

INTENTION TOWARD WORKING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AMONG FOURTH-YEAR NURSING STUDENTS IN THAILAND

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Abstract:

This study explored the influence of socio-economic characteristics, attitudes, skills and social factors on the intention of nursing students toward working in the private sector. Participants comprised 508 nursing students from two public nursing colleges under the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), three public nursing universities and three private universities in Thailand. Data were collected by using a self-administered questionnaire. Chi square tests and multiple logistic regression were used. One-third (32.9%) of nursing students had the intention to work in a private hospital or abroad. The reasons for this intention included: salary (60.8%), improving of English language skills (10.5%) and professional development (9.9%). When adjusting for other factors, the multivariate model found five significant predictors of intention to work in the private sector among nursing students. These were scholarship (AOR: 1.52; 95%CI:1.025-2.262), having a family member who is a nurse in the private sector (AOR:2.00;95%CI:1.323-3.018), high income are important for profession (AOR:2.43; 95%CI:1.264-4.664)perceived workload (AOR: 1.65; 95%CI: 1.095 -2.480) and expenditure per month (AOR: 1.78;95%CI:1.198-2.639). Students who intended to work in the private sector thought working in the public sector was busier. Findings indicated that improving workload and monetary incentive are key factors for retaining nursing students in the public sector. Therefore it is recommended that to promote social welfare, the public sector should provide salary in accordance with the workload.

Keywords: Motivation to work, Nursing students, Private hospitals, Thailand

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INTRODUCTION

Presently, the shortage of health professionals is a problem all over the world, especially nurses [1]. Kanchanachitra et al. [2] investigated the shortage of health workers in ASEAN member countries and found that Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam as well as Indonesia are having trouble coping with the shortages in nursing and other categories of health workers. These countries are facing a remarkable shortage in healthcare human resources, falling below the World Health Organization (WHO) minimum threshold of 2.28 doctors, nurses, and midwives needed per 1,000 population [3]. However, five countries, i.e., Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and

Myanmar) are facing a critical shortage of doctors, nurses and midwives. Thailand has a nurse density of 2.2 per 1,000 population which suggests that the shortage of nurses is not yet a major problem. "However, in Thailand the demand for nurses has been increasing because of the following four reasons." First, the Universal Healthcare Coverage Scheme (UCS) has been enforced since 2002, and to improve the health of all Thai people, equality for health care is strongly needed. The WHO [4] reported that 99% of Thai nationals are provided. After initiating UCS, increased number of patients clearly in public hospital. Moreover, rate of doctor's turnover had doubled from 2003 to 2004 [5]. Second, Bangkok is well-known as a hub for health and medical tourism. Many foreigners would like to travel to enjoy overseas health-care services. Some patients tour foreign countries combining

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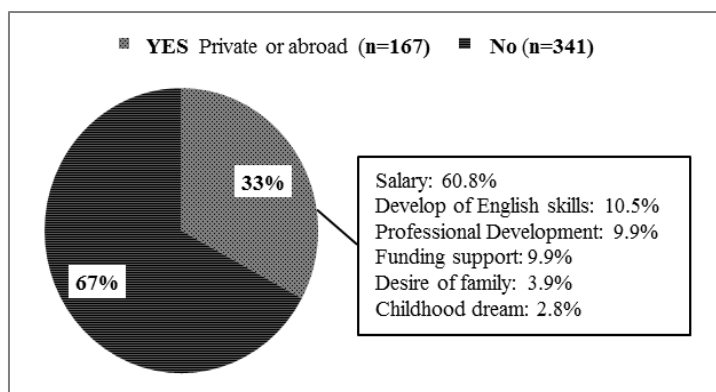


Figure 1 Intention to work in the private sector

sightseeing and tourist activities. Third, According to WHO morbidity reports, the rate of non-communicable disease (NCD) are increasing in Thailand [6]. The majority report (71%) is NCD. Especially diabetes (DM) has been increasing [7, 8]. Fourth, people who are 60 years or older has been increasing rapidly from a total of 9.5% of the total population in 2000 to 12.6% in 2010.

