

Original
Research
Article

Motivators of Nursing Students' Completion in a Private School in Iloilo

ABSTRACT

Student attrition in nursing education remains a continuing concern, particularly in private institutions where students face academic, personal, and socioeconomic challenges. Understanding the factors that influence nursing students' intention to complete their program is essential in strengthening retention efforts and ensuring workforce sustainability. Guided by Social Cognitive Theory, this study aimed to determine how selected motivators, including passion, socioeconomic status, family influence, and Nursing Aptitude Test (NAT) results, influence first-year nursing students' intention to complete the nursing course in a private school in Iloilo. A descriptive-correlational research design was utilized and conducted the study at Iloilo Doctors' College between January and February 2026. Ethical clearance was sought prior to data collection. Data were gathered from 237 first-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing students using a validated researcher-made questionnaire composed of Likert-scale items measuring passion, family influence, and intention to complete the program. Reliability testing showed excellent internal consistency for passion ($\alpha = 0.912$) and good consistency for intention to complete ($\alpha = 0.889$). Results revealed high levels of passion, strong family influence, and a high intention to complete the nursing program. While sex, NAT scores, and monthly family income showed no significant association with the intention to complete ($P > .05$), both passion ($r = .432, p < .001$) and family influence ($r = .312, p < .001$) demonstrated significant positive relationships with the students' determination to finish the course. The findings suggest that intrinsic motivators, such as professional passion, and extrinsic support from family are more critical drivers of academic persistence than demographic or academic aptitude factors. Strengthening initiatives that foster passion and family engagement may enhance student retention.

Keywords: Nursing students, Passion, Family influence, Socioeconomic status, Intention to complete

1. INTRODUCTION

Nursing is a profession that requires not only academic competence but also personal motivation and an external support system. Many students are driven by potential increased salaries and better working conditions overseas, compared to limited pay and opportunities here in the Philippines (De Luna, 2023). Identifying factors that influence students' intent to complete nursing education can reveal their reasons on what keeps them motivated in pursuing nursing education that can improve institutional strategies and ensure the sustainability of the nursing workforce.

A student has a passion for studying when they enjoy (or love) their studies, treat them as part of their identity, devote time to learning, and define it as their passion (Larionow & Gabryś, 2024). Passion plays an important role in influencing students' choice of nursing as it reflects their initial motivation and career intention, also as those who genuinely feel interested in the profession are more likely to develop a deeper commitment in completing the program. A study between the relationship of grit, passion, and professional attitudes among nursing students, shows that stronger professional attitudes and behaviors were connected to higher levels of passion (Taylan and Özkan 2025). This study reveals that passion is a persistent motivating element that enables students to align their actions with professional values such as responsibility, perseverance, and ethical conduct.

Gaps in college completion persist between low- and high-income students (Castleman & Meyer, 2019). Study showed that family financial crises, part-time job involvement, and educational loans significantly affected students' academic outcomes. Although financial satisfaction showed a slight positive relationship with achievement, the overall impact of financial hardship was largely negative (Alam et al., 2024). Similarly, lack of financial support and competing responsibilities were major factors in delayed completion in nursing education (Hart, 2021). With these studies, it shows that socioeconomic status remains a strong factor for student nurses' retention or completion in nursing education.

Families are very influential in shaping their children's interests and values, developing self-concepts, and giving positive and negative perspectives on professions (Koçak et al., 2021). Emotional and positive family support was a significant factor that helped students to feel more connected to the nursing profession (Hua et al., 2022). It is revealed that many Filipino students chose nursing based on family influence and expectations, often driven by the prospect of securing stable jobs abroad to support their families (Dahl et al., 2021). Another local study highlighted that Filipino students are deeply influenced by caregiving values, where family experiences and parental advice strongly affect their nursing career choice and persistence (Filipino First Year Students Study, 2018).

Student attrition remains a significant concern in nursing education, as early withdrawal limits the pool of qualified nurses and wastes institutional resources. An aptitude test is designed to assess what a person is capable of doing or to predict what a person is able to learn or do given the right education and instruction (Cherry, 2023). The Nursing Aptitude Test (NAT), which usually assesses the abilities such as reading comprehension, science reasoning and critical thinking can help determine students' strength and areas for development. Evaluating these fundamental skills can support students' readiness, motivation and confidence which ultimately contributes to their perseverance and program completion (Torregosa & Patricio, 2025).

