

Study on Nursing College Students' Subjectivity in Their Attitude Toward Jobs

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Purpose. The purpose of the study was to categorize nursing students' subjectivity in their attitude toward their jobs, and thereby understand the differences among these attitude types.

Methods. The study used a Q-method to measure nursing students' attitude toward jobs identity types. In-depth and objective interviews and literature review formed Q sample. The P sample consisted of 25 nursing students.

Results. The results of the study show that nursing students can be categorized into three types, depending on their attitudes toward their jobs. The first type, "interest-oriented" students, strongly disagree to the following: giving priority to job over marriage, standing unfair treatment in the workplace, the importance of promotion opportunity, irresponsibility, and uncertainty. The "reward-oriented" students, on the other hand, strongly disagree to the following: indifference to career prospects, employment-related relocation of residence, irresponsibility, standing difficulties, and compromises with others. The third type of nursing students is the possession-oriented students, who strongly disapprove of irresponsibility, refusal to compromise with reality, standing unfair job allocation or promotion and career uncertainty.

Conclusions. The study on nursing college students' attitude toward their jobs is meaningful in the following aspects: First, the study clarifies nursing college students' attitudes toward their job by categorizing it. Second, the study confirms the changing attitudes of nursing students toward jobs with the change of times and calls for proper educational programs to foster healthy career attitudes. Third, proper decision-making as regards jobs and job allocation for nurses, or their career attitudes, is beneficial to individuals, the medical industry, and society.

Key Words : Job attitude, Nursing Students

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the study

The financial crisis in late 1997 had serious impacts on the Korean labor market which consequently went through structural changes. Premature retirement as well as recurrent and long-term unemployment began to substitute stable and lifetime employment for stable and lifetime jobs. Short-term or temporary workers accounted for 47.2% of the working population in 1980, but the

percentage rose to 62.4% in 2000 (Bang, 2001). Meanwhile, youth unemployment exceeded 400,000 in 2004 (www.Hankooki.com). The growing youth unemployment changed the general attitude toward jobs in Korean society and employment prospects became a more critical factor than personal preference or academic achievements in deciding one's major in college. The attitude toward jobs shows how seriously people take various attributes and rewards of their potential jobs. These attitudes are divided into internal and external attitudes; internal attitude is about how people approach

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the job itself, while external attitude is about material rewards and conditions of the job such as wage, welfare and job security (Kim, 1994). As premature retirement and unemployment rate rise, external factors are more seriously considered than internal factors. A concrete example is that in the past, students applied for admission in nursing colleges with a sense of social duty, or to serve the community (Lim, et al., 2001). At present, however, the nursing job is preferred because of its very high employment prospects, as high as 97.8% (Armed Forces Nursing Academy, 2000).

Q-methodology, also known as "subjectivity study", objectively measures people's subjective response to a certain idea or phenomenon such as attitude, belief, and conviction (Kim, 1992). Since a person's attitude toward a profession reflects his or her convictions, the attitude can be studied effectively through Q-methodology.

Various papers related to nursing student have already been written. Some examples are papers on nursing students' relation to the nursing practice, stress, nursing moral principle problem, and knowledge of nursing student (Suk et al., 2002; Han et al., 2001; Ha et al., 1998; Shin & Park, 1995).

In addition, papers related to the job, such as papers on profession and role, job satisfaction, and job stress, have been accomplished (Lee, 2001; Koo & Choi, 2000; Noh & Sohng, 2000; Lee, 1997). No study on career attitude, however, has been conducted in field of nursing.

This study applies Q-methodology to nursing students to throw light on the subjectivity in their attitude toward their jobs, and to categorize their attitude into several types. By analyzing and comparing the attitude types, the study is expected to contribute to fostering healthy attitude toward jobs among nursing students.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to categorize nursing students' subjectivity in their attitude toward their jobs, and thereby understand the differences among these attitude types.

METHODS

Q-sample

In this study, in-depth interview data were collected from researchers of career development centers, doctoral nursing students, and nursing college students. In addition, a 72 Q-population was created from a review of lit-

erature (Shim, 2001).

A non-structured method was used to select Q sampling. From the 72 Q populations the occupations, jobs, work, and duty areas were classified, and positive and negative statements were evenly distributed in all three areas. Consequently, 28 Q samples were selected after consulting with a professor from nursing science, who was also an expert in Q methodology.