Nurses are quite mobile compared with other professions and the migration of nurses has always been significant [9, 10]. Globally, the number of international migrants is approximately 214 million, while internal migration accounts for 740 million [11]. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) will come into effect December 31, 2015. Thailand will allow free flow of labor with the other ASEAN member counties [12]. Most nurses move to work in the private sector to receive a higher salary and obtain better working conditions than in public hospitals. Nurses working at public hospitals are notably dissatisfied with the salary and promotion scheme compared with nurses in the private sector. In Thailand, private hospital nurses reportedly can receive greater satisfaction from their achievements, professionalism and opportunity to use their abilities than public hospital nurses [3, 10, 13-15]. Research focusing on identifying plans to work in the private sector among Asia. Thai nursing students is lacking. With growing connections among countries and plans for the AEC and Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), a strong need for information on migration patterns of health professionals has emerged. However, only a few studies have been conducted about the intention of nursing students toward working in the private sector in Thailand. Therefore this study explored the factors related to students' intentions to work in the private sector. It could be useful to discover the factors associated with their intentions to work in the private sector and propose solutions for the potential shortage in the public sector.

METHODOLOGY

Cross-sectional analytical study design was used to describe the intention of fourth year nursing students to work in the private sector after graduating. Random sampling method was used to collect the required sample size. To reduce the missing data, 10% was added to calculated sample size 422. Fourth year nursing students were chosen purposively. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the 508 of nursing students in two public nursing colleges under the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), three public nursing universities and three private universities in Thailand. The Descriptive statistics are presented with frequency, percentage, means, medians, standard deviation (SD), quartile deviation (QD), minimum and maximum values. All questionnaires were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 (SPSS licensed for Mahidol University) Window software. The associations between independent variables and intention toward working in the private sector were determined by Chi square tests and multiple logistic regression (COR, AOR, 95%CI). The level of significant which is used in this study was 0.05. The strength of associations between independent variables and dependent variables was also analysed by the step-wise backward LR approach.

Data collection

After obtaining approval from the Mahidol University Institutional Review Board (COA.NO. MU-SSIRB: 2014/025.2801), a formal letter from the director of ASEAN Institute for Health Development (AIHD) was sent to the director of the selected nursing institutions in Thailand. After received the permission, the researcher contacted the appropriate dean of the university to explain the purpose and process of this study. After getting inform consent from the students, questionnaire was sent to three expert persons to check the validity and

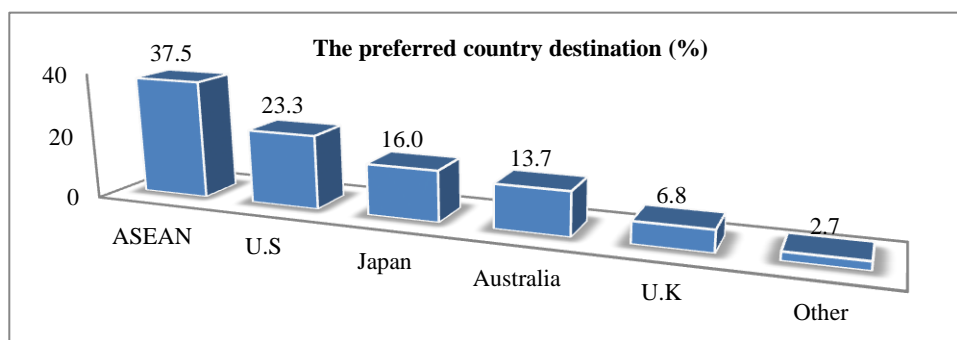


Figure 2 Percentage of students' preferred country of destination

Table 1 Characteristics of the sample by intention toward working in the private sector