Ideally, nursing education should provide equal opportunity for students to complete their programs regardless of financial background, family situation, or academic preparedness. This vision aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education, which calls for equitable access to affordable and quality tertiary education and emphasizes reduced dropout rates as a global benchmark (United Nations, 2015). Nationally, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) mandates nursing programs to ensure high retention and licensure examination performance, while the Professional

Regulation Commission (PRC) underscores the need to produce competent nurses to address local and international healthcare demands.

Despite the recognition of these motivations individually, there is still a limited study about the combined influence of these factors in the intent to complete nursing education, particularly in local private schools in the Philippines. Most studies that exist are focused on either career choice or academic performance but not specifically on passion, socioeconomic status, family influence and NAT results that drive the students' persistence. This study is conducted on why student nurses still continue the nursing profession despite their awareness of its low salary and demanding workload. It seeks to explore their personal perspectives and external factors that keep them motivated in their chosen field. Understanding these motivations can help not only the students but also the institutions for more valuable insights about the factors affecting nursing students' choice and to create more strategies in shaping the students effectively.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design and Respondents

A descriptive-correlational research design was utilized in this study to determine the factors influencing nursing students' intention to complete the nursing program. Specifically, the study examined the role of passion, socioeconomic status, family influence, and Nursing Aptitude Test (NAT) results in shaping students' intention to complete the nursing course. The respondents were first-year nursing students enrolled in a private school in Iloilo, academic year 2025-2026. A total of 237 first-year nursing students participated in the study and were selected using simple random sampling to minimize bias.

2.2 Research Instruments

The primary tool used for data collection was a researcher-made questionnaire. The research instrument consisted of four parts:

(1) Characteristics of the Respondents. This section collected demographic data about the participants, including sex, NAT (Nursing Aptitude Test) score, monthly family income, and choice of nursing.

(2) Passion. This section evaluated the students' personal motivation, enthusiasm, and genuine interest in pursuing nursing as a profession. It consisted of 10 researcher-made items, all stated as positive statements. Respondents rated their level of agreement using a 4-point Likert scale.

(3) Family Influence. This section assessed the degree of family encouragement, support, and expectations experienced by students in choosing and pursuing nursing education. It consisted of 10 positive statements. Responses were measured using the same 4-point Likert scale.

(4) Intention to Complete. This section measured the students' determination and confidence in completing the nursing program. It consisted of 10 positive statements. Respondents indicated their level of agreement using the same 4-point Likert scale. The response options were converted from letter-based categories into numerical values to enable quantitative analysis and score computation.

2.3 Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed face-to-face, and the selected respondents were personally met in their classrooms, where the questionnaires were personally handed to them. Before distributing the questionnaire, the researchers explained the purpose of the

study, the contents of the informed consent form, and the confidentiality measures to ensure voluntary participation.

2.4 Statistical Analysis

To analyze the data, descriptive and correlational analyses were conducted. The collected data were first encoded in Microsoft Excel and subsequently analyzed using SPSS Version 31 (IBM, 2025). A coding manual was prepared to ensure consistency and minimize errors during data entry. The study variables were coded as follows: sex (1 = female, 2 = male), first choice (1 = yes, 2 = no), aptitude score (1 = low average, 2 = average, 3 = high average, 4 = above average, 5 = superior, 6 = excellent), monthly family income (1 = poor, 2 = low income, 3 = middle income, 4 = upper income, 5 = rich), passion (1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high), family influence (1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high), and intention to complete (1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and assess their motivators in intention to complete the nursing course.

Normality of the data was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov–Smirnov tests (Razali & Wah, 2011; Gupta, 2022). Results indicated that the data were not normally distributed; therefore, non-parametric tests were utilized. Spearman's rho correlation was employed to determine the relationship between passion, family influence, and intention to complete the nursing course, while the Chi-square test was used to examine the association between sex, NAT scores, monthly family income, and intention to complete. The strength of correlation was interpreted as very weak (0.00–0.19), weak (0.20–0.39), moderate (0.40–0.69), strong (0.70–0.89), and very strong (0.90–1.00). Pearson's r was also considered when variables met the assumptions of interval data and normal distribution (SurveyMonkey, 2021).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In terms of sex, the majority of the respondents were female 179 (75.5%), while 58 (24.5%) were male. This indicates that nursing remains a female-dominated program in the private school in Iloilo. The higher proportion of female students may reflect the traditional perception of nursing as a female oriented profession.

