

# A Training Institution-Based Assessment of Choices and Perceptions of the Nursing Profession and Analysis of Career Progression Perspectives Among Final Year Nursing and Midwifery Students

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## Abstract

*The nursing profession is crucial in healthcare, emphasizing patient-centered care to improve health at both individual and community levels. Nurses work collaboratively with physicians but also provide independent care to enhance patient outcomes. In Ghana, over 128 accredited institutions train nurses; however, enrollment often exceeds capacity, prompting calls for selective recruitment, infrastructure expansion, and greater use of preceptors. This multi-site, cross-sectional study explores why final-year students chose nursing, their views on the profession, and perspectives on career progression. Findings indicate that most students, primarily single, learned about nursing through family and friends. Many chose nursing early, often influenced by their parents and a lasting interest in the field. Students generally view nursing as a respected profession and believe job opportunities are accessible both locally and abroad, though it is not considered highly paid domestically. Some received career counseling before training, which affirmed their choice. Most plan to migrate within five years, favoring the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. Many students consider a genuine interest in nursing essential for success, express satisfaction with the profession, and would recommend it to others. Further research is needed to understand students' motivations and career plans more fully.*

**Keywords:** *Choice, Migration, Nursing, Profession, Perception, Satisfaction.*

## Introduction

The nursing profession is essential to healthcare, promoting health and quality of life for individuals and communities [1]. Despite a global shortage of qualified professionals [2, 3], nurses serve crucial roles across specialties, with a strong focus on patient-centered care. Though often seen as working under physicians [4, 5], nurses also provide autonomous care and collaborate with physicians to enhance health outcomes [4, 5]. Nursing roles and practices differ by specialization and national context. The International Council of Nurses defines nursing as both independent and collaborative care across all ages, emphasizing health promotion, disease prevention, and care for the ill, disabled, or terminally ill. Nursing roles

include advocacy, ensuring safe environments, conducting research, shaping health policy, managing patient care, and educating [6]. Similarly, the Royal College of Nursing views nursing as using clinical judgment to help individuals achieve the best quality of life until death, regardless of condition [6].

The American Nurses Association describes nursing as advocating for health at all levels, with goals to protect, promote, and optimize health, prevent illness, and alleviate suffering through diagnosing and treating human illnesses and needs [7, 8]. Henderson (2009) adds that nursing includes helping patients perform health-related tasks they would do independently if possible [9]. Key aspects of the profession are high-quality care, ethical standards, credentialing, and lifelong learning

[6]. Despite equal opportunity laws, around 90% of nurses globally are women [10]. Nursing training combines theoretical and practical instruction, typically provided by experienced nurses and medical professionals. Education is available at diploma, associate, or bachelor's degree levels, with specializations in areas like mental health and pediatrics. Modern nursing education emphasizes inter-professional collaboration and research in decision-making. In Ghana, with a population of around 32 million facing health and economic challenges [11], most nurses are trained at nursing and midwifery institutions affiliated with teaching hospitals. In 2007, the Ghanaian Ministry of Health mandated an increase in healthcare professionals, particularly those with bachelor's degrees in nursing [12].

Ghana has over 128 accredited nursing and midwifery training institutions that provide certificates, diplomas, and degrees, training a significant number of nurses annually [13]. For example, 4,799 nurses were recruited during the 2017-2018 period [14]. However, enrollment often exceeds institutional capacity, leading to recommendations for recruiting qualified applicants, expanding infrastructure, and increasing the use of preceptors [11]. While thousands of qualified applications are received each cycle, the capacity is limited to under 200 students [11]. Although the number of qualified applicants could meet the country's nursing needs, existing infrastructure cannot accommodate this volume [11]. Understanding students' motivations for choosing nursing is crucial, and researchers use both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore these motivations, emphasizing a long-standing desire to care for others [15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20]. A survey identified job security, ease of access, and diverse career opportunities as key factors influencing the selection of nursing as a profession [21].

