

The occupational status of the graduates of Semnan Nursing School

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ABSTRACT

Background: One of the main missions of higher education is to train the professional manpower the society needs. Higher education institutes should know the fate of their students after graduation and that how they use their expertise.

Purpose: To determine the occupational status of the graduates of Semnan Nursing School.

Methods: The graduates of the first 11 years since the foundation of the school were included in this study. The data-gathering tool was a questionnaire consisting of 7 demographic questions and 10 questions about the place of occupation, nature of the job, continuing education and scientific activities. The questionnaires were mailed to the study group addresses and the data were analyzed after receiving the answers.

Results: Of the respondents, 60.22% were female. Most of them were working in hospitals and 43.01% were practicing in fields other than nursing. Only 24.72% of the respondents were unemployed for one year after graduation. Most of the graduates did not continue their education, 2.61% have continued their study in fields other than nursery and 6.45% have changed their field of profession. The majority showed no interest in research and writing or translating books. Also, 77.42% have not tried to publish an article in any journal and 80.64% have not participated in any scientific conference. Of the respondents, 80.64% had no contact with their prior university and only 17.2% were employed in university-affiliated hospitals.

Conclusion: Long-term unemployment after graduation, unstable occupational status, practicing in fields other than nursing, showing no interest in continuing education or participating in research projects, having no contact with scientific centers and not participating in national or regional health programs indicate that the enrollment of students in nursing schools is not consistent with their personal interests and capabilities. It is recommended to interview the students in order to determine their occupational interest before entering the universities. To reduce the nurses' unemployment rate, they could be employed in positions that are compatible with their field of education, as rural nurses, school nurses or factory nurses.

Keywords: OCCUPATIONAL STATUS, GRADUATES, NURSING SCHOOL

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Introduction

The missions of nursing schools could be summarized as follows:

1- Training expert nurses to provide the necessary manpower, which will be able to play their educational, supportive, preventive, curative and coordinating roles in the best way.

2- Training professional instructors to act as nursing school faculty members.

3- Training nurses that are able to conduct basic and practical researches in their field of expertise and can plan proper strategies and propose scientific recommendations in order to improve nursing science and technology and develop new knowledge in this field.

4- Providing professional manpower that could play an important role in development of the society.

5- Providing necessary facilities for a life-long education of their graduates and conducting re-education courses.

The graduates are also supposed to continue their education in MSc or PhD courses, conduct research projects, publish books and articles, participate in scientific conferences and learn the latest advances in their field of expertise, have contact with scientific centers especially the university they are graduated from, and participate in national and regional health programs.

One of the most important factors in achieving the above-mentioned goals is the employment status of the nursing school graduates. Each student hopes

to find a proper job in his/her field of expertise. Considering the treatment centers' need for professional nursing staff -especially university-affiliated hospitals- it is expected that these graduates will not remain unemployed for a long time. However, the statistics show that nearly 17 thousand nurses find no nursing job and those employed are not satisfied with their status. In fact, the health system was successful in training the necessary manpower but not in providing occupational opportunities and health care efficiently(1).

Moreover, higher education, especially in medical universities, is expensive and a considerable amount of national resources is allocated for this purpose each year. It does not seem a cost-effective measure to spend so much money to train students for whom there is no occupational opportunity.

It cannot be denied that the dramatic advances in science and technology necessitate the presence of experts and professionals who can lead the society to scientific, economic and even cultural development. But training professionals solely with no opportunity to take advantage of their expertise not only wastes the national resources, but also leaves the graduates despaired and discouraged.

Halting the quantitative development of the medical educational section temporarily and addressing the quality of education and research is another useful approach. In this regard, studying the employment background and occupational status of the graduates is necessary. Research can show whether the outcome of the educational system is consistent with its missions and whether it could fulfill the society's requirements. This study was designed to determine the occupational status of the graduates of Semnan Nursing School.

Materials and Methods

In this cross-sectional descriptive survey, the occupational status of the BSc graduates of Semnan Nursing School in courses has been studied. The study group consisted of first 11 years graduates since the foundation of the school, which amounted to 265.

The data gathering tool was a questionnaire containing 7 general questions and 10 questions about their place of occupation, nature of the job, continuing education and scientific activities including research, writing or translating books,

participation in nursing-related seminars, connection with the university they are graduated from and participating in national or regional health development programs.

