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Career Expectations, Difficulties And Choices In Nursing Students: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract-- *This study aimed to explore and compare between career expectations and difficulties in deciding careers and career choices in nursing students. This study was a cross-sectional study in an university in Surabaya, Indonesia, conducted with 233 first and final year bachelor degree nursing students, using a range of instruments: Career Expectations Questionnaire, Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire, and Questionnaire Survey on Career Choice. The data were then tested by t-test and Mann Whitney. The results showed no significant differences between first and final year students for career expectations, career decisions and career choices. Different aspects between first and final year students were in the aspects of organizational membership (p=.029) and there were differences in difficulties in deciding career, especially in aspects of lack of readiness (p=.031). The learning process and experience during the study period can be related to the impact of students' confidence in deciding their chosen careers. Support from academic staff and the environment such as parents, friends and nursing organizations are needed to shape positive aspects of the careers chosen by students.*

Keywords--career expectation; career choices; career difficulties; nursing students

I. INTRODUCTION

Career is a lifestyle concept that includes tiered work activities throughout life. Careers include activities before and after obtaining skills and decisions about how one unites their work life into other life roles [1]. Career selection is one of the most important decisions an individual makes in their life, and is seen as a core task of the late stages of adolescent development in the process of developing self-identity [2]. Today, the majority of prospective employees have high career expectations, especially in terms of personal learning and development, skills development, challenging work assignments, variations in work, and strong leadership [3]. High career expectations have the potential to cause difficulties in deciding a

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career so that individuals are increasingly hesitant and confused in making career choices. Furthermore, today many people choose to change careers. The influence of career expectations in deciding on a career and career choice in nursing students is unclear.

Today, there is a decline in the number of nurses, and increasing demand for nurses that has occurred in the last few decades in various countries has become a global problem [4]. Previous studies have shown that, despite the fact that there is a downward trend in the number of nurses in various parts of the world, many millennials are not interested in pursuing nursing as a profession [5]. The growth and resilience of the nursing profession depends highly on its ability to recruit and retain the next generation of professional nurses [6] which one of it's strategy can be done by understanding millennial generation career choices.

Career expectations consist of several dimensions which include: competition, freedom, management, life balance, organizational membership, expertise, learning, and entrepreneurship [7]. Factors that influence students' career expectations include: salary, working conditions, positive working atmosphere, understanding leaders, good interpersonal relationships, desire to join social groups, possibility to be able to apply the skills and knowledge possessed, fast career growth, prestige, promotion opportunities, and self-expression [8]. High expectations of one's career has the potential to create difficulties in deciding a career. These difficulties include several dimensions such as lack of readiness, doubt, dysfunctional myths, lack of knowledge about career decision-making processes, lack of information about oneself, lack of information about work, information inconsistencies, along with internal and external conflicts [9].

Career choice is seen as a complex consideration of social position, full of hope, dreams, doubts and personal tensions. Students' perceptions and expectations relating to their careers as nurses in the future are influenced by historical understandings and stereotypes of nursing itself; an image that often exists in the community [6]. The motives for selecting student careers are influenced by cognitive personal factors such as self-realization, sense of autonomy, social status, personal or financial development [10]. Some criteria that are often used by nursing students before choosing to pursue nursing as a career decision include: 1) happiness in treating sick people, 2) nurses being health professionals, 3) ease in getting a work position, 4) personality type, 5) views as an important profession for the community, 6) being able to shape the nursing profession, 7) the potential to obtain a high salary, 8) influence from family and friends, and 9) previous or existing health problems in the family [5].

Based on the previous study, the reasons of nurses' leave their profession were; they choose nursing as the second choice, nurse work content was demanding, did not fit to the stereotypical image of nurses and not able to provide career development possibilities [11]. Based on our interview with four nursing alumnus that worked in other field, they have said that their salary as nurses are still below the standard of other professions, and that when compared with the tuition they've spent to become a graduate of nursing and the effort that has been made to be able to complete their study on time is incomparable. In addition, in Indonesia, there are still limited employment opportunities for degree qualified nurses in several locations because employers often prefer to employ graduates of diploma courses for reasons of being more skilled and lower salary standards. Nursing clinical career ladder system in Indonesia, which has been started in 2006 is still have not been established well. Some hospitals have implemented using the standard of Indonesia Nurse Association, but its implementation is still diverse [12], which mean the nurses career pathway in hospital is still unclear. Therefore, career expectations, difficulties in deciding career and career choices of nursing students need to be further investigated..

II   METHOD

This research was an analytic descriptive study employing cross-sectional design. Cross-sectional studies involve measurement of dependent and independent variables, carried out only at one time, regardless of the length of the study period as a whole [13]. In this study, first and final year nursing students in a bachelor degree program in one university in Surabaya, Indonesia, were surveyed about their future careers with the aim of examining the influence of career expectations their future career decisions and choices.

The sample in this study were bachelor degree nursing students who met the following selection criteria: a. Were in their first or final year the bachelor degree program in nursing ; b. Were a minimum of 18 years old. The sampling technique applied in this study is purposive sampling. Nursing students who apllied for the inclusion criteria was choosen as research respondents.

Career expectation were measured using the Career Expectations Questionnaire instrument developed by Pemberton (1997). This instrument initially consisted of 24 statements covering eight domains, namely: 1) competition, 2) freedom, 3) management, 4) life balance, 5) organizational membership, 6) expertise, 7) learning, and 8) entrepreneurship. The choice of answers for each question consists of four alternatives on a Likert scale, ranging from not important (value 1) to very important (value 4). The maximum value that can be obtained across the questionnaire is 96, and the minimum 24. The results of instrument testing with 25 nursing students showed that there were 22 valid items with a value of $r = 0.413 - 0.866$ and high reliability with a value of $\alpha = 0.939$. Items No. 3 and 4 proved invalid so removed from the instrument for this study.

Challenges in deciding on career to pursue were measured using the Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire instrument developed by Gati et al. (1996). This instrument initially consisted of 44 statements covering nine domains, namely: 1) lack of readiness, 2) doubts, 3) dysfunctional myths, 4) lack of knowledge about career decision making processes, 5) lack of information about oneself, 6) lack of information about work, 7) information inconsistencies, 8) internal conflicts, and 9) external conflicts. The choice of answers consists of nine alternatives on a Likert scale, starting from not reflecting myself (value 1) to being suitable for describing myself (value 9). The maximum value that can be obtained is 396, while the minimum is 44. Results of testing the instrument with 25 nursing students showed there were 42 valid items with a value of $r = 0.402 - 0.867$ and high reliability with a value of $\alpha = 0.978$. Items No. 2 and 39 proved invalid so were removed from the instrument. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to assess severity of difficulties experienced (1 = not at all severe; 9 = very severe) and write additional barriers that could prevent them from making career decisions (not quantitatively assessed).

Career choice was measured using the Career Choice Questionnaire Survey developed by Takeda et al. (2013) which was originally designed to examine career choices of medical students. This instrument consists of three domains, namely: 1) basic information, 2) future career plans and areas of interest to be pursued, and 3) future career plans and workplaces. In total, this instrument consisted of 67 items, which four of these were questions of demographic characteristics (gender, age, marital status, number of children). The first domain consisted of eight questions (Q1 - Q8), there were four questions in the second doman (Q9 - Q12) Q12 consisted of 31 statements (scale 1-4), and two questions in the third domain (Q13 - Q14) where Q13 consisted of 20 statements (1-4 scale). The items in the first section were dichotomous questions with answer choices of yes (value 1) and no (value 0). The maximum value that could be obtained in section 1 is 8, while the

minimum value is 0. The majority of questions in the second part allowed respondents to answer more than 1 (not quantitatively assessed), except Q12. In general, the choice of answers in Q12 and Q13 consisted of four alternatives, starting from none at all (value 1) to very (value 4). The maximum and minimum values   that could be obtained in Q12 were 124 and 31, while in Q13 these were 80 and 20 respectively. Q14 had five answer choices, starting from very wanted/motivated (value 1) to never (value 4). The researcher slightly modified the question items and rating scale so that they were more suitable for nursing students. The results of instrument testing with 18 nursing students on item Q12 showed that there were 14 valid items with a value of r = 0.492 - 0.754 and high reliability with a value of $\alpha = 0.902$. The results of instrument testing were 23 nursing students on item Q13 showed that there were 14 valid items with a value of r = 0.428 - 0.860 and high reliability with a value of $\alpha = 0.901$.

Following ethical approval, student contact details were obtained from the academic and student affairs department. The first researcher conducted a road show to collect research data personally. Before distributing the questionnaire, the researcher gave an explanation of the research (objectives, benefits, and instructions for completing the questionnaire) and asked students to sign an informed consent sheet to ensure their willingness to be involved. Respondents were reassured they could refuse to become participate and this would not affect their learning process. At the time of completing the questionnaire, the researcher remained in case there were items that were unclear.

Collected data were tabulated (descriptive analysis) and analyzed to determine the effect of career expectations on difficulties in deciding on nursing students' career and career choice, and whether there were significant differences in the findings between first and final year students. For influence testing, the researcher first conducted a linearity test of the data then analyzed it using linear regression. Where the research data was not linear, then logistic regression test was chosen as an alternative to statistical testing. For different tests, the researchers initially conducted tests of data normality and analyzed the data with Levene Test. Where there was significant difference between the two sample groups, the Levene Test was followed by one-sample t-Test to determine which group of students scored better when viewed from the variables measured. If there was no difference between the two student groups, further testing was not done. With the level of significance of the data (α) <0.05; the research hypothesis was accepted if the value of $p < \alpha$. This research was carried out with ethical approval as granted by the research ethics committee of the Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Airlangga and in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants completed informed consent prior to completing the questionnaire. The privacy and confidentiality of participants' data was ensured as findings are reported collated and non-identifiable.

III   RESULTS

A total of 143 first year and 90 final students participated in the study. Hence, the total number of respondents was 233. Most of the students (n=109, 46.78%) lived with their parents or siblings, 111 (47.63%) reported living in boarding accommodation and the rest living in other places such as their own homes and dormitories (n=13, 5.59%). The average age of first year students was 18 years while final years students were 22 years old. Most first year students and final year students had come to the course from public schools (n=190, 81.54%), 30 (12.87%) from private schools, seven (3%) from Islamic schools, and five (2.59%) from vocational schools (Table 1).

Table 1 Demographic data

Variable	First Year Students	Final Year Students	N (%)	p-value
Residence				.059
Parents/Family	66	43	109 (46.78)	
Dormitory	65	46	111 (47.63)	
Other	12	1	13 (5.59)	
Age (years)	18	22		.000
Type of School				.497
Public School	116	74	190 (81.54)	
Private School	18	12	30 (12.87)	
Islamic School	6	1	7 (3)	
Vocational School	3	3	6 (2.59)	
Nursing as second choice			17 (7.6)	

Table 2 Career expectations and difficulties in career decisions

Aspects	First Year Students X ± SD	Final Year Students X ± SD	t	ρ
Career expectations	77.7±6.244	76.57±7.785	-1.164	0.246
Competitions	9.80 ± 1.265	9.70 ± 1.353	-0.547	0.231
Freedom	9.90 ± 1.293	9.88 ± 1.348	-0.097	0.912
Management	8.85 ± 1.327	8.97 ± 1.369	0.624	0.534
Life Balance	10.18 ± 1.336	10.18 ± 1.362	-0.022	0.759
Organization memberships	9.65 ± 1.158	9.38 ± 1.395	-1.615	0.029*
Expertise	9.52 ±1.514	9.59 ± 1.579	0.308	0.652
Learning	10.27 ± 1.251	9.66 ± 1.462	-3.313	0.148
Enterpreuneurships	9.52 ± 1.198	9.30 ± 1.386	-1.267	0.282
Career Decision Difficulties	197.41±45.463	205.31±52.82	1.172	0.243
Lack of readiness	11.55 ± 4.547	11.47 ± 7.432	-0.273	0.031*
Doubtness	19.84 ± 5.394	18.13 ± 5.849	-2.272	0.527
Dysfunctional myths	19.94 ± 3.947	19.49 ± 4.432	-0.783	0.365
Lack of knowledge about the process	13.76 ± 4.642	15.43 ± 4.802	2.620	0.533
Lack of knowledge about self	39.70 ± 15.872	42.13 ± 16.843	1.098	0.516
Informational inconsistency	48.51± 17.124	50.93 ± 17.664	1.031	0.793
Internal conflict	32.03 ± 7.100	34.24 ± 8.162	2.120	0.320
External conflict	11.29 ± 6.758	13.47 ± 7.432	2.249	0.120