In developing countries like Ghana, career selection carries significant social, political,

and economic implications, emphasizing the need for nursing entrants to be genuinely motivated to care for patients. Koech et al. (2016) recommend exploring multiple career paths for future success [22]. Identifying factors influencing adolescent career exploration is crucial, as strong parental influence has been noted [23]. Academic streams often correlate with specific job options, impacting long-term career prospects [23]. Parents frequently prioritize job security, sometimes imposing their aspirations on their children. While children seek guidance, informed decisions based on personal interests can yield better outcomes. According to Piaget's theory, children begin pursuing career aspirations early [24]. Additionally, a longitudinal study shows that parents' education and employment significantly shape their children's career goals [25]. Despite existing research, ongoing studies are essential to fully understand the evolving economic, cultural, and sociodemographic factors affecting nursing. Understanding students' views and motivations for nursing is essential.

Researchers employ quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate factors influencing students' motivations for pursuing nursing, revealing a longstanding desire to care for others [15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20]. Key reasons for choosing nursing include job security, accessibility, and diverse opportunities, with stable employment being especially critical in developing nations like Ghana, where career choices carry significant implications [21]. High enrollment in nursing highlights the profession's appeal, making genuine motivation to care essential for new nurses. Parental influence is significant, as parents often guide children's career choices [23]. Academic paths correlate with job prospects, and parental expectations can shape decisions. According to Piaget's theory, career interests develop early [24], while parental education and employment influence children's aspirations [25]. Given these complexities, continued research is

needed to understand how evolving economic, cultural, and demographic factors affect nursing. This study aims to investigate factors influencing students' choice of nursing, assess their perspectives, and examine career progression among final-year Nursing and Midwifery students.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Study Area**

The Eastern Region of Ghana, in the south, borders Lake Volta and the Bono East, Ashanti, Central, and Greater Accra regions. Its capital, Koforidua, lies within its approximately 19,323 square kilometers, which make up about 8.1% of Ghana's total landmass. The region has 33 Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs), governed by Chief Executives. The number of MMDAs increased from 9 in 1988 to 33 in 2018 [26]. The region hosts several governmental and private nursing training institutions, including Koforidua Nursing and Midwifery Training College, Atibie Nursing and Midwifery Training School, and All Nations University College. These institutions play a vital role in preparing healthcare professionals for the region's needs.

### **Study Design**

This study is a multi-site, cross-sectional investigation conducted in nursing training institutions across the Eastern Region of Ghana. Systematic probability sampling was used, selecting every second college from an alphabetically ordered list. Visits were scheduled on agreed-upon days for questionnaire administration. Permission to visit the training colleges was obtained from the Eastern Region's Regional Director of Health Services. Meetings with management facilitated scheduling, and a timetable was shared with principals and academic coordinators. Although qualitative data were included, the study primarily focused on quantitative analysis.

### **Study Setting**

Nursing training colleges and universities are equipped with infrastructure supporting diverse functions, including administrative offices, classrooms, and dormitories. These institutions also have auditoriums for conferences and meetings, which served as venues for questionnaire administration in this study. Targeting final-year nursing students, the questionnaires were self-administered, allowing participants to complete them at their own pace, thereby promoting more accurate and candid responses.

### **Study Population and Sampling**

The study targeted final-year students enrolled in general nursing and midwifery diploma and Bachelor of Science (BSc) programs. A non-probability sampling method was employed, allowing all consenting male and female students to participate. Arrangements were made with college management to assemble participants in a large auditorium, where trained research assistants distributed the questionnaires. While no formal exclusion criteria were applied, students who were absent on the day of questionnaire administration were passively excluded. Participation was voluntary, with students given the option to decline without any pressure. The estimated sample size was calculated using OpenEpi software, based on an assumed population of 500,000, an anticipated frequency of 50% (0.5), confidence limits of 3% (0.03), and a design effect of 1.0. The study aimed to recruit approximately 1,280 participants.

### **Data Collection and Measurements**

Data collection utilized a structured, self-administered questionnaire as the primary tool. A pretest was conducted at a nursing training college excluded from the final sample to identify any ambiguities in the questions. After revisions for clarity, a second pretest was performed to ensure the instrument's reliability.

