

# *A Study on Employment Intention and Death Anxiety of Undergraduate Nursing Students after Internship*

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**Abstract:** This study seeks to investigate the employment intention and death anxiety of undergraduate nursing students post-internships, to create a foundation for enhancing their job intention and diminishing nursing staff turnover. The method applied in this paper is the convenience sampling method, this study investigated the employment intention and death anxiety status of undergraduate nursing interns in a tertiary hospital through a questionnaire survey. The research results demonstrate that 158 of 233 nursing students are eager to take part in clinical nursing, making up 67.8%, while 32.2% are unwilling. The total score of death anxiety among nursing students after the internship is  $38.14 \pm 11.907$ . Among them, personal conditions, social security, occupational conditions, and other factors have a certain impact on the employment intention and death anxiety demand of nursing students. This study shows that the intention of undergraduate nursing students to continue clinical nursing work after internship needs to be improved, and family residence and death anxiety are important factors that affect their employment intention. Educators and nursing management should vigilantly observe the death anxiety of nursing students, to bolster their professional literacy and coping aptitude, bolster their physical and mental well-being, and foster the growth of nursing careers.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the number of medical graduates has increased with the rapid development of the medical industry<sup>[1]</sup>. Although the demand for nurses is great in China, the employment prospects of nurses are still not optimistic due to the popularization of universities and the reform of the labor market. Due to the influence of various factors, there is a "gap" and a relative "saturation" phenomenon in the demand for nursing talent in China<sup>[2]</sup>. And some nursing students are not willing to engage in clinical nursing after graduation, resulting in the loss of nursing talent<sup>[3]</sup>. Death anxiety (Death Anxiety, DA) refers to the emotional state of anxiety or fear generated by individuals in the face of death or death-related events<sup>[4]</sup>. Because of chronic death threats, healthcare workers often feel frustrated, exhausted, and helpless, which can easily lead to death anxiety. Nurses, in particular, are most closely related to patients and need to directly care for dying patients, so they are more prone to death anxiety<sup>[5]</sup>. Nurses' death anxiety not only affects their own health but also brings behavioral and emotional consequences to affect their life and work. This

study aims to explore the employment intention and death anxiety of undergraduate nursing students after the internship and to provide a basis for improving the employment intention of nursing students and reducing the loss of nursing staff.

## **2. Objects and methods**

### **2.1. Study Subjects**

#### **2.1.1. Object source**

By means of convenient sampling, 240 nursing students from a hospital were selected from February to March 2023.

#### **2.1.2. Inclusion Criteria**

①Senior undergraduates who have completed their internship should fully understand and voluntarily participate in the survey; ②can correctly express their cognitive feelings; and ③has clear ideas or plans for future work.

#### **2.1.3. Exclusion criteria**

① Non undergraduate nursing students; ② Undergraduate nursing students who have not completed their internships; ③ The investigator has serious psychological or mental disorders or illnesses.

## **2.2. Research Tools**

### **2.2.1. General data survey questionnaire**

After consulting relevant literature, the researchers made themselves, including citizenship, gender, family residence, whether the only child, religious belief, the direction of their major after the internship, whether they had experienced death, and family attitude towards death.

### **2.2.2. The Death Anxiety Scale**

Through the use of Yang Hong<sup>[6]</sup>The new version of the Death Anxiety Index in China, we are able to completely measure the level of death anxiety among caregivers. This index consists of 5 items, covering 5 related aspects, such as emotion, cognition, time concept, etc., a total of 15 related aspects. "5~1" "very agree", "compare agree", "uncertainty" disagree "and" very not agree with five assessments, 9 assessments using positive correlation, 6 assessments using negative correlation, finally 0~75 evaluation results, the lower the score, the patients' death anxiety is greater, 35 points represents a higher degree of death anxiety. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of up to 0.762 showed good reliability.

## **2.3. Study Methods**

When the data is collected online through the questionnaire star, the manager will detail the purpose of the survey and distribute the questionnaire link to the respondents after obtaining their informed consent. The survey is anonymous, and each respondent can only submit it once to ensure the accuracy of the data. Respondents should participate voluntarily and fill it out truthfully. After careful screening, a total of 240 questionnaires were issued in this survey, of which 233 were

effectively recovered, with an effective rate of 97%.

