

Career Choices, Factors Influencing Career Choices and Perception Towards Nursing Career Among Higher Secondary School Students

Fincy Joseph K¹, Silji Sebastian²

¹PG Nursing student, Department of Community Health Nursing, Lourdes College of Nursing, Kerala University of Health Sciences, Ernakulam, India

²Associate Professor, Department of Community Health Nursing, Lourdes College of Nursing, Kerala University of Health Sciences, Ernakulam, India

Corresponding Author: Fincy Joseph K

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/gijhsr.20260124>

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Choosing a career is a critical decision that profoundly impacts a person's life. At the Secondary School level, students are expected to make sound choices that are consistent with their aims and objectives. Individuals globally prioritise selecting their preferred job path, which frequently determines their choice of study programs. Nursing holds a prominent position within healthcare systems, with nurses playing a crucial role in delivering safe effective healthcare and contributing significantly to societal health goals (Muhtar and Lim).

Material and Method: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 110 Higher Secondary School students in Ernakulam District, Kerala. Purposive sampling was done. Data were collected by a structured questionnaire.

Results: The findings showed that, 30.90% students had mentioned nursing as their 1st career choice and 20.90% students had mentioned engineering as their 2nd career choice. Regarding perception towards nursing career, the majority of the students (85%) had positive perception.

Conclusion: This study underscores the need for promoting an accurate and positive image through media, school campaigns and

involvement of practicing nurses to inspire future generations.

Keywords: Career choices; Factors; Perception; Nursing career; Higher Secondary School students.

INTRODUCTION

Choosing a career is a critical decision that profoundly impacts a person's life. Career selection has become increasingly complex with the evolution of technology, the post-industrial revolution and heightened job competition. At the Secondary School level, students are expected to make sound choices that are consistent with their aims and objectives. This process involves identifying interests and skills, researching various career options, acquiring relevant education and training, fostering adaptability, setting goals, seeking guidance and considering future trends.¹

Individuals globally prioritize selecting their preferred job path, which frequently determines their choice of study programs. Korkmaz emphasizes that various factors, including intrinsic and extrinsic ones, play a significant role in shaping individuals' career decisions. Intrinsic factors such as interests, personality, self-concept, cultural identity, and attitudes are crucial

considerations. Conversely, extrinsic factors arise from social networks, access to reduce like funding and knowledge, presence of role models, globalization, educational background and ethnicity, among others. However, the act of choosing remains paramount, especially during the enrolment process for specific study programs.²

Nursing holds a prominent position within healthcare systems, with nurses playing a crucial role in delivering safe effective healthcare and contributing significantly to societal health goals (Muhtar and Lim).³ The history and philosophy of Nursing trace back to Florence Nightingale, who rose to prominence in the profession during the nineteenth century and brought respectability to the role of a nurse. Nursing aims to be acknowledged as a scientific discipline capable of making valuable contribution to health care.⁴ The positive image and perception of nursing are vital as nurses are at the forefront of health care delivery. Despite significant changes over time, nursing still faces similar obstacles and stereotypes, which can influence Higher Secondary School students' perception and choice regarding the profession.⁵

Education is essential for realizing one's full potential, building a just and equitable community and furthering national progress. Universal high-quality education is the best method to develop and maximize our country's vast talent and resources for the benefit of the person, society, country and the world. Over the next decade, India will have the world's largest youth population and our capacity to provide them with high-quality educational opportunities will define our country's future. The global education development agenda reflected in Goal 4 (Sustainable Development Goals 4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015, seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030.⁶

