

THE MOTIVATIONAL ORIENTATIONS  
AND SELF-CONCEPTS OF  
REGISTERED NURSE MASTERS DEGREE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

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The study identified the motivational orientations underlying the reasons nurses return to school to seek a master's degree in nursing, and determined the relationships between these orientations, the self-concepts, and selected demographic variables of the participants (sex, age, marital status, educational background, position currently held, and position sought).

The sample consisted of 65 registered nurses enrolled in nursing master's degree programs in five colleges and universities in Connecticut and Boston. Three instruments were used for data collection: a 56-item checklist questionnaire consisting of possible reasons for participation (modified Education Participation Scale), a 100-item checklist questionnaire consisting of items related to the participant's self-concept (Tennessee Self-Concept Scale), and a demographic data sheet.

Cluster analysis of responses to the EPS indicated that seven motivational orientations underlie the nurses' reasons for returning to school. These orientations were labeled: Professional Achievement, Knowledge Seeking, Social

Responsibility, Pragmatic Benefits, Self-Improvement, Social Relations, and Change in Routine. Mean scores on each orientation were computed for the entire sample (lowest possible score, 0; maximum, 9.0), and ranged from 5.82 (Professional Achievement) to 1.74 (Change in Routine).

Self-concept scores were computed for each respondent and ranged from 251 to 422, with a group mean of 365, which was higher than the norm mean of 346. Most (89.2%) of the respondents' scores indicated either average or high self-concepts. Pearson product-moment correlations computed to determine the relationship between the self-concept scores and the seven motivational orientations revealed only one significant difference in the Social Relations orientation, which correlated negatively ( $-.45$ ) with the self-concept scores.

Analysis of variance to determine the relationship between the motivational orientation scores and selected demographic variable revealed significant differences between the Self-Improvement orientation and age, and the Pragmatic Benefits orientation and credit ratio (ratio of program credits completed to program credits required to complete the degree).

The findings of the study suggest that for these nurses, reasons related to achievement or advancement in their profession motivated them to return to school to seek a master's degree in nursing. Based on these findings, nurse educators and program administrators in nursing master's degree programