

# Work-Life Balance and Intention to Pursue Graduate Studies among Nurses

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## ABSTRACT

**Aims:** This study aimed to determine the relationship between work-life balance and the intention to pursue graduate studies among nurses in a selected hospital in Iloilo.

**Study design:** A descriptive-correlational quantitative research design was employed.

**Place and Duration of Study:** The study was conducted in a selected hospital in Iloilo City among staff nurses during the Academic Year 2025–2026.

**Methodology:** The study involved 73 registered nurses selected through total enumeration sampling. Data were collected using a validated survey instrument composed of two parts: work-life balance questionnaire and intention to pursue graduate studies questionnaire. Work-life balance was measured using a 30-item scale, while intention to pursue graduate studies was assessed using a 30-item questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Inferential analysis was conducted using Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between work-life balance and intention to pursue graduate studies.

**Results:** Nurses demonstrated a high level of work-life balance ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) and a strong intention to pursue graduate studies ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ). Pearson's correlation showed a moderate positive relationship between work-life balance and intention to pursue graduate studies ( $r = 0.561$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating that nurses with better work-life balance are more likely to pursue further education.

**Conclusion:** The assessment revealed that work-life balance significantly influences nurses' intention to pursue graduate studies. Nurses who are able to manage their professional and personal responsibilities effectively are more motivated to engage in advanced education. The findings suggest that organizational support, flexible scheduling, and work-life balance initiatives may encourage nurses to pursue graduate studies.

*Keywords: work-life balance, nurses, graduate studies, professional development, organizational support*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Balance between work and life indicates incorporation within the scope of professional endeavors and familial roles. It pertains to the capacity to which an individual can competently align their professional and personal commitments, promoting overall well-being (Zulkeflee et al., 2024). Over the past years, undertaking a master's degree has become a significant concern. The growing requirement for nursing personnel with advanced professional training and specialized expertise fosters nurses' engagement in continuing their education (Wang et al., 2024). Advanced nursing education contributes to higher-quality care and enhanced professional practice (Burrow et al., 2020). However, the factors influencing nurses' decision to pursue graduate studies remain unclear (Zhou et al., 2024). The World Health Organization (WHO) predicts a global shortage of nursing professionals, emphasizing the need for more qualified nurses (WHO, 2022). Graduate nursing programs play a crucial role in enhancing competencies and meeting healthcare demands (Huang et al., 2020). However, pursuing advanced education presents challenges, including workload and motivation (Agga et al., 2023). This study aimed to determine the relationship between work-life balance and the intention to pursue graduate studies among nurses.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This research employed a descriptive-correlational, cross-sectional methodology to investigate the relationship between work-life balance and nurses' intentions to pursue graduate studies. Using a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design, the study examined variables in their natural state and assessed the strength and direction of their associations without manipulation (Thomas & Zubkov, 2023). While not establishing causality, it determined the presence of statistically significant correlations between work-life balance and academic aspirations. Data were collected at a single point in time, making this approach appropriate for unbiased analysis within real healthcare settings.

### **2.2 STUDY SETTING**

The research was conducted at a hospital in an urban barangay of Iloilo City, Western Visayas, Philippines. To protect the institution's privacy, its name is omitted. As a primary healthcare facility, it was the sole site for data collection and provided a suitable environment for survey distribution. The site was chosen for its accessibility, relevance to nursing practice, and number of eligible nurse participants. The study included all registered nurses employed there during the data collection period, with confidentiality and respondent privacy strictly maintained.

### **2.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

The study population comprised registered nurses employed at a selected hospital in Iloilo who met the established inclusion criteria. These nurses were evaluated for their work-life balance and intentions to pursue graduate education. Nurses were chosen as the focus group due to their dual professional and domestic responsibilities and the direct impact of these factors on their decision to pursue further education. A total enumeration sampling technique was employed, inviting all 119 registered nurses at the facility to participate. Total enumeration, also known as census sampling, allows the collection of data from the entire population when feasible, providing a comprehensive understanding of the study variables (Creswell, 2014; Babbie, 2013). Of the invited nurses, 73 completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 61.34%, which is generally considered acceptable for robust statistical

analysis (Babbie, 2013). Nonresponse bias was acknowledged as a potential limitation. Participation was voluntary, and only nurses meeting the inclusion criteria were included. Despite not achieving full census participation, the sample of 73 nurses was sufficient to generate valid descriptive and inferential statistics while maintaining methodological rigor.

