristic of successful students and nurses. In line with the present study, Whitehead et al. (2007) and Eley et al. (2011) have also reported examining the nursing applicants' hard working as one of the important components for entering the field.

4.1 | Implications of the findings in the nursing education

The findings of this study could be used by the policymakers and the nursing education institutions to develop their current methods to examine the psychological strength of the nursing applicants. This can prevent any job incompatibility and leads to improve the quality

of nursing care and increasing the efficiency in the health service provider organizations.

5 | CONCLUSION

The results of this study revealed a number of psychological components that should, in the view of participants, be investigated when making decisions about recruitment into nursing education programs. The findings of this study could be used by the nursing education institutes to develop their current methods such as designing scenarios in multiple mini interviews or situation judgment tests that are used to examine the psychological strength of nursing applicants in the students' selection process. Further quantitative research is needed to support the findings of this study. This study provides specific testable hypotheses for future research endeavours. It is recommended that the researchers investigate the appropriateness of the components identified in this study to assess the psychological strength of the applicants in the longitudinal studies. Also, because the present study is the first study on identifying the components of psychological strength required to enter the nursing field which was conducted qualitatively in the context of Iran, to obtain cross-cultural validity, it is suggested that similar studies be conducted by the other researchers in the context of the other societies.

5.1 | Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of the qualitative studies is the dependability of the results on the time and place of the study which could affect the generalizability of the findings. In this research, the experiences of the nurses and nursing instructors in the three western provinces of Iran were studied. To control this limitation, the results of the study were presented to a number of nonparticipating individuals. Then, the compatibility of the findings of the study with their experiences was examined and there was a high consistency between them. The social and cultural conditions of the society completely affect the psychological issues. The findings of this study are related to the context of Iran. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct this study in the context of other societies. So, we added this to the limitations of the study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
None of the authors had a conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS
FB, AG, LV and VZ: Study conception and design. FB and VZ: Data collection. All authors: Data analysis and interpretation, drafting of the article and critical revision of the article.

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