The administrative management of each selected institution was consulted to schedule convenient data collection days. On the designated days, final-year students were gathered in a conference hall, where they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Informed consent was obtained individually before research assistants distributed the questionnaires. Participants were instructed to return complete questionnaires before leaving the auditorium. The questionnaire included both simple closed-ended questions and Likert scale items, with each question requiring a response and multiple-choice questions offering at least two answer options. To ensure confidentiality, no identifying information—such as names or addresses—was requested.

### **Management of Data and Analysis**

After data collection, research assistants placed the completed questionnaires in opaque envelopes, which were then securely transported to the principal investigator's office. All returned questionnaires were retained, irrespective of quality. Each selected training college's research assistants were responsible for overseeing the collection and delivery process, with at least two assistants verifying the count of collected questionnaires to ensure accuracy. The principal investigator reviewed each questionnaire for completeness; those with fewer than 10% of responses were excluded, following criteria outlined in the final report. Data entry was conducted in Epi Info version 7.2.5 by trained data entry assistants. This process was followed by data cleaning to identify and correct inconsistencies or errors. The total number of received questionnaires was cross-checked against recorded submissions, and any unfilled questionnaires were noted. Descriptive data analysis was also conducted using Epi Info 7.2.5, with results presented in tables and graphs. Measures of central tendency, spread, and association were included where applicable, while percentages,

proportions, and means were calculated to examine relationships with dependent variables.

### **Ethical and Legal Considerations**

Ethical approval for the study (GHS-ERC: 020/03/23) was granted by the Ethics Review Committee of the Ghana Health Service Research and Development Division (GHSRDD) after rigorous adherence to its established procedures and ethical guidelines.

### **Results**

The study included 1,280 final-year nursing students aged 17 to 39 years. The majority of students (1,082 or 84.33%) were between 21 and 30 years old, followed by those aged 20 or younger (159 or 12.39%), with a minority aged 31 or older (42 or 3.27%). Female students overwhelmingly outnumbered male students, with 1,087 females (84.59%) compared to 198 males (15.41%). This female predominance was consistent across age groups: among students aged 20 years or younger, 15.72% were male ( $n=25$ ) and 84.28% were female ( $n=134$ ); in the 21–30 age group, 15.34% were male ( $n=166$ ) and 84.66% were female ( $n=916$ ); and among those aged 31 or older, 16.67% were male ( $n=7$ ) and 83.33% were female ( $n=35$ ). The overall mean age of final-year nursing students was 22.9 years ( $SD \pm 2.9$ , variance=8.7).

This mean age was similar across gender subgroups, with male students averaging 23.2 years ( $SD \pm 2.9$ , variance=8.7) and female students averaging 22.94 years ( $SD \pm 2.9$ , variance=8.4). Age-specific subgroup analysis revealed an increase in the mean ages of male and female final-year nursing students across ascending age groups. Among students aged 20 years or younger, females had a slightly higher mean age (19.88 years,  $SD \pm 0.36$ ) compared to males (19.43 years,  $SD \pm 0.80$ ). This trend was also observed in the 31–40 age group, where females had a mean age of 34.02 years ( $SD \pm 1.85$ ), marginally higher than the mean age of

males at 33.28 years (SD  $\pm$ 0.65). However, in the 21–30 age group, males were slightly older on average than females. Notably, the standard deviations remained consistently low across all age groups, indicating limited variability within each subgroup.

Analysis of the occupational patterns among guardians (either father or mother) of final-year nursing students revealed a higher prevalence of formal occupations among male guardians compared to female guardians. However, formal employment was still low for both groups, with most occupations classified as non-formal, lacking established remuneration. In terms of religious affiliation, most final-year nursing students identified as Christians, followed by Muslims, with a smaller number identifying as 'other' religions. Regarding marital status, the majority of final-year nursing students were single, followed by married students. A notable minority were cohabiting, while others were separated or divorced. Among female final-year nursing students, most reported being single, similar to their male counterparts; however, the number of single males exceeded that of single females. Following single students, the majority of females identified as married, then cohabiting, and finally divorced, in descending order. In

contrast, a lower proportion of males reported cohabiting than females, with the number of cohabiting males equal to that of married males. Overall, a greater proportion of females were married or cohabiting, while males had higher proportions of singles or those who were divorced or separated.

