

Field report

Correlation between job security as motivation and career maturity among Japanese nursing students

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Abstract

Objective: For nursing students, career maturity –an individual’s readiness to cope with career development tasks and make age-appropriate career decisions– is an essential factor influencing their desire to continue the job after qualifying as a nurse. Although job security as motivation to become a nurse might influence the career maturity of nursing students, it has not been demonstrated. In this study I aimed to elucidate the correlation between job security as motivation and career maturity among Japanese nursing students.

Patients and Methods: This study was conducted in 2012, through an anonymous, self-administered questionnaire, on 237 Japanese nursing students. Data on career maturity, job security as motivation, and personal characteristics were collected followed by data analysis using multiple regression.

Results: Job security as motivation (“A nursing job is not affected by the economic climate”) was significantly correlated with career maturity ($\beta = -0.29$; $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: This study demonstrated that being motivated by job security negatively affects career maturity. Hence, at an early stage, basic nursing educators should identify nursing students with low career maturity by assessing whether they are motivated by job security, and if so, efficiently providing support to improve their career maturity.

Key words: career maturity, job security, motivation, nursing students

(*J Rural Med 2018; 13(2): 168–171*)

Introduction

The shortage of nursing staff is a critical problem in Japan, and it necessitates that nurses work long hours, and with a positive attitude. A previous study on basic nursing education demonstrated that nursing students with a high career maturity are more likely to show an enhanced desire to continue in the profession after they qualify as nurses¹. Career maturity, a concept related to career development, broadly refers to an individual’s readiness to cope with career development tasks and their ability to make informed and age-appropriate career decisions². Hence, from the perspective of basic nursing education, it is imperative to improve the career maturity of nursing students in order to tackle the shortage of nurses.

In addition, with the purpose of improving career maturity, it is necessary to elucidate factors that influence career maturity and determine targets that warrant intervention. Some studies have demonstrated that a proactive personality³, parental attachment⁴, and work experience⁵ are factors that contribute to career maturity. In Hickey’s Nursing Career Development Framework⁶, job vacancies and marketing forces are theoretically included as factors related to nursing students’ career development. Thus, I have focused on job security (e.g., possibility of getting a job and job stability) as a potential factor influencing career maturity.

In Japan, the economic climate and employment are unstable in the long-run. During the recession period, there was an increase in the number of young people choosing to become nurses because they recognized it as a stable occupation⁷. In addition, job security is a motivation for a significant proportion of nursing students⁸. Based on these facts, although it can be assumed that being motivated by job security might influence the career maturity of nursing students, it has not been demonstrated.

This study aimed to elucidate the correlation between job security as motivation and career maturity among Japanese nursing students. In the event of fulfilling the objective

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Table 1 Items for job security as motivation to become a nurse

| Items |
|---|
| Item 1: My motivation to become a nurse is that it is easy for a nurse to get a job. |
| Item 2: My motivation to become a nurse is that the job of a nurse is stable. |
| Item 3: My motivation to become a nurse is that the job of a nurse is not affected by the economic climate. |

There are four response alternatives, ranging from *not at all* to *very much*.

of this study, basic nursing educators can assess job security as motivation at an early stage in order to identify and support students that have a low level of career maturity, and develop necessary interventions to improve it.

Patients and Methods

Participants

In 2012, there were 366 first-grade students (of a three year course), in four nursing schools, in four prefectures of the Chugoku region of Japan. Of the 366 students asked to participate, 286 students agreed to participate in the study. This study was approved by the ethical committee of the Hiroshima University (Hiroshima, Japan).

Data collection

I conducted an anonymous and self-reported questionnaire survey in June 2012. The survey comprised items related to; (1) career maturity, (2) job security as motivation to become a nurse, and (3) personal characteristics.

- (1) *Career maturity* was assessed using the Occupational Readiness Scale⁹. In addition, reliability and validity were also confirmed (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$). A previous study used this scale to assess students' level of career maturity¹⁰. The higher the score, the higher the career maturity reflected by students. The scale comprised four response alternatives, ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.
- (2) *Job security as motivation to become a nurse* was evaluated using three original items (Table 1). These items were prepared using the following procedure. Literature on the career choice of Japanese nursing students^{11–13} was carefully perused and the items which were important to “job security as motivation to become a nurse” were extracted. I generated categories from the meanings and contents. As a result, three categories were identified: short-run job security (e.g., how easy it is to find a job), long-run job security (e.g., stable income or labor force attachment), and economy-related job security (e.g., “a nursing job is not affected by the economic climate”). Questions representing these three categories were constructed. The higher the score, the higher the job security motivation. There were four response alternatives

ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

- (3) *Personal characteristics* related variables included age, gender, pre-entry nursing experience (yes or no), whether the person had a nurse in her/his family (yes or no), and perceived economic climate before admission. Notably, the question “perceived economic climate before admission” was based on the Economy Watchers Survey¹⁴, and a high score implied “I feel the economic climate before admission was good”. The five response alternatives ranged from *very bad* to *very good*.

Statistical analysis

In this study, career maturity score was used as the dependent variable, whereas independent variables were personal characteristics, and job security as motivation. As the correlation coefficient between Item 1 and 2 was $r = 0.75$ (> 0.70), Item 1 was excluded from the principal analysis because of multicollinearity. A multiple regression analysis was conducted for career maturity. In addition, the analysis was conducted using the R version 3.4.1. Furthermore, $p < 0.05$ was considered to be statistically significant in this study.

Results

Personal characteristics

The questionnaire was distributed among 286 students, of whom, 237 responded to the entire questionnaire (response rate, 82.9%). Of the 237 responders, 225 (94.9%) were women (median age \pm SD: 18.4 \pm 0.47 years), 153 (64.9%) had pre-entry nursing experience, 125 (52.7%) had a nurse in her/his family, and 204 (86.1%) felt that the economic climate before admission was *very bad* or *bad*.

Correlation between job security as motivation and career maturity

A multiple regression analysis was conducted using nursing students' career maturity as the dependent variable. Consequently, “My motivation to become a nurse is that the job of a nurse is not affected by the economic climate (Item 3)” ($\beta = -0.29$; $p < 0.001$) and pre-entry nursing experiences ($\beta = 0.15$; $p < 0.05$) were significantly correlated with career maturity (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.11$; $p < 0.001$; Table 2).

Table 2 Multiple regression analysis for career maturity ($N = 237$)

| | Career maturity | | |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| | β | (95% CI) | ΔR^2 |
| Personal characteristics | | | 0.04 |
| Age | -0.01 | (-0.13, 0.11) | |
| Gender (to male) | 0.07 | (-0.05, 0.19) | |
| Pre-entry nursing experience (to yes) | 0.15* | (0.02, 0.27) | |
| Nurse in the family (to yes) | -0.02 | (-0.14, 0.10) | |
| Perceived economic climate before admission | 0.06 | (-0.06, 0.19) | |
| Job security as motivation to become a nurse | | | 0.07 *** |
| Job of a nurse is stable (Item 2 ^a) | -0.02 | (-0.15, 0.13) | |
| Job of a nurse is not affected by the economic climate (Item 3 ^b) | -0.29 *** | (-0.43, -0.14) | |
| Adjusted R2 | 0.11 | | |

* $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$. 95% CI, 95% confidence interval. ^a and ^b refer to Table 1.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed a negative correlation between “My motivation to become a nurse is that the job of a nurse is not affected by the economic climate (Item 3)” and career maturity, suggesting that motivation by job security is a negative factor in the career maturity of nursing students. To the best of my knowledge, this study is the first to empirically reveal this relationship among nursing students, which corroborates with previous researchers’ hypothesis^{15, 16} that if job security is a nursing students predominant reason for pursuing this career, once their need for job security is fulfilled by becoming a nurse, they will no longer be motivated to continue nursing and consequently, might leave the profession. Furthermore, Galletta *et al.*¹⁷ reported that nurses’ work attitude is negatively affected by external motivation (e.g., “This job affords me a certain standard of living”) and positively affected by autonomous motivation (e.g., “Because I enjoy this work very much”). In my opinion, if job security is an external motivation factor, and the sole motivation for nursing students, they will not be able to solve career development tasks and make age-appropriate career decisions; therefore showing low career maturity. Hence, basic nursing educators can improve the career maturity of nursing students who are highly motivated by job security, by strengthening the students’ autonomous motivation. Career maturity is a dynamic variable that fluctuates within-person over time². Thus, basic nursing educators should recognize nursing students with low career maturity at an early stage by evaluating whether they are motivated by job security, and if so, effectively initiate support to improve their career maturity.

In addition, this study revealed that nursing students with pre-entry nursing experience have significantly higher career maturity than those without prior experience. In this

study, previous nursing experience proved to be an essential factor influencing career maturity, corresponding with the result by Lai *et al.*¹⁸ who determined that students with previous experiences of being hospitalized were more likely to choose a career in nursing and stay in the profession. Furthermore, Ten Hove *et al.*¹⁹ reported that students’ past healthcare work experience was a motivating factor for a positive orientation and attitude toward nursing. Perhaps, students’ pre-entry experiences with nursing or caring influence not only their career choice but also positively influence their perception of the profession, leading to the development of career maturity. Based on this study, because approximately 35% students do not have a nursing experience before they enter the course, basic nursing educators need to provide opportunities for students to have positive nursing experiences that lead to career maturity.

This study has some limitations. First, this study used a cross-sectional design that does not facilitate examination of the direction between career maturity and job security as motivation. Hence, a longitudinal perspective is needed in the future. Second, participants in this study were nursing students of a three year course. In Japan, basic nursing education is shifting from vocational schools (three year course) to universities (four year course), and so these results cannot be generalized to represent all nursing students. Thus, retesting for university students is necessary. However, because vocational school students currently comprise the majority of nursing students in Japan, the results of this study are relevant for nursing educators.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study demonstrated that being motivated by job security negatively affects career maturity. Hence, basic nursing educators should recognize nursing

students with low career maturity at an early stage by evaluating whether they are motivated by job security, and if so, effectively initiate support to improve their career maturity.

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