One of Kerala's most notable achievements is its high literacy rate, which sets it apart on the global stage. The state places a

significant focus on education, with a well-educated population, particularly among the youth. According to the Economic Review 2023, a total of 3,53,000 students were enrolled in arts and science colleges during the academic year 2022–2023.⁷ In the same period, student enrollment across sectors stood at 11,19,380 in the government sector, 20,30,091 in the aided sector, and 2,99,082 in the unaided sector. Additionally, 3,83,515 students were enrolled in Plus Two courses during the academic year 2022-2023.⁸ In 2023, a total of 441,120 students appeared for the Plus Two examinations, of which 294,880 passed, reflecting a pass percentage of 78.69%. Notably, 39,242 students achieved A+ grades in all subjects.⁹ The Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) for higher secondary education (Grades 11-12) in India has shown a positive trend over recent years. For instance, the GER was 56.50% in 2015-16 and increased to 57.60% in 2019-20, indicating a gradual improvement in enrollment at the higher secondary level.¹⁰

As of December 2022, there were 329,492 registered General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM) nurses in Kerala, reflecting an increase from 315,620 in 2021.¹¹ According to a report from The Lancet in 2022, the annual number of nursing graduates in India are Diploma holders are 134,949, Bachelor's degree holders are 107,814, post-introductory course graduates are 25,485 and Master's degree holders are 13,971.¹² As per the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, for the academic year 2023-24, a total of 120,585 nursing students are expected to graduate across the country.¹³

Approximately 27 million men and women make up the global nursing and midwifery workforce. A global shortage of health workers, particularly nurses and midwives, represents more than 50% of the current shortage. The WHO (World Health Organization) predicts that by 2030, there will be a need for an additional 9 million nurses and midwives worldwide for all nations to achieve the SDG on health and well-being. A significant portion of the

workforce is made up of women who work in nursing and midwifery.¹⁴

MATERIALS & METHODS

This cross-sectional study was conducted among 110 Science stream students of the 12th standard at St. Peter's HSS, Kumbalangi, and Al-Farooquia HSS, Cheranalloor, in Ernakulam district, Kerala. The samples were selected using a non-probability purposive sampling technique. The sample included students from the selected schools who met the predefined criteria, while students who were absent during data collection or unwilling to participate were excluded. Obtained approval from the Institutional Scientific Review Committee and Institutional Ethics Committee. Participation information sheets were given a day earlier, and informed consent from parents and assent from students were obtained. A self-structured questionnaire was used to gather data from 55 eligible 12th-grade science students from each school. The tools used for data collection included Tool 1, a structured questionnaire on career choice comprising Section A (socio-demographic profile) and Section B (career choice questionnaire); Tool 2, a structured questionnaire on factors

influencing career choice; and Tool 3, a nursing career perception questionnaire.

Statistical Analysis

Data analysis was done by transforming the data into MS EXCEL worksheet and SPSS was used to extract meaningful outcomes and subject them to draw percentages, means and deviations. Fisher's exact test was used to find an association between the research variable and demographic variables. All the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Null Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant association between perception towards nursing career and selected demographic variables of Higher Secondary School students.

H₀₂: There is no significant association between career choices and selected demographic variables of Higher Secondary School students.

RESULT

The study was implemented among Higher Secondary School students of St. Peters HSS, Kumbalangi and Al- Farooquia HSS, Cheranalloor in Ernakulam. The following table shows the frequency and percentage distribution of demographic variables of students.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of gender, religion, monthly family income and area of residence

Variables	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	35	31.80
	Female	75	68.20
Religion	Christian	60	54.50
	Hindu	29	26.40
	Muslim	21	19.10
Monthly Family Income	Below ₹25,000/-	52	47.30
	₹25,000 - ₹50,000/-	49	44.50
	Above ₹50,000/-	9	8.20
Area of residence	Urban	18	16.40
	Rural	54	49.10
	Semi-Urban	38	34.50

Table 1 shows that, among 110 sample, 68.20% were females and 31.80% were males. While considering religion, 54.50% belonged to the Christian religion, 26.40% belonged to the Hindu religion and 19.10%

belonged to the Muslim religion. While considering the monthly family income, 47.30% had income below ₹25,000/-, 44.50% had between ₹25,000-₹50,000 and 8.20% had income above ₹50,000/-.

Considering the area of residence, 49.10% lived in rural areas, 34.50% lived in semi-urban areas and 16.40% lived in urban areas.

