

# Convergence Effect Factors on Career-Preparation Behaviour among Nursing Students

Ju-young Park, Chung Hee Woo\*

Nursing College, Konyang University

## 간호대학생의 진로준비행동에 대한 융합적 영향 요인

박주영, 우정희\*

건양대학교 간호대학

**Abstract** This study attempted to identify convergence effect factors affecting career-preparation behavior among nursing students with clinical practice. Study participants were 159 students in D city and data were collected from September 25 to October 4, 2014. Participants' responses were analyzed using a stepwise regression analysis. As results, satisfaction with major, professional values, and positive psychological capital were positively correlated with career-preparation behavior. Significant and convergence predictors of career-preparation behavior were curriculum satisfaction, a subdomain of major satisfaction, and social awareness as a professional value. These findings showed that nursing students' career-preparation behavior was partly determined by major satisfaction and nursing professional values. positive psychological capital need to be investigated as a convergent influence factor of career preparation behavior of nursing students by further study.

• Key Words : Nursing student, Career-preparation behavior, Major Satisfaction, Professional values, Positive psychological capital

**요약** 본 연구는 임상실습경험을 가진 간호대학생의 진로준비행동에 미치는 융합적인 영향요인을 확인하기 위해 시도되었다. 자료수집은 D 도시 간호대학생 159명을 대상으로 2014년 9월 25일부터 10월 4일까지 시행하였다. 수집된 자료는 SPSS Win 22.0에 의해 단계적 회귀분석을 실시하였다. 자료분석 결과, 대상자의 진로준비행동에 있어 전공만족, 전문직업관 및 긍정심리자본이 통계적으로 유의한 양의 상관관계를 나타내었다. 대상자의 진로준비행동의 융합적 예측인자로는 전공만족의 하위영역인 교육과정 만족과 전문직관의 사회적 인식이 통계적으로 유의하였다. 연구결과를 토대로 간호대학생의 진로준비행동은 자신들의 전공만족과 전문직관에 의해 일부 영향을 받는 것으로 나타났다. 긍정심리자본은 추후 연구를 통해 간호대학생의 진로준비행동의 융합적 요인의 가능성을 확인해 볼 필요가 있다.

• 주제어 : 간호대학생, 진로준비행동, 전공만족도, 전문직관, 긍정심리자본

## 1. INTRODUCTION

University students are at a stage of development

where they assert autonomy through their identity, highlighting the importance of career choices. However,

\*Corresponding Author : 우정희(createjane@konyang.ac.kr)

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it is not easy to make career-related decisions based primarily on self-realization goals, especially during severe unemployment crises. Rather, it is important to conduct thorough career searches and prepare for specific careers [1].

Career-preparation behavior is defined as activities to obtain job-related information; understand one's aptitudes, interests, etc. [2] as well as develop skills and exert efforts to achieve career goals. Career-preparation activities can help inculcate a sense of purpose in students who select their major based on employment opportunities. For nursing students, the relationship between career-related decisions and selecting a major is very strong, indicating its importance. Unemployment crises can be preempted to some extent when potential employees exceed limited vacancies, especially in fields where jobs were previously guaranteed, such as nursing [3]. Thus, in-depth career guidance is essential [4]. When satisfaction with one's major is low and/or adaptation is difficult, nursing students tend to delay or avoid career decision-making [5], drop-out of school, diverge from their specialization after graduation, or fail to adapt to their roles as nurses, leading to high turnover [6]. Consequently, the relationship between nursing students' satisfaction with major and career-preparation behavior needs to be examined further.

According to previous research [7], high major satisfaction affects nursing students' development of professional values. If students develop positive nursing professional values through education, they are likely to provide consistent nursing services and show professionalism toward patients in the future [8]. Nursing professional values are closely linked to nurses' job satisfaction and ability to perform nursing work [9], as well as students' sense of career-related identity, mature attitudes towards careers [7], and career-preparation activities [10].

The focus of the recent interest in positive psychology within counseling and clinical fields has

been on improving motivation by identifying individuals' strengths for problem solving. Positive psychological capital demonstrates a similar potential for youths' career development [11]. A meta-analysis on factors influencing career-preparation activities found that the effect sizes for self-encouragement, hope, achievement motivation, and self-efficacy were above the median [1]. That is, psychological resources, pursuing positive psychological states, and reinforcing capabilities are individual characteristics beyond mental health that can improve academic and work-related performance. Positive psychological capital—an integrative concept of hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience—predicts better employment behavior and work outcomes [12]. Each subdomain is also a strong predictor of performance [4,13,14,15]. Although the career-counseling programs must consider individual characteristics [16], it also must be treated convergently. In other words, university education strives to develop and refine students' attitudes, knowledge, and concepts within their field of study, to ensure their active practical application in clinical settings.