The educational backgrounds of parents and guardians of final-year nursing students varied widely. Male guardians were more likely to have attended Senior High School (SHS) or tertiary institutions, while female guardians had higher proportions with no formal education or only primary and Junior High School (JHS) education, indicating generally lower educational attainment among female guardians. Participants identified family and friends as their main sources of information on the nursing profession. Notably, nursing was not the primary career choice for most students during primary school, with some not considering any future profession at that time. A 4.04% difference was observed between those who chose nursing as a first choice and those who did not. However, by senior high school, many students indicated nursing as their preferred career, showing a shift from their initial aspirations in primary school [Table 1].

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic Characteristics of Final-Year Nursing Students in the Eastern Region of Ghana

Characteristic	Frequency – N (%)
<b>Religion</b>	
Christianity	1218 (95.08)
Islam	57 (4.45)
Other	6 (0.47)
<b>Marital status</b>	
Married	72 (5.61)
Cohabiting	43 (3.35)
Divorced/separated	5 (0.39)
Single	1163 (90.65)
<b>Sources of information about the nursing profession</b>	
Mass media	85 (7.67)
Family/friends	602 (54.33)
Personal observation	331 (29.87)
Internet	89 (8.17)

<b>Occupation of parents</b>	<b>Formal</b>	<b>Non-formal</b>
Father	355 (29.58)	845 (70.42)
Mother	146 (11.87)	1084 (88.13)
<b>Marital status by sex</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Married	4 (2.03)	68 (6.26)
Cohabiting	4 (2.03)	39 (3.59)
Divorced/separated	1 (0.51)	4 (0.37)
Single	188 (95.43)	975 (89.78)
<b>Educational backgrounds of parents</b>	<b>Fathers</b>	<b>Mothers</b>
Nil	22 (1.72)	55 (4.3)
Primary	52 (4.07)	147 (11.49)
Junior High School	249 (19.48)	509 (39.80)
Senior High School	336 (26.29)	299 (23.38)
Tertiary	619 (48.44)	269 (21.03)
<b>Nursing was first choice of profession</b>	<b>Primary school</b>	<b>Senior high school</b>
Yes	576 (43.86)	769 (60.08)
No	615 (47.90)	511 (39.92)
Didn't think about it	93 (7.24)	-

When asked about their initial career preferences in primary school, final-year nursing students who did not choose nursing as their first option considered diverse fields, primarily media, law, and medicine, along with teaching, security services, and aviation. When

questioned about their first career choice in Senior High School, these students continued to show interest in various professions, with notable preferences for teaching, media, law, medicine, business, and aviation [Table 2].

**Table 2.** Preferred Professions During Primary School among Final Year Nursing Students for whom Nursing at the Time is not a First Choice

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Frequency – N (%)</b>	
	Primary school	Senior high school
Veterinary officer	1 (0.17)	1 (0.21)
Teacher	42 (7.12)	28 (5.87)
Sportsman	9 (1.53)	3 (0.63)
Security services	81 (7.96)	1 (14.05)
Politician	3 (0.51)	3 (0.63)
Pharmacist	7 (1.19)	12 (0.52)
Priest	1 (0.17)	2 (0.42)
Physician assistant	5 (0.85)	7 (1.47)
Nutritionist	9 (1.53)	16 (3.35)
Media practitioner	82 (13.9)	64 (13.42)
Lawyer	90 (15.25)	60 (12.58)
Laboratory technician	5 (0.85)	5 (1.05)

Human resource practitioner	3 (0.51)	5 (1.05)
Health information officer	1 (0.17)	1 (0.21)
Fraudster	1 (0.17)	1 (0.21)
Fashion designer	13 (2.20)	6 (1.26)
Engineer	18 (3.05)	21 (4.40)
Economist	2 (0.34)	7 (1.47)
Medical doctor	101 (17.12)	72 (15.09)
Dancer	2 (0.34)	2 (0.42)
Computer engineer	3 (0.51)	7 (1.47)
Caterer	2 (0.34)	2 (0.42)
Business	14 (2.37)	17 (3.56)
Biochemist	3 (0.51)	2 (0.42)
Banker	14 (2.88)	8 (1.68)
Aviation	40 (6.78)	18 (3.77)
Agricultural officer	2 (0.34)	1 (0.21)
Accountant	15 (2.54)	10 (2.10)
Surveyor	-	1 (0.21)
Musician	-	2 (0.42)
Lecturer	-	14 (2.94)
Forestry officer	-	1 (0.21)
Forestry officer	-	1 (0.21)
Farmer	-	1 (0.21)
Customs officer	-	2 (0.42)
Health service administrator	-	1 (0.21)

Most final-year nursing students reported a longstanding interest in the profession, with many indicating that parents or guardians—particularly mothers—significantly influenced their decision to pursue nursing, while friends and peers played a minimal role. Additionally, some students noted that nurses' uniforms contributed to their interest, though this group was not a majority. Most students expressed varying levels of agreement on the ease of job acquisition for nurses, with a slight majority believing that employment abroad in more

developed countries would be feasible, while only a small minority disagreed. Many final-year nursing students were raised in families with at least one member in healthcare; however, a notable minority viewed nursing as a low-paying profession. Most students received career counseling, which they found very helpful, with many believing it significantly influenced their career choice, though some were uncertain about its impact. The majority perceived nursing as a respected profession. Family members of these students

were involved in various healthcare roles, from mainstream health work to allied services [Table 3.0].

**Table 3.** Final Year Nursing Students' Interest in Nursing, Parental and Peer Influence on Career Choice, Alongside Preferences for Parental Roles in Nursing Decisions

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Frequency – N (%)</b>
<b>Interest in nursing</b>	
Always been interested in nursing	795 (62.01)
<b>Influence in choice of nursing profession</b>	
Parents played a role	422 (81.39)
Friends played a role	369 (28.78)
Uniform played a role	570 (44.71)
<b>Whose influence did you perceive as stronger?</b>	
Father	198 (18.97)
Mother	422 (40.42)
Both	424 (40.61)
<b>“It is easy for a professional nurse to obtain a professional job”</b>	
Strongly agree	166 (13.03)
Disagree	307 (24.1)
I don't know	145 (11.38)
Agree	426 (33.44)
Strongly agree	230 (18.05)
<b>“It is easy to obtain a professional job in a more advanced country”</b>	
Strongly agree	19 (1.48)
Disagree	82 (6.41)
I don't know	106 (8.28)
Agree	547 (42.7)
Strongly agree	526 (41.09)
<b>Nursing career influences and perceptions/variables impacting nursing career choices</b>	
Family member was a healthcare worker	777 (60.56)
Nursing is a well-paid job	73 (5.69)
Nursing is well-respected	780 (60.99)
Had career counselling before training	678 (52.80)
Career counselling was helpful	625 (89.54)
Career counselling influenced my choice	492 (72.78)
<b>Professions of family members who were health workers</b>	
Pharmacist	54 (6.89)
Paramedic	1 (0.13)
Physician assistant	13 (1.66)
Nutrition officer	1 (0.13)
Nurse/midwife	546 (69.64)

Laboratory technician	7 (0.89)
Medical herbalist	1 (0.13)
Driver	14 (1.79)
Medical doctor	106 (0.52)
Disease control officer	2 (0.26)
Biomedical scientist	1 (0.13)
Anesthetist	1 (0.13)
Health service administrator	14 (1.79)
Accountant	23 (2.93)

Final-year nursing students were surveyed about their initial interest in nursing when they began their course. While most reported high initial interest, a significant minority indicated low interest. Specifically, 28.78% had low initial interest, while 71.22% expressed high interest, with 24.75% stating their interest was "very high" at the start of training. In contrast, only 6.88% reported low current interest in the profession, while 73.72% maintained high interest, and 19.4% described their interest as "very high" at this stage. Many final-year nursing students expressed uncertainty about their intention to practice nursing until retirement. Specifically, 407 students (31.67%) believed they would continue in the profession until retirement, while 438 students (34.11%) indicated plans to leave nursing for other occupations. Regarding post-nursing career plans, the majority (438 students, 34.59%)

mentioned pursuing careers unrelated to nursing.

A significant majority, 1,199 students (93.89%), were certain they would eventually leave Ghana for more developed countries, regardless of whether they would practice nursing there. When asked about their timeline for leaving Ghana in pursuit of better economic opportunities after qualification, most expressed a strong inclination to do so within a short timeframe, with 1,032 students (95.64%) planning to leave within five years. In comparison, only 3 students (0.28%) intended to leave between 6- and 10-year post-qualification, while 44 students (4.08%) planned to depart 11 years or more after qualifying. The preferred destinations among these students included the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany. [Table 4].

**Table 4.** Preferred Countries That Final Year Nursing Students Would One Day Want to Travel to for Work

Characteristic	Frequency – N (%)
United States of America	346 (30.35)
Canada	346 (30.35)
United Kingdom	327 (28.68)
Germany	42 (3.68)
Australia	18 (1.58)
Holland	8 (0.70)
China	7 (0.61)
France	7 (0.61)

Korea	4 (0.35)
Italy	4 (0.35)
United Arab Emirates	3 (0.26)
Sweden	3 (0.26)
Singapore	3 (0.26)
Japan	3 (0.26)
Belgium	3 (0.26)
India	2 (0.18)
Cuba	2 (0.18)
Thailand	1 (0.09)
Switzerland	1 (0.26)
South Africa	1 (0.09)
Saudi Arabia	1 (0.09)
Norway	1 (0.09)
Jamaica	1 (0.09)
Israel	1 (0.09)
Greece	1 (0.09)
Denmark	1 (0.09)
Croatia	1 (0.09)
Brazil	1 (0.09)
Benin	1 (0.09)

The majority of final-year nursing students believe that a genuine interest in the nursing profession is essential for successful practice. A smaller yet significant proportion expressed a willingness to recommend nursing as a career to those considering their professional options. Analysis of students' perceptions regarding job

fulfillment in nursing shows that most find it generally fulfilling. Additionally, many final-year nursing students pursued a general science curriculum in senior high school, particularly with a focus on biology. However, most of these students intended to pursue academic paths unrelated to nursing [Table 5].

**Table 5:** Final Year Nursing Students' Views on Genuine Interest in Nursing and Career Recommendations

Characteristic	Frequency – N (%)
<b>“Is primary interest important for successful practice?”</b>	
Interest is important	1187 (92.74)
<b>“Would you recommend nursing to others?”</b>	
Recommend nursing to others	964 (75.49)
<b>“Do you think you will find the practice satisfying/fulfilling?”</b>	
Very dissatisfying	31 (2.43)
Dissatisfying	77 (6.04)
Cannot tell	233 (18.27)
Satisfying	692 (54.27)
Very satisfying	242 (18.98)

<b>“I Studied science with biology option at senior high school”</b>	
General science with biology	50.67
<b>If you studied science with biology option, what was your profession of interest?</b>	
Interest in Nursing	45.11

## Discussion

This study examined career choices, perceptions of nursing, and career progression among final-year nursing and midwifery students. While no participants declined, some questionnaires were partially completed. The age distribution of participants aligned with [27], who reported an age range of 20–30 years among final-year nurses in northern Ghana. However, our sample included a broader range, from under 20 to nearly 40, differing from the narrower 21–25 range noted by [28]. Most students were aged 21–30, with females outnumbering males in all age groups. Mao et al. (2021) highlighted the intersecting identities of male nurses as being male, a nurse, and a minority [29]. Key themes included role strain, the advantages of masculine traits, and an egalitarian view of nursing, suggesting that male nurses could leverage both gender-related advantages and disadvantages for professional growth. Prosen (2022) examined gender stereotypes in nursing, finding that all genders face role constraints but often challenge them [30]. Prosen recommended addressing stereotypes, promoting gender diversity, and updating curricula to reduce disparities.

Rajapaksa et al. (2009) found gender differences in nurses' financial attitudes but similar professional views [31]. Kuehnert (2019) critiqued an NPR article suggesting that the "feminine" perception of nursing deters men, opposing the notion of rebranding nursing as "masculine" due to its oversimplification [32]. Kuehnert emphasized that nursing requires technical skills, emotional strength, resilience, collaboration, critical thinking, and adaptability—qualities appealing to all. The mean age of final-year nursing students was

22.9 years (SD ± 2.9), with no significant gender difference, although males were slightly older. Males aged 21 to 30 had a higher mean age than females, and low standard deviations indicated stable age distributions across genders. Occupational patterns of guardians showed a higher prevalence of formal jobs among male guardians, although overall rates were low for both genders. Most guardians held non-formal jobs, likely reflecting socioeconomic implications and suggesting that male guardians are somewhat more inclined toward formal roles despite their limited prevalence [32].

