The Relationship between Self-Esteem and Academic Motivation among Postgraduate Nursing Students: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract

Introduction: Among different variables affecting students' performance, academic motivation is one of the most vital factors. This study was carried out to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and academic motivation in postgraduate nursing students.

Method: A total of 220 postgraduate nursing students were selected from 10 nursing schools in a cross-sectional study using multistage randomized sampling with replacement in 2014-2015. The Rosenberg Self-esteem Questionnaire and the Academic Motivation Scale of Vallerand were the data collection tools. A hierarchical regression model was used in seven blocks for evaluating the demographic, educational, familial, social, and spiritual well-being course characteristics.

Results: According to the results, postgraduate students in nursing had low self-esteem (13.968) and moderate academic motivation (128.318). The correlation between self-esteem and academic motivation was 0.313 with a t-statistic of 4.874 at a significant positive level (p <0.001). The spiritual well-being course (P <0.0001) (as an educational variable) had a significant impact on academic motivation with an average increase in self-esteem.

Conclusion: Self-esteem should be considered as a criterion for screening applicants for master's degrees given the sensitivity of nursing postgraduate students' personal and occupational performance. Since the spiritual well-being course affects self-esteem, introducing cultural patterns and interventions in this field can be associated with increasing students 'self-esteem.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Academic Motivation, Master of Nursing, Cross-Sectional Study

Introduction

In many disciplines, the concept of motivation analyzes why and how the mankind behaves [1]. Academic motivation is a subjective process that stimulates activities and continues to achieve a certain academic achievement [2]. Academic motivation is the enjoyment of learning that has direction, curiosity, persistence, intrinsic duty as well as learning tough and new challenging tasks. Higher levels of academic motivation can have positive impacts on increasing time management skills and capabilities, reducing anxiety, and ultimately leading to better performance [3, 4]. Motivation plays a very important role in explaining behavior, predicting the effects of tasks, guiding behavior in achieving a goal, stimulating the learner and nurturing behavior by directing his activities [5]. Several papers examined the relationship between motivation, professional, organizational performance, and confirmed its impact on enhancing employee performance and effectiveness [6, 7]. Studies have shown that lack of culture in society towards the nursing profession, educational problems, the gap between theory and practice, the negative attitude towards the nursing profession, and students' dissatisfaction with education and the clinical environment have led to a decrease in students' academic motivation and frustration in nurses [8, 9]. According to the literature, on one hand, academic motivation indicates a direct relationship with

positive self-concept, and on the other hand, self-concept has a direct relationship with self-esteem [10].

Motivation has a very complex philosophy. In a healthy person, self-esteem is one of the most important attributes and it means the value that one considers for oneself. Also, it may be a judgment that a person has on his value [11]. Students with self-esteem illustrate better educational status, and all the efforts and investments of any educational system are to achieve this goal [12]. Sufi in his study found that the variables of academic self-concept and learning strategies play a key role in explaining the variance of academic achievement [11]. Therefore, increased self-esteem cannot only affect academic motivation, but can also increase psychological well-being and tolerance to working conditions and stress among nurses in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) [13]. The success in any training depends on how and to what extent the system has achieved the expected performance. The most common problem in the education system is the low level of academic motivation among learners in many countries, which annually causes huge cultural and economic losses to governments and families. The impact of increased academic motivation on students' academic achievement has been proven to be one of the important indicators in evaluating educational systems and its high levels can predict a bright future for the individual and the society [14]. We can greatly predict human behavior by understanding the factors that lead to increasing or decreasing motivation. Studies have shown the effect of personal, social and economic characteristics of individuals on academic motivation[15-18].

So far, studies have been carried out on undergraduate nursing students. In this national research, all nursing faculties around Iran were included. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and academic motivation in postgraduate nursing students, given that the postgraduate students had different conditions than undergraduates, despite being older and performing work tasks of social life.

Method

The present study was a cross-sectional study conducted in 2014-2015. Master of Science (MSc) nursing students studying in the nursing faculties of different medical sciences universities were the statistical population of this study. All of the MSc could be included in the study. They were selected by multistage random sampling with replacement. Using simple random sampling with replacement, seven provinces (Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, Isfahan, Semnan, Mazandaran, Shiraz, and Zahedan) were randomly selected. Nursing schools in Tehran and a number of universities of medical sciences were included in the present study as representatives of each province. A total of 10 nursing schools were selected. Simple random sampling was performed to reach the desired sample size of the list prepared in each faculty using a random number table. A sample study with 30 samples was used to determine the sample size; the data of 30 samples were separated from the analyzed data. By the first-type error (0.01), test power (90%), and the

relationship between two variables of self-esteem and academic motivation 0.270; the sample size was 197 people. The sample size was considered to be 15% of the loss rate, due to the nature of the study and the likelihood of loss and the final sample size was equal to 227. The information needed to determine the sample size is given below.