## 2.4. Statistical analysis method

The obtained questionnaires were obtained and analyzed on the questionnaire Star Network platform, and statistical analysis was performed using SPSS26.0 software. Measurement data are described by mean  $\pm$  standard deviation, and counting data are described by frequency and percentage. The factors affecting the employment intention of nursing students were analyzed by t-test or chi-square test and Logistic regression analysis. Test level  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

## 3. Results

### 3.1. General information

240 nursing students participated in filling out the questionnaire, and 233 valid questionnaires were collected. Among them, there are 41 males, 192 females; 83 only children, 150 non-only children; 199 Han people, 34 ethnic minorities; 24 experienced deaths, 209 without deaths; 70 living in rural areas, 71 in towns, 92 in cities; 62 with relatives and friends in recent five years, and 171 without relatives and friends. After graduation, 158 people chose to continue to engage in nursing work, accounting for 67.8%, and 32.2% of nursing students were not willing to engage in clinical nursing.

### 3.2. Current situation of death anxiety

The total score of death anxiety among the 233 nursing students surveyed was 16 to 68, with a mean score (of  $38.14 \pm 11.907$ ).

### 3.3. Univariate analysis affecting the employment intention of nursing students

Table 1: Univariate analysis affecting the employment intention of nursing students.

Clauses and sub-clauses	Divide into groups	Whether to continue working in clinical care (%)		T/ $\chi^2$	p
		Yes	Deny		
Sex	Man	28(68.29)	13(31.71)	0.005	0.942
	Woman	130(67.71)	62(32.29)		
Nation	The Han citizenship	139(69.85)	60(30.15)	2.595	0.107
	Minority citizenship	19(55.88)	15(44.12)		
Home residence	Rural area	58(82.86)	12(17.14)	20.569	0.000**
	Town	53(74.65)	18(25.35)		
	City	47(51.09)	45(48.91)		
Religion	Have	1(100.00)	0(0.00)	0.477	0.490
	Not have	157(67.67)	75(32.33)		
Whether he is an only child	Yes	65(78.31)	18(21.69)	6.515	0.011*
	No	93(62.00)	57(38.00)		
Whether the patient has experienced the death event in the clinical internship	Yes	21(87.50)	3(12.50)	4.752	0.029*
	No	137(65.55)	72(34.45)		
Whether the family member had ever or was suffering from a serious illness	Yes	41(77.36)	12(22.64)	2.865	0.091
	No	117(65.00)	63(35.00)		
Whether loved ones / friends have died in the last 5 years	Yes	51(82.26)	11(17.74)	8.078	0.004**
	No	107(62.57)	64(37.43)		
Whether death can be discussed openly about in the home	Yes	121(74.23)	42(25.77)	10.251	0.001**
	No	37(52.86)	33(47.14)		
The Total score of death anxiety		36.03 $\pm$ 1.84	42.60 $\pm$ 10.83	4.068	0.000**

Univariate analysis results show: family residence, whether is the only child, clinical practice experienced in patient death, nearly five years without loving relatives/friends died and home whether can public discussion and death, and so on of different students, the employment intention

is different, differences have statistical significance ( $P < 0.05$ ). Results of the univariate analysis are shown in Table 1.

### 3.4. Multi-factor analysis affecting the employment intention of nursing students

Through Logistic regression analysis, we can take the employment situation of nurses after graduation as the dependent variable affecting the analysis results, and compare it with the variables with significant correlation to explore the mechanism of the influence distribution. It was found that family residence and death anxiety level have a significant impact on nurses' employment decision-making, and this relationship has clear statistical characteristics, including Table 2 for details.

Table 2: Multivariate analysis affecting the employment intention of nursing students.

	B	Standard error	Wald	Free degree	P	OR	The 95% CI of the OR	
							Lower limit	Superior limit
Home residence	-0.522	0.209	6.250	1	0.012	0.594	0.394	0.893
Whether he is an only child	-0.258	0.370	0.486	1	0.486	0.773	0.375	1.595
Whether the patient has experienced the death event in the clinical internship	-1.227	0.687	3.186	1	0.074	0.293	0.076	1.128
No loved ones / friends have died in the last 5 years	-0.030	0.446	0.004	1	0.947	0.971	0.405	2.328
Whether death can be discussed openly about in the home	-0.525	0.334	2.472	1	0.116	0.592	0.308	1.138
Total score of death anxiety	-0.039	0.015	7.059	1	0.008	0.961	0.934	0.99