Yosep et al. (2022) examined nursing students' religiosity and positive thinking during the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting the role of spirituality in stress management [33]. They found that high levels of religiosity and positive thinking helped students cope with remote learning. Most final-year students identified as Christian, reflecting societal trends and the altruistic values of nursing, while Muslim students constituted the second-largest group. Future research could explore how religious beliefs influence clinical experiences, decision-making, and patient care outcomes. Some nurses reported being married, while most were single, and few identified as divorced. Research on nursing students' marital status is limited, but existing studies often link it to professional practice. Cañadas-De la Fuente et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of 78 studies, finding higher burnout rates among male nurses, singles, divorcees, and those without children [34]. Similarly, Prosen (2022) studied gender roles and career aspirations among nursing students, noting that females emphasized family motivations while

males focused on leadership [30]. Understanding sociodemographic factors is essential for enhancing the nursing profession and supporting student success.

Blackmore (2024) examined the predominance of women in nursing, linking it to historical events, gender biases, societal perceptions, and caregiving stereotypes [35]. The profession became female-dominated during the Civil War when women replaced male nurses, and early nursing schools largely accepted only women, excluding men until the mid-20th century. Societal norms continue to portray nursing as a feminine profession, reinforcing traditional caregiving roles and perpetuating the gender gap. While flexible schedules have attracted women to nursing, recent changes and the COVID-19 pandemic have disrupted this balance. Despite being the numerical majority, women remain underrepresented in healthcare leadership. Blackmore encourages women to pursue leadership roles to challenge stereotypes, emphasizing the importance of mentorship and education. In contrast Davidson et al. (2022) stress the urgent need for more men in nursing to address rising healthcare demands from an aging population and chronic illnesses [36]. The pandemic has exacerbated a global shortage of health professionals, with the WHO projecting a deficit of 9 to 13 million nurses by 2030.

Mbonimana and Byishimo (2020) studied parental influence on career decisions and academic performance in the Rulindo District, finding that parental occupation, education, and expectations significantly shape career choices [37]. Supportive guidance correlated with better academic outcomes, while conflicting expectations posed challenges, underscoring parents' crucial role in vocational paths. In a related study, Xiaomai Chen (2021) examined the impact of child-parent relationships on young adults' career choices, revealing weak positive correlations between relationship quality and career stability, challenging the

notion that stronger relationships lead to more stable career decisions [38]. Final-year students also reported parental influence on their profession choices. Furthermore, a study indicated that nursing aligns with individuals' values due to its job stability, diverse paths, and dynamic environment [39]. Lai et al. (2008) found that the percentage of students viewing nursing as their first career choice increased from 19.1% at college entry to 46.5% by 2005 [40]. Key factors influencing career intent included past illness, stress, self-rated competency, staff nurse support, and perceived career value.

Alkaya et al. (2018) compared career choices and professional values among nursing students in the U.S. and Turkey, finding that American students scored higher on the Vocational Congruency scale and the Nurses Professional Values Scale–Revised [41]. While both groups exhibited strong professional values, American students prioritized personal goals, whereas Turkish students were more influenced by living conditions, highlighting cultural factors shaping career aspirations. Final-year nursing students often cited parental guidance, especially from mothers, as a primary motivator, with peer influence being less significant. The symbolism of nurse uniforms also sparked interest in the profession. Halperin et al. (2013) identified altruism as the main motivator for pursuing nursing, followed by professional interest, while materialistic factors were less impactful [15]. They noted a positive correlation between professional adaptation and role perception, with female students valuing teamwork and clinical skills more than their male counterparts. Additionally, Jewish students felt more suited for nursing than Arab students, emphasizing altruism and perceived fit in recruitment strategies.

