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The Factors Affecting Nursing Students' Career Preparation Behavior: Focusing on Participation in a Self-Leadership Program

Yu Mi[1] and Kang Kyungja[2*]

[1]College of Nursing, Institute of Health Sciences, Gyeongsang National University, Jinju City, 52828, Republic of Korea; yumi825@gnu.ac.k

[2]College of Nursing, Jeju National University, 102 Jejudaehak-ro, Jeju-si, Jeju Special Self-Governing Province, 63243, Republic of Korea; kkyungja@jejunu.ac.kr

Abstract

Background/Objectives: This study aimed to determine the factors affecting career preparation behavior among self-leadership, self-efficacy, and college life adjustment in nursing students. **Methods/Statistical Analysis:** We conducted a survey of 254 students in nursing college from September, 2014 to October, 2015. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics, t-tests, $\chi 2$-tests of independence, and hierarchical linear regression analyses using SPSS/Win 21.0 software. **Findings:** The study found a positive correlation and significant direct effects between self-leadership, self-efficacy, career preparation behavior and college life adjustment. Participation inself-leadership program variable explained 5.2%, self-leadership variable explained 14% and college life adjustment and self-efficacy variables explained 22.3% of career preparation behavior. Therefore, self-leadership of students can improve self-efficacy, furthermore, improve ultimately college life adjustment. **Improvements/Applications:** According to this study, to improve college life adjustmentof nursing students, education program related to self-leadership training should be considered and reflected in nursing curriculum.

Keywords: Career Preparation Behavior, Nursing, Self-Leadership, Student

1. Introduction

Despite the increasingly serious unemployment for college students and the issue about the supplement rate for each department of colleges, more and more students actually apply for the department of nursing on the basis of their achievement in high school or from the National Academic Aptitude Test due to a relatively high employment rate and others' recommendation without sufficient consideration of the major. However, they can experience the burden of patient care or excessive tasks assigned during the period of clinical practice as well as lots of academic studies[1], lowered self-esteem[2] and feel difficulty in adapting themselves to college life due to inconsistency with aptitude and excessive academic stress and some of them can drop out or withdraw from college. Moreover, they can become more concerned about post-graduation career as a nurse while they go through clinical practice and more seriously lose confidence in nursing and even become skeptical about their major sometimes[3]. Also Korea has an increasing number of male students being admitted into nursing programs, the males thought that nowadays they are important in the clinical settings. Being male in a female dominated profession, male students face many problems such as psychological stresses. In[4] reported that some male students considered dropping out because of the pressure from nursing courses. This means that it is necessary for them to get clear insight into nursing, make efforts to get a correct understanding of themselves, and cope actively with the situation by themselves and that it is essential for them to prepare for career and choose a job on the basis of a sound and ideal vision.

Career preparation behavior refers to a series of processes including the inquiry to determine the suitable

*Author for correspondence

area of career and activity of preparing for career one has selected[5] and a specific process of practicing is essential to the behavior. The various career preparation behaviors for employment must not only include cognition and attitude related to career selection but also the actions which are taken to decide a career and to carry out that decision[6].

The higher level of career preparation behavior, the higher level of career decision-making self-efficacy[7,8], the higher college year[9], and little research has been conducted on career preparation behavior in nursing students. In particular, while development of employability for higher graders (juniors and seniors) rather than for lower ones (freshmen and sophomores) can lead to more active career preparation behavior[9]. Many nursing students make written application for employment in the first term of the fourth year and have their employment confirmed before graduation. Therefore, it seems more effective to decide on the direction for career and make preparation in the third year rather than in the fourth year.

However, nursing students are at greater risk of losing balance due to the sense of reality related to the job of nursing and excessive academic stress in higher years before employment than in the year of freshmen. Therefore, "self-directed self-leadership" is essential to establish a good view of occupation, get a correct understanding of themselves, cultivatecriticalthinking[10].

Great leadership of employees is competitive in the global era, and plays an important role in creating satisfactory outcomes for organizations[11]. Especially, self-leadership means a process of setting a goal for oneself and becoming influential in a desirable direction of one's thinking or behavior with the objective of performing tasks or duties successfully, contrary to general leadership by which a leader influences others[12]. Contrary to the passive and dependent life style based on instructions or heteronomy to which one has been accustomed as a secondary college high school student in South Korea, one needs to take responsibility, shift to independent life style, and make efforts to become mature enough to live a social life as a college student. Development of self-leadership, which allows college students to use their own behavior and cognitive strategies to lead themselves positively with the aim of achieving the goal. It may help them cultivate ability along with high levels of independence, autonomy, and responsibility and this ability plays a crucial role in helping them cope wisely with various tasks, including designing career and getting employed[9].