Therefore, this study aims to assess the influence of nursing students' major satisfaction, nursing professional values, and positive psychological capital on career-preparation behavior. We would like to provide basic information for intervention strategies aimed at improving university education.

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Participants and Data Collection

Participants comprised 159 nursing students in city D selected through non-random convenience sampling. Questionnaires were administered to 180 prospective subjects and 149 returned questionnaires were analyzed.

Data were collected from September 25 to October 4, 2015. Self-report questionnaires were distributed only to those who consented to participate.

## 2.2 Measures

Major satisfaction is defined as the level of satisfaction with one's current major compared to the general standard for jobs in that field [17]. The tool to measure major satisfaction for program evaluation was originally developed at Illinois University, was modified by Kim and Ha [17] and restructured to include only major satisfaction questions [18].

Nursing professional values refer to nurses' opinions regarding the nursing profession and their perceptions of their nursing duties. We used the 18-item Nursing Professional Values Scale developed by Yeun, Kwon, and Ahn [19] and revised by Han, Kim and Yun [9]. This measure comprised six items on self-concept within the profession, five on social awareness, three on nursing professionalism, and two each on nursing-service roles and nursing independence.

Positive psychological capital comprises the constructs of self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism [20]. In this study, we used the criteria that were originally developed by Luthans et al. [20] and adapted for Korean nurses by Lee and Kim [21]. This tool includes 24 questions with six items for each subdomain: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism.

Career-preparation behavior refers to individual efforts to achieve occupational goals [2] and includes clarity and self-confidence [22]. We used a tool developed by Kim [2] comprising 16 questions.

## 2.3 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS/WIN. Descriptive statistics were used to assess participants' general characteristics, levels of major satisfaction, professional values, positive psychological capital, and career-preparation behavior.

ANOVAs and t-tests were performed to assess differences in study variables according to general characteristics. Scheffé's test was used for post-hoc analysis. Relationships between study variables were analyzed using Pearson's correlation. Finally, a

stepwise multiple linear regression was used to identify predictors of career-preparation behavior.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Participants' General Characteristics

A total of 159 participants' responses were analyzed. Participants' mean age was 21.4 ( $\pm 1.1$ ) years, and a larger number were third-year students (69.8%). Most (88.1%) were women. Participants reported job security (49.7%), aptitudes and interests (22.6), job value and advice of parents or teachers (10.1%), and match to academic record (7.5%) as motives for selecting their major (Table 1).

<Table 1> General Characteristics of the Participants  
(N = 159)

Characteristics	Categories	n (%)
Age, M (SD)		21.4 (1.10)
Gender	Male	19 (11.9)
	Female	140 (88.1)
Year	3	111 (69.8)
	4	48 (30.2)
Major selection motive	Job stability	79 (49.7)
	Value of the job	16 (10.1)
	Aptitude/interest	36 (22.6)
	Advice of parents or teachers	16 (10.1)
	Grades	12 (7.5)

### 3.2 Levels of Major Variables

Participants' major satisfaction score was 3.72 ( $\pm 0.52$ ) (out of 5), while subdomain scores were highest for social perceptions. The score of nursing professional values was 3.58 ( $\pm 0.43$ ) out of 5, while subdomain scores were highest for self-concept within the profession, followed by nursing-service roles, nursing professionalism, social awareness, and nursing independence. Positive psychological capital score was 4.28 ( $\pm 0.57$ ) out of 6, while subdomain scores were highest for self-efficacy. Furthermore, career preparation satisfaction was 2.71 ( $\pm 0.47$ ) out of 4 (Table 2).