The sampling distribution of 36 statements was forced normal distribution based on the level of subjectivity, which starts at the center 0, to extremely agree at +3 and to extremely disagree at -3, as shown in Table 1.

P-sample

The study was conducted on 25 students of nursing department in H University in Seoul.

Q-sort

Initially, the consent of the students, all of who received an explanation ad the purpose and methods of the study, was obtained. Then, the questionnaire about academic year, religion, and original place of residence was distributed to get the socio-academic specifications of the participants. The Q-samples were asked to read the statements and to provide, any one of three types of responses: positive (+), neutral (0), and negative (-). Of their responses for both (+) and (-), the extreme statements were classified as (+3) and (-3), and the number diminished toward the center or neutral response (0). For 6 extreme cases in (+3) and (-3), however, the respondents were asked to write their reasons on the white space.

Data analysis

The force distribution data of the 25 subjects selected as Q-samples were coded with points. The most negative statement was assigned 1 point, and the most positive statements were assigned 7 points. These data were analyzed using the PC QUNAL Program.

RESULTS

Career attitude types among nursing students

According to a factor analysis based on Q-sample, fac-

Table 1. Distributed Q-samples

-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
3	3	5	6	5	3	3

tor 1 accounts for 39.33% of the variance, whereas factor 2 and factor 3 account for 10.46% and 6.62%, respectively. The total variance is 56.41% (Table 2).

The coefficient of correlation is .476 for type 1 and type 2, .564 for type 1 and type 3 and .385 for type 2 and type 3. The correlation between each of the two types is further categorized into different types (Table 3).

Twenty-five samples in all were distributed to 12 participants in the 1st type, 8 in the 2nd type and 5 in the 3rd type of subjectivity. More nursing students were found to fall under the 1st type and 2nd types. "Table 4" shows the variable assignments with factor weights

Table 2. Eigen Values and Variances

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Eigen values	9.8328	2.6159	1.6538
Variance	.3933	.1046	.0662
Cumulative	.3933	.4979	.5641

Table 3. Correlation between Types

Type	1	2	3
1	1.000		
2	.476	1.000	
3	.564	.385	1.000

Table 4. Demographic Characteristics and Factor Weights of P-samples

Types	Id	Factor weights	Grade	Religion	Original Place
1 (N = 12)	1	1.2096	3	Buddhist	Province of Ganwon
	3	2.2050	3	Catholic	Province of Jeonbuk
	4	.6835	3	Protestant	Seoul
	5	.3284	3	Catholic	Province of Jeju
	11	1.0262	4	None	Province of Gyeongnam
	13	1.1496	1	Catholic	Province of Gyeonggi
	14	1.0943	1	Protestant	Ulsan Metropolitan city
	18	1.6910	1	Protestant	Seoul
	19	1.1873	1	None	Seoul
	20	1.1690	2	Catholic	Seoul
	21	2.3047	2	Protestant	Incheon Metropolitan city
	25	1.4456	2	Buddhist	Seoul
2 (N = 8)	2	.9532	3	Protestant	Seoul
	6	1.5138	3	Protestant	Seoul
	8	.5241	4	None	Province of Ganwon
	10	2.4678	4	Catholic	Province of Gyeonggi
	12	.8766	4	None	Province of Gyeongnam
	16	.7228	1	Buddhist	Province of Gyeongnam
	22	.4128	2	Catholic	Seoul
	24	1.1242	2	Catholic	Seoul
3 (N = 5)	7	1.0633	4	Buddhist	Gwangju Metropolitan city
	9	.8227	4	None	Province of Gyeongnam
	15	1.3019	1	Protestant	Province of Ganwon
	17	1.8321	1	Protestant	Province of Ganwon
	23	.7407	2	Protestant	Province of Ganwon

by type and demographic characteristic.

Character analysis of each type

The description of each type is the analysis of statements with Z-score wider than ± 1.00 among the statements to which each participant "strongly agreed" or "strongly disagreed." To understand the participants' attitude more specifically by the type of change, separate in-depth interviews were held.