Colleges need to make a more positive strategy so that their students can design their life in a long-term roadmap. As part of this strategy, leadership training has been reinforced to help individuals lead a successful life and to cultivate talented people required by society[10] and accreditation of nursing education in the department of nursing has also suggested leadership exertion as principal learning performance[13].

Currently, adjustment difficulties of college students have become an emerging issue[14]. Since how one spends the period of being a college student is directly related to future job choice and failure in college life can lead to almost no chance for recovery, adjustment has an important meaning especially for college students[15]. College life adjustment is a broad and multidimensional concept that is not limited to students' college performance and academic success. In other words, successful adjustment is not only the level of academic achievement but also includes interpersonal relationship to maintain good relationships with various members of college, academic activity to work hard at one's major, career preparation to make a good plan for one's career and make positive preparation, personal psychology to cope with difficulties with responsibility and challenge as a college student, and social experience to participate in various organizations or groups in and out of college and experience a social life. Since maladjustment to college can produce negative results in college life, such as lowered academic achievement, depression, and suicide[16,17], consequently, finding ways to weaken the adverse effects of negative life events on college lifeadjustment has become a major concern of researchers and educators.

Recent studies have found that such psychological factors as psychological empowerment, resilience, and self-efficacy play a crucial role in improving college life adjustment or performance[18,19]. More recently scholars have begun to assess psychosocial factors such as psychological empowerment, resilience and self efficacy as a way to promote better college outcomes.

As a belief in one's own ability, self-efficacy serves as a variable affecting career preparation behavior through expectation of the result that individuals can obtain a specific result from certain behavior[9]. The more likely one is to feel anxious and helpless, or the lower level of self-efficacy, the less likely one is to search for career[20], thus, self-efficacy serves as an important variable when college students prepare for their career. Various studies have been conducted to improve self-efficacy and recent report

is that self-leadership may directly affect self-efficacy in deciding on career for college students[21]. In[1] reported that nursing students who got less stress from clinical practice, had higher levels of psychological well-being, and were more likely to use a coping method of controlling internal and external needs showed higher levels of college lifeadjustment and that social competence including positive interpersonal relationship was a variable that accounted for the level of general college lifeadjustment. It is therefore necessary to provide ego growth or self-management programs, such as self-leadership, as well as to improve self-efficacy with the objective of raising the level of college lifeadjustment.

Colleges need not only to train students for social leadership but also to enable them to lead a productive life as workers in the future. Importantly, colleges should provide professional vocational education to help individuals make self-realization and to cultivate professionals who can make social contributions[10]. Most of the leadership training programs led by colleges have difficulty in accommodating all the students because students need to apply for the programs and the application is related to academic achievement or English proficiency. Although the curriculum for the department of nursing designates leadership cultivation as learning performance, it is not required but optional and few programs have been designed to accommodate all the students.

This study aimed to determine the effects of self-leadership program application on self-leadership, college lifeadjustment, self-efficacy, and career preparation behavior for juniors as nursing majors and to make a leadership training program settled as a required curriculum for college students and make positive contributions to their career preparation behavior.

2. Methods

2.1 Study Design

Thisis study used a cross-sectional design to identify the factors affecting career preparation behavior, with a focus on self-efficacy, college lifeadjustment, self leadership of nursing students related to participation of self leadership program.

2.2 Participants

The participants were nursing students in one nursing school. The G*Power 3.1.0 program using[22] power analysis was used to estimate the sample size necessary for regression analysis. It revealed that 109 persons would be necessary for a significance level of .05, a power (1-β) of .80, an effect size of .15 (medium), and 4 predictors; thus, a total of 108 persons would be required for analysis. This subjects is totally 254 persons, it was suitable subjects.

2.3 Data Collection

The participants were divided with two groups; participation in SLP and non-participation in SLP. They were asked to read the purpose of this study, anonymity and confidentiality of the collected data, use of data for no purpose other than research and the option of withdrawing from the study. The participants were then asked to sign the consent form if they agree to the terms state above before completing the questionnaire. This study was conducted in September, 2014 for non-participants of SLP and in October, 2015 for participants of SLP.

2.4 Measurements

2.4.1 Self-Leadership

The scale validated by[23] for domestic college students on the basis of 35 items from the Revised Self-Leadership Questionnaire (RSLQ) developed by[24] was used. Self-leadership was determined in three sub-variables-behavior-focused strategies, natural reward strategies, and construct thought pattern strategies-and reliability of the scale was estimated to be .70-87. When all the sub-items were included, reliability of the scale was estimated to be .90.

