



## Iranian Nursing Students' Satisfaction Regarding their Field of Study: A Review of Literature

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### Abstract

**Background:** Satisfaction with the field of study can be the source of motivation and the continuation of academic progress. This study aimed to review the Iranian nursing students satisfaction with their field of study and its related factors.

**Materials and Methods:** In this review, an online search of databases included Medline, ERIC, PsycINFO, Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar search engine up to March 2023. Two independent authors undertook the screening, selection, and quality assessment.

**Results:** Finally, six related studies were included. The results showed that the mean satisfaction of students toward their field of study was  $20.77 \pm 3.17$  (out of 35), and toward their future career was  $17.84 \pm 2.63$  (out of 30), respectively. The most effective factors in academic dissatisfaction were discrimination between nursing and medical students, physician prioritization, and a lack of proper presentation of the nursing field before entering university. In addition, 83.3% of students had little satisfaction with the educational environment, 47.2% were dissatisfied with the clinical environment, 41.7% were unsatisfied with the theoretical educational method by professors, 41.7% were dissatisfied with the method of clinical education by clinical trainers, 47.2% were not satisfied with the method of evaluation by professors, and 62.5% were dissatisfied with the nursing social image. A weak, positive, and statistically significant correlation was found between satisfaction with the field of study and the total score of clinical competence, as well as between gender and the attitude of discipline ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** Approximately half of the students reported a low level of satisfaction with the nursing field. Increasing the quality of theoretical education, improving clinical and evaluation processes, enhancing interactions, and elevating social prestige are important for promoting the quality of education.

**Key Words:** Field of Study, Iran, Nursing students, Satisfaction.

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## 1- INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction is defined as the psychological state that results from the confirmation of expectations with reality (1). Satisfaction with the field of study has an effective role in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills of the profession (2), academic achievement, and future career success of learners (3, 4). All students, including student nurses, join a university with predetermined expectations. As the most important stakeholders, university students have certain expectations when it comes to academic services (5). Some researchers believe that people who are more satisfied with education show more effort to achieve academic success (6-8). Studies indicate that satisfaction with education is related to motivation, personality, academic progress, and professional achievements (9, 10), and students who are more satisfied with their education show more effort to get a better grade (11-13). Several factors exert positive, significant influences on student satisfaction, including the quality of lecturers, physical facilities, and effective use of technology (14-19).

As one of the pillars of the university, nursing and paramedical students will be part of the foundation of the Ministry of Health organizations in the future. As a result, their attitude and satisfaction with their field of study are effective in motivating, maintaining, and improving the quality of education and clinical care. The selection of a nursing field of study, which is related to human health, should be done more carefully, as interest in the profession is one of the preconditions for providing quality services to clients (20). Some students do not have enough interest, insight, and knowledge about the field of nursing, which can lead to the intention to leave education (21), and low quantity and quality of nursing services (2).

Sattari et al. investigated the views of nursing, midwifery, and health students of Hamedan University of Medical Sciences regarding their future and found that, on average, 50% of the studied students were worried about their future careers. More than 60% of nursing students were not willing to choose this field if they had the chance again, and 35.5% of nursing students and 40% of health students had a negative view of their chosen field (17). In the study of Law et al., a negative attitude toward the nursing profession was reported in more than 50% of students, which was related to the low status of the nursing profession in society (22). The result of another study on undergraduate nursing students from a public university in southern Brazil showed that students were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied with the institution, the course, and the opportunity for development (23).

It has been found that students choose nursing studies because of the opportunity to find a job easily or because their score was only enough to enter nursing (24, 25). It is necessary to attract and retain learners interested in this field to support the growth, sustainability, and future of the nursing profession (26). Ensuring student satisfaction is critical if nursing schools are to attract and retain students, as well as to improve their reputation (27). Nursing is a combination of knowledge and clinical skills to meet the needs of patients and their families (28). Nurses form the largest group of the health care system in the country, and many care outcomes are the result of their activities (29). Considering the complex nature of nursing and the variety of existing healthcare situations that nurses face, society requires nurses who are experienced, interested in the field of study, and with acceptable scientific and practical abilities to provide care (30). As interest in and satisfaction with the field of study are among the most effective factors in the education and success of students,

paying attention to this topic should be a priority in nursing education planning (31).

