

The Relationship Between Professional Identity and Work Motivation Among Nurses at The Maternal and Child Hospital in Aceh Province

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Abstract

Objective: This research explores the link between professional identity and work motivation among nurses at the Maternal and Child Hospital in Aceh. It examines how various aspects of professional identity such as ethics, knowledge, leadership, and professional behavior affect nurses' motivation in their work environment. The primary objective is to assess whether a more developed professional identity contributes to increased work motivation. The hypothesis posits that a stronger professional identity across these dimensions is positively related to greater motivation at work. The findings indicate a significant and robust correlation between the domains of professional identity and work motivation. These results provide valuable evidence for creating strategies aimed at enhancing nurses' professional identity, boosting motivation, and ultimately improving the quality of patient care and healthcare services.

Material and Methods: This study employed a correlational design conducted from January to March 2024 at the Maternal and Child Hospital of Aceh Province. A total of 142 implementing nurses were selected using total sampling based on inclusion criteria such as active registration, a minimum of one year of experience, and voluntary participation. Data were collected using two validated instruments: the Nurse Professional Identity Scale (NPIS), measuring four domains of professional identity (values and ethics, knowledge, leadership, and professional comportment) with a Cronbach's alpha 0,96, and the Unified Motive Scale (UMS) showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0,95, indicating strong reliability for both scales. which assesses three components of work motivation (achievement, power, and affiliation) based on McClelland's Human Motivation Theory. Data analysis was performed using chi-square tests to examine bivariate relationships and also using Pearson correlation to assess the strength of the relationship.

Results: Of the 142 nurses surveyed, 65,5% reported high work motivation. Significant associations were found between work motivation and values and ethics ($p = 0,002$; $r^2 = 0,753$), knowledge ($p = 0,003$; $r^2 = 0,915$), leadership ($p = 0,012$; $r^2 = 0,989$) and professional comportment ($p = 0,001$; $r^2 = 0,963$).

Conclusion: This study highlights a significant and strong relationship between professional identity and work motivation. The domains of professional identity, such as values, knowledge, leadership, and comportment, are closely associated with increased work motivation. Strengthening these domains can enhance motivation and improve job performance.

Keywords: professional, identity, motivation, nurse, hospital

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Introduction

Nurses play a vital role in healthcare systems, delivering continuous, patient-focused care in various clinical environments. Their responsibilities go beyond routine care to encompass clinical decision-making, advocating for patients, providing health education, and collaborating within multidisciplinary teams. Consequently, nurse motivation is crucial for ensuring high-quality healthcare, patient satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness. However, many healthcare facilities in Indonesia face ongoing challenges with nurse motivation, influenced by factors such as heavy workloads, limited professional growth opportunities, inadequate pay, and insufficient organizational support. These challenges not only impact individual nurse performance but also contribute to higher turnover and diminished care quality.

One important but less studied factor affecting nurse motivation is professional identity, which refers to the integration of professional values, norms, knowledge, and ethical conduct shaping nurses' perceptions of their roles within healthcare. A well-developed professional identity is associated with greater job satisfaction, lower burnout rates, improved teamwork, and stronger ethical commitment. International research indicates that nurses with a clear and confident sense of their professional identity tend to exhibit greater resilience, motivation, and institutional loyalty.

Despite its importance, professional identity has received limited attention in the Indonesian healthcare setting, especially regarding its influence on nurses' motivation. Addressing this gap is essential given the persistent issues in nurse retention and performance. This study therefore investigates the relationship between professional identity and work motivation among nurses at the Maternal and Child Hospital in Aceh Province. The results aim to provide evidence to guide policies and management practices that improve nurse well-being and job performance.

Materials and Methods

Research design and setting

This study employed a quantitative correlational design conducted from January to March 2024 at the Maternal and Child Hospital in Aceh Province, Indonesia, a regional referral center specializing in maternal and pediatric care. This study was conducted after completing the ethical review process, which was approved by the Ethics Committee of Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, under approval number 112017110924. All respondents provided written informed consent to participate in this study.

Population and sample

The study population comprised all 149 implementing nurses working at the Maternal and Child Hospital in Aceh Province. Using total sampling, 142 nurses who met the inclusion criteria, holding valid nursing registration, having at least one year of work experience, and consenting to participate were recruited as the study sample.