&lt;Table 2&gt; Descriptive Analysis of the Major Variables of the Participants (N=159)

Variables	M (SD)
Specialty satisfaction	3.72 (0.52)
General satisfaction	3.64 (0.65)
Social perception satisfaction	4.01 (0.60)
Curriculum satisfaction	3.51 (0.70)
Relation satisfaction	3.53 (0.72)
Nursing professional value	3.58 (0.43)
Self-concept of the profession	3.97 (0.53)
Social awareness	3.50 (0.60)
Professionalism of nursing	3.88 (0.56)
Roles of nursing service	3.96 (0.61)
Originality of nursing	2.59 (1.15)
Positive psychological capital	4.28 (0.57)
Self-efficacy	4.40 (0.72)
Hope	4.37 (0.73)
Resilience	4.27 (0.60)
Optimism	4.07 (0.58)
Career preparation behavior	2.71 (0.47)

### 3.3 Differences in Career-Preparation Behavior based on General Characteristics

Differences in career-preparation behavior according to participants' general characteristics are presented in Table 3. While significant differences according to gender ( $F = 1.98, p = .049$ ) and motivation for major selection were observed ( $F = 3.77, p = .006$ ). Further, the post-hoc analysis of motivation for major selection showed significant differences in job stability and aptitudes and interests ( $p = .022$ ).

&lt;Table 3&gt; Differences in Career Preparation Behavior by Participants' General Characteristics (N=159)

Classification	M (SD)	t (F)	p
Gender	2.91 (0.40)	1.98	.049
Male	2.68 (0.47)		
Female			
Year	2.67 (0.46)	-1.60	.111
3	2.80 (0.48)		
4			
Major selection motive	2.63 (0.50)	3.77	.006
Job stability <sup>a</sup>	2.82 (0.26)		a < c
Value of the job <sup>b</sup>	2.94 (0.42)		
Aptitude/Interests <sup>c</sup>	2.63 (0.39)		
Advice of parents or teachers <sup>d</sup>	2.54 (0.50)		
Grades <sup>e</sup>			

a, b, c: Scheffé's

### 3.4 Correlations between Major Variables and Career Preparation Behavior

Significant positive correlations were observed between career-preparation behavior and overall major satisfaction ( $r = .33, p < .001$ ) general satisfaction ( $r = .29, p < .001$ ), curriculum satisfaction ( $r = .32, p < .001$ ), and satisfaction with student - professor relationship ( $r = .39, p < .001$ ). Significant positive correlations were observed between career-preparation behavior and overall nursing professional values ( $r = .25, p = .001$ ), self-concept within the profession ( $r = .23, p = .003$ ), and social awareness ( $r = .22, p = .005$ ). Finally, while significant positive correlations were observed between career-preparation behavior and overall positive psychological capital ( $r = .21, p = .008$ ), hope ( $r = .22, p = .006$ ), resilience ( $r = .22, p = .005$ ), and optimism ( $r = .23, p = .003$ ; Table 4).

&lt;Table 4&gt; Correlations between convergence variables and career preparation Behavior (N=159)

Variables	r	p
Satisfaction with specialization	.33***	<.001
General satisfaction	.29***	<.001
Social perception satisfaction	.13	.095
Curriculum satisfaction	.32***	<.001
Relation satisfaction	.39***	<.001
Nursing professional values	.25***	.001
Self-concept of profession	.23**	.003
Social awareness	.22**	.005
Professionalism of nursing	.11	.180
Roles of nursing service	.10	.202
Originality of nursing	.15	.069
Positive psychological capital	.21**	.008
Self-esteem	.08	.330
Hope	.22**	.006
Resilience	.22**	.005
Optimism	.23**	.003

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ 

### 3.5 Convergence factors Influencing Career-Preparation Behavior

To verify the convergence factors affecting career-preparation behavior, stepwise regression analysis was performed using significant variables in the univariate analysis ( $p < 0.5$ ). Multivariate normality Q-Q plot, scatter plots, Durbin-Watson (D-W) statistic, tolerance, and variance inflation factor (VIF)

were analyzed to test the basic assumptions of multiple regression analysis: multivariate normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, auto-correlation, and multicollinearity. Residuals showed normal distribution approaching a 45-degree straight line, and all residual-area scatter plots were evenly distributed around 0. The D-W statistic was 1.98 (close to 2), confirming no risk of auto-correlation, while tolerance (0.98) and VIF (1.02) showed no problems with multicollinearity.

The results of the stepwise multiple linear regression analysis showed that 18.0% ( $p < .001$ ) of the variance in career-preparation behavior could be attributed to relation satisfaction (major satisfaction) and social awareness (nursing professional value; Table 5) among expected convergence factors.

<Table 5> Stepwise Regression Analysis on Career Preparation Behavior (N = 159)

Variables	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Relation - satisfaction	.37	5.00***	< .001
Social - awareness	.17	2.38**	.018
$R^2 = .180^{**}$		Adj. $R^2 = .170$	

\*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study attempted to identify the convergence effect factors on nursing students' career-preparation behavior.