The addresses of the target group were extracted from the university archive and the questionnaires were mailed to 174 (out of 265) persons who had a complete address. Of this number, 91 completed questionnaires were received and their data were analyzed.

Results

The results show that 60.22% of the respondents were female. Most of them (44.1%) were employed in hospitals and 12.91% in nursing schools (Figure 1), while 43.01% had a job in a field other than nursing (Figure 2). About one fourth of the samples were unemployed for 6-12 months after graduation (Figure 3). Only 12.9% continued their education in nursing MSc courses, 2.61% changed their field of education and 60.22% of the graduates did not continue their education at all. The majority of the respondents (55.91%) expressed no interest in research and only 8.6% performed a research each 1-3 years. Of all respondents, 93.56% have not written or translated any book, 1.07% have authored just one book and 77.42% have no article published in domestic or foreign journals. Most of the respondents (80.64%) did not participate in any nursing or other conferences, even without submitting an article. Of the study group, 80.64% had no connection after graduation and 17.2% were employed in Semnan university affiliated hospitals, 2.15% in Nursing School and 3.23% in the administrative sections of this university. The data showed that 35.48% of the respondents had a role in regional health programs at hospital wards, but no one was active in national level (Table 1).

Discussion

The students have different motives in entering higher education but certainly most of them wish to have a job in their field of education. This is also true for nursing students. This study showed that 86.8% of the graduates were unemployed for 6 months to 3 years after graduation, and 17.2% were unemployed in the time of study. In another study, the number of unemployed nursing graduates has been shown to be 19.3% (2).

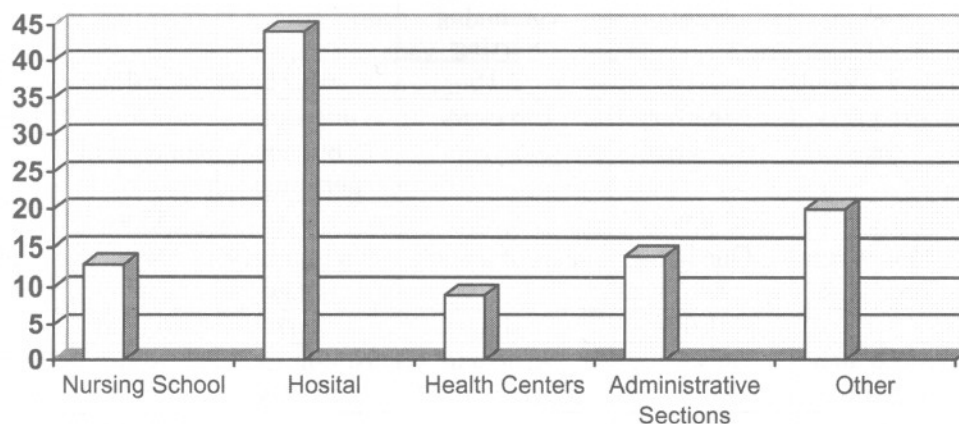
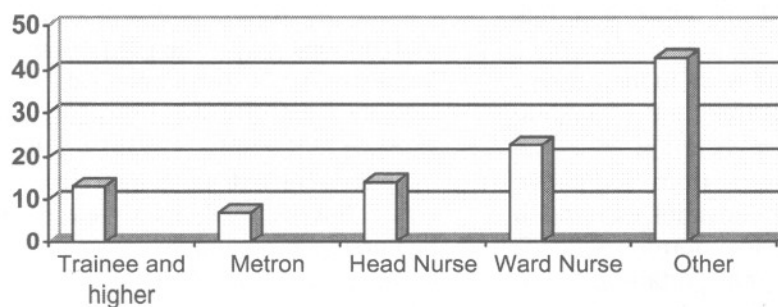
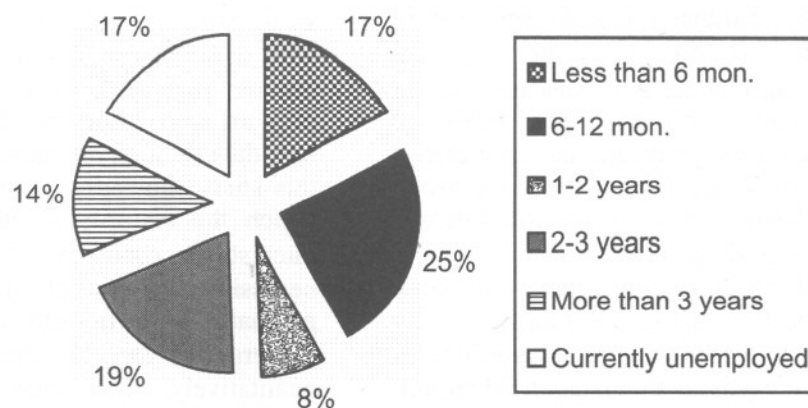
FIGURE 1. The frequency distribution of nursing graduates according to their place of employment (%)**FIGURE 2.** The frequency distribution of nursing graduates according to their kind of employment (%)**FIGURE 3.** The duration of nurses' unemployment after graduation (%)