2.4.2 Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy means belief in individuals' ability to succeed in performing behavior necessary to obtain results and was measured in this study using[25] translation of the general self-efficacy scale developed by[26]. A five-point scale with 17 items concerning expectation in new situations generalized through experience of success and failure in a diversity of areas-from 1 '*totally disagree*' to 5 '*totally agree*'-was used, with a higher score meaning a higher level of self-efficacy. Reliability of the scale[25] was estimated to be Cronbach's α = .89. It was .86 in this study.

2.4.3 College Lifeadjustment

College lifeadjustment means adapting oneself to social life, which involves academic life, interpersonal

relationships, and extracurricular activity in college, coping well with psychological stress, and feeling attachment for, having a friendly feeling toward, and feeling a bond with, one's college or other students in general. In[1] adaptation of the Korean version of college lifeadjustment scale developed by[27] with 15 items was used in this study and it was composed of four sub-areas: Interpersonal relation, academic activity, career presentation, and personal psychology. This five-point Likert scale generates scores ranging from 1 'totally *disagree*' to 5 '*totally agree*', with a higher score meaning a higher level of college lifeadjustment. Reliability of the scale was estimated to be Cronbach's α = .70-86[1]. It was .83 in this study.

2.4.4 Career Preparation Behavior

Career preparation behavior means practical and specific behavior for good career decision-making or behavior to implement the decision following decision-making[5]. This involves activities to get information about oneself (one's ability, aptitude, interest, personality, etc.), information about the world of the target job (status, perspective, ways to be employed, requirements, promotion channel, working environment, etc.), and required instruments. It includes activities to obtain necessary or desired certificates and licenses in the process of preparing for getting the target job. It also includes actual activities to invest efforts to achieve the goal, or time and energy necessary to achieve a goal[5]. It means specific behavior related to the question "*what do you think people perform specifically to make a rational and good choice of their career or occupation*?" and 16 items used by[8] on the basis of the career preparation behavior scale developed by[5] were used in this study. The scale was composed of such sub-areas as information collection, instrument equipment, and goal achievement and its reliability coefficient was estimated to be .71-81. It was .84 in this study.

2.5 Data Analysis

All the data in this study were statistically analyzed using SPSS 21.0 (SPSS, Chicago, IL, USA). Frequencies and percentages were estimated for the general characteristics of the nurses; means and standard deviations were estimated for self efficacy, self leadership, college lifeadjustment, career preparation behavior, Pearson's correlation was used to assess the correlation between self efficacy, self leadership, college lifeadjustment, and career preparation behavior. Finally, Hierarchical linear regression analysis was used to identify the factors affecting career preparation behavior.

3. Results

3.1 General Characteristics

This study was conducted in a total of 254 participants and 235 of them (92.5%) were female. The mean age was 21.1 years and 215 respondents (84.6%) desired to be a domestic clinical nurse right after graduation. 85 respondents (25.6%) wanted to work in medical-surgical ward for adult and 53 (16.0%) wanted to work in a pediatric ward. 106 (31.2%) wanted to work as a community nurse after five years and 86 (25.3%) wanted to work as a domestic clinical nurse. 125 respondents (49.2%) participated in self-leadership training and 125 (50.8%) made no such participation (Table 1).

Table 1. General characteristics (N = 254)

Characteristics	Categories	n(%) or M±SD
Gender	Male	19(7.5)
	Female	235(92.5)
Age(years)		21.14±0.92
Desired career after graduating college*	Clinical nurse	215(62.0)
	Public health nurse	63(18.1)
	College professor	2(0.6)
	Global health care coordinators	15(4.3)
	Graduate college entrance	27(7.8)
	Not related to nursing	21(6.0)
	Others	4(1.2)
Desired department in hospital*	adult medical-surgicalward	85(25.6)
	Intensive Care Unit	22(6.6)
	Pediatrics	53(16.0)
	Obstetrics/ Gynecology	31(9.3)
	Psychiatrics	44(13.3)
	Operation room	42(12.7)
	Emergency Room	39(11.7)
	Others	16(4.8)

(*Continued*)

Desiredcareerin 5 year *	Clinical nurse	86(25.3)
	Public health nurse	106(31.2)
	College professor	2(0.6)
	Global health care coordinators	34(10.0)
	Graduate college entrance	67(19.7)
	Not related to nursing	45(13.2)
Participation of SLP	Yes	125(49.2)
	No	129(50.8)

*Multiple responses. SLP = Self-Leadership Program.