On comparing nursing students' scores with previous research that uses the same scales [7,10], the levels for nursing professional values and major satisfaction were consistent; however, career-preparation behavior ( $2.71 \pm 0.47$ ) was very low compared to the average of 4.22 found in a previous study [10]. While a direct comparison of nursing students' positive psychological capital was not possible, the present results were somewhat high when compared to previous studies on nurses with averages of 3.32 (out of 5) points [23] and 3.80 (out of 6) points [21]. Career-preparation behavior among general

university subjects is thought to be higher in the third and fourth years compared to the first and second years [24,25]; however, in this study, participants comprised only third- and fourth-year students. Most fourth-year students were in the process of making decisions regarding work; their education and clinical experience in the school hospital may have contributed to high levels of satisfaction. This study needs to be replicated in similar environments.

Regarding general characteristics, career-preparation behavior differed by gender and motives for selecting a major, with significant differences for groups whose motives were based on job security, as well as aptitudes and interests. This contrasts with research wherein career-preparation behavior differed according to students' academic performance [25], but is similar to a study that found a relationship between sense of career identity and stability, interests, and abilities [26]. Since specializations in nursing are varied, continuous guidance and career-identity promotion for nursing students may be a useful strategy to improve career-preparation behavior.

Positive correlations were found between subjects' career-preparation behavior and overall major satisfaction, nursing professional values, and positive psychological capital, as well as their subdomains: general satisfaction, curriculum satisfaction, and satisfaction with student - professor relationship; professional self-concept and social awareness; and hope, resilience, and optimism. This finding is similar to a previous study that found a positive correlation between nursing values and career-preparation behavior ( $r = .24, p < .001$ ) [10]; however, it should be interpreted with caution as there are almost no studies on nursing values and career-related factors among university students. Moreover, the present study is among the few to have examined the relationship between university students' integrated positive psychological capital and career-related variables. In the present study, the only non-significant factor was self-efficacy, which contradicts a previous study that

found a relatively high positive correlation between academic self-efficacy and mature career attitudes ( $r = .59, p < .001$ ) [4], and another that found positive correlations between third- and fourth-year university students' career decision self-efficacy and most subdomains of career-preparation behavior ( $r = .24 - .46, p < .001$ ) [24]. However, the present findings are consistent with studies that found a link between career-preparation behavior and hope [14], resilience [15], and optimism [13]. They are also similar to the results from a study examining the relationship between high-school students' positive psychological capital and career-preparation behavior ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ) [11]. Although several studies have examined job satisfaction, immersion, and performance, most were conducted with clinical nurses as subjects [23]. Nonetheless, they are still considered valuable to understanding factors affecting university students' career-related behaviors.

Results of the stepwise multiple linear regression showed that curriculum satisfaction and social awareness affected participants' career-preparation behavior, with an explanation power of 18.0%. This differs from a study where career self-efficacy, career-related decision-making, academic record, and career maturity influenced career-preparation behavior [25]; however, it partially supports Han's [4] study where in major satisfaction was associated with career-related factors. However, the differences in the major satisfaction of nursing students may vary depending on college admission process or grade level [27].

The indirect effect of career decision-making level, major assimilation, academic satisfaction, career maturity, academic record, and career self-efficacy on career-preparation levels [25,28,29] suggests that these variables may have mediated the relationship between the independent variables proposed in this study and career-preparation behavior. Regarding positive psychological capital, although studies have primarily focused on employees' job-related factors [20,30], the

validity of these tools in undergraduate populations needs to be investigated. The effect of positive psychological capital on university students' career-preparation behavior was not confirmed in this study, but previous research suggests that it may be a job-related factor. A few factors were adopted as convergence effect factors on nursing students' career-preparation behavior in this study and the explanatory power of career preparation behavior of nursing students were rather low. It implies that factors did not include enough. Therefore, research design including more convergent factors such as empowerment [31], social support [32], or self-esteem [3] seems necessary.

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저자소개

박 주 영(Ju-young Park)

[정회원]



- 1998년 3월: 국군간호사관학교 (간호학 학사)
- 2006년 8월: 연세대학교 간호대학 (간호학 석사)
- 2011년 2월: 연세대학교 간호대학 (간호학 박사)

<관심분야>

재난 및 응급간호, 간호교육

우 정 희(Chung Hee Woo)

[정회원]



- 1987년 2월: 국군간호사관학교 (간호학 학사)
- 2003년 2월: 연세대학교 간호대학 (간호학 석사)
- 2012년 8월: 연세대학교 간호대학 (간호학 박사)

<관심분야>

정신건강, 지역사회, 연구방법론