

# Career Development: Nursing Graduates' Outlook in India

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**Abstract:** Career planning or selecting preferred job increases the job satisfaction where as a career chosen randomly adversely affects both job satisfaction as well as those receiving the care. Career planning helps them to be more satisfied in future with their job profile. An understanding of perception of nursing as career among nursing students, their job preferences and associated reasons will foster the recruitment agencies to provide conducive and promising work environment for future nurses thereby balancing between demand and supply of nursing task force and aid in their retention. Current study aims to explore the career advancement preferences of final year nursing students and associated factors influencing their plans. A descriptive cross sectional, online survey of 433 nursing students (total enumeration, final year) using structured questionnaire containing 20 items, was conducted over three months. A self developed structured questionnaire included 20 items was shared using Google form. Results showed that 36.49% of the students had nursing as their first career choice and 34.8% self motivated. 54.04% felt nursing is about caring the sick. Students wanted to pursue their career as clinical nurse (38.57%) and nurse educator (36.49%) respectively. Overall 46.19% preferred working in intensive care unit and 83.10% wished to pursue higher education.

**Keywords:** Job Preference, Nursing Graduates, Work Area

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## 1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) designated 2020 as the year of nurse and midwife. Nurses and midwives play a vital role in providing health services. In today's time when nursing is considered the most noble and trusted profession, there were 1.79 million registered nurses/midwives and 786,796 auxiliary nurse midwives in India according to Indian Nursing Council (INC) and World Health Organization (WHO) data, 2014. WHO recommends nurse-to-population ratio as 1:500 whereas in India it was 1:475.14 [1]. Being largest workforce, (38%) India still needs 1.97 million nurses to meet the growing demand [2]. Shortage of nurses remain one of the greatest challenges in India as well as in other developing countries. Several nursing students in past after completing graduation have opted to quit Nursing and choose other paths for their career. While working

conditions have been reworked, and pay schemes revised, this has not helped to reduce the shortage of nurses. The changing health needs and expanding knowledge has caused nursing profession to undergo a tremendous transition and many new job options have come up India and abroad have been created. There is increase in educational institutions which directly reflect rising in Nursing. The scope of nursing practice has expanded as nurse practitioners, researchers, administrators, nursing faculty etc. challenging the students to strive for these options as per their potential. Today's generation is focused in preparing themselves as per their preferences. They prefer higher education, sometimes migrate to other cities and make adjustments.

Career planning or selecting preferred job increases the job satisfaction whereas a career chosen randomly, adversely affects both job satisfaction as well as those receiving the care. Students prefer for higher monthly income job and the probability of choosing a rural job is 92.8% if monthly

income is increased while location of the workplace is least important [5]. Therefore, it is important that nursing students make correct choices early while they are studying. Understanding of future plan after graduation will serve to provide their preference based opportunities and make nursing profession empowered. Self-aware students are more likely to choose a job that is more compatible to their values, bring satisfaction and contentment to their life [3, 4]. The factors that influence students in their choice of nursing are their want to help people, provide care to the needy (55.5%), easy to find nursing jobs (44.5%), and a high value attached in the society (29.2%) [6].

Perception towards Nursing refers to the way Nursing is understood or interpreted. Nursing students enter the profession at a very early age and perceive it as hard work with high pressure and stress [6]. Students believe nursing is a noble profession (96%), 88% are helped by parents and friends to choose nursing, 86% are self-motivated and select nursing because of family decision (80%) [4]. An understanding of perception of nursing as career among nursing students, their job preferences and associated reasons will foster the recruitment agencies to provide conducive and promising work environment for future nurses there by balancing between demand and supply of nursing task force and aid in their retention. Therefore, current study aims to explore the career advancement preferences of final year nursing students and associated factors influencing their plans.

## 2. Significance of the Study

Career planning or selecting preferred job increases the job satisfaction where as a career chosen randomly adversely affects both job satisfaction as well as those receiving the care. Therefore, it is important that nurses make correct

choices early while they are studying. Understanding of nursing student's future plan after graduation will serve to provide their preference based opportunities and make nursing profession empowered. This will help the nurse educators to provide career counseling as well as help students in preparing for the most opted preferences. Therefore, current study aims to explore the career advancement preferences of final year nursing students and associated factors influencing their plans.