Nursing students constitute the future of nursing in the country. Therefore, it is necessary to pay due attention to their concerns and level of satisfaction so they complete their educational process with motivation and high quality and are ready to be present in the healthcare service system. Given the reports on different levels of satisfaction and the detrimental effect of the lack of satisfaction with education on academic performance and social success of students, which can lead to a decline in health and healthcare in the country, the present study aimed to review the Iranian nursing students' satisfaction with their field of study and its related factors.

## 2- MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2-1. Data sources

Research studies describing the Iranian nursing students' satisfaction with their field of study were searched. The search was performed on online databases Medline, ERIC, PsycINFO, Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar search engine with no time restrictions (up to March 10, 2023). The search was performed independently and in duplicate by two reviewers, and any disagreement was resolved by the supervisor.

### 2-2. Inclusion criteria

Research articles conducted in Iran were the main criteria for inclusion in the study. Other inclusion criteria were the focus on the satisfaction of nursing students toward their field of study, published up to March 2023, written in English or Persian, and published articles with full text available.

### 2-3. Data collection process

A researcher-made form was developed as a template and followed for each study. Two reviewers collected the data independently, and a third reviewer

resolved any discrepancies. The collected data included the study population, authors' names and settings, year of publication, study type, sample size, target population, and the main results.

### 2-4. Risk of bias

The quality of the included studies was evaluated using the modified STROBE (Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology) checklist. The modified STROBE is a valuable tool for evaluating the quality of observational studies. This checklist has 11 items, and a maximum of one point is allocated to each methodological element. The final score of the checklist varies from 0 to 11, indicating high (8-11), moderate (4-7), and low (0-3) quality points (32).

## 3-RESULTS

A total of six research studies (conducted from 2011 to 2022) were selected. The review of the existing literature indicated that 43.1% of nursing students reported a low level of satisfaction with the nursing field. The main characteristics of the selected studies are summarized in **Table 1** and as follows:

**1.** A descriptive cross-sectional study aimed to determine effective factors in academic dissatisfaction of nursing and paramedical students with their fields. The results showed that the most effective factors contributing to academic dissatisfaction were discrimination between nursing and paramedical students with medical students ( $4.4 \pm 0.98$ ), physician prioritization ( $4.34 \pm 0.98$ ), and a lack of proper presentation of nursing and paramedical fields before entering university ( $4.25 \pm 0.91$ ) (33).

**2.** A cross-sectional descriptive study aimed to determine nursing students' attitudes toward their discipline and future career at Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences. The results showed that the mean student attitude toward their

discipline was  $12.64 \pm 2.74$  (out of 25), and toward their future career was  $17.84 \pm 2.63$  (out of 30), respectively, which are lower than expected. The study showed a significant relationship between gender and the attitude to the discipline ( $p=0.03$ ), with women having a more positive attitude towards their field of study (34).

**3.** A descriptive correlational study aimed to investigate the correlation between satisfaction with the field of study and clinical competence in nursing students. The results showed that the clinical competence of nursing students in the seventh and eighth semesters was moderate (53.3%), and 56.9% of them were highly satisfied with their field of study. A weak, positive, and statistically significant correlation was found between satisfaction with the field of study and the total score of clinical competence ( $p=0.001$ ,  $r=0.260$ ). This means that higher satisfaction with the field of study leads to better clinical competence among nursing students (35).

**4.** A descriptive cross-sectional study aimed to investigate the satisfaction of nursing and midwifery students with their field of study. The results showed that the mean satisfaction with the field of study among students was  $20.77 \pm 3.17$  (out of 35). The difference between the fields was not statistically significant, but the level of satisfaction with the field increased in higher semesters. No significant

relationship was found between academic satisfaction and demographic variables (36).