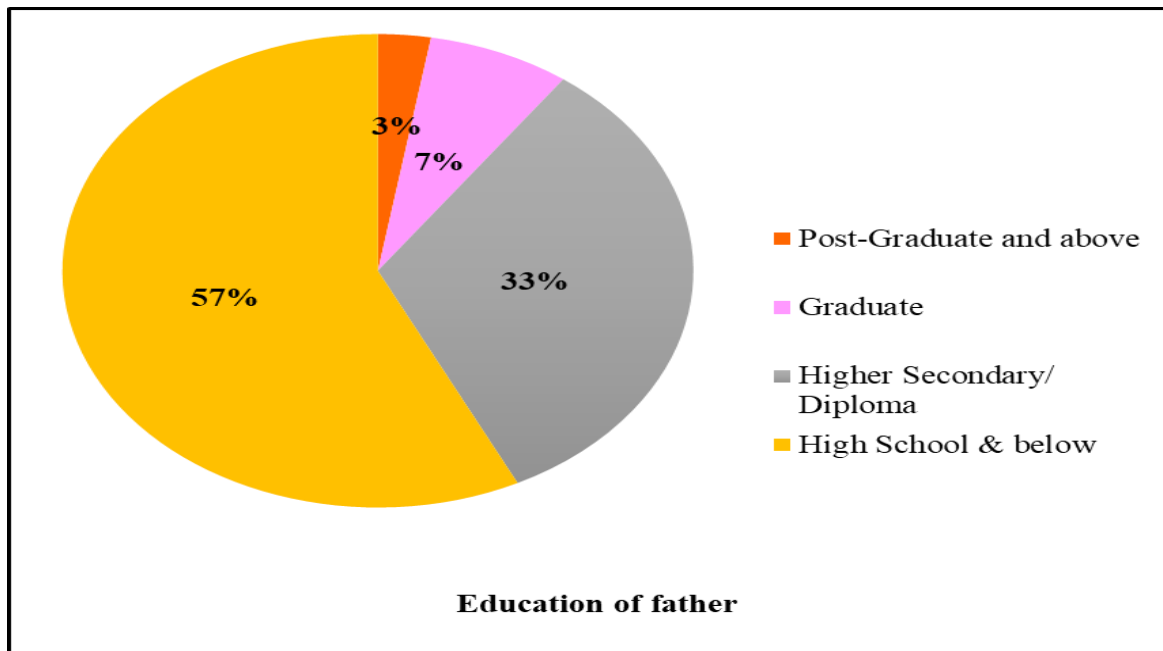


Figure 1: Percentage distribution of sample based on education of father

Figure 1 demonstrates that, concerning fathers' education, 57% have high school & below education, 33% have higher secondary/diploma, 7% have graduation and 3% have post-graduation and above education level.

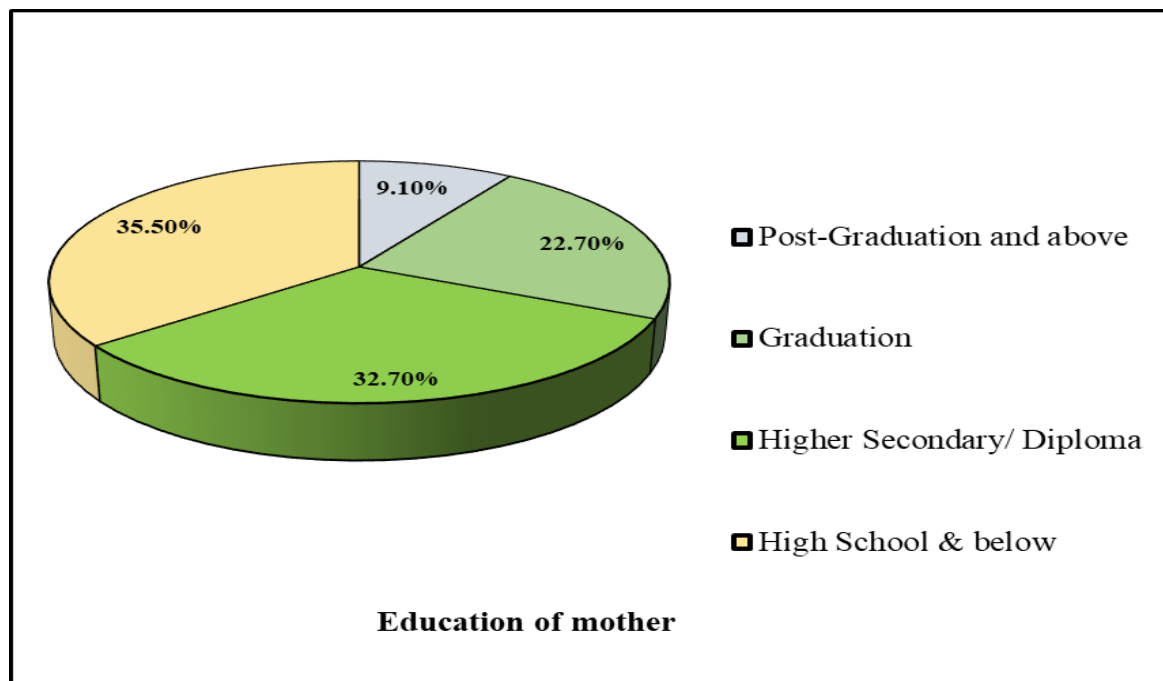


Figure 2: Percentage distribution of sample based on education of mother

Figure 2 illustrates the education of mothers, 35.50% have high school & below education, 32.70% have higher secondary/diploma, 22.70% have graduation and 9.10% have post-graduation and above education level.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of sample based on occupation of father and mother, career guidance program attended, family member currently practicing as a nurse or pursuing studies in nursing and current hospitalization of a family member

Variables	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Occupation of Father	Self-Employment/Business	23	20.90
	Government Service	5	4.50
	Private Employee	19	17.30
	Retired	6	5.50
	Others	57	51.80
Occupation of Mother	Self-Employment/Business	10	9.10
	Government Service	6	5.50
	Private Employee	22	20.00
	Retired	1	0.90
	Others	71	64.50
Career guidance program attended	Yes	103	93.60
	No	7	6.40
Family member currently practicing as a nurse or pursuing studies in nursing	Yes	31	28.20
	No	79	71.80
Current hospitalization of a family member	Yes	17	15.50
	No	93	84.50

Table 2 explains that, considering the occupation of father, 20.90% were self-employed/ business, 17.30% were private employees, 5.50% were retired, 4.50% were working in government service and 51.80% of fathers were working in other professions. The occupation of mothers revealed that, 20% were working as private employees, 9.10% were self-employed/ business, 5.50% were working in government service, 0.90% were retired and 64.50% were working in other professions. Regarding the career guidance program attended, 93.60% had attended and 6.40%

did not attend career guidance program. While considering the family member currently practicing as a nurse or pursuing studies in nursing, 71.80% were currently practicing as a nurse or pursuing studies in nursing and 28.20% were not practicing as a nurse or pursuing studies in nursing. The current hospitalization of the family member revealed that, 84.50% were currently hospitalized for treatment and 15.50% were not hospitalized.

Objective 1: To assess the career choices of Higher Secondary School students.

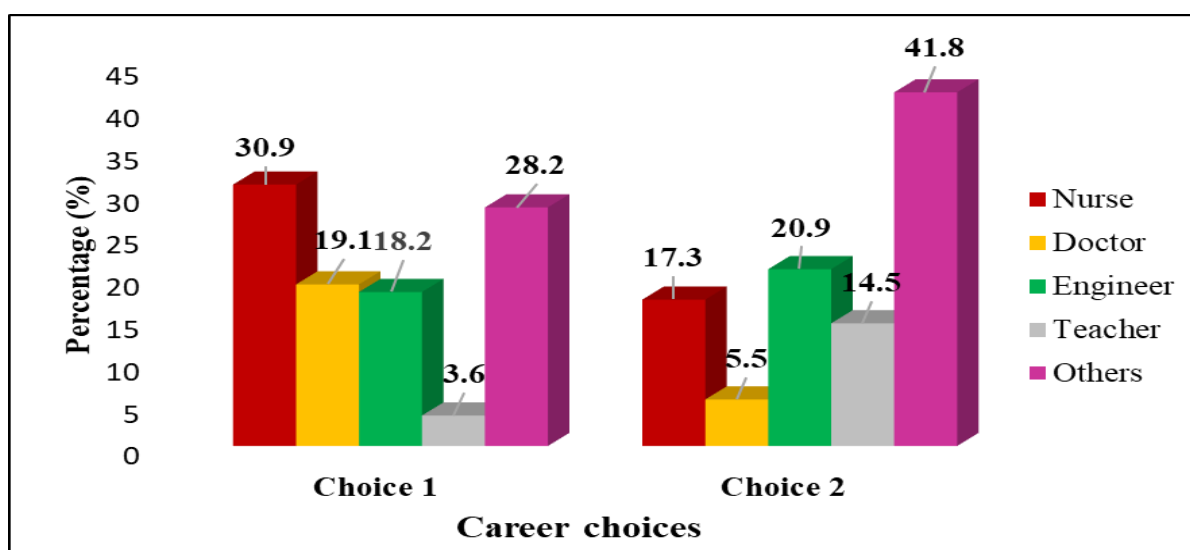


Figure 3: Percentage distribution of sample based on career choices

Figure 3 explains the distribution of students' career choices. Most of the participants chose nursing as their first career choice (30.90%), followed by doctor (19.10%) and engineering (18.20%). The least preferred first choice is teaching

(3.60%). For the second career choice, engineering lines highest (20.90%), followed by nursing (17.30%) and teaching (14.50%). The least preferred second choice is doctor (5.50%).

Table 3: Domain-wise score of factors influencing career choices

Domains	Mean (M)	SD
Influence of family on career choice	14.73	3.29
Personal interest on career choice	17.75	2.53
Social impact on career choice	16.02	2.93

Table 3 explains the mean and standard deviation score of factors influencing career choices of students. The most influencing factor on career choices of Higher Secondary School students is the personal interest with a mean score of 17.75 ± 2.53 , followed by social impact on career choice

(16.02 ± 2.93) and the least influencing factor is the influence of family on career choice with a mean score of 14.73 ± 3.29 .

Objective 3: To assess the perception towards nursing career among Higher Secondary School students.