Procedure of study

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Universitas Syiah Kuala Ethics Committee, and permission was secured from the hospital administration. The researchers coordinated with the heads of nursing units to facilitate the distribution of questionnaires. Eligible nurses were informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights as participants, including confidentiality and voluntary participation. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before the questionnaires were administered. The data collection involved two validated instruments: the Nurse Professional Identity Scale (NPIS) and the Unified Motive Scale (UMS), which were distributed in printed form during work shifts to minimize disruption. Completed questionnaires were collected by the nursing unit heads or directly by the research team. The data collection process spanned from January to March 2024. Following collection, all questionnaires were checked for completeness before data entry and analysis.

Results

The respondents are predominantly female (78.9%) with an average age of 37.5 years and an average length of service of 9.22 years. Most are married (79.4%) and hold a Bachelor of Nursing (44.4%) or a Diploma III in Nursing (43.8%). The majority work as Clinical Nurse Level III (44.4%), followed by Level 1 (34.4%). Regarding employment status, 56.3% are government employees with work agreements, while 26.9% are civil servants. This demographic suggests a well-experienced, female-majority workforce with a strong preference for government employment.

Nurses who exhibited strong professional identity characteristics such as strong values and ethics, knowledge, leadership, and professional comporment demonstrated higher levels of work motivation. Specifically, those with strong values and ethics had 52.6% reporting high motivation, compared to 23.3% with weak values and ethics, with a highly significant ($p = 0,002$; $r^2 = 0,753$). Similarly, strong knowledge ($p = 0,003$; $r^2 = 0,915$) and leadership ($p = 0,012$; $r^2 = 0,989$) were associated with higher motivation, respectively. The highest correlation was observed for strong professional comporment, where 54.5% of nurses with strong comporment reported high motivation ($p = 0,001$; $r^2 = 0,963$). See table 1.

Table 1: Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic and Professional Characteristics	f	%	$\bar{X} \pm SD$
Age	-	-	37,5 ± 6,836
Length of Service	-	-	9,22 ± 5,649
Gender			
Male	30	21,1	-
Female	112	78,9	
Marital Status			
Married	127	79,4	-
Single	15	9,4	
Education			
Bachelor of Nursing	71	44,4	-
Diploma III in Nursing	70	43,8	
Master of Nursing	1	0,6	
Clinical Nurse Level			
Clinical Nurse Level 1	55	34,4	-
Clinical Nurse Level III	16	10,0	
Clinical Nurse Level III	71	44,4	
Employee Status			
Civil Servant	43	26,9	-
Government Employee with Work Agreement	90	56,3	
Contract Staff	9	5,6	

Table 2: The Relationship between the Variable of Professional Identity and Nurses' Work Motivation

Variable of Professional Identity	Nurses' Work Motivation				f	%	p	r ²
	High		Low					
	f	%	f	%				
Strong Value and Ethic	41	52,6	37	47,4	78	100	0,001	0,753
Weak Value and Ethic	15	23,3	46	76,6	64	100	0,001	
Strong Knowledge	38	52,1	35	47,9	73	100	0,003	0,915
Weak Knowledge	18	26,1	51	73,9	69	100	0,003	
Strong Leadership	33	41,3	47	58,8	80	100	0,012	0,989
Weak Leadership	23	37,1	39	62,9	62	100	0,012	
Strong Professional Comportment	42	54,5	35	45,5	77	100	0,001	0,963
Weak Professional Comportment	14	21,5	51	78,5	65	100	0,001	

Discussion

This study examined the association between professional identity and work motivation among nurses at the Maternal and Child Hospital in Aceh Province. The findings revealed that specific facets of professional identity namely values and ethics, knowledge, leadership, and professional comportment are positively correlated with nurses' motivation levels. These results offer valuable insights into how various elements of professional identity contribute to nurse motivation within hospital settings, reinforcing and extending existing knowledge in nursing and healthcare management. The observed positive correlation between values and ethics and motivation aligns with prior studies emphasizing that adherence to professional values and ethical standards is fundamental in cultivating intrinsic motivation among healthcare practitioners¹⁻³. Nurses who internalize such principles tend to exhibit greater commitment and dedication, which directly enhances their motivation to provide high-quality care. This underscores the imperative for healthcare organizations to strengthen ethical education and foster environments where professional values are actively upheld, thereby reinforcing a robust professional identity that invigorates nurses in their practice.