Type 1: Interest-oriented

Those belonging to type 1 answered that they choose a job that is suitable to their lifestyle, and that they do their best for the job they chose. This type was categorized as "Interest-oriented" since preference and interest are the first priority of those falling under this type. Most type 1 students agreed to the statements "I do my best for the job I chose," "I chose the job that is suitable to my lifestyle and interest," and "Preference and interest are the most important factors in deciding on a job." Meanwhile, they least agreed with the statements "Even though I understand I have to have a job, I am not attracted by any career prospects that I know" and "Promotion opportunity is the most important factor in de-

cing on a job” (Table 5). The separate interviews show that most of the respondents agreed to the aforementioned statements because they believe they can only enjoy a job that they are interested and that they have chosen. They also said they would like to work by themselves regardless of any kind of formality. Regarding the other statements, they said they would do their utmost without regret, and they would enjoy their work.

Type 2: Reward-oriented

Those belonging to type 2 are considered reward-oriented since they cited career prospects, welfare, and working environment as the most important factors in deciding on a job, and they highly value well-paid jobs.

Most type 2 participants agreed to the statements “Career prospects are important,” “I chose a job promising welfare and a good working environment,” and “I chose a well-paid job”. Meanwhile, they least agreed to the statements, namely: “I would adjust myself to what others want” and “I keep trying to do what I believe is right even when I’m disappointed or frustrated” (Table 6). The separate interviews show that the statements most frequently agreed to were chosen because the respondents think that welfare or a good working environment improves efficiency, and that it is a matter of

course to get rewarded for what one did. Regarding other statements, they said they want job security until the age of retirement, but they don’t want hard work.

Type 3: Possession-oriented

Those belonging to the 3rd type agreed to statements like “Marriage, child birth, and care are not obstacle to having a job.” They are possession-oriented, because they would like to possess a job rather than be attracted by interest or value that the job might provide.

Most of the type 3 participants most agreed to the statements “I do my best for the job I chose,” “Marriage, child birth and care and housework might be a burden, but not an obstacle, to having a job” and “Career prospects are the critical factor in deciding on a job.” They least agreed to statements “Even though I understand I have to have a job, I am not attracted by any career prospects that I know,” “I would stand any unfair practice in job allocation and promotion to retain my job” and “I keep trying to do what I believe is right even when my colleagues disapprove of it” (Table 7). Separate interviews show that they chose the most-frequently-agreed-to statements above because they think that if marriage gets in the way of having a job, it would be better not to get married. They do not want to give up

Table 5. Descending Array of Z-score and Item Descriptions for Type 1

Q-Statement	Z-score
13. I will do my best for the job I chose.	1.64
22. I will choose my job according to my life style and interest.	1.60
26. Preference and interest are important in choosing a job.	1.58
17. I have to make effort in finding solution to problems in carrying out my duty that I chose.	1.24
24. I would choose a job that is suitable to my ability.	1.09
25. I fully understand and can describe job duty of my job.	1.01
12. What kind of job I can get is more important than whether I can get married or not.	-1.03
5. I would stand any unfair practice in job allocation and promotion to retain my job.	-1.06
11. I highly value promotion prospects in choosing a job.-1.16	
10. Even though I understand I have to have a job, I am not attracted by any career prospects that I know.	-2.07

Table 6. Descending Array of Z-score and Item Descriptions for Type 2

Q-Statement	Z-score
2. Career prospects are important.	1.78
14. Welfare and working conditions are important factors in choosing a job.	1.38
4. I prefer a well-paid job.	1.29
16. Attending graduate courses is necessary to get better job in the future.	1.17
22. I will choose my job according to my life style and interest.	1.02
7. I am conscious of social status of a job.	1.02
10. Even though I understand I have to have a job, I am not attracted by any career prospects that I know.	-1.17
27. I keep trying to do what I believe right even when disappointed or frustrated.	-1.49
23. I would adjust myself to what others want.	-1.99

the job they tried hard to get. Regarding the other statements, they agreed they would overcome difficulties arising from personal circumstances and get along with colleagues, but any unfair treatment is intolerable.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

Changes in human value are most remarkable in the family, the very fundamental unit of human life. The basis of family life is closely related to livelihood. With industrialization and the advent of the knowledge-based information society, household incomes rose, and lifestyle and consuming patterns also changed. These things also brought about a shift in the values and attitudes of the members of the society. Cultural or value attitudes of human beings are created through interactions between the ecological and socio-cultural aspects of human life under the great influence of environment. Therefore, such attitudes change with times and societies (Im, 1994). The premature retirement of those in their 40's and even 30's, and the high unemployment rate, changed people's values and attitudes toward their jobs. Against this backdrop, this study was aimed at categorizing and understanding attitudes toward jobs held by nursing students whose values are influenced by changes that happen over time.