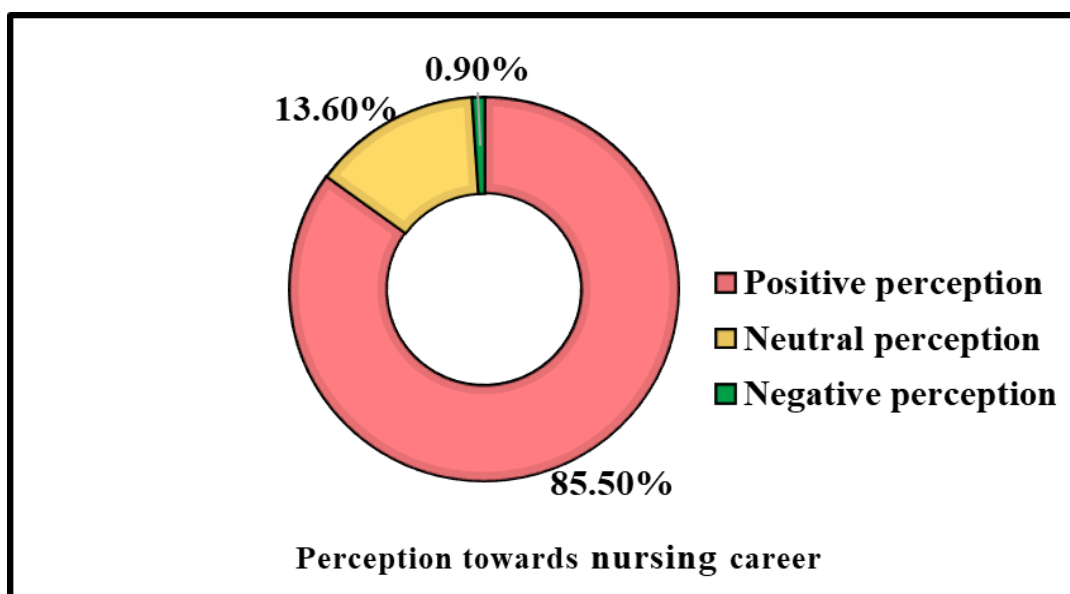


Figure 4 depicts the perception of Higher Secondary School students towards nursing career. The majority 85.50% have positive

perception, 13.60% have neutral perception and 0.90% have negative perception towards nursing career.

Table 4: Domain-wise score of perception towards nursing career

Domains	Mean (M)	SD
Nursing education & career potential	18.39	4.38
Nursing profession	18.29	4.42
Nursing working conditions	17.15	5.90
Socioeconomic status of nursing	17.18	6.22

Table 4 represents mean and standard deviation score of perception towards nursing career. The findings reveal that

students have a more favorable perception of nursing education and career potential (18.39 ± 4.38) compared to the nursing

profession itself (18.29±4.42) and the socioeconomic status of nursing (17.18 ± 6.22). Perceptions of nursing working conditions are notably concerning, with a lower mean score of 17.15 ± 5.90, indicating a negative outlook among Higher Secondary School students.

Objective 4: To find the association between perception towards nursing career and selected demographic variables of Higher Secondary School students.

Regarding the association between perception towards nursing career and

selected demographic variables, there was no significant association of perception towards nursing career with gender (2.01, p=0.41), religion (1.72, p=0.93), monthly family income (1.15, p=0.78), area of residence (1.17, p=0.78), education of father (0.72, p=1.00), education of mother (5.00, p=0.54), occupation of father (4.37, p=0.74), occupation of mother (2.41, p=0.30), career guidance program attended (1.27, p=1.00), family member working as nurse or pursuing studies in nursing (0.59, p=0.83) and current hospitalization of family member (1.99, p=0.38).

Table 5: Association between career choices 1 and selected demographic variables of Higher Secondary School students

Variable	Category	Career choice 1					Fisher's exact value	p Value
		Nurse	Doctor	Engineer	Teacher	Others		
Gender	Male	4	8	13	0	10	17.99	0.001*
	Female	30	13	7	4	21		
Religion	Christian	22	10	7	1	20	14.06	0.05*
	Hindu	10	6	5	1	7		
	Muslim	2	5	8	2	4		
Residence	Urban	14	15	13	0	14	10.58	0.02*
	Rural	20	6	7	4	17		
Education of father	Higher Secondary & above	8	13	11	1	13	10.01	0.03*
	High School & below	26	8	9	3	18		
Education of mother	Higher Secondary & above	15	14	18	4	20	13.82	0.006*
	High School & below	19	7	2	0	11		
Career guidance program attended	Yes	32	20	20	2	29	7.99	0.04*
	No	2	1	0	2	2		
Family member as a nurse or pursuing nursing	Yes	8	11	2	2	8	10.41	0.02*
	No	26	10	18	2	23		

Considering the association between career choices and selected demographic variables. There was association of career choice 1 with gender (17.99, p=0.001), religion (14.06, p=0.05), residence (10.58, p=0.02), education of the father and (10.01, p=0.03),

education of the mother (13.82, p=0.006), career guidance program attended (7.99, p=0.04) and family member working as a nurse or pursuing studies in nursing (10.41, p=0.02).