## **2.4 INSTRUMENTATION**

The researchers used adapted and researcher-made questionnaires specifically designed to meet the study's objectives. Work-life balance was measured using the Kumar and Sarkar Work-Life Balance Questionnaire (2021), integrated into a single instrument divided into three parts. Part I, Demographic Data – Collected personal information from nurses at the selected hospital, including name, sex, age, monthly income, and specialty. This provided context for analyzing the relationship between demographic factors, work-life balance, and pursuit of graduate studies. Part II, Work-Life Balance – A 30-item questionnaire adapted from Kumar and Sarkar (2021) measuring how respondents balance work, personal life, and graduate study. A five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was used, with higher mean scores indicating better work-life balance. Part III, Extent of Pursuing Graduate Studies – A 30-item researcher-made questionnaire assessing factors influencing nurses' decisions to pursue graduate education. Responses were rated on the same five-point Likert scale, with higher mean scores reflecting greater motivation, opportunity, and support for graduate study.

## **2.5. DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE**

Prior to collecting any data, the researchers obtained formal approval from the Office of the Dean of the College of Nursing and authorization from the administrator of the selected hospital in Iloilo. On-site visits were conducted to distribute and administer the survey questionnaires to eligible registered nurses. Respondents were informed of the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation. Participants were limited to registered nurses with at least one year of continuous service who provided consent. Surveys were completed during the nurses' available time to minimize disruption, with guidance provided as needed. Data were collected using a structured 30-item work-life balance questionnaire adapted from Kumar and Sarkar (2021) and a 30-item researcher-developed questionnaire assessing factors influencing the pursuit of graduate studies. Both instruments used a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Completed surveys were collected, recorded, and securely stored in locked cabinets and password-protected digital files, accessible only to the research leader and adviser, ensuring confidentiality and data security.

## **2.6. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE**

This study used both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze data. Descriptive measures included frequency, percentage, standard deviation, and mean to assess work-life balance and intention to pursue graduate studies, with work-life balance measured using a 30-item Likert-scale questionnaire adapted from Kumar and Sarkar (2021) and intention to pursue graduate studies measured using a 30-item researcher-developed Likert-scale questionnaire. Weighted mean intervals categorized levels of work-life balance (Very Low to Very High). Inferential analyses included the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test to assess data

normality and Pearson's  $r$  to determine the strength and direction of relationships between work-life balance and intention to pursue graduate studies, with statistical significance set at  $\alpha = 0.05$  (two-tailed). All analyses were conducted using SPSS.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The level of work-life balance among 73 registered nurses was assessed using a 30-item validated questionnaire, yielding an overall mean score of 3.82 (SD = 0.62), categorized as "high" (Yaacob et al., 2019). Nurses reported the strongest perceptions of balance in areas related to career development and organizational support, including opportunities for growth (M = 4.15, SD = 0.72), training provision (M = 4.10, SD = 0.71), and managing work-family obligations (M = 4.00, SD = 0.70), highlighting the protective role of job resources in fostering well-being (Abbas et al., 2020; Sami, Li, & Guo, 2021). Lower mean scores were observed in items related to workload and time management, such as completing tasks within regular hours (M = 3.63, SD = 1.00), conflicting family events (M = 3.58, SD = 0.95), managing unexpected tasks (M = 3.57, SD = 0.84), leave and holidays (M = 3.57, SD = 0.99), and adequate rest (M = 3.57, SD = 0.91), reflecting ongoing challenges associated with work demands. Despite these pressures, the relatively low standard deviations indicate a shared organizational experience. Overall, findings suggest that while nurses generally perceive a high level of work-life balance—supported by professional development and organizational resources—time pressure, rest, and workload management remain areas for improvement, consistent with the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Dall'Ora et al., 2016) and Neuman's Systems Model of coping and resilience. Table 1 shows the data.

**Table 1. Distribution of mean responses on Work Life Balance, specific indicators (n= 73).**

| <b>Work-Life Balance</b>                                                                | <b>mean</b> | <b>sd</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| My job provides good opportunities for career development.                              | 4.15        | 0.72      |
| Training opportunities are provided by my organization to improve my career.            | 4.10        | 0.71      |
| I can manage both my work and family obligations.                                       | 4.00        | 0.70      |
| Are you satisfied with your current job position?                                       | 3.95        | 0.78      |
| Despite stress at work, I can manage my emotional health.                               | 3.95        | 0.75      |
| My time outside work hours are respected by my supervisors.                             | 3.94        | 0.88      |
| I can manage to take care of my physical health with my current work schedule.          | 3.93        | 0.90      |
| My personal and family responsibility are easily manageable with my workplace location. | 3.90        | 0.90      |
| Discussion about workload and wellbeing is openly discussed in my organization.         | 3.90        | 0.85      |
| Despite my workload, I manage to stay connected with friends and family.                | 3.90        | 0.90      |
| I am content with my salary.                                                            | 3.89        | 0.90      |
| The time between work and personal life is divided based on how I wanted it.            | 3.89        | 0.73      |
| My employee work-life balance is supported by my organization.                          | 3.87        | 0.79      |
| I can attend family or social events if my work schedule allows me.                     | 3.84        | 0.72      |
| I am fully satisfied with my current work-life balance                                  | 3.83        | 0.83      |
| Flexible working hours is always a thing in my work.                                    | 3.78        | 1.12      |
| I feel fine after finishing a shift.                                                    | 3.78        | 0.86      |
| My work is flexible enough for me to handle my personal matters.                        | 3.78        | 0.83      |
| I can manage my stress with work and family demands.                                    | 3.78        | 0.90      |

|                                                                                        |             |             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| My work feels enjoyable without it feeling like it's taking up my time.                | 3.78        | 0.91        |
| My colleague have a group support system in maintaining work-life balance.             | 3.76        | 0.87        |
| After work I feel that I have enough time to relax and rest.                           | 3.75        | 0.77        |
| I can pursue my hobbies or interest with my workload.                                  | 3.75        | 0.92        |
| During work, I can take short breaks without the feeling of guilt or stress.           | 3.74        | 0.81        |
| I can easily manage my workload without being overwhelmed.                             | 3.74        | 0.85        |
| I can manage to finish my workload within my regular working hours.                    | 3.63        | 1.00        |
| Family events or activities often conflict with my work schedule.                      | 3.58        | 0.95        |
| Unexpected work task are manageable for you without them affecting your personal time. | 3.57        | 0.84        |
| I feel content with the number of holidays and leave option I receive on work.         | 3.57        | 0.99        |
| On workdays, I get adequate rest.                                                      | 3.57        | 0.91        |
| <b>OVERALL</b>                                                                         | <b>3.82</b> | <b>0.62</b> |

The level of nurses' intention to pursue graduate studies was assessed using the Extent of Pursuing Graduate Studies (EPS) questionnaire, with an overall mean of 3.80 (SD = 0.57), indicating a strong intention. The highest-rated items were the perceived value of obtaining a graduate degree (M = 4.00), its role in enhancing clinical decision-making (M = 3.99), and its importance for professional growth and leadership opportunities. These results highlight nurses' recognition of both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of graduate education for clinical proficiency and career advancement. Lower mean scores were observed for institutional scholarships (M = 3.29), employer-provided incentives (M = 3.45), and balancing work-study demands (M = 3.58), reflecting variability in perceived financial and structural support, with scholarship availability showing the highest SD (0.99). Overall, findings suggest that nurses are highly motivated to pursue graduate studies, yet financial constraints, limited family support, and workplace demands may hinder the realization of these aspirations, consistent with prior studies linking career development and access to resources with educational intentions (Foreman, Perry & Wheeler, 2015).

**Table 2.** *Distribution of mean responses on Extent of Pursuing graduate studies, specific indicators (n= 73).*

| <b>Extent of Pursuing graduate studies</b>                                             | <b>mean</b> | <b>sd</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| I believe that completing a graduate degree is worth for its time.                     | 4.00        | 0.68      |
| My clinical decision-making skills will improve in pursuance of higher education.      | 3.99        | 0.68      |
| My professional growth is necessary in applying for graduate studies.                  | 3.96        | 0.72      |
| I could gain leadership roles for having a postgraduate degree.                        | 3.95        | 0.72      |
| My graduate degree can contribute for me to take better care of my patients            | 3.95        | 0.80      |
| I feel more satisfied with my overall job for having graduate education.               | 3.95        | 0.70      |
| Possessing a graduate degree will develop my credibility in my profession and peers.   | 3.93        | 0.81      |
| My chances of promotion will increase for having a graduate degree.                    | 3.93        | 0.69      |
| My ability to conduct nursing research improves with graduate education                | 3.90        | 0.82      |
| I need a graduate degree for me to keep up with the current advancement in healthcare. | 3.90        | 0.77      |
| I feel the need to gain specialized nursing knowledge.                                 | 3.90        | 0.73      |