## 4. Conclusions

### 4.1. The willingness of nursing students to engage in nursing work after graduation needs to be improved

After graduation, 158 people chose to continue working in nursing, or 67.8%, which is lower than the results of scholars in 2020<sup>[3]</sup>. A study of nurses' refusal to do care showed that the vast majority of nurses felt constant tension, fear, panic, and psychological burden; a few felt tension about doctor-patient relationships and workplace risks of low pay and pandemic threats. Research shows that nurses face great psychological challenges, they must not only constantly face acute and critical patients, but also strictly monitor their health status, but also bear huge psychological burdens, such as death anxiety<sup>[7]</sup>. In addition, due to the uniqueness of the nursing industry, their body will also be seriously damaged, especially in the face of those patients with serious illness, their psychological state will also be severely impacted, which will seriously affect their desire to work<sup>[8]</sup>; Third, in a few years, the COVID-19 epidemic spread around the world, the number of infections and deaths is increasing, medical care staff not only fought in the clinical frontline for a long time, but also some medical workers were unfortunately infected and died, which caused a huge impact on the psychological health of nursing students, so that nurses have high risk and unwilling to engage in nursing work, and choose to take the postgraduate entrance examination, public examination, self-employment or other work<sup>[9]</sup>.

### 4.2. Factors affecting the employment intention of nursing students

#### 4.2.1. Family Residence

In this study, nurses with urban residences as the control group and rural family residences were more willing to work in nursing. In terms of employment opportunities, the rural economic development level of urban areas is relatively low, and employment opportunities are relatively few. Therefore, nursing work may be a better employment choice for rural nursing students. Secondly, in

the educational background and knowledge structure: the education level in rural areas is relatively low, nursing students may be more likely to accept and adapt to nursing work, because nursing work in most areas does not require a relatively high educational background<sup>[10]</sup>.

#### 4.2.2. Death Anxiety

In this study, the death anxiety score of 233 nursing students surveyed was 16 to 68, with the average score (of  $38.14 \pm 11.907$ ), which was slightly higher than the study of Yang Hong et al<sup>[6]</sup>. This may be related to the negative correlation of nursing students' employment intention and death anxiety score, and the higher the death anxiety score and the lower the people engaged in nursing work. In terms of individual psychological factors, the level of death anxiety has a great impact on the employment intention of nursing students and practitioners. In career choices, people with higher death anxiety tend to be more likely to choose life-related occupations, such as health care workers. Because these occupations need to face and deal with life-related problems, they are more anxiety for people with higher death anxiety. However, excessive death anxiety can also have a negative impact on the mental health of practitioners, such as large mood swings, easy to feel tired, thus affecting their willingness to engage in the profession<sup>[11]</sup>.

Secondly, in terms of the occupational characteristics of the industry, the working nature and occupational characteristics of the nurse industry will also affect the employment intention of the practitioners<sup>[12]</sup>. Nursing students usually need to face a variety of life threats and dangers, such as occupational injuries, epidemic outbreaks, etc., these risk factors aggravate the death anxiety of nursing students. In addition, in terms of work pressure and work intensity, nursing students also have to face higher work intensity and work pressure, which makes the psychological endurance and stability of practitioners become one of the important considerations in choosing this career<sup>[13]</sup>. Faced with these occupational characteristics, those with lower death anxiety were more likely to work in the nursing student industry, while those with higher death anxiety were more likely to avoid the profession.

Finally, in terms of social-cultural factors, family cultural background and social environment will also affect the employment willingness of nursing students. With an enlightened family culture, people who care for life will be respected and revered by the society<sup>[14]</sup>. In this social background, people will be more willing to engage in the nursing student industry. On the contrary, in some other cultural backgrounds, people's attitude towards death is more fear and avoidance, which makes people in the nursing student industry be regarded as disgraceful or disrespected careers, thus affecting people's career choices.

In conclusion, family residence and death anxiety have an important impact on the employment willingness of practitioners in the nursing student industry. Employment opportunities, educational background and knowledge structure, individual psychological factors, industry occupation characteristics and social and cultural factors influence people's choice of nursing student industry to varying degrees.

This study shows that the intention of undergraduate nursing students to continue in clinical nursing after internship needs to be improved, and family residence and death anxiety are important factors affecting the employment intention of nursing students. Nursing management and nursing educators should pay close attention to the death anxiety of nursing students, so as to improve their professional quality and coping ability, promote the physical and mental health of nursing students, and promote the development of nursing career.

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