With regard to NAT score, most respondents 145 (61.2%) obtained average NAT score, while 71 students (30.0%) were classified as high average. A small number of respondents also reached high categories, with 5 students (2.1%) classified as excellent and 2 students (0.8%) as superior. The presence of students in these higher categories, combined with the absence of low average scores, suggests a generally strong level of academic ability. This indicates that many students possess the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for nursing education. Academic readiness is essential in managing the academic and clinical demands of the program and may contribute to students' ability to continue and complete their studies.

In terms of monthly family income, a substantial proportion of respondents 194(81.9%) were categorized as Poor, while only 3 students (1.3%) were classified as coming from rich-income families. The classification of monthly family income was based on the criteria established by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA). The large number of students from low income families may suggest that many students view nursing as a means of improving their financial situation and supporting their families. However, financial constraints may also create challenges, such as the paying tuition, uniforms and other school-related expenses, which may affect academic performance if adequate support is lacking.

Regarding the choice of nursing, 194 respondents (81.9%) reported that they personally chose nursing as their program, while 43 respondents (18.1%) indicated that they did not choose nursing themselves. This finding suggests that most students intentionally selected nursing as their field of study. Students who personally choose nursing may demonstrate stronger motivation and commitment, which are important factors in completing nursing education. On the other hand, some students may have entered the program due to family influence, peer pressure, or limited educational options.

Overall, the results indicate that most respondents were female and came from low-income families, with the majority demonstrating average to above-average NAT scores. Additionally, most students reported that nursing was their chosen program. These demographic and academic characteristics may influence students' intention to complete the nursing program, particularly in relation to their socioeconomic background and academic readiness.

The Mann–Whitney U test was used to examine the association between sex and students' intention to complete the nursing course, which yielded $U = 4961.00$, $p = 0.513$. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the result indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the intention to complete the nursing course when respondents are grouped according to sex.

The Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to determine whether there were significant differences in students' intention to complete the nursing course when grouped according to NAT scores. The result showed $H(3) = 2.697$, $p = 0.441$, indicating no significant difference among the groups.

Similarly, the Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to examine the relationship between monthly family income and students' intention to complete the nursing program, which yielded $H(3) = 2.697$, $p = 0.441$. This result also indicates no statistically significant difference in the intention to complete the nursing program when respondents are grouped according to monthly family income.

Since all p-values are greater than 0.05, the findings indicate that sex, NAT scores, and monthly family income do not have a statistically significant association with students' intention to complete the nursing course.

These findings are supported by the study of Fortes et al. (2022), which reported that demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, including income level and background, may influence nursing students' persistence in their programs. However, such factors do not necessarily determine students' intention to complete their studies. Similarly, research has shown that Nursing Aptitude Test (NAT) scores, particularly in areas such as verbal reasoning, numerical ability, and science knowledge, may be associated with academic performance. Nevertheless, NAT scores alone do not fully determine students' persistence or intention to complete a nursing program.

This observation is consistent with the findings of Romero (2002), who emphasized that while aptitude tests can indicate academic readiness, other factors, such as personal motivation, professional goals, and psychological readiness, play a more significant role in students' persistence and intention to complete nursing education.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage for sex, NAT scores, monthly family income and choice of nursing (n=237)

Variables	Categories	f	%
Sex	Female	179	75.5%
	Male	58	24.5%
NAT Scores	Low Average (17-30)	0	0%
	Average (31-68)	145	61.2%
	High Average (69-86)	71	30%
	Above Average (87-96)	14	5.9%
	Superior (97-98)	2	0.8%
	Excellent (99-100)	5	2.1%
	Monthly Family Income	Poor (₱ < 12,030)	194
	Low Income (₱ 12,030- 48,120)	3	1.3%
	Middle Income (₱ 48,120- 84,210)	14	5.9%
	Upper Income (₱ 84,210-144,360)	23	9.7%
	Rich (₱ 240,600 & above)	3	1.3%
Choice of Nursing	Yes	194	81.9%
	No	43	18.1%

Table 2. Mean Scores on Level of Passion (Specific Items)

Level of Passion	Mean	Standard Deviation
I respect the job that nurses do.	3.81	0.43
I feel the joy when I am able to help someone.	3.70	0.50
I want to treat people and save lives.	3.68	0.49
I see myself living a life as a nurse.	3.54	0.56
I have the passion to be successful in my educational pursuit of becoming a nurse.	3.51	0.53
I would dream of being nothing but a nurse.	3.47	0.65
I am passionate about choosing nursing as my profession.	3.43	0.58
My life goals and values align with nursing.	3.41	0.57
I find a sense of identity in nursing.	3.36	0.61
Nursing is my calling.	3.36	0.59
Overall Mean:	3.56	