**5.** A cross-sectional study aimed to determine the perspective of nursing students of Islamic Azad University in Sanandaj on the factors affecting the choice of nursing. The results showed that the main factor for choosing this discipline from the students' perspective was the desire to help people, and healthcare work experience prior to education had the least effect. The impact of environmental factors in selecting this discipline was statistically significant and higher than other factors ( $p<0.05$ ) (37).

**6.** A cross-sectional study aimed to evaluate nursing students' satisfaction with their field of study. The results showed that 83.3% of students had little satisfaction with the educational environment, 47.2% with the clinical environment, 41.7% with the theoretical educational method by professors, and 41.7% with the method of clinical education by clinical trainers. Also, 47.2% were rather dissatisfied with the method of evaluation by the school professors, 80.6% with the relationship with colleagues, and 62.5% with the nursing social image. Findings indicated that 33.3% of the participants were dissatisfied with the method of evaluation by clinical trainers and 50% with the nursing management (38).

**Table-1:** General characteristics of included studies (n=6).

Authors, Study period, References	Study type	Target population	Settings	Sample size	Quality assessment of included studies	Main findings
Dehghani et al., 2013, 33	Descriptive cross-sectional study	Nursing and paramedical students	School of Jahrom University of Medical Sciences	202	*Moderate	The most effective factors contributing to academic dissatisfaction were discrimination between nursing and paramedical students with medical students, physician prioritization, and lack of proper presentation of nursing and paramedical fields before entering university, respectively.

Marzban et al., 2017, 34	Cross-sectional descriptive study	Nursing students	Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences	250	*High	The mean of students' attitudes toward their discipline was $12.64 \pm 2.74$ (out of 25), and toward their future career was $17.84 \pm 2.63$ (out of 30), respectively.
Zeighami Mohammadi et al., 2020-2021, 35	Descriptive correlational study	Nursing students	School of Nursing and Midwifery, Islamic Azad University, Karaj Branch	167	*Moderate	With increasing satisfaction with the field of study, the clinical competence of nursing students increased.
Talebi et al., 2022, 36	Descriptive cross-sectional study	Nursing and midwifery students	Golestan University of Medical Sciences	123	*High	The mean satisfaction with the field of study among students was $20.77 \pm 3.17$ (out of 35).
Vahabi et al., 2011-2012, 37	Cross-sectional study	Nursing students	School of Nursing and Midwifery at Islamic Azad University of Sanandaj	79	*Moderate	The main factor for choosing the nursing field was the desire to help people, and healthcare work experience prior to education had the least effect.
Hakim, 2012, 38	Cross-sectional study	Nursing students	Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences	72	*Moderate	Most students had little satisfaction with their field of study.

#### 4- DISCUSSION

This study aimed to review the Iranian nursing students' satisfaction with their field of study and its related factors. Based on the existing literature, the mean of students' satisfaction with their field of study was  $20.77 \pm 3.17$  (out of 35), and with their future career was  $17.84 \pm 2.63$  (out of 30), respectively.

Choosing a field of study in the university is usually a challenging and time-consuming process that can determine an individual's future and professional career, requiring knowledge and interest. Candidates entering the university are highly stressed when selecting a field of study and are constantly exposed to psychological pressure and various other factors (e.g., family pressure, friends' influence, and social and economic factors) (39). The inconsistency of these factors with candidates' interests and their personal and psychological characteristics can affect their future academic satisfaction (40-43). Since satisfaction with the field of study and future career are

among the most important factors in students' progress and the basic foundations in the growth and promotion of educational centers, this issue should be placed at the highest priority of educational programs and necessitates further research in this field (44-46). Based on the current results, about half of the nursing students reported a low level of satisfaction with the nursing field and their future careers. The extreme sensitivity of medical science departments due to the direct relationship with human lives and society's health intensifies the necessity of empowering medical students and their interest in their field of study, and any factor that can increase the ability and interest of students is of great importance (47). Studies have shown that most students of paramedical professions are satisfied with and have a positive attitude toward their field of study (48, 49).