|                                                                                    |             |             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| My pursuance of postgraduate studies will boost my self-confidence.                | 3.90        | 0.73        |
| My professional position pushes me to pursue graduate studies.                     | 3.89        | 0.79        |
| I am provided with better salary opportunities for having graduate qualifications. | 3.88        | 0.73        |
| I feel motivated by my colleagues and peers who have graduate degrees.             | 3.86        | 0.77        |
| I am confident in my skills and ability to succeed in graduate studies.            | 3.86        | 0.73        |
| My nursing supervisors encourage me to continue my postgraduate studies.           | 3.85        | 0.84        |
| I have access or can easily commute to nearby universities.                        | 3.84        | 0.70        |
| My institution provides information and study opportunities.                       | 3.78        | 0.87        |
| I feel a strong sense of personal accomplishment.                                  | 3.78        | 0.85        |
| <b>OVERALL</b>                                                                     | <b>3.80</b> | <b>0.57</b> |

The relationship between work-life balance and nurses' intention to pursue graduate studies was examined using Pearson's correlation, revealing a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.561$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates a statistically significant relationship, with higher levels of work-life balance associated with stronger intentions to pursue graduate education. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.315$ ) suggests that approximately 31.5% of the variance in nurses' educational intentions is explained by differences in work-life balance, while other factors such as financial resources, institutional and family support, and career aspirations likely contribute to the remaining variance. These findings are consistent with research highlighting the positive impact of supportive work environments, lower job stress, and flexible schedules on nurses' professional development and educational goals (Adams & Bond, 2000; Almeida, Figueiredo, & Lucas, 2024). In line with the Neuman Systems Model (2011), effective management of work-life demands may foster adaptive outcomes, including pursuing graduate studies.

**Table 3.** Relationship between work-life balance and pursuing graduate studies( $n=73$ )

|                   | Academic engagement |                 |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
|                   | r-value             | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Work-life Balance | 0.561               | .000            |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the study objectives and findings, it can be concluded that nurses at the selected hospital generally maintain a favorable work-life balance, which promotes effective performance in both their personal and professional domains. The majority of respondents expressed a strong motivation to pursue further education, indicating a commitment to continuous improvement across professional, academic, and personal dimensions. The study established a significant positive relationship between work-life balance and the intention to pursue graduate studies. These findings suggest that when nurses are provided with adequate support and manageable workloads, they are more likely to pursue advanced educational opportunities. However, it is important to acknowledge that these results were derived from a single institutional setting with a limited sample size, thereby constraining the generalizability of the findings.

## **5. RECOMMENDATION**

In view of the preceding findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed: Hospital administrators may consider developing and implementing institutional policies that provide flexible work schedules, academic support measures, and financial assistance, including scholarships or study leaves. Recognizing and providing incentives for nurses who seek advanced education may promote a culture of continuous learning and professional development. Nursing leaders are encouraged to establish effective workload management strategies, promote communication concerning academic and professional prospects. It improves workplace support systems assisting nurses to align their work obligations alongside personal pursuits. Nurses are encouraged to enhance efficiency in managing time and employ approaches with colleagues who have successfully attained graduate studies. Involvement in professional development initiatives and the establishment of explicit personal and career objectives may enhance motivation for higher education. Nursing students are urged to recognize higher education as a pathway to leadership and enhance roles within the profession. Inspired by academically advanced practicing nurses, students may be encouraged to contemplate future graduate studies. Future research should rectify the limitations identified in this study by incorporating larger and more diverse samples from various healthcare institutions. It is advisable to consider additional variables such as organizational support, burnout, financial preparedness, and family dynamics through longitudinal or mixed-methods approaches. This is to gain a more profound understanding of the factors affecting nurses' educational intentions. By prioritizing work-life balance as a strategic initiative. The healthcare institutions can enhance nurse retention and promote academic and professional development. Ultimately resulting in improved healthcare outcomes and more robust leadership within the nursing profession.

**CONSENT**

All authors confirm that informed consent was obtained from participants prior to data collection.

**ETHICAL APPROVAL**

The study was reviewed and approved by the Iloilo Doctors' College Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IDIREC) before its conduct.

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