Variables	Total		Intend to work in the private sector			
	n	%	Yes		No	
			n	%	n	%
Age (years)						
≤ 22	406	79.9	129	31.8	277	68.2
> 23	102	20.1	38	37.3	64	62.7
Gender						
Male	46	9.1	13	28.3	33	71.7
Female	462	90.9	154	66.7	308	33.3
Overseas experience						
Ever	149	29.3	56	37.6	93	62.4
Never	359	70.7	111	32.9	248	69.1
Scholarship						
Yes	258	50.8	68	26.4	190	73.6
No	250	49.2	99	39.6	151	60.4
Type of university						
Public	369	72.6	74	20.1	295	79.9
Private	139	27.4	93	66.9	46	33.1
Attitude toward the private sector						
Positive	322	63.4	135	41.9	187	58.1
Negative	186	36.6	32	17.2	154	82.8
English skill						
Good	60	11.9	23	38.3	37	61.7
Poor	443	88.1	142	32.1	301	67.9
Family/relative works in the private sector						
Yes	301	59.3	120	39.9	181	60.1
No	207	40.7	47	22.7	160	77.3
Confidence of improving nursing skill in the private sector						
High confidence	293	57.8	118	40.3	175	59.7
Little confidence	214	42.2	49	22.9	165	77.1
Higher income is important in choosing a profession						
Important	436	85.8	154	35.3	282	64.7
Not important	71	14.2	13	18.3	58	81.7
Working conditions in the public sector are busier than the private sector						
Agree	157	30.9	66	42.0	91	58.0
Disagree	351	69.1	101	28.8	250	71.2
Expenditure (baht per month)						
≤ 5,000	291	57.3	75	25.8	216	74.2
> 5,000	217	42.7	92	42.4	125	57.6
Expected salary (baht per month)						
≤ 30,000	312	61.4	92	29.5	220	70.5
> 30,000	196	38.6	75	38.3	121	61.7

language clearness. Pre-test was conducted in one university, Bangkok (n=50).

For reliability, before conduct study, the reliability of the developed and improved instrument should be equal at least 0.70 [16]. The result of Cronbach's alpha coefficient test for attitude, nursing skills, career development and working condition were 0.7, 0.9, 0.8 and 0.7, respectively.

RESULTS

The study found that one third (32.9%) of nursing students intended to work in a private hospital or abroad (Figure 1). The reasons for working in the private sector included salary (60.8%), development of English language skills (10.5%) and professional development (9.9%).

Figure 2 presents data on the preferred country destination. Less than 40% of the subjects intended to work in the ASEAN region, whereas around one-third aimed to have a career in the USA and one fifth of respondents' had the intention to work in Japan. Most students' intended to work in Singapore or an ASEAN country.

Nursing students were asked to list barriers to working in another country. The majority (69.2%) of respondents reported that lack of language proficiency was a barrier to migration. The other factors identified lack of experience (15.4%), and the cost (9.0%).

The age of respondents ranged from 21 to 33 years, with a median age of 22 years. The majority of the nursing students in this study were female (n=462), Table 1. More than two thirds of the students had never been overseas. Half were studying on scholarship. Only 12% felt they had good English skills. The majority of students (85.8%) reported that having a high income was important for one's choice of profession. Of those students who intended to work in the private sector, less than half (42.7%) spent more than 5,000 baht monthly. More than one third (30.9%) of students, felt that nursing work in the public sector was busier than in the private sector.

In terms of funding support, just over half (50.8%) of the students received a scholarship and among these, more than 80% received their scholarship from the government. Attitude toward working in the private sector was categorized in two levels, positive and negative by cutting off the 75th percentile (score=6) from the total score. Of those intending to work in the private sector, more than 40% (41.9%) had a positive attitude toward the private sector. The respondents' confidence in their clinical skills was categorized into two levels.

