



ISSN: 2230-9926

Available online at <http://www.journalijdr.com>

IJDR

International Journal of Development Research
Vol. 08, Issue, 03, pp.19189-19193, March, 2018



ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

EXPERIENCING THE CHOICE OF UNDERGRADUATE NURSING COURSE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL PHENOMENOLOGY

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 25th December, 2017
Received in revised form
26th January, 2018
Accepted 21st February, 2018
Published online 30th March, 2018

Key Words:

Nursing education,
Professional choice,
Nursing students,
Social phenomenology.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To understand the reasons that led graduates of the Undergraduate Nursing Course to choose the profession.

Method: Qualitative study with theoretical and methodological reference of the Social Phenomenology of Alfred Schütz. Ten graduates from a private institution in the interior of São Paulo State participated. Data collection was performed between February and March of 2013, through audio recorded interviews. The statements were numbered from one to ten, analyzed individually and globally. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine of Botucatu.

Results: In the process of choosing the profession, graduates revealed the "reasons for" and "reasons why", and when analyzing the reasons, the typical situation experienced by the social subject was described in five concrete categories: nursing care, family influence, labor market, professional reaffirmation and professional satisfaction.

Conclusion: Social phenomenology enabled exposing the experiences of graduates throughout life, reaffirming values and meanings according to their biography in an economic, cultural and social scenario.

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Citation: Carla Regiani Conde, Maria de Lourdes da Silva Marques Ferreira and Regina Célia Popim, 2018. "Experiencing the choice of undergraduate nursing course in the perspective of social phenomenology", *International Journal of Development Research*, 8, (03), 19189-19193.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is a great challenge for universities, being responsible for the training, learning and education processes of members of society (Gatti, 2013). Seeking to train competent professionals for the health care of the population, nursing education in Brazil aims to train generalist, humanist, critical and reflexive nurses with technical-scientific, ethical-political, social and educational competence (Conselho Nacional de Educação, 2001). In this context, the main purpose of the pedagogical project is to train individuals with autonomy, initiative and able to solve problems (Garcia and Queiroz, 2012). The Undergraduate Nursing Course promotes activities focused on the purpose of teamwork, acting in a relationship of dependence to provide care for the human being (Gomes et al., 2012). At the time of choice, it is important to understand that the nurse is the member of the

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team capable of humanizing care through skills and abilities (Hermann et al., 2014) constituted of a reflexive process that demands search and certainty of desires, aptitudes, interests, commitments with the family, society and satisfaction needs according to the personality, possibility of work and remuneration (Tomaschewski-Barlem et al., 2012). Innovative pedagogies contribute to the development of these skills and abilities by addressing knowledge in the quest to train critical, reflective and engaged individuals with the community within the professional context they are involved. And, in view of this proposal, this study aims to understand the reasons that led the graduates of the Undergraduate Nursing Course to choose this profession. In order to obtain the testimonies of these social actors, the guiding question was: "why did you choose the Undergraduate Nursing Course?", because we believe that when professors get to know the reasons that motivated the student to seek a profession in the health area, they become able to make the teaching and learning process dynamic and to direct health care practices aimed at the well-being of the individual being cared for.

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research with a theoretical-methodological reference of the Social Phenomenology of Alfred Schütz (Minayo, 2013; Schütz, 2012) conducted with the participation of ten graduates of the class of 2012 of the Undergraduate Nursing Course of the Marechal Rondon School, São Manuel campus, in the interior of São Paulo State. Seeking to understand the meanings of the social subjects' experience in relation to the choice of the Undergraduate Nursing Course, we used qualitative research (Minayo, 2013). When addressing the focus of the study, the graduates, and seeking to understand the reasons for their choice by nursing, we opted for an existential and social analysis as proposed by the social phenomenology of Alfred Schütz (Schütz, 2012). The phenomenological philosophy allows reflection on a phenomenon experienced and, to be unveiled, shown or externalized (Peixoto, 2011) and social phenomenology turns to the foundation of social life as it presents itself in the everyday life guided by the relationships between people, with each other, with themselves and with things. This interaction is responsible for the construction of the life history and possibility of constituting the biographical self, which contains all the impressions experienced by the social actor. This matrix is what sets us apart and drives us to action (Capalbo, 1998). In phenomenological understanding, action is always linked to experiences in and of the world of life, moving towards a motivated social behavior (Capalbo, 1998), covered by the "reason for" that allows the human being to manifest actions directed to the future and the "reason why" when he/she is allowed to relate experiences acquired throughout life and that are the base for their current action, that is, their act (Schütz, 2012). Social action is based on the reciprocity of the reasons, in which occurs a typification of the socially prescribed actions that, through common sense, allow the actors to act in a similar way to something experienced (Schütz, 2012). The fundamental ideas of Schütz were based on the search for the typical combination of the reasons for the choice of the graduates in relation to the Undergraduate Nursing Course.