In the study by Shiri et al., nurses' satisfaction with their jobs was reported as 82% (50). Borjian Borujeni et al. also reported that the majority of the studied graduates were satisfied with the field and

career of nursing (51). However, the results of a study at Tehran University of Medical Sciences revealed a starkly different perspective: only 17% of nursing students had a positive opinion about their profession, and 69% agreed to leave the profession. Additionally, 63.6% of students decided to change their field, and 51.64% considered withdrawing from the field. Researchers speculate that several factors contribute to this dissatisfaction, including low salary and benefits, national methods and policies of the nursing system, and the lack of a positive social base. These factors can cause students to become disillusioned and potentially withdraw from continuing their education (52).

In another study, approximately 50% of students were worried about their future careers, more than 60% of nursing students were unwilling to choose this field if they had another chance, and 35.5% had a negative view toward their chosen field (17). In a survey of 1,200 nurses in 2013, nearly 87% of nurses expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs (53). The studies of Dargahi et al., Julayi et al., and Hakim et al. have described the level of satisfaction of nurses as low (2, 46, 54-56).

The study of Dalir et al. in Mashhad showed that nursing and midwifery students were not motivated enough to choose their field of study (57). A qualitative study (2015) aimed to explain the nursing students' perception of professional challenges in Firoozabad and categorized the findings into four themes and 11 subthemes. The main themes were challenging education, non-standard care, inappropriate social-professional identity, and not being a researcher (58).

This difference in opinions and views toward the field of nursing can be attributed to various factors such as different environments or the time of the study. Today's students have access to many educational resources, can observe

successful examples among their peers, and can conduct internet research to gather information related to the nursing field (37).

Students will form one of the pillars of various organizations in society in the future. Therefore, their satisfaction with university activities can significantly influence their attitude toward their academic field, create motivation, and maintain the improvement of educational quality (59). Efforts should be made to continuously improve the quality of services, including education, research, culture, and comfort, to achieve higher satisfaction among students as service recipients (60). Studies have shown that the probation rate is higher among students who are less satisfied with their field of study, and a positive relationship exists between the level of satisfaction and academic progress in students (61, 62).

A better match between a person's motivation and professional interests, skills, and personality (including needs, demands, and environmental characteristics) increases the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes, such as success in education, work, and job satisfaction (63).

The knowledge of nursing and the roles assumed by nurses are continuously expanding. The lack of interested and capable nurses in academic environments, especially medical-educational settings, can potentially decrease the quality of services provided to hospitalized patients and compromise the health of society (64).

The sensitivity of the nursing profession underscores the critical importance for university and national officials to address the profession's challenges and ensure the satisfaction of nurses. This is paramount because the health of society takes precedence over all other considerations (65).

## 5- CONCLUSION

Choosing the right field of study and job is among the most important decisions in one's life. Interest in the chosen field can lead to the progress and academic advancement of students, while a lack of interest can create boredom, frustration, and fatigue from continuing education. According to the literature, the mean score of students' satisfaction toward their field of study was  $20.77 \pm 3.17$  (out of 35), and toward their future career was  $17.84 \pm 2.63$  (out of 30). Among nursing students, 43.1% reported a low level of satisfaction with the nursing field.

The most effective factors contributing to academic dissatisfaction included discrimination between nursing and paramedical students, physician prioritization, and lack of proper presentation of nursing and paramedical fields before university entry. Students reported widespread dissatisfaction across educational domains, with low satisfaction rates in areas such as educational environment, clinical training, and professional image. A weak, positive, and statistically significant correlation was found between satisfaction with the field of study and clinical competence. Notably, the study revealed gender-based differences, with female students demonstrating a more positive attitude toward their professional discipline.

## 6- AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Study conception or design: SM and HA; Data analyzing and draft manuscript preparation: VZ, SF, NA, and HA; Critical revision of the paper: SM; Supervision of the research: SM and HA; Final approval of the version to be published: SM, VZ, SF, NA, and HA.

**7- CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** None.

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