Of those who intended to work in the private sector, more than 70% had high confidence in their clinical skills. Almost two fifths (39.9%) of students who had a family or relatives working as a nurse in the private sector. Of those intending to work in the private sector, more than one third (35.3%) felt that high salary was an important factor for choosing a profession. Perceived nursing workload was also categorized in two levels. Interestingly, of those not intending to work in the private sector less than three fifths (58.0%) felt that the nursing workloads in the public hospital was busier than the private sector. With regard to expected salary they were also realistic. Of those intending to work in the private sector, less than two fifths (38.3%) expected a salary of more than 30,000 baht monthly. Even more than three fifths (61.7%) of those not intending to work for the private sector expected a salary in excess of 30,000 baht monthly.

Relationship between the independent variables and intention to work in the private sector

As shown in Table 2, of all the factors holding significant association with the dependent variable were tested by multiple logistic regression, five were found to be predictive factors for the students' intentions to work in the private sector. The students who did not get a scholarship were 1.52 times more likely to intend to work in the private sector than students who received a scholarship. Students who had family or relatives working as a nurse in the private sector were twice more likely to seek work in the private sector than students who did not have. Respondents who thought high income was important for their chosen profession were 2.43 times more likely to intend to work in the private sector than students who did not consider income as important. The respondents who spent more than 5,000 baht monthly were 1.78 times more likely to have the intention to work in the private sector than respondents who spent less than 5,000 baht monthly.

DISCUSSION

This study found that one third (32.9%) of nursing students intended to work in a private hospital in Thailand or abroad. The reasons for working in the private sector or abroad included salary (60.8%), development English language skills (10.5%) and professional development (9.9%). The students preferred country destinations included English speaking countries, except Japan about 40% of subjects intended to work in an ASEAN country, whereas around one third of them

Table 2 Multiple logistic regression between variables and respondents for intention to work in the private sector

Factors	COR	95%CI	P-value	AOR	95%CI	P-value
Scholarship						
Yes	1	1.258		1	1.025	
No	1.83	2.667	0.002**	1.52	2.262	0.037*
Confident of one's skill for working in the private sector						
High confident	2.28	1.529				
Little confident	1	3.371	0.000***			
Family/Relative working in the private sector						
Yes	2.26	1.515		2.00	1.323	
No	1	3.363	0.000***	1	3.018	0.001**
High income is important in choosing a profession						
Important	2.28	1.294		2.43	1.264	
Not important	1	4.587	0.006**	1	4.664	0.008**
Working conditions in the public sector are busier than the private sector						
Agree	1.80	1.213		1.65	1.095	
Disagree	1	2.657	0.003**	1	2.480	0.017*
Expenditure per month						
≤5,000 baht	1	1.455		1	1.198	
>5,000 baht	2.12	3.088	0.000***	1.78	2.639	0.004**

* p-value<0.05 ** p-value<0.01 *** p-value<0.001

Notes: COR(Crude Odds Ratio), AOR(Adjusted Odds Ratio)

aimed to have a career in U.S and one fifth of respondents' intended to work in Japan. Most of students' intended to work in Singapore rather an ASEAN country.

Students with a desire to work in Japan gave two main reasons: improve professional development (80%), followed gain a higher salary (20%). A previous study by Buchan and Sochalski [17] mentioned that students seeking opportunity for improved professional development was the main reason for migration. Hirano Yuko, et al. [18], also mentioned that the main reasons why Filipino and Indonesian nurses wanted to go to Japan were economic advancement, professional development, and desire to learn about advanced Japanese technology. A previous study found that half of all students intended to immigrate to the U.S (50.5%), followed by Australia (20.5%), Canada (17.6%) and the U.K (5.6%). In the international sector, two thirds (66.7%) of the subjects thought that lack of language ability was a barrier to migration [19]. The motivation of nursing students for migration was economic (29.7%) followed by professional development, and lastly by personal educational development [19]. According to the results, most students want to eventually return to Thailand after immigrating.

As for scholarship, the students with no scholarship were 1.52 times more likely to seek work in the private sector as those with a scholarship.

