

Analysis of the Status and Influencing Factors of Professional Identity among Elderly Care Nursing Students in Non-Metropolitan Areas of China

A Large Cross-Sectional Study in Three Colleges (December 2023 – April 2024)

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Background & Objectives

Global and national context: China has the world's largest aging population, with over 200 million people aged ≥ 60 years. The demand for elderly care services is soaring, especially in non-metropolitan areas where medical resources and trained geriatric nurses are critically insufficient. Professional identity among nursing students is a key predictor of career intention and long-term retention in elderly care.

Research gap: Despite its importance, empirical data on professional identity among elderly care nursing students in non-metropolitan China remain scarce. This study aims to:

- ① Investigate the current level of professional identity among elderly care nursing students in non-metropolitan China.
- ② Analyze demographic, educational, attitudinal, and knowledge-based factors influencing professional identity.
- ③ Explore the relationships among aging knowledge (FAQ1), attitudes toward older people (KAOP), and professional identity.

Methods

Design & setting: Multicenter cross-sectional study conducted between December 2023 and April 2024 in three nursing colleges located in a typical non-metropolitan area of China (Henan Province).

Participants: 1,100 nursing students selected using convenience sampling. Inclusion criteria: full-time nursing students, aged ≥ 18 years, with at least one semester of study.

Instruments: General information questionnaire (demographics, educational background, monthly household income, elderly care experience, first choice of major, geriatric nursing courses offered and hours, level of understanding of elderly care institutions); FAQ1 (Facts on Aging Quiz 1, range 0-25); KAOP (Kogan's Attitudes toward Older People, range 34-238); Professional Identity Scale for Elderly Care Nursing (range 26-130).

Statistical analysis: SPSS 26.0, descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation. Significance level $P < 0.05$.

Conceptual Framework

Personal factors (income, grade, experience) → Professional Identity
Educational factors (first choice, geriatric courses, hours) → Career Intention
Attitude (KAOP) & Knowledge (FAQ1)

Key Results

Professional Identity

Mean = 104.90 ± 16.18 (range 26-130)
80.96% (n=880) moderate level or above.

Aging Knowledge (FAQ1)

Mean = 10.22 ± 3.57 (0-25)
Only 11.49% (n=125) scored >15 (good knowledge).
Interpretation: Most students have limited aging knowledge.

Attitude toward Elderly (KAOP)

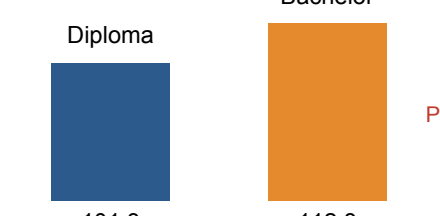
Mean = 165.68 ± 22.85 (34-238)
88.68% (n=964) scored above 136 (positive attitude).

Significant Differences ($P < 0.05$)

- Educational background (undergraduate $>$ diploma)
- Grade level
- Monthly household income
- Duration of elderly care experience
- Nursing as first choice of major
- Geriatric nursing courses offered & course hours
- Level of understanding of elderly care institutions/geriatric nursing

Undergraduate students scored highest in both professional identity and aging knowledge.

Professional Identity by Education Level



Illustrative comparison of mean scores

Further Results & Correlations

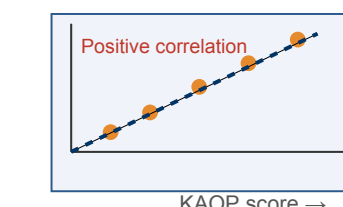
Grouped by career intention: Significant differences ($P < 0.05$) were observed in professional identity, FAQ1, and KAOP scores among students with different career intentions. Those with stronger intention to work in elderly care had higher scores in all three measures.

Correlation analyses ($P < 0.05$):

- FAQ1 \leftrightarrow Professional identity: $r = 0.42$
- KAOP \leftrightarrow Professional identity: $r = 0.38$
- FAQ1 \leftrightarrow KAOP: $r = 0.31$

Higher aging knowledge and more positive attitudes are associated with stronger professional identity.

KAOP vs. Professional Identity ($r=0.38, P<0.01$)



Scatter plot illustrating linear relationship

Conclusion & Recommendations

Conclusions: Nursing students in non-metropolitan areas of China demonstrate a moderately high level of professional identity (mean 104.9, 80.96% moderate or above) and positive attitudes toward the elderly (88.68% positive), but their knowledge of aging is limited (only 11.49% good). Undergraduate students scored highest in both professional identity and aging knowledge. Higher aging knowledge scores and more positive attitudes are associated with stronger professional identity. Career intention is closely linked to professional identity and knowledge/attitudes.

Recommendations

- Integrate geriatric nursing courses into core curricula and increase course hours.
- Provide more clinical exposure and community projects to improve aging knowledge and attitudes.
- Targeted interventions for diploma students and those with limited elderly care experience.
- Promote positive role models and career counselling to strengthen professional identity.

Keywords: Elderly care nursing; Nursing students; Career intention; Professional identity; Influencing factors; Non-metropolitan China

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