*=significant difference

Table 3 Career choice influences

Aspect	First year student n(%)	Final year student n(%)
Nursing as second choice of career	9(5.8)	8(11.9)
Working other jobs before nursing	9(5.8)	14(20.9)
Family figure who is a nurse	7(4.5)	7(10.4)
Know someone else that have nursing profession before choosing nursing	77(49.4)	18(26.9)
Have a nurse as role model before choosing nursing as career	55(35.3)	17(25.4)
Deciding on nursing profession as career	152(97.44)	64(95.52)
Parents' suggestion for nursing as career choice	125(80.13)	44(65.67)
Senior students' suggestion for nursing as career choice	101(64.74)	40(59.70)
Academic lecturer suggestion for nursing as career choice	112(71.79)	38(56.71)
Availability of employment	135(86.53)	47(70.15)
Magnitude of income	129(82.69)	50(74.62)

Findings indicated no differences between first and final year students related to career expectations. Different aspects found between the two student groups were in the aspects of organizational membership (p=.029) and in difficulties in deciding career, especially in aspects of lack of readiness (p=.031) (Table 2). The study results show that the majority of respondents chose a nursing career as their first choice of career because of family desires, especially the wishes of parents, having a role model who worked a as nurse, availability of employment and the magnitude of income (Table 3).

IV   DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore and compare career expectations and difficulties in deciding careers and career choices in two groups nursing students in Indonesia. The results indicate that there was no difference between career expectations and difficulties in career decision between first and final year nursing students. Appropriate choice for students entering nursing is important and has a high impact on their professional lives and future achievements in their career of choice. Incompatibility between career expectations, career difficulties and career choices can be a cause of dissatisfaction and lead to career failure [14]. One study conducted in Canada found that nurses who chose careers as nurses had perceptions and expectations about what the profession entailed, and early perceptions and expectations of nursing practice could influence their future career decisions, such as mobility and intent to remain in nursing profession [15]. Nursing students in this study, who have positive expectations and perceptions about the profession tend to have greater intention to choose to stay in their nursing career.

Different aspects were found in this study between first and final year students in the aspects of organizational membership and lack of readiness. Results showed that the higher the level of students, the more organizational experience increased. Experience as a member of an organization can also play a role in students' career decisions. Based on a theory,students who participate in organizational activities as members will observe organizational activities and influence their career decisions [16]. Student readiness to determine their future career is also related to career decisions and difficulties. In the current study, the higher the level of students, the more readiness they had to determine their future career. Readiness is associated with one's belief in doing something that is the initial process of the career decision process. Lack of preparedness in the chosen career could also lead to career indecision [17]. Students whose aspirations and expectations were discrepant were less confident about making a career-related decision, more career indecisive, and had lower levels of career choices.

The results of the current study showed that the majority of respondents chose nursing as a career as their first career choice because of family desires, especially due to the wishes of their parents, having role models who worked as nurses, availibility of employment and the income. Income was identified as an influential extrinsic factor in career choice decision. Previous study stated that exposure to nursing and nurses, either as a consumer of health care or other health care role, plays a primary role in influencing career change in nursing students [18]. Previous studies have also found that financial reward was a high motivator for career decisions among students [19], [20]. The majority of respondents in this study chose nursing as their career because of the influence of families, especially parents. Previous research has shown a great impact of the family, especially parents, on students' career

choices [21] as well as previous exposure to nurses and the health care system (McKenna et al. 2017). In addition, peer influence and job opportunities have also been shown to affect the career choices of students [22]. The results of this study reinforce that environmental support could influence individual decisions in students' career choices.

V   CONCLUSION

The future global nursing workforce is dependent on recruiting and retaining nursing. To ascertain how students perceive nursing, and why they decide on nursing as a career, is therefore important. The learning process and student experience during their studies are also directly related to career decision making and lead to career choices. The more positive the experience gained, the better career decisions made by students. The learning process and experience during their studies can be related to the impact of students' confidence in deciding their chosen career. Support from the university and environment such as parents, friends and nursing organizations is needed to shape positive aspects of careers chosen by students. Further studies should explore the job satisfaction and career intentions of nurses after graduation to understand the consistency of their career choice with their original expectations.

VI   CONFLICT OF INTEREST

We declare that there was no conflict of interest.

VII   ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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