The standard normal deviate for α = Z_α = 2.576,
The standard normal deviate for β = Z_β = 1.282
$C = 0.5 * in [(1+r)/(1-r)] = 0.277$
Total sample size = N = $[(Z_\alpha+Z_\beta)/C]^2 + 3 = 197$

Three questionnaires were used for data collection: Demographic Characteristics Questionnaire (for example age, sex, faculty, semester, diploma, taking the spiritual well-being course) (Table 1), Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) of Vallerand [19] and Rosenberg Self-esteem Questionnaire [20].

Academic Motivation Questionnaire: This questionnaire was designed and validated by Vallerand et al. to measure academic motivation with 28 items. This scale measures students' agreement with items on seven subscales (intrinsic motivation to understand, intrinsic motivation to do work, intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation, adaptive adjustment, intrinsic adjustment, extrinsic adjustment, and extraversion adjustment and impulsivity) with the help of 7-point Likert scale, three of which relate to the intrinsic motivation dimension (knowing, moving forward, and driving experience), and three to the extrinsic motivation dimension (matching, extrapolation, and external adjustment) and one subscale. The scale is related to the dimension of impulsivity. Scores of 130 and above indicate high academic motivation, scores between 65 and 129 indicate moderate academic motivation, and scores below 65 indicate low academic motivation. The minimum score for each item is one and the maximum score is seven, thus the highest score on the questionnaire is 196 and the lowest is 28.Vallerand et al. reported the reliability of these subscales using Cronbach's alpha method equal to 0.84, 0.85, 0.86, 0.62, 0.84, 0.85 and 0.85, respectively and the total reliability of the questionnaire was 0.71 (15).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Questionnaire: This scale was developed and introduced by Maurice Rosenberg in 1989. It includes variables such as competence, ability to perform a task, positive self-esteem, self-satisfaction, and feelings of failure. The questionnaires consisted of 10 items (five positives and five negatives). Likert-based scoring was from 0 to 3 scores (strongly agree to strongly disagree) and for questions with negative content were 3 to 0.

The lowest score was zero and the highest possible score was 30. High scores above 21, between 17-21 and lower than 17 indicate high, moderate and low levels of self-esteem, respectively. Cronbach's alpha was calculated in the first stage (0.87 for men and 0.86 for women) and in the second stage (0.88 for men and 0.87 for women) for this scale.

Cronbach's alpha for this scale was calculated in the first stage (0.87 for men and 0.86 for women) and in the second stage (0.88 for men and 0.87 for

women). The correlation of each of the variables of the questionnaire ranged from 0.56 to 0.72 which was significant at P<0.001. This scale is prepared to measure overall self-esteem and it can be implemented for all ages (22). The reliability of the self-esteem questionnaire was calculated 0.88 using Cronbach's alpha. The effect of demographic, educational, familial, social, and spiritual characteristics was used on seven blocks with a hierarchical regression model.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation, frequency and percentage), inferential (Pearson correlation coefficient) and univariate and hierarchical linear regression analyzes were performed step by step. The SPSS software version 19 was used for data analysis and the significance level was considered P <0.5.

Results

A total of 220 postgraduate nursing students completed their questionnaires. The students with the mean age of 32.54 years old (SD = 4.54) had a minimum age of 23 and a maximum of 48 years old of which 47.7% were married. Females comprised 55% of the sample, and second-semester students had the highest percentage of participation with 38.2% and 1.4% studying in semesters one and seven. About 82.7% of the postgraduate students were employed and the rest were just studying. Also, 73.6% in senior nursing, 13.2% in senior nursing, 7.3% in internal medicine-surgical, 1.8% senior in psychiatric nursing and the rest of the participants were from children's tendencies, neonatal intensive care, health and community and emergency medical services.