## 3. Materials and Methods

A cross-sectional survey was conducted over three months using an online platform. Ethical permission from Institute Ethics Committee was obtained. A self-developed structured questionnaire was prepared using Google form to assess the career preferences. Section I was regarding demographic profile and section II included 20 items related to reason for choosing nursing, preferred work area and type of job and desire for further education. Reliability of the tool was established by the test-re-test method and  $r=0.84$ . Google form was shared through Whatsapp in class groups, all students were sent message to fill the proforma. Online informed consent was obtained. Three reminders were sent through group message followed by individual message and the link was deactivated for receiving responses after one week. Total 433 students were enrolled from both government and private colleges of North India. Final year students, using smart Phone with Whatsapp were included. The current study is based on the assumption that final year nursing students have some insight regarding their selection of nursing profession and future job preferences. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency and percentage for choices and chi square/ANOVA to seek association between preferences and select variables.

*Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants (n=433).*

S. No	Variable			
1	Age (Mean±SD)		21.9±0.98*	
2	Gender	Male	28 (6.47)#	
		Female	405 (93.53)	
3	Religion	Hindu	338 (77.60)	
		Christian	40 (9.24)	
		Sikh	31 (7.16)	
		Muslim	24 (5.54)	
4	Marital Status	Single	430 (99.31)	
		Married	2 (0.46)	
		Divorced	1 (0.23)	
6	Education	Father		
		Illiterate	6 (1.39)	Mother
		Upto high school	187 (40.75)	20 (4.62)
		Graduate and above	240 (57.28)	367 (53.34)
			46 (42.03)	

Data presented as\*Mean±SD, #frequency (%).

## 4. Results

In the present study 28 (6.47%) were males and 405 (93.53%) were females, 338 (77.60%) were Hindus and 99.3%

were single. Education status of 53.3% mothers was upto high school and 57.28% of fathers were educated upto graduation and above (Table 1).

One family member of 89% of the students was a registered nurse, with sisters accounting 10.66% followed by

mothers (6.89%). It was found that 36.49% of the students had nursing as their first career choice with 34.8% self-motivated to choose nursing. Those motivated by their fathers, mothers, relatives and sisters were 23.42%, 18.9%, 8.5% and 5.08% respectively. Nursing students expressed

that nursing is caring for the sick (54.04%), profession with more job opportunities (28.4%), consider Nursing as carrying out doctor's orders (2.54%) and nursing as a means to go abroad (1.62%) (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Information Related to Nursing Profession (n=433).

S. No	Variable	Frequency (%)			
1	Presence of registered nurse	Yes	89 (20.55)		
		Father	12 (2.77)		
		Mother	32 (6.89)		
		Sister	44 (10.66)		
		Brother	1 (0.23)		
2	Nursing as first career choice		158 (36.49)		
		Self motivation	151 (34.8)		
		Father	101 (23.42)		
		Mother	82 (18.9)		
		Brother	6 (1.39)		
3	Source of motivation to choose nursing as a career	Sister	22 (5.08)		
		Relatives	37 (8.5)		
		Teachers	12 (2.77)		
		Others	22 (5.08)		
		4.	Nursing is	Caring for the sick	230 (54.04)
				High status profession	30 (7.62)
Same as any other profession	22 (5.08)				
Carrying doctors orders	11 (2.54)				
Means to go abroad	7 (1.62)				
A low status profession	10 (2.31)				
Profession with more job opportunities	117 (28.4)				
Any other	6 (1.36)				

Data presented as frequency (%).

Reasons to choose nursing were failure to get admission in MBBS (56.35%), better job opportunity in India (49.31%), easy to get job abroad (44.57%), service to humanity (41.11%) and a means for improving economic status of the family (27.94%). Almost similar preference was observed regarding place of work after graduation, anywhere in India 30.02%, abroad 27.48% and in native place by 23.79%. The preferred clinical setting among nursing students was 48.73% in medical-surgical ward followed by 21.94% in obstetrics department and 10.1% as public health nurse (PHN). The

results also showed that 46.19% preferred to work in intensive care unit (ICU) setting while 17.09%, 14.78% and 13.68% would work in general ward, operation theatre (OT) and outpatient department (OPD) respectively. Of all the participants 64.67% were willing to work in the community and 83.10% wished to pursue higher education. As far as choice of higher education was concerned 40.18% opted for medical-surgical, 22.17% for psychiatric nursing and 12.24% for paediatric nursing (Table3).