3.2 Differences in Career Preparation Behavior, Self-Leadership, Self-Efficacy and College Lifeadjustment by Respondents' Participation in Self-Leadership Program (SLP)

The differences in career preparation behavior, self-leadership, self-efficacy, and college lifeadjustment by participation in SLP can be compared as presented in Table 2.

Participants in SLP (2.45±0.43) showed higher levels of career preparation behavior than non-participants (2.23±0.45) and the former were better at such sub-categories as information gathering activities, tool preparation activities, and goal achievement activities than the latter.

Participants in SLP (3.54±0.39) showed higher levels of self-leadership than non-participants (3.40±0.43) and the former were better at such sub-areas as natural reward and construct thought pattern strategies than the latter.

Participants in SLP (3.14±0.49) showed higher levels of college lifeadjustment than non-participants (2.99±0.49) and the former (3.65±0.63) were better at the sub-category of personal psychology than the latter (3.48±0.65).

3.3 Correlation between Career Preparation Behavior and Self-Leadership, Self-Efficacy and College Lifeadjustment for Respondents

As for correlation between career preparation behavior, self-leadership, self-efficacy and college lifeadjustment for the respondents, career preparation behavior was significantly positively correlated with self-leadership (r = 0.406, p<.001), self-efficacy (r = 0.173, p = .006), and college lifeadjustment (r = 0.606, p<.001) (Table 3).

Table 2. Comparison of career preparation behavior, self-ledership, self-efficacy, college lifeadjustment according to participation in self-leadership program (N = 254)

Categories	Participation	No Participation	t	p
	M±SD	M±SD		
Career preparation behavior	2.45±0.43	2.23±0.45	3.929	<.001***
information gathering activities	2.72±0.47	2.54±0.50	2.955	.003**
tool preparation activities	2.56±0.57	2.14±0.63	5.495	<.001***
goal achievement activities	2.19±0.50	2.07±0.51	2.018	.045*
Self-leadership	3.54±0.39	3.40±0.43	2.686	.008**
behavior-focused strategies	3.61±0.44	3.52±0.48	1.674	.095
natural reward strategies	3.44±0.57	3.24±0.61	2.588	.010**
construct thought pattern strategies	3.49±0.49	3.32±0.58	2.434	.016*
Self-efficacy	3.42±0.47	3.35±0.47	1.075	.283
College lifeadjustment	3.14±0.49	2.99±0.49	2.319	.021*
academic activity	3.18±0.77	3.06±0.73	1.340	.181
career presentation	3.05±0.70	2.94±0.68	1.259	.209
personal psychology	3.65±0.63	3.48±0.65	2.000	.047*
interpersonal relation	2.77±0.72	2.61±0.71	1.757	.080

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

3.4 Factors Affecting Career Preparation Behavior

To determine the factors affecting career preparation behavior, hierarchical regression analysis was performed for such variables as the general characteristics and participation in SLP in the first stage, self-leadership in the second stage, and self-efficacy and college lifeadjustment in the third stage.

As for fundamental assumptions and multicollinearity of the regression analysis model in each stage, the final model 3 had Durbin-Watson of 2.168, tolerance of ≥0.1, and VIF of <10; thus, it had no problem with multicol-

Table 3. Correlation between career preparation behavior and variables Table 1. styles

Variables	Career preparation behavior	Self-leadership	Self-efficacy	College life adjustment
	r(p)	*r(p)*	*r(p)*	*r(p)*
Career preparation behavior	1	0.406 (<.001)***	0.173 (.006)**	0.606 (<.001)***
Self-leadership		1	0.493 (<.001)***	0.586 (<.001)***
Self- efficacy			1	0.470 (<.001)***
College lifeadjustment				1

** p<.01, *** p<.001

linearity. Therefore, the fundamental assumptions for performing multiple regression analysis were met.

R2 variation for each stage of the model was statistically significant and the variables added to each model led to a significant increase in explanatory power.

Hierarchical regression analysis of the model 1 found that the factors affecting career preparation behavior were participation in SLP (β = 0.229, p<.001), participation in SLP (β = 0.167, p = .004), self-leadership (β = 0.397, p<.001) in model 2, participation in SLP (β = 0.167, p = .004), self-leadership (β = 0. 112, p = .080), college lifeadjustment (β = 0. 604, p<.001), and self-efficacy (β = -0.163, p = .005) in model 3. College lifeadjustment among the independent variables had the greatest relative influence, followed by self-efficacy, participation in SLP, and self-leadership.

F statistics for estimated goodness-of-fit of the regression model was very significant at 43.891 (p<.001) and explanatory power was estimated to be 40.6% (Table 4).