TABLE 1. The frequency distribution of the nursing graduates according to their scientific activity

Continuing Education	Nursing MSc and higher	Non-nursing MSc and higher	Diploma in other field while continuing nursing	Not continued	Changing Profession	Unspecified
	12.9	2.16	2.16	60.21	6.45	16.12
Number of Scientific Research	1 in every year	1 in every 1-3 years	1 in every 3-5 years	Interested but not performed	Not interested	Unspecified
	0	8.6	3.23	25.8	55.91	6.45
Writing or Translating Books	More than one book	One book	Part of a book	Non-nursery books	None	Unspecified
	0	1.07	4.3	1.07	93.56	0
Number of Articles	More than one article	One article	Article in invalid journals	Non-nursery articles	None	Unspecified
	3.23	7.52	5.38	2.15	77.42	4.3
Level of Programming Activities	Health Ministry	Medical university	Nursing school	Hospital	Hospital wards	Unspecified
	0	3.23	5.35	8.6	35.48	47.32

Two facts should be noted in addressing this problem:

The graduates wish to live and work in their native provinces (2). The objective of founding universities in each province is to provide the province's required manpower from its native students. This has several advantages, which include reducing the need for dormitory, self-service restaurant and transportation, and permanent residing of the manpower in the province (3).

The employment of more than 40% of the graduates in fields other than nursing shows that the educational objectives of nursing schools are not consistent with the requirements of the work force market (4). Zarghami (5) showed that in other disciplines, the situation is the same, for example, 76% of agriculture graduates are working in fields that they don't have any academic expertise in. Charandabi's results demonstrated a better situation, in which 75% of the study group was working in health centers. There could be two explanations for this situation:

The graduates don't have any interest to follow their field of education as a job. Naturally, nursing is a difficult job that requires strenuous efforts in order to meet the needs of the patients. Therefore the students must have a personal interest toward social services. However, the only criterion for

passing the university exams is the students' score and no one pays attention to their professional interests. It is recommended that the nursing schools –and also other disciplines– accept more students in the written exam and then choose more interested students in an interview.

Azad University admits a great number of student in nursing programmes as well as other medical training program. Zarghami (5) showed that in 1996, the number of nursing student of this university exceeded that of state-run universities. These graduates impose a further limit on the employment of public universities' students and reduce the cost-effectiveness of national resources. The "information explosion era" requires all graduates, especially those in medical fields to have a permanent communication with scientific centers, participate in seminars and meetings and play an active role in producing and developing new data through research. However, the results of this study showed a totally different situation, in which the majority of the study group had no interest in such matters. This highlights the necessity of measures to encourage the nursing graduates to participate in such activities. If the universities are to improve their manpower qualitatively, they must provide the required facilities for continuing and life-long education of their students and meet their requirements to stay

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up-to-date. The nurses' reasons for having no interest in research activity should be assessed in further studies.

Most of the graduates had no connection with their university, which is not consistent with the objectives and missions of the universities. The administrative system of the universities may be one of the causes, which has no structured program for involving the students and graduates in the management of the universities and schools.

Responsibility and accountability for the national problems should be taught to the students in the universities. The universities can review their success in achieving their objectives by evaluating their outputs (6). However, the results show that the graduates have no role in national programs and only 35.48% are working in a hospital ward.

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