**Table 3.** Career Preferences of the Participants (n=433).

S. No	Variable	Response	Frequency (%)
1.	Reasons for choosing nursing*	Failed to get admission in MBBS	244 (56.35)
		Better job opportunity in India	214 (49.31)
		Can go abroad easily	193 (44.57)
		Can improve eco. Status of the family	121 (27.94)
		Bette matrimonial prospective	100 (23.09)
		Service to humanity	178 (41.11)
		Provides chance for higher education	137 (31.61)
2	Preferred place to work after graduation*	Native state	104 (23.79)
		Any metropolitan city of India	79 (18.24)
		Anywhere in India	131 (30.02)
		Abroad	119 (27.48)
		Staff nurse/clinical nurse	169 (38.57)
3	Preferred nursing career*	Nurse educator/tutor	159 (36.49)
		Nurse administrator	48 (10.85)
		Public health nurse	39 (8.78)
		Nurse researcher	9 (2.08)
		Any other	9 (2.08)
4	Preferred clinical setting for practice*	Medical Surgical Nursing	211 (48.73)

S. No	Variable	Response	Frequency (%)
5	Preferred area for clinical practice*	Paediatric Nursing	38 (8.78)
		Psychiatric Nursing	35 (8.55)
		Obstetrical and Gynaecological Nursing	93 (21.94)
		Geriatric	12 (2.77)
		PHN	44 (10.16)
		OPD	60 (13.86)
		General ward	79 (17.09)
		ICU	205 (46.19)
		OT	64 (14.78)
		Chronic care: rehabilitation	22 (5.08)
6	Interest in working in community setting	Any other	3 (0.69)
		Yes	280 (64.67)
7.	Interested in pursuing higher education in nursing?	Yes	359 (83.10)
		Medical Surgical Nursing	174 (40.18)
8.	Choice of interest for higher education*	Paediatric Nursing	53 (12.24)
		Psychiatric Nursing	96 (22.17)
		Community Health Nursing	34 (7.85)
		Nursing education	20 (4.61)
		Nursing administration	33 (7.62)
		Nursing research	15 (3.46)
	No response	8 (1.84)	

\*Multiple response questions.

Table 4 depicts the job preferences of the participants, 92.38% desired job security in government sector whereas only 4.18% were interested in non-government organization (NGO). Out of the three working shifts 73.21%, 21.25% and 5.54% preferred morning, evening and night respectively.

With regard to work setting, participants preferred to work in equal number of male and female setting (83.60%). Students preferred to work in government sector (52.2%) immediately after graduating and only 22.4% preferred to go for higher studies.

**Table 4.** Job Preference of the Participants (n=433).

S. No	Variable	Response	Frequency (%)
1	Preferred sector for securing job	Private sector	9 (2.08)
		Govt. sector	401 (92.38)
		NGO/voluntary org	18 (4.16)
		Missionary sector	5 (1.15)
2	Perceived satisfaction with job in Indian Govt. sect or	Yes	359 (83.10)
		Temporary	14 (3.23)
3	Preferred type of appointment	Permanent	409 (94.46)
		Contract	8 (1.85)
		Part-time	2 (0.46)
		Morning	317 (73.21)
4	Preferred shift for work	Evening	92 (21.25)
		Night	24 (5.54)
		Only female nurses	18 (4.16)
		Equal no. of male and female	362 (83.60)
5	Which of the following type of work setting duo wish to work? A work setting with	Few male and female	41 (9.47)
		More male and few female	9 (2.08)
		Only male nurse	3 (0.69)
		Secure job in govt. sector	226 (52.19)
6	Your preference after graduation	Prepare a career abroad	60 (13.86)
		Prepare a new job in pvt. Sector	26 (6.00)
		Prepare for higher studies in nursing	97 (22.40)
		Change the profession and switch onto other career line	24 (5.54)

Students ranked job satisfaction (43.4%), high pay scale (18.9%), and safe atmosphere (10.9%) for nursing profession as their preferences. The last rank was availability of job for spouse (0.7%) for nursing profession as their preference.

Table 6 shows that females preferred to work in metropolitan cities (p=0.038), to work with female colleagues (p=0.034) and preferred to work in morning shift (p=0.013).