The actors of this research, therefore, experienced the situation of having been undergraduate students in nursing and were able to attribute meanings to the experiences they had when choosing to be nurses. This fact was of fundamental importance to characterize the experienced social world and allowed that the actions of social subjects were understood in the perspective of comprehensive sociology. The study was conducted in February and March of 2013 and began with the graduates being invited through telephone contact. The interviews were scheduled according to the day, time and place available. The number of participants was defined during the study and the interviews ceased when they were deemed sufficient to reveal the phenomenon. Repetition was noticed in the tenth interview and when this invariant was reached, to the distribution of reasons, the collection was interrupted by the saturation criterion (Minayo, 2013). The research project was referred to the Ethics and Research Committee of the Faculty of Medicine of Botucatu, being approved under protocol 490/08. Afterwards, participants signed the Free and Informed Consent Form and the interviews were started, which were audio recorded, and lasted approximately 60 minutes. The statements were numbered from one to ten, analyzed individually (ideographic analysis) and then analyzed globally (nomothetic analysis) (Maziero *et al.*, 2014), which enabled understanding the type lived, that is, the experience of the group of graduates. In order to guarantee the anonymity of the graduates, the code "D" was first established for each participant and, respecting the order of the interviews, the first interviewee was identified by "DI", the second "DII" and so on. Each statement was also numbered in the order that the units of meanings were presented as, for example, DI-1.

RESULTS

For the unveiling of choice, the meanings attributed by the subjects emerged in the specific context and circumscribed to the experiences and attitudes in the social world of each one, constituted by aspirations, motivations and future projects. The construction of the categories in the analysis phase respected the phenomenological framework of Schütz.