Table 6: Association between career choices 2 and selected demographic variables of Higher Secondary School students

Variable	Category	Career choice 2					Fisher's exact value	p Value
		Nurse	Doctor	Engineer	Teacher	Others		
Gender	Male	4	2	11	0	18	14.07	0.005*
	Female	15	4	12	16	28		
Residence	Urban	14	1	8	6	27	11.12	0.02*
	Rural	5	5	15	10	19		
Education of father	Higher Secondary & above	10	4	6	2	24	12.63	0.01*
	High School & below	9	2	17	14	22		
Education of mother	Higher Secondary & above	14	5	10	7	35	11.23	0.02*
	High School & below	5	1	13	9	11		
Occupation of father	Employed	7	5	12	2	21	11.34	0.02*
	Unemployed	12	1	11	14	25		

There was an association of career choice 2 with gender (14.07, $p=0.005$), residence (11.12, $p=0.02$), education of father (12.63, $p=0.01$), education of mother (11.23, $p=0.02$) and occupation of the father and (11.34, $p=0.02$).

DISCUSSION

The present study was supported by a descriptive study conducted by Matias A on factors affecting the career choices of graduating students among selected High Schools in the four western towns of Tarlac, Philippines (2010-2011). The sample size of 240 was selected by simple random sampling technique. Interview guides were used to gather data for this study. The result revealed that, among private schools most of the respondents still prefer to enrol (22.72 %) in Bachelor of Science in Nursing, while (22.36 %) Bachelor of Science in Education was the priority course of respondents in the public schools. The top five most preferred courses are Bachelor of Science in Education followed by Hotel, Restaurant and Management, next is Bachelor of Science in Nursing, next is Bachelor of Science in Information Technology and last is Bachelor of Science in Criminology.¹⁵

The present study was contrary to a cross-sectional descriptive study conducted by Humayon A et al. on the effect of family

influence, personal interest and economic considerations on career choice amongst undergraduate students in higher educational institutions of Vehari, Pakistan (2018). The sample size of 350 was selected through a simple random technique and the data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The result revealed that family influence (4.11 ± 0.58) had a very important role in influencing them to choose a career. Personal interest had the lowest mean (3.55 ± 0.75) compared to economic considerations (4.00 ± 0.64).¹⁶

The present study findings were supported by a study conducted by Khatun A et al. (2024) on perception of nursing profession among 12th standard School students in Bhopal. The sample size of 235 was selected through convenience sampling technique from selected schools of Bhopal. The data were collected by a structured questionnaire. The results revealed that, among the 235 participants, more than half (66.4%) students had fair perception, 33.6% students had good perception and none of the students had poor or very poor perception towards nursing profession.⁷

Recommendations

Based on the present study, the following recommendations have been made for future study:

- A longitudinal study can be conducted to assess the changes in career choice over time.
- A qualitative study can be conducted to explore the factors influencing career choices.
- A comparative study can be conducted to assess the factors influencing career choice in adolescents residing in urban and rural areas.
- A similar study can be conducted with a probability sampling technique.
- Further studies can be conducted to focus on the impact of specific factors like media influence, role models and gender stereotypes.
- Conduct specific research focusing on the students with neutral perceptions and investigate the reason for neutrality.
- Further studies can be conducted to examine how specific aspects of the Higher Secondary curriculum or extracurricular activities influence the perception of nursing.

CONCLUSION

The present study showed career choices, factors influencing career choices and perception towards nursing career among Higher Secondary School students. The most of the students demonstrates interest in choosing nursing as their first choice of career and engineering as their second choice of career. While considering the factors influencing career choices, the most influencing factor was the personal interest in career choice. The study also found that most of the respondents had positive perception towards nursing career, few of them had neutral perception and the least of them had negative perception towards nursing career. The present study found that there was no significant association between perception towards nursing career and selected demographic variables. Considering the association between career choices and selected demographic variables, there was a significant association between career choices and selected demographic variables such as gender, residence,

education of parents, occupation of father, career guidance program attended and family member working as a nurse or pursuing studies in nursing. This study underscores the need for promoting an accurate and positive image through media, school campaigns and involvement of practicing nurses to inspire future generations.