Arrigoni et al. (2014) identified primary motivations for pursuing nursing, including a sense of usefulness (80%), desire to provide care (78%), interest in sciences (71%), and compassion (66%) [16]. They emphasized the

need for clearer motivations and realistic portrayals of the field. Wilkes et al. (2014) found altruism, job security, and passion to be key motivators among first-year nursing students in Sydney, recommending their integration into nursing programs [19]. Usher et al. (2013) reported that altruism, community impact, family influence, and career advancement were significant motivators for Pacific Island students [20]. Cilar et al. (2020) noted optimism about job prospects among final-year nursing students in Slovenia and Croatia, emphasizing the importance of improved university conditions to attract students [42]. Duffield et al. (2004) found that former nurses in managerial roles adapted well due to their transferable skills [43]. Final-year students expressed concerns about salary and the demand for effective career counseling. Koech et al. (2014) highlighted parental guidance and job prospects as significant factors in college choice [22], while Alessandro (2018) argued that higher nursing wages attract skilled nurses, ultimately enhancing the quality of care [44].

Nelson and Folbre (2006, 2009) argued that competitive wages attract skilled professionals and enhance care quality [45]. Wilson et al. (2018) found that nursing has wider gender pay gaps than teaching, revealing biases that can negatively affect patient care [46]. In 2013, 75% of the U.S. nursing workforce was white non-Hispanic, with limited diversity resulting from disparities in education and wages that favor male nurses. Strategies like mentorship could enhance minority enrollment and retention. Marsland (1996) emphasized the importance of career counseling for final-year students [47], while Smith (1982) recommended collaboration between nursing services and education to improve job satisfaction [48]. Many nursing students planned to migrate to more developed countries within five years of qualification. Dovlo (2007) reviewed nurse migration from sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting the need for policies to

mitigate impacts on health systems [49]. Smith et al. (2022) examined nurse migration to Australia, Germany, and the UK, pointing out issues such as discrimination and language barriers, along with the need for structured integration [50]. Although limited, this study provides a foundation for future research aimed at improving nursing education and practice strategies.

## **Conclusion**

Understanding nursing students' motivations requires a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods. Altruism, influenced by job security and accessibility, emerges as a primary motivator, particularly in stable nursing contexts like Ghana. Parental guidance significantly shapes career choices, though its impact on job fulfillment is debated. Economic, cultural, and demographic factors also influence career trajectories, highlighting the need for further research. Gender differences were evident in marital status and parental education levels, with females more likely to be married or cohabiting, and female guardians typically having lower educational attainment. Family and peer influence, especially from mothers, were crucial in career decision-making. While some students were attracted by nurse uniforms, they generally viewed job prospects positively, with many envisioning employment opportunities abroad. Despite initial enthusiasm, a notable number expressed intentions to leave nursing for economic reasons, seeking careers outside the field and internationally. Nursing is regarded highly, positively impacting career choices, with many students planning to migrate within five years, primarily to the USA, Canada, the UK, or Germany, citing genuine interest in and fulfillment from the profession, along with a readiness to recommend it to others.

## **Recommendations**

Further research is essential to understand nursing students' motivations and career

intentions. Future studies should explore how demographic factors—such as gender, age, and socioeconomic status—interact with cultural norms and educational experiences to shape career aspirations. Longitudinal studies tracking nursing graduates' career paths may reveal key factors for retention. Qualitative research can uncover motivations often overlooked in quantitative analyses. A systematic assessment of interest in nursing, particularly in patient care, should be conducted at pre-course, mid-course, and post-course stages, including during admissions interviews. Targeted interventions are needed to address gender disparities and promote nursing as a viable career option. Additionally, policies supporting nurse retention and job satisfaction are crucial to mitigating post-qualification emigration.

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## Declarations

### Funding

None.

### Conflict of Interest

None declared.

### Acknowledgements

I thank God for His countless blessings. My deepest appreciation goes to my local guide, Dr. Brainard Ayisi Asare, and my academic advisor, Dr. Indra Selvam, for their guidance and sacrifices. Their guidance made this journey truly fulfilling and worthwhile.

I am extremely grateful to my beloved husband, Brainy and wonderful children, Jay Brainard and Curtis for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout the conceptualization, proposal development, and completion of my doctoral thesis.

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