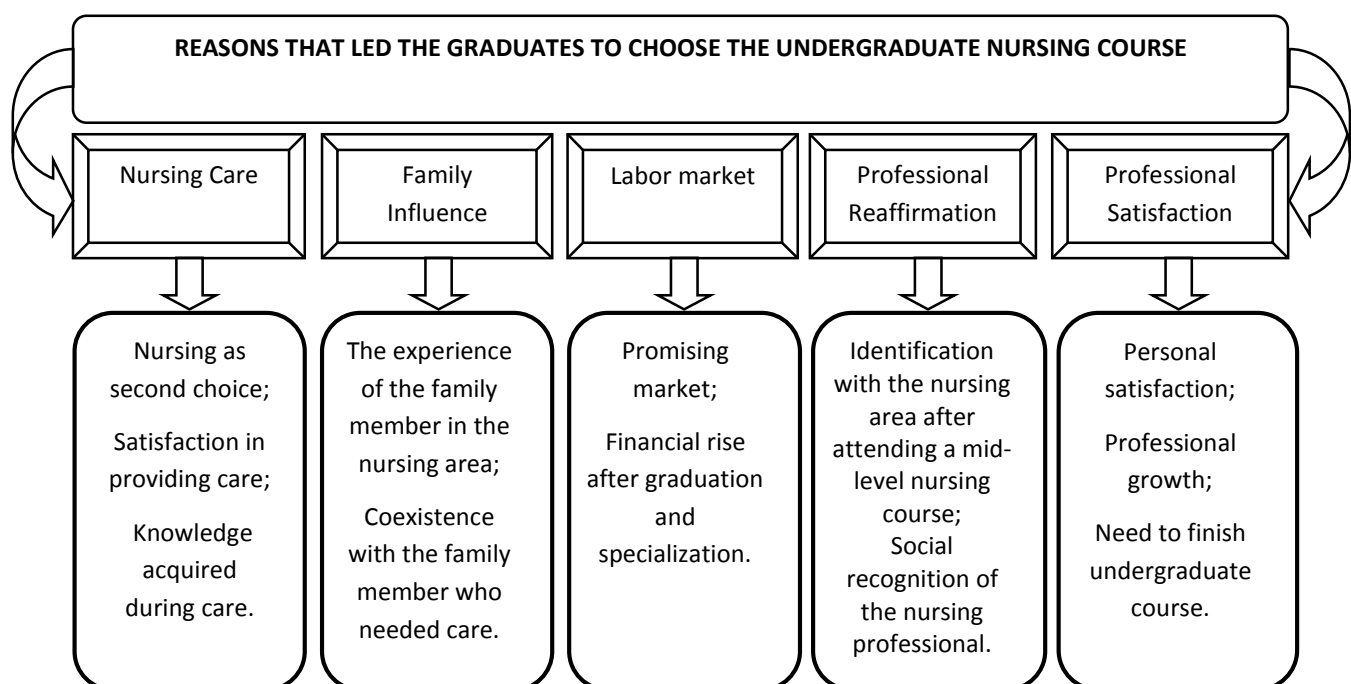


Figure 1. Diagram of the phenomena unveiled by the graduates in choosing the Undergraduate Nursing Course

In order to understand the social actor in the lived type, a vertical relationship with each category was established, without disassociating one from the other and by observing its convergences. Five concrete categories emerged: Nursing care, Family influence, Labor market, Professional Reaffirmation and Professional Satisfaction. The following is a demonstrative diagram (Figure 1), according to: Central Theme, linked categories and units of meanings reported in the statements.

Nursing Care revealed that the choice for the Undergraduate Nursing Course was not the first professional option for some graduates. However, when they entered nursing school, the possibility of being in contact with the human being, mainly during the academic activities developed in the community, allowed them to increase the desire for providing care and to experience the clinical evolution and positive or negative moments of the patient. The nurse is the health professional who stays longer in patient care when compared to other professionals. Thus, the nurse-patient bond becomes strengthened, allowing the monitoring and recovery of the individual:

In college, we came to understand that we have more contact with the patient than the physicians themselves, the physician goes to the hospital, visits, makes prescriptions, and leaves. The nurse is different, they follow the patient's progress and they feel happy, sad. I like nursing and I do not want to quit (DI-3).

The economic need to be in the labor market concomitantly to attending a higher education course was a factor impeding the choice of other courses with full-time dedication, such as medicine:

I wanted to be a doctor. I tried everything, but because of my financial condition, I had to work, to study and I know that you have to devote most of your time to study medicine (DI-1).

The undergraduate nursing course was within participants' possibilities and was also in the health area. The desire to work in a profession that has a relation or that works with the human being has been perceived, in which care was prioritized in their actions and this motivation was associated with the satisfaction of accomplishing higher education:

I did not want nursing at first, I wanted social assistance, but nursing is also a health area and so I ended up choosing nursing (DII-1). I used to work in a totally different area, I used to make pants, but I have always liked working with people, so I said, I'm going to do a nursing course. It is a satisfaction from attending higher education combined with what I liked to do (DIII-5).

Nursing care aroused the feeling of satisfaction and admiration in providing care, a contribution that one's work confers physical and emotional well-being to the patient, favoring their recovery. The proximity and participation in moments of daily life of the patient strengthen the therapeutic relationship and affective relationships:

I admired providing care very much. Because of this, I chose nursing, I chose care; I have pleasure in helping somebody (DI-2). [...] because I like the patient and not of taking care of the disease; participating in their lives, seeing the joy in their

eyes, when we give a simple bath, a simple talk, listening to the day of each one of them (DVII-3).

The professional choice made by participants evidenced the desire to obtain a university-level profession, even though they have been already in the job market with financial stability. Upon completing the Undergraduate Nursing Course, they reveal the fulfillment of this desire:

[...] having a profession. I had a job, I earned well, but I did not have a high-level profession (DIII-1).

It also meant the construction of specific knowledge about the profession, provided by the professional disciplines that favored the unveiling of what it is "to be a nurse":

I chose the nursing course. I had no idea what it was, I was really enjoying the area because of the knowledge acquired in the specific disciplines and because I like the patients (DVII-1).