The academic motivation average in postgraduate nursing students was 128/318 (SD= 31.357) and there was no significant difference between the postgraduate nursing majors (P= 0.445). The self-esteem average in postgraduate nursing students was 13.968 (SD= 1.441) and there was no significant difference between postgraduate nursing majors (P= 0.283). According to the results of the present study, postgraduate nursing students have low self-esteem (13.968) with the average academic motivation of 128.318. Also, 57.3% of postgraduates nursing students scored higher than 129 out of 196. The results of academic motivation average of postgraduate semester were not significant (P= 0.432).There was no significant relationship between having alive parents (P= 0.432), having quota in university entrance exam (P= 0.746), informed choice (P= 0.407), birth place (P= 0.552), family child (P= 0.226), income (P= 0.192), changing major in the present and future (P= 0.182) and different tendencies of nursing postgraduate students.

The self-esteem score was not significantly correlated with education semester (P= 0.350), interest in field (P= 0.420), income (P= 0.902), informed choice (P= 0.407), changing major in the present and future (P= 0.559) among

different tendencies of nursing postgraduate students. Pearson correlation coefficient testing to calculate the relationship between self-esteem and academic motivation indicated a positive and significant relationship (P<0.0001) between these two variables. The causal relationship between independent variables and dependent on univariate regression showed that the direct effect of self-esteem on academic motivation was 0.313 with t-statistic of 4.874 at the significant level of P> 0.001. Finally, 6.821 scores are added to the academic motivation of postgraduate students with one score change in self-esteem mean.

In this study, seven separated blocks were entered into the model in order to investigate the effect of other variables including personal, educational, educational, family, social and spiritual characteristics and their effects on the independent variable.

Table 1 shows the results of regression analysis in seven blocks. The results of this analysis indicate a significant positive or negative effect of some of the individual, educational, family, social, and religious characteristics of postgraduate nursing students participating in the study. For example, gender with 8.084 (4.028) regression coefficient increases academic motivation along with increased self-esteem. In the sixth block, the results indicated that sleep hours affect the self-esteem mean and decrease academic motivation by -5.965 (1.973) and it is significant.

Statistically, the spiritual well-being course' variables increased academic achievement scores 16.546 (4.341) and 2.505 (0.834), respectively by increasing the self-esteem average.

Discussion

Motivation is a key factor in orienting individuals towards the goal and its weakness or strength can influence the achievement of the goal. Therefore, identifying the factors affecting academic motivation in different academic groups and levels can lead to strategies for removing, reducing or enhancing the motivational factors. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and academic motivation in postgraduate nursing students. The results showed a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic motivation in this group of students. Academic motivation was reported at a medium level of 128.318. A study calculated the academic motivation in medical departments higher than the present study and 151.5, while nursing and midwifery students had obtained the highest academic motivation score [21].

In the present study, 57.3% of postgraduate students gained the academic motivation score higher than 129 out of total score of 196. In another study, 50.7% of nursing experts had higher academic motivation than medium [22]. Academic motivation was reported in a medium level in Shahrekord medical sciences' students [23]. Megahed in a study in Saudi Arabia showed that academic motivation in nursing students was in a low level [24].