**Table 5.** Reason for selecting nursing as a career choice (n=433).

S. No	Reason	Frequency (%)
1	Job satisfaction	188 (43.42)
2	High pay scale	82 (18.94)

S. No	Reason	Frequency (%)
3	Safe atmosphere	47 (10.85)
4	Availability of job for spouse	3 (0.69)
5	Promotional opportunity	8 (1.85)
6	Opportunity for higher education	22 (5.08)
7	Independent decision maker	16 (3.70)
8	Optimal workload and good atmosphere	13 (3.00)
9	Religious facilities and activities	4 (0.92)
10	Proximity to native place	13 (3.00)

**Table 6.** Association of selected variables with Career preferences (n=433).

S. No	Variable	Preference	Male	Female	P value
1	Reason for choosing nursing as a career	Failed to get admission in MBBS	14 (50.00)	230 (56.79)	0.484
		Better job opportunity in India	14 (50.00)	200 (49.38)	0.932
		Can go abroad easily	14 (50.00)	179 (44.20)	0.550
		Can improve eco. Status of the family	9 (32.14)	112 (37.65)	0.609
		Better matrimonial prospective	7 (25.00)	93 (22.96)	0.805
		Service to humanity	8 (28.57)	170 (41.98)	0.163
		Provides chance for higher education	8 (28.57)	129 (31.85)	0.718
2	Where would u like to work after graduation	In my native state	10 (35.71)	93 (22.96)	0.125
		Any of the metropolitan cities of India	1 (3.57)	78 (19.26)	0.038
3	Anywhere in India	Anywhere in India	11 (39.29)	119 (29.38)	0.269
		Outside India	6 (21.43)	113 (27.90)	0.458
4	Which among the following nursing careers will u prefer?	Staff nurse/clinical nurse	11 (39.29)	156 (38.52)	0.936
		Nurse educator/tutor	10 (35.71)	148 (36.54)	0.930
		Nurse administrator	2 (7.14)	45 (11.11)	0.514
		Public health nurse	4 (14.29)	34 (8.40)	0.287
		Nurse researcher	1 (3.57)	8 (1.98)	0.567
5	Which of the following type of work setting do u wish to work? A work setting with	Only female nurses	1 (3.57)	17 (4.20)	
		Equal no. of male and female	19 (67.86)	343 (84.86)	
		Few male and female	5 (17.86)	36 (8.89)	0.034
		More male and few female	2 (7.14)	7 (1.73)	
6	Which one of the following duty shift will u prefer?	Only male nurse	1 (3.57)	2 (0.49)	
		Morning	18 (64.29)	299 (73.83)	
		Evening	5 (17.86)	87 (21.48)	0.013
		Night	5 (17.86)	19 (4.69)	
		Medical Surgical Nursing	0	46 (11.36)	0.059
7	Which will be your choice of interest for higher education?	Paediatric Nursing	4 (14.29)	85 (20.99)	0.396
		Psychiatric Nursing	1 (3.57)	26 (6.42)	0.547
		Community Health Nursing	0	13 (3.21)	0.336
		Nursing education	2 (7.14)	24 (5.93)	0.793
		Nursing Administration	0	8 (1.98)	0.453
		Nursing Research	1 (3.57)	1 (0.25)	0.012

## 5. Discussion

This study elicits the perception of nursing students towards nursing profession and their career choices. Authors tried to identify motivating factors to choose nursing as their career, their job preferences and their desire to pursue further education. Data was collected from both private and government colleges of North Delhi.

Nursing is predominantly a female profession globally. This is very well depicted in the present study where majority of the participants were female (93.53) which is congruent with the studies done by Sullivan [8], Arzu [9] and Sangita Devi [3].

The mean age of the participants was 21.9±0.98, majority were single (99.31%). Career choices are opted at this age after school education. With regard to fathers education 57.28% were graduated/above graduation whereas 53.34% mother's were educated up to high school. Sangita Devi (2015) [3]

reported similar pattern of age of participants and education among parents.

Findings of the present study reveal that students (36.49%) had nursing as their first career choice, were self-motivated (34.8%), had either sister (10.66%), mother (6.89%), or father (2.77%) working as a nurse. Various studies from different states of India reveal that students are self motivated to choose nursing profession as their career choice [4, 7, 10] which was in contrast to the present study findings. Family plays a major role for young individuals to make a choice for profession and it is accepted that cultural level influences the professional choice [5].

In present study 54.04% students perceived nursing profession as an opportunity to care for the sick. This finding is supported by another study where 69.6% students chose nursing as a means to serve humanity [4]. Various studies reported that there as on to choose nursing was because of their inclination towards caring for sick and to care for humanity [7, 11]. The idea of helping and caring for people

played an important role in choosing nursing as a profession.

In India, nursing is generally considered to be the second career choice after MBBS. This statement is very well supported by the present study where more than half of the participants (56.35%) opted nursing as they failed to get admission in MBBS.

Another important reason to choose nursing was availability of jobs (49.31%). This is supported by Arzu Khader et al [9] where the participants chose nursing because of ease of finding the job (63.5%). Nursing profession has several job opportunities and there is deficiency of Nurses not only in India but across the globe.

In the present study 30.02% of students were ready to work anywhere in India after graduation while, 27.48% were interested in going abroad. This is contrary to the findings of S. Swarna (58%) [10] and Patidar Anurag et al (71%) [7] where majority of the students were attracted to migrate abroad in hope to get good professional opportunity and better quality of life. This might be because of better working conditions, good salary and more respect to nursing profession in developed countries as compared to developing country like India. Similar trend was also observed in other developing countries like Ghana where Nyaledzigvor P. P. et al (2014) [12] found a positive relationship between student nurses' intention to travel to developed countries and their choice of nursing as career.

In the present study students who wanted to continue as clinical nurse and nurse educator were 38.57% and 36.49% respectively. Similarly in studies conducted by Sangita Devi (53.3%) [3] and S Swarna (51%) [10] desired to continue their career in teaching area.

Most of the students preferred higher education and among them around 40.18% students wanted to pursue higher education in medical surgical nursing followed by psychiatric nursing. Majority of students expressed their interest in working in a medical surgical unit and Intensive care unit. These findings were consistent with the results of Sangita Devi [3]. This inclination towards medical surgical subject could be because varied and broader scope to work in this field. Incongruent with these findings there is study that expressed that around 71% students were not interested to join higher studies as their future plan for migration [7].

Only 5.6% of the students wanted to change their profession. This finding was incongruence with the results of the study done by Anurag [7] where only 7% wanted to change their jobs. Reason for change may be that students were interested in work other than nursing.

It was also seen that students mostly preferred for job in government sector (92.3%) as there is more job security with better salary and benefits. They have a perceived job satisfaction in government sector (83.10%). Basically nursing as a career in India is satisfying in government sector.

Morning shift is the preferred shift amongst majority (73.21%) of the students. This is congruent with the findings of Sangita Devi (71.7%) [3]. This is probably due to safety issues while travelling for work in the day time and it also

leaves them rest of the day for their family time.

A large number of students (83.60%) chose to work in an environment with equal number of male and female nurses which might be due to large number of males entering this profession and students perceive that gender equality is emerging in Nursing profession in India.

The top ranked reasons for selecting nursing as a career choice was job satisfaction (43.42) followed by high pay scale (18.94%), safe atmosphere (10.85%), opportunity for higher education (5.08%) and optimal workload (3%). Similar reasons were stated in various other studies [4, 7, 13, 14]. This finding very well validates the factors such as job satisfaction, high pay; safe work environment and optimal work load are essential points to be considered while choosing a career.

The present study finding show a statistically significant association between gender and working in metropolitan cities ( $p=0.038$ ). Females prefer working in metropolitan cities which could be because of availability proper facilities and the better standard of living. This was similar to the finding of Sheeba Jekabani [4]. There was significant association found between gender and preferred shift of work (0.013). Females preferred working in morning shift compared to males considering safety issues.

## 6. Conclusion

The study concluded that most of the students in final year of B.Sc Nursing were self motivated to choose Nursing as a career and family also plays a vital role in making career choice decision. Most of the students felt job satisfaction as a main reason for continuing nursing as their career.

Limitation of this study is that the data is collected from Government and Private colleges of North India and sub analysis to seek difference in government and private colleges is not done as the proportion was not similar. We recommend that career guidance and counseling should be incorporated in nursing colleges. Nurses can act as counselors to determine choice of career among students. We further recommend a comparative study can be done to determine the level of satisfaction between those who continue and those who change their profession as well as students.

## 7. Recommendations

Nursing education programmes should be organized in such a way to develop professional identity and examine the change in the perception of the nursing students. Career counseling may be facilitated during nursing education program to develop better insight for job preferences and to provide information regarding scope of nursing practice.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no competing interest.

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