In order for the professional to offer assistance, they must have knowledge, and the accomplishment of the high-level course represents this knowledge. Academic training attends to the specific needs of each subject and provides quality in the care:

I liked to keep in touch with the patient and through this contact I wanted to do more, to provide quality care (DVI-1). In order to know better the pathologies, I had the will to know more about the health of the human being and the opportunity to attend college (DVI-2).

Family influence revealed that the family's opinion was an important and definitive factor in the moment of professional choice. Interpersonal relationships developed among family members contributed to their experience and were projected in their achievements. The experience of the family member in the nursing area made the participant to choose nursing and to have the same profession practiced by some member of the family:

It was because of my mother who works in the nursing area. My mother started to say, you should choose nursing, you will like it, you get it; it was more because of my mother's, my family's encouragement (DII-2).

Being involved in the family's health care also influenced the moment of choosing a career. In the testimony of the participant who had experienced a situation of care with his grandmother, it was revealed the interest and attachment to elderly people, a decisive factor for choosing nursing, looking for improve himself in the area of knowledge of the elderly:

I live with my grandmother and she is part of an old age group. I have always gone with her to the meetings, sometimes I met her friends and I was always participating in the activities she had. And, I started to feel a great love; I fell in love with the elderly people and then I said, I want to go deeper. So I finished high school and I went to nursing school and I fell in love and suddenly I said: taking care of the elderly (DV-1).

The labor market was important in the moment of choosing this profession, since there is always need of professionals with specific training. It was believed, upon completion of the

course, in the promising job market offer, status and professional success:

A profession that had a great labor market; I wanted to do college and I searched one that I think there was a great labor market (DIII-2).

I found that I was going to get luck (DIII-6).

On the rise due to the increase in life expectancy, the area of geriatrics and gerontology was considered promising:

I will get on very well because I want to specialize in the geriatrics and gerontology field (DV-2).

Professional reaffirmation revealed that when individuals already working in the nursing area, occupying mid-level positions, choose to attend an undergraduate course, it does not only demonstrate identification with the area, but intellectual growth and status. The course of nursing assistant or technician is done intentionally as an aptitude test for the exercise of the profession:

I did the nursing assistant course and I found myself in this profession (DIV-1).

I started to like this area a lot; I did not see myself out of it. I graduated as a nursing technician and I chose to go to college (DVII-2).

Attending an undergraduate course means to accomplish professional training of greater status and gives to the nurse the recognition by the society of the degree obtained:

I did the nursing assistant course to see if I liked the area and then I tried to go to college and I realized that I would enjoy it (DIII-3).

I have already worked in the area; I have been in this area for 15 years (DX-1).

Professional satisfaction has shown that nursing is a profession that deals with the individual's health needs, whether in promotion, prevention, healing and/or rehabilitation. Providing assistance is to develop care that can be configured in pleasurable and satisfactory acts for the nursing professional:

I think it was personal satisfaction, indeed (DIII-4).

A personal desire, for a long time (DIX-3).

Also, the Undergraduate Nursing Course enabled professional growth and better placement in the labor market:

Being able to grow in the profession (DIV-2).

To improve my knowledge and possibly work in the area as soon as possible (DVIII-2).

To get something better (DX-2).

The choice of this course was to supply the desire to be a nurse as a life project and due to the need to finish the Undergraduate Nursing Course, because the participant presented the need to interrupt it for personal reasons, but when she had the opportunity, she returned to complete it:

About 15 years ago I started to do nursing school and left because I got pregnant and had other problems. I think it's time to go back to school, I had an opportunity and I said: I'm going to finish college (DIX-2).