With regard to students with high confidence levels of improving the nursing skills in the private sector were 2.26 times more likely to seek work in

the private sector than those who had little confidence by clude OR. Previous study found the reason why the nurses migrate traditionally for achieving professional because they can't receive it in their home countries [13].

As for the aspect of English skills, less than 40% of students reported that had good English skills intended to work in the private sector. According to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) of the U.K, the English language requirement is an international English language test (IELTS) score of 7.0. In addition, international nurses must pass an English test before working as a migrant nurse. However, a nurse who seeks work in ASEAN country needs to pass an examination in the language of the destination country.

Regarding students having a family member who was a nurse in the private sector were twice more likely to seek work in the private sector as those who did not have. Previous study M. Freeman [20] found that all students mentioned the importance of family in influencing job plans. Hence, it could be clearly family was a great influence when choosing a work place.

As for perception, the perception that high income was important for choosing a profession was a significant predictor of intention to work in the private sector. Students who thought high income was important were 2.43 times more likely to seek work in the private sector than those who did not share that opinion. Previous studies found students revealed the differences in expectations about remuneration. Males indicated that they chose nursing because they expected good wages [21].

In contrast, with regard to the association between career development and intention to work in the private sector, the majority of students felt it was “important” or “very important” that they obtain nursing competencies and professional development opportunities in the first job. However, no statistically significant association was found between career development and intention to work in the private sector, although the study by M. Freeman [20] found that seeking professional development was a significant motivation for migration. In addition, traditionally, nurses migrate for professional development when they feel they cannot obtain that in their home countries [22].

Regarding workload, the students who felt the public sector was busier than private sector were 1.65 times more likely to seek work in the private than those who thought that the public sector was not busier than the private sector. One of the reason for intention to work in the private sector was preferred working conditions. Nurse to population ratio in Thailand is 14 per 10,000 population [23]. Compared to an average of 97 per 10,000 population [19]. Hence, Thai nurses have hard work workloads. Previous studies found heavy workloads make them stressed and decreased in job satisfaction. Moreover, it may lead to turn over [13]. Therefore, nurse migrate to seek better workload.

Previous studies found that the reason a public nurse moves to a private hospital was because private hospitals pay higher wages. Moreover higher salary was a significant magnet to draw personnel from public to private hospitals [9, 10, 12, 14].

As for personal expenditure, the respondents who spent more than 5,000 baht monthly were 1.78 times more likely to seek work in the private sector than respondents who spent less than 5,000 baht monthly. This is a logical outcome that the one who wants or needs to spend money more than others will choose the job for high salary.

CONCLUSIONS

When adjusting for other factors regarding intention to work in the private sector, the multivariate model found five significant predictors. Scholarship (AOR:1.52; 95%CI:1.025-2.262) students having a family member who is a nurse in the private sector (AOR:2.00;95%CI: 1.323-3.018), higher income was important in choosing a profession (AOR:2.43;95%CI:1.264-4.664), Perceived workload, i.e., the perception that public hospitals were busier than the private sector

(AOR:1.65;95%CI:1.095-2.480) and personal expenditure per month were significant predictors (AOR:1.78; 95%CI:1.198-2.639), Based on the findings from this study, promote social welfare or other incentives are key factors in retaining nursing students in the public sector.

RECOMMENDATION

Students who intended to work in the private sectors thought that working in the public sector was busier than the private sector. Therefore, researcher suggests that improvements be made in social welfare or other incentives to retain nurses in the public hospitals. Public hospitals should provide salaries in accordance with the workloads.

Improving English language skills and receiving high salary were major factors regarding intention to work in the private sectors; therefore, is the researcher suggests promoting English education in public hospital as well to retain nurses the in public sector. Also, since the AEC will be launched starting from 2015 [11], the number of migrant workers going to hospitals is expected to increase and English proficiency among the nurses will be required even in the public sector.

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