4. Discussion

This study aimed to determine the effects of college life-adjustment, self-efficacy, and self-leadership on career preparation behavior for juniors as nursing majors and to provide nursing students with practical career education and other types of education necessary to prepare for employment.

College lifeadjustment, self-leadership, and career preparation behavior all varied significantly by participation in a self-leadership program for nursing students and career preparation behavior was signifi-

Table 4. Factors affecting career preparation activities

Variables	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	b	s.e	β	p	b	s.e	β	p	b	s.e	β	p
Constant	2.242	0.038		<.001	0.857	0.214		<.001	0.725	0.197		<.001
Participation in SLP	0.203	0.055	0.229	<.001	0.148	0.051	0.167	.004	0.121	0.044	0.137	.006
Self-leadership					0.407	0.062	0.379	<.001	0.120	0.068	0.112	.080
College life adjustment									0.541	0.056	0.604	<.001
Self-efficacy									-0.153	0.054	-0.163	.005
R^2	5.2%				19.2%				41.5%			
Adjusted R^2	4.9%				18.6%				40.6%			
F(p)	13.829(<.001)				29.678(<.001)				43.891(<.001)			

Participate in SLP; yes=1.

cantly positively correlated with each of such variables as self-leadership, self-efficacy and college lifeadjustment. Since leadership training is to allow individuals to acquire leadership skills, have a good understanding of themselves, and cultivate such skills as rational decision-making and problem-solving, these results are consistent with the result from the previous studies that participation in leadership training may improve self-leadership and career preparation behavior[28] and self-efficacy[6]. Specifically, self-leadership can be improved through learning and improved self-leadership may make lots of contributions to personal growth by generating performance on the basis of higher levels of employment strategies and greater interest, by improving satisfaction with the department, and by allowing individuals to take responsibility for their behavior and try to achieve the goal they have set for themselves with autonomy and enthusiasm[29].

The hierarchical regression analysis of the factors affecting career preparation behavior found that participation in self-leadership training accounted for 5.2% and self-leadership 14.0%. That is, participation in leadership training improved self-leadership and career preparation behavior and the group with a higher level of self-leadership made a higher level of career preparation behavior; thus, this result is consistent with the result that development of self-leadership can improve career preparation behavior[9,28] and with the report that self-leadership is a factor affecting career preparation behavior[9].

College lifeadjustment and self-efficacy accounted for 22.3% of career preparation behavior. This is consistent not only with the result that the higher level of career decision-making self-efficacy, the higher level of career preparation behavior[6,30] but also with the result that self-leadership is positively correlated with career decision-making self-efficacy[21]. As for correlation between self-leadership and career preparation behavior[28], found that experience of leadership training and experience as a leader could improve self-leadership and career preparation behavior and self-leadership affected employment strategies for college students[10]; thus, leadership training associated with career and employment, such as self-leadership, not simply theoretical education about leadership, is needed[9]. Self-efficacy, which was measuredby general self-efficacy in this study, thus it cannot be compared directly with the specific measurements of self-efficacy, such as career decision-making self-efficacy. However, in[31] obtained the same result: General self-efficacy positively affected career preparation behavior.

The level of college life adjustment was suggested as a significant variable for career preparation behavior. As a sub-concept of the college lifeadjustment scale that reflects the socio-cultural background specific to South Korean colleges, college lifeadjustment can be defined as a concept that includes the area of career preparation[27]. That is, career preparation as a sub-item of college lifeadjustment is defined as positive preparation for career on the basis of a good schedule and contains the concept of positive preparation for career because it means such ideas as time utilization and well-planned preparation. Among the independent variables affecting career preparation behavior, college lifeadjustment had the greatest relative influence, followed by self-efficacy, participation, and self-leadership. This result is consistent with the result that there was significant positive correlation between self-leadership, self-efficacy, and satisfaction with college life for nursing students with experience of clinical practice, that these variables accounted for 26.8% of the channel for satisfaction with college life, and that self-leadership had significant direct effects on satisfaction with college life[29]. It is also consistent with the result that self-efficacy as a concept of personal growth was positively correlated with college lifeadjustment in general and accounted for college lifeadjustment[32,33] and with the result from[34] that self-efficacy was positively correlated with each of the subcategories of college lifeadjustment. That is, self-leadership, self-efficacy, and college lifeadjustment were all found to be significant variables for career preparation behavior.

6. Conclusions

It is therefore necessary to provide a systematic career program that can help improve self-leadership and self-efficacy for each individual and grade so that college students can begin to prepare for career and make behavior in lower grades with the aim of improving their career preparation behavior. This study is significant in that it has provided practical suggestions for more desirable career decision-making and effective career and employment preparation training for nursing students.

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