Table 1. The Effect of Characteristics Intermediate Variables

Block	Level and variable type	Regression coefficient (standard error)	Sig.	Results of Regression Model
1	Self esteem	6.82 (1.39)	<0.0001	R = 0.31 R ^{2} = 0.09 Adjusted R ^{2} = 0.09
2	Self esteem Sex (man)	6.61 (1.39) 8.08 (4.02)	<0.0001 0.046	R = 0.33 R ^{2} = 0.11 Adjusted R ^{2} = 0.10 R Dif = 0.26
3	Self esteem Sex (man) Faculty (Tehran) Semester Total of score Diploma (experimental)	5.68 (1.36) 6.6.6(4.00) -9.63 (4.08) 2.35 (1.43) 1.76 (0.83) -18.43 (8.24)	<0.0001 0.101 0.019 0.102 0.034 0.026	R = 0.43 R ^{2} = 0.18 Adjusted R ^{2} = 0.16 R Dif = 0.09
4	Self esteem Sex (man) Faculty (Tehran) Semester Total of score Diploma (experimental) Father education (Diploma) Mother job (NGOs) Number of sister	5.61 (1.33) 7.14 (3.93) -7.49 (4.05) 1.61 (1.43) 1.81 (0.82) -19.62 (8.08) -6.67 (4.35) -7.66 (5.05) -4.81 (1.57)	<0.0001 0.071 0.066 0.261 0.029 0.016 0.127 0.131 0.002	R = 0.48 R ^{2} = 0.23 Adjusted R ^{2} = 0.20 R Dif = 0.05
5	Self esteem Sex (man) Faculty (Tehran) Semester Total of score Diploma (experimental) Father education (Diploma) Mother job (NGOs) Number of sister Previous semester average Total Average History of academic failure, yes Priority selection Interest in the field of study Willing to change the field, yes	5.22 (1.35) 6.56 (4.09) -6.14 (4.40) 1.57 (1.43) 1.75 (0.82) -16.47 (8.17) -7.05 (4.41) -7.06 (5.09) -4.85 (1.57) -6.88 (4.48) 7.50 (4.59) 7.18 (7.82) 0.07 (0.11) 1.54 (1.03) 0.54 (6.86)	<0.0001 0.110 0.165 0.272 0.035 0.045 0.111 0.167 0.002 0.126 0.104 0.360 0.512 0.135 0.937	R = 0.51 R ^{2} = 0.26 Adjusted R ^{2} = 0.21 R Dif = 0.02
6	Self esteem Sex (man) Faculty (Tehran) Semester Total of score Diploma (experimental) Father education(Diploma) Mother job (NGOs) Number of sister Previous semester average Total Average History of academic failure, yes Priority selection Interest in the field of study Willing to change the field, yes Sleep hours Use of network	5.32 (1.32) 5.53 (4.01) -5.90 (4.33) 1.27 (1.40) 1.34 (0.81) -15.95 (7.98) -6.71 (4.31) -5.97 (5.00) -4.22 (1.55) -6.83 (4.39) 7.21 (4.52) 3.75 (7.70) 0.05 (0.11) 1.26 (1.01) 1.25 (6.71) -5.96 (1.97) -1.36 (1.02)	<0.0001 0.169 0.175 0.365 0.102 0.047 0.121 0.232 0.007 0.121 0.112 0.627 0.629 0.212 0.852 0.003 0.183	R = 0.55 R ^{2} = 0.30 Adjusted R ^{2} = 0.24 R Dif = 0.03
7	Self esteem Sex (man) Faculty (Tehran) Semester Total of score Diploma (experimental) Father education (Diploma) Mother job (NGOs) Number of sister Previous semester average Total Average	5.07 (1.27) 4.31 (3.85) -4.12 (4.21) 1.35 (1.36) 1.15 (0.78) -14.04 (7.65) -3.67 (4.18) -3.92 (4.81) -3.76 (1.49) -7.82 (4.23) 8.67 (4.34)	<0.0001 0.264 0.330 0.320 0.141 0.068 0.381 0.416 0.012 0.066 0.047	R = 0.60 R ^{2} = 0.37 Adjusted R ^{2} = 0.31 Dif = 0.05

Block	Level and variable type	Regression coefficient (standard error)	Sig.	Results of Regression Model
	History of academic failure, yes	2.51 (7.38)	0.73	
	Priority selection	0.0001(0.11)	0.99	
	Interest in the field of study	0.99 (0.97)	0.31	
	Willing to change the field, yes	0.58 (6.45)	0.92	
	Sleep hours	-6.23 (1.91)	0.001	
	Use of network	-0.83 (0.98)	0.397	
	Spiritual Health Course	16.54 (4.34)	0.0001	
	Necessity of spiritual health courses	2.50 (0.83)	0.003	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self-esteem
b. Dependent Variable: Educational Motivation

Low academic motivation in nursing students is due to factors such as outsourcing low-level careers, undesirable attitudes of physicians and society, as well as how physicians treat students. In contrast, achieving a dignified life, serving fellow humans, and obtaining more success for the family were identified as reasons for increasing academic motivation in nursing students [22]. In his study, Saeedi introduced strategies including empowering and motivating teachers to improve the quality of teaching, developing a positive attitude to nursing, empowering and encouraging academic achievement, improving the quality of clinical education, optimizing academic and clinical relationships, providing extracurricular programs, appropriate curriculum and educational facilities, and welfare to increase nursing students' academic motivation [25]. In the present study, the level of academic motivation did not change with increasing academic term, but the results showed that motivation decreased with increasing academic years in nursing students [26].