DISCUSSION

In contextualizing the scenario of the graduates, it was identified that social actors at first sought professions of greater social ascension, as for example, medicine. This was due to the need to reach better salaries compared to other courses of the health area, that is, as a first choice of profess, they sought a career of greater social value. However, individuals with less economic and cultural power consider private institutions education and the entrance in courses still in the health area as a possibility to take a university course or to be in university. This corroborates with the profile of the graduates. Thus, the differences between social classes are minimized and even those individuals who entered less competitive courses stand out and occupy privileged positions in society when compared to the previously occupied status (Tomaschewski-Barlem *et al.*, 2012). By letting the desire to provide care emerge, it becomes evident that the essence of nursing as a social action consists not only in the development of techniques and procedures, but in the training of individuals who are willing to assist others in a holistic way through actions that involve sensitivity, creativity and intuition when caring for the human being. It is in making and feeling that the nursing professional cooperates, participates, demonstrates affection, love, interacts, relates scientific and practical knowledge, promotes bond, establishes limits, values their potential and perceives the other in their particularities, as a unique being (Soares *et al.*, 2015). Nursing care aims to promote the common good and restore the social actor, that is, to restore physical, psychic and social well-being, and to improve the quality of life and autonomy of individuals (Cavalcanti and Ribeiro, 2014). For the nursing student, this perspective of care is fundamental, stimulating the reflexive and inflexive process on the responsibility of the academics of the health area (Camponogara *et al.*, 2012). Family influence revealed that the choice was influenced by the individual's biographical self and is associated with their personal experiences, built in the face-to-face relationship with their peers (Schütz, 2012).

Family is a relationship of intimacy and closeness. It is characterized by the direct intercommunication of the subjects in the vivid presence and face-to-face relationships, allowing one subject to influence the other and also to be influenced (Wagner, 1979). Family is the first referential, conveyer of values and attitudes, and plays a relevant role in the choices of its members. An individual's approach to the care of a relative when he or she falls ill was another point revealed during the testimonies. Experiencing a situation of caring for a family member is something transformative and allows the professional to take care of the other in a more humanized way, to better understand the moment of fragility of the other (Mariano, 2014). The fact of understanding the nursing labor market as promising motivated the professional choice of graduates. However, it is necessary to emphasize that although the market is promising and certain areas are on the rise, it is necessary to consider the aptitude associated to these, since it is necessary to take care of the human being (Tomaschewski-Barlem *et al.*, 2012). As for the opportunity for personal and professional growth, improvement of scientific knowledge and possibility of changing status within the team, the literature corroborates that when the individual is capable of experiencing the learning process in undergraduate course, previous experience in the area is a propulsion factor in theoretical-practical learning. Professional success, therefore,

can be considered a process whose objective is to reach or surpass the desires and aspirations of the social subject (Sales *et al.*, 2015) and, in the conception of the graduates, the choice for nursing is a way of being recognized by the society in the different environments of their conviviality. Social recognition makes the human being constantly seek for achievement and establishes means to achieve their goals. Completing a higher education course means getting the chance to be valued and getting a better salary (Araújo *et al.*, 2016). During the undergraduate course, the formation of the professional identity of the student is established, enabling them to work together with nurses and teachers, which are role models for their training and fundamental figure in the construction of the professional profile that one wishes to present to the labor market (Gomes *et al.*, 2015). In this context, social phenomenology sought to understand the "biographical selves" of the egresses, rescuing the essence of each individual and organizing their experiences through the facts reported and that were remarkable in their daily life. The option for higher education in nursing was driven and manifested by the desires, dreams, influences and achievements of a social group with common characteristics, thus constituting the typical situation lived by the social actor (Schütz, 2012; Duarte *et al.*, 2015).

Final thoughts

Social Phenomenology disclosed the typical experiences of the egresses acquired throughout life, reaffirming values and meanings according to their biography in an economic, cultural and social scenario. It was important to understand subjective aspects of the action of graduates in choosing the Undergraduate Nursing Course, and their professional choice was guided by their biographical self, social actions, way of acting and relating to the world. Understanding the graduates in the performance of their acts revealed the "reasons for" and "reasons why" of their actions represented by the choice of the Undergraduate Nursing Course. With this, it was understood that the choice of nursing was revealed as the desire to provide nursing care, family influence, identification with the profession, promising job market and search for reaffirmation and professional growth. These reasons made it possible to establish the typical situation lived by the social subject. This study had a limitation because it did not allow generalizations to other populations, which is typical of the number of participants in the qualitative research. However, it brought about reflection on the pedagogical policy of education institutions in the process of professional training. In this sense, the biographical situation and the knowledge collection of these nursing graduates were important signposts for the action taken by them to choose the undergraduate nursing course, and serve as signposts also for planning and the effectiveness of actions of teachers to meet the needs of these students. Thus, this study contributes to this effectiveness of actions and consequently to the practical applicability, given the results obtained.

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