Declaration by Authors

Ethical Approval: Approved. Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Ethical clearance committee (LH/EC/2024-25)

Acknowledgement: None

Source of Funding: None

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

1. Career choice and its effects on secondary school students [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.researchproject.com.ng/education/career-choice-and-its-effects-on-secondary-school-students>
2. Korkmaz H. Factors influencing students' career choices in science and technology: Implications for high school science curricula. *Procedia Soc Behav Sci.* 2015 Jul; 197:966-972. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.284.
3. Lim SG, Muhtar M. Factors influencing nursing students' decision to choose nursing. *Int e-J Sci Med Educ.* 2016 Oct; 10:3-10. doi:10.56026/imu.10.2.3.
4. Selanders LC. The voice of Florence Nightingale on advocacy. *OJIN: Online J Issues Nurs.* 2012;17(1): Manuscript 1. Available from: <https://ojin.nursingworld.org/table-of-contents/volume-17-2012/number-1-january-2012/florence-nightingale-on-advocacy/>
5. Raymond A, James A, Jacob E, Lyons J. Influence of perceptions and stereotypes of the nursing role on career choice in secondary students: A regional perspective. *Nurse Educ Today.* 2018; 62:150-157. doi: 10.1016/j.nedt.2017.12.028.
6. Government of India. National Education Policy 2020 [Internet]. New Delhi: Ministry of Education; 2020. Available from:

- https://www.education.gov.in/site/upload/files/mbrd/files/NEP_final_english_o.pdf
7. Kerala State Higher Education Council. All Kerala Higher Education Survey Report 2021-22 [Internet]. Thiruvananthapuram: KSHCEC; 2022. Available from: https://www.kshcec.kerala.gov.in/images/pdf/Report_pdf/AKHES_report_2021-22.pdf
 8. The New Indian Express. Kerala school academic year begins tomorrow; 25 lakh students in Class 1 [Internet]. 2024 Jun 2. Available from: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2024/Jun/02/kerala-school-academic-year-begins-tomorrow-25-lakh-students-in-class1>
 9. Onmanorama. Kerala Plus Two VHSE results 2024: 78.69% students pass [Internet]. 2024 May 9 [cited 2025 Apr 4]. Available from: <https://www.onmanorama.com/career-and-campus/top-news/2024/05/09/Kerala-plus-two-vhse-results-2024-live.html>
 10. Ministry of Human Resource Development. Statistics regarding higher education in India [Internet]. Available from: https://www.mhrd.gov.in/node-report/node-report?date_filter%5Bvalue%5D=&page=49&type=updates
 11. CEIC Data. Number of nurses registered in Kerala: General Nursing and Midwifery [Internet]. 2022 Dec [cited 2025 Apr 4]. Available from: <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/india/health-human-resources-number-of-nurses-registered/number-of-nurses-registered-kerala-general-nursing-and-midwives>
 12. The Lancet. Nursing education in India: Mapping the numbers [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2025 Apr 4]. Available from: <https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lansea/article/PIIS2772-3682%2822%2900100-7/fulltext>
 13. Parliament of India. Number of nursing students in India: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare report [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2025 Apr 4]. Available from: <https://sansad.in/getFile/annex/262/AU276.pdf>
 14. World Health Organization. Nursing and midwifery [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/facts-sheets/detail/nursing-and-midwifery>
 15. Matias A. Factors affecting the career choices of graduating students among selected high schools in the four western towns of Tarlac, Philippines.
 16. Humayon A, Raza S, Khan R, Ansari NUA. Effect of family influence, personal interest, and economic considerations on career choice amongst undergraduate students in higher educational institutions of Vehari, Pakistan. *Int J Organ Leadersh*. 2018 Jun;7. doi:10.33844/ijol.2018.60333.
- How to cite this article: Fincy Joseph K, Silji Sebastian. Career choices, factors influencing career choices and perception towards nursing career among higher secondary school students. *Gal Int J Health Sci Res*. 2026; 11(1): 202-211. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/gijhsr.20260124>