Naseh in a study showed that there was a negative relationship between academic motivation in undergraduate students and the increasing age [23].Whereas in the present study, there was a significant relationship between the age, total grade average, last semester grade average and interest in the major with self-esteem and academic motivation. It seems that post-secondary education usually starts with a higher motivation. This motivation goes on and is more accepted by the society or by working conditions. The self-esteem score obtained from data analysis in this study showed low self-esteem of postgraduate students. The results of the study by Liu and Huihui also reported low self-esteem among nurses of the ICU. However, according to the present study, there was a correlation between self-esteem and academic motivation [14]. In our study, self-esteem had no significant relationship with gender. However, Bosak reported this relationship in nursing and anesthesia students [27].

Self-esteem not only can serve as a predictor in explaining individual differences in cognition, emotions, and behavioral aspects, but can also serve as a mediator in regulating physical and psychological responses to success and failure [28]. Therefore, by incorporating the variables into a hierarchical regression model, the results indicate a significant positive or negative effect of some of the individual, physiological, family, social, cultural, and spiritual characteristics on the mean score of nursing and motivational graduate students. Rouhi reported higher academic motivation in women than men in this study. In addition, age had a significant relationship with academic motivation. In his study, there was a negative relationship between the age and external motivation, and it was positively related to the total motivation score [21]. In another study, no significant relationship was seen between age and gender, parents' education, the field of study, students' welfare, college education, educational centers, and career prospects [23].

In the present study, job, marital status, history of academic failure, and probation were not significantly correlated with academic motivation and self-esteem. Kashfi reported that marital status has a significant relationship with academic motivation [29].

Similarly, Delaram in a study titled comparing the self-esteem of conditioned and non-conditioned students showed that non-conditioned students had higher self-esteem than conditioned students [30]. Asgari also reported a statistically significant decline in the mean score of self-esteem with gender, field of study, interest in the field of study, and course history [31]. In block six, the regression model was associated with a significant decrease in academic motivation. Another study found that increasing time management scores improved academic motivation and academic success. The ability to perform time management is directly related to academic motivation [32].Time management is considered as the nurses' skills and professional competencies and can be effective in controlling students' stress and academic motivation. Internet use was one of the variables studied in this study. This variable had no significant relationship with self-esteem and academic motivation. Another study suggested a reverse association of self-esteem with the use of the Internet that would lead to social isolation in a reverse cycle [33]. The significance of the spiritual health course was the most important indicator in block seven from the students' point of view and increasing the average self-esteem resulted in an increase in academic motivation. In his study, Baksi also reported spiritual health as a predictor of academic success [34].

Aramideh in a study also reported a significant and positive relationship between spiritual health and academic motivation and achievement [35]. According to the results of studies, it can be stated that investing more in universities to promote students' spiritual health will increase the academic motivation and students' motivation and progress will, in turn, lead to excellence in university and higher education. The career motivation, nurses' interest in having a professional model and self-esteem have a direct impact on professional identity [26].

Therefore, having cultural patterns is one of the factors affecting self-esteem. Providing the right context and presenting patterns accepted by the nursing community can alleviate low self-esteem. Existing studies indicate some limitations in studies that have conducted interventions to increase self-esteem in nurses, so recommending such studies is one of the research priorities in this field [28].

Identifying individual factors in taking up the major and its impact on academic motivation were the criteria for entering into this major.

One of the limitations of this study was the lack of studies targeting senior nursing experts. Therefore, all comparisons were made with the results of bachelor studies. Hence, the researchers only compared studies that reported levels of academic motivation or self-esteem in their study. Meanwhile, using different tools to measure academic motivation can be a reason for the variety of the presented results.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between self-esteem and academic motivation among postgraduate nursing students. The undergraduate nursing students had low self-esteem and their academic motivation was moderate. Therefore, it is expected to consider variables such as average age, interest in the university degree, spiritual well-being, and self-esteem and academic motivation of students. Given the importance of self-esteem in human health dimensions as well as the sensitivity of the individual and occupational performance of nursing postgraduate students, self-esteem should be considered as a criterion for screening applicants for entering into the postgraduate course. Given the significant impact of spiritual health on self-esteem, presenting cultural patterns and implementing interventions in this field can be done to increase students' self-esteem.

Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this study.

Ethical Approval

The present study with the code of IR.BMSU.REC.1394.219 has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Baqiyatallah University of Medical Sciences. The aims of the study were explained to the students and an informed consent was obtained from them. The students were assured that their dissatisfaction with the study did not affect their course and marks and it was possible to leave the research process at any time when the student was not willing to cooperate in the research. Each student was provided with an electronic sample of the questionnaire for ease of answering to complete at their discretion via mobile or computer and they were also assured of confidentiality.

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