Table 3. Mean Scores on Extent of Family Influence (Specific Items)

Extent of Family Influence	Mean	Standard Deviation
I feel motivated to study harder when I think about my family's sacrifices.	3.77	0.47
If I become a nurse, my family will be more proud of me.	3.76	0.49
My family supports me to pursue nursing.	3.72	0.50
I feel my family shows their support of my nursing pursuit.	3.68	0.54
My family helped me stay motivated in my studies.	3.44	0.62
My family has high expectations of me becoming a nurse.	3.41	0.60
I receive advice from my family on every decision I make.	3.41	0.69
My parents want a nurse in the family.	3.35	0.72
I want to fulfill the desired career of my parents by becoming a nurse.	3.28	0.81
Working in healthcare has been in my family's line of work.	2.86	1.02
Overall Mean:	3.56	

Table 4. Mean Scores on Intention-To-Complete the Nursing Course (Specific Items)

Intention-To-Complete the Nursing Course	Mean	Standard Deviation
I am determined to complete my nursing course.	3.74	0.49
I am dedicated to obtaining my license as a nurse.	3.72	0.52
I stay focused on graduation as my ultimate goal.	3.68	0.52
I care about my education and look forward to the learning experiences.	3.67	0.55

Intention-To-Complete the Nursing Course	Mean	Standard Deviation
I will not give up on my nursing studies despite the stress and pressure.	3.66	0.54
I can picture myself graduating and working as a registered nurse.	3.65	0.55
I believe I have the means to complete my nursing education.	3.64	0.54
I plan to finish my nursing degree within the expected timeframe.	3.64	0.55
I will be able to deal with challenges throughout my course.	3.60	0.55
I feel capable of passing all of my classes.	3.46	0.60
Overall Mean:		3.71

Table 5. Association between sex, NAT scores and monthly family income and intention to complete the nursing course

Intention to Complete the Nursing Course	
Sex	$U = 4961.00$ $p = 0.513$
NAT Scores	$H(3) = 2.697$ $p = 0.441$
Monthly Family Income	$H(3) = 2.697$ $p = 0.441$

* significant at 0.05

Table 6. Relationship between the level of passion and intention to complete the nursing course

Intention to Complete the Nursing Course	
Passion	$r = 0.432$ $p < 0.001^*$

* significant at 0.05

Table 7. Relationship between family influence and intention to complete the nursing course

Intention to Complete the Nursing Course	
Family Influence	$r = 0.415$ $p < 0.001^*$

* significant at 0.05

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the major findings of the study, several conclusions were drawn. The respondents were first-year nursing students enrolled in a private school in Iloilo, with the majority being

female. The higher number of female students in nursing may be influenced by social and cultural perceptions that associate nursing with caring and nurturing roles, which are traditionally linked to women. Most respondents belonged to families classified as “poor” according to the criteria of the National Economic and Development Authority. This suggests that many students may pursue nursing as a means of achieving financial stability and improving their families’ economic situation. In terms of academic preparation, most respondents obtained average NAT scores, indicating that they possess the basic academic readiness required for nursing education. The level of passion among the respondents was high, indicating strong personal interest, enthusiasm, and intrinsic motivation toward completing the nursing program. Likewise, the extent of family influence was great, demonstrating that family support and encouragement serve as important external motivators that help sustain students’ academic persistence. Correspondingly, the level of intention to complete the nursing course was high, reflecting students’ strong determination to finish their degree and achieve their goal of becoming registered nurses. The study further concludes that demographic and socioeconomic variables such as sex, NAT scores, and monthly family income do not significantly influence students’ intention to complete the nursing program. However, passion and family influence were found to have significant positive relationships with students’ intention to complete the nursing course. Students with a stronger passion for the nursing profession and those who receive greater family support are more likely to remain committed to finishing their nursing education.

CONSENT

Respondents' written informed consent was obtained, and the confidentiality of their responses was ensured. Participants were informed of their right to voluntarily participate and to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study was submitted to the Iloilo Doctors' Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IDIREC) and was granted ethical clearance (IDIREC-2025.OI_188). The conduct of the research complied with the National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research and the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) to safeguard the confidentiality and safety of participants.

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