The results of the study show that nursing students can be categorized into three types, depending on their attitudes toward their jobs. The first type, "interest-oriented" students, strongly disagree to the following: giving priority to job over marriage, standing unfair treatment in the workplace, the importance of promotion opportunity, irresponsibility, and uncertainty. They enjoy their jobs and tend to like the jobs that they chose. They would easily give up their job, however, if they no longer enjoy it. This is the typical trait of the self-centered and individualistic youths, who want to develop their personality. They enjoy their jobs but would give it up if they are treated unfairly. Oh (1997) said that the

turnover of clinical nurses is a result of improper personnel management, damaged self-esteem, and humiliation, which indicates that the young generation easily leave their workplace when they lose interest in their job.

The "reward-oriented" students, on the other hand, strongly disagree to the following: indifference to career prospects, employment-related relocation of residence, irresponsibility, standing difficulties, and compromises with others. They are more conscious of rewards, payment and working conditions. Kim (1996) affirmed that the most critical factor in deciding to quit is payment. Working hours and promotion prospects are also important factors.

The third type of nursing students is the possession-oriented students, who strongly disapprove of irresponsibility, refusal to compromise with reality, standing unfair job allocation or promotion and career uncertainty. For this type of students, the most important thing is to have a job. Therefore, marriage, child birth and care, and housework cannot keep them from having a job. They hardly care about payment or working conditions. With the high unemployment rate, this type of people frequently have problems adjusting to the job that they chose without considering their preference or working conditions. The rising number of unpaid or underpaid employees is also remarkable among this type of people.

This point of view on career attitude was elicited from Q-methodology which is the basis of the belief that, since a human being has a special meaning and structure of suitability in a society, a study about human subjectivity can lead to an understanding of human nature and social phenomenon (Kim, 1992).

The study on nursing college students' attitude toward their jobs is meaningful in the following aspects:

First, the study clarifies nursing college students' attitudes toward their job by categorizing it. Second, the study confirms the changing attitudes of nursing students toward jobs with the change of times and calls for proper educational programs to foster healthy career atti-

Table 7. Descending Array of Z-score and Item Descriptions for Type 3

Q-Statement	Z-score
13. I will do my best for the job I chose.	1.79
8. I would keep my job even under difficult circumstances such as marriage, child birth and care and house work.	1.58
2. Career prospects are important.	1.45
25. I fully understand and can describe job duty of my job.	1.01
20. I keep trying to do what I believe right even when my colleagues disprove of it.	-1.82
5. I would stand any unfair practice in job allocation and promotion to retain my job.	-2.02
10. Even though I understand I have to have a job, I am not attracted by any career prospects that I know.	-2.10

tudes. Third, proper decision-making as regards jobs and job allocation for nurses, or their career attitudes, is beneficial to individuals, the medical industry, and society.

Kang (2001) was defined nurses as helpers and professors, who can find other people's diseases and help them discover the meaning of pain. It is clear that a health professional's meaning and purpose in life is that of being a helper. When the meaning and purpose of one's own studies and job are certain, it is said that the person may well achieve success in his or her profession.

If nursing students do not have the right attitudes toward the nursing profession and its meaning, this may affect the individual's mental health as well as the nursed patient, particularly when they complain about the state of their existence because of feelings of worthlessness emptiness, meaninglessness, feebleness, etc. Therefore, in order to prevent the reduction of the nursing profession to something that is a shadow of what it really is, nursing students must find genuine meaning in their jobs by having the right sense of values for it.

For nurses who will carry out the important service of maintaining and promoting public health to have the proper attitude toward their job, there must be a customized educational program, consistent from undergraduate course to on-the-job training for newly employed nurses. This is the way to reduce social and economic costs and loss of talents in the field of nursing.

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