Similarly, the significant link between knowledge and motivation supports evidence suggesting

that continuous professional development and skill acquisition enhance nurses' confidence and motivation^{4,5}. Given the complexities of clinical practice, ongoing education equips nurses to effectively manage patient care challenges, which is pivotal in sustaining motivation and job satisfaction. This is consistent with findings by Kohnen et al who identified that a supportive professional climate and recognition from peers and supervisors significantly enhance nurse engagement and intrinsic motivation. As professional comportment reflects both internalized identity and social reinforcement mechanisms, fostering a workplace culture that emphasizes respect, recognition, and professional interaction is crucial for maintaining motivation⁶.

Knowledge and motivation are strongly interconnected, which could be attributed to contextual factors such as diverse perceptions of leadership roles, limited opportunities for leadership development, or insufficient training within the nursing workforce. The literature underscores the essential role of effective nursing leadership in empowering staff and fostering motivation⁷⁻⁹, suggesting that the absence of association in this study indicates a gap in leadership development programs and the need to clarify and expand leadership roles to better support nurse motivation. Demographically, the majority of respondents were female (78.9%), with a mean

age of 37.5 years and an average tenure of 9.2 years, mirroring global nursing workforce trends where age and experience influence professional identity and motivation¹⁰. Experience gained through years of service likely strengthens professional identity and enhances intrinsic motivation as nurses develop greater clinical expertise and role competence.

The concept of professional identity is closely linked to work motivation, with a significant relationship observed between various components of professional identity, such as values, ethics, knowledge, leadership and comportment, and the motivation levels of nurses^{2,11,12}. Nurses who exhibit a stronger professional identity tend to show higher motivation in their work. These findings underscore the direct impact that a well-developed professional identity has on enhancing intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction among nurses. This highlights the critical need for healthcare organizations to prioritize the cultivation of a strong professional identity, as it plays a pivotal role in improving nurse motivation and, consequently, the quality of patient care.

Practically, these findings advocate for healthcare administrators and policymakers to prioritize the reinforcement of professional identity as a strategy to improve nurse motivation and consequently, care quality¹³⁻¹⁵. This can be achieved through structured and ongoing professional development programs targeting ethical standards, clinical knowledge, and professional comportment. Additionally, cultivating a supportive and respectful workplace culture that values professional behavior and promotes recognition can sustain motivation. Policies encouraging nurse participation in decision-making and equitable compensation are also essential to motivate and retain skilled nursing personnel. Although this study provides valuable evidence regarding the influence of professional identity on motivation, its cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and findings may not be generalizable beyond the study setting. Longitudinal research is recommended to explore temporal changes in professional identity and motivation, while qualitative studies could offer richer contextual understanding of nurses' experiences.

In conclusion, this study underscores the pivotal role of values and ethics, knowledge, leadership and professional comportment in fostering nurse motivation, while revealing underexplored potential in leadership development. Focused interventions in these areas could enhance motivation, job satisfaction, and ultimately patient outcomes. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of nursing workforce dynamics and inform actionable strategies for healthcare organizations aiming to optimize nurse performance and retention.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the strong and significant association between professional identity and work motivation among nurses at the Maternal and Child Hospital in Aceh Province. The key dimensions of professional identity, including values and ethics, knowledge, leadership and professional comportment, are closely linked to higher motivation levels. These findings highlight the importance of healthcare organizations reinforcing these components through ongoing education and ethical practices to enhance nurse motivation and job satisfaction. Overall, fostering a well established professional identity is crucial for improving nurse motivation, retention, and the quality of patient care. Future research should further investigate the evolving relationship between professional identity and motivation in nursing practice.

Limitations of The Study

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, which restricts causal conclusions, and its single-hospital setting, which may affect generalizability. The use of self-administered questionnaires may introduce response bias, and the non-significant leadership findings could be due to unmeasured contextual factors.

Future Research Recommendations

Qualitative studies are recommended to deepen understanding of nurses' perspectives, especially on leadership's role in motivation. Investigating interventions to enhance professional identity and motivation is also suggested.

Ethical Consideration: The research approval was given by Universitas Syiah Kuala Ethics Committee, Banda Aceh, under approval number 112017110924.

Conflict of Interest: All the authors declared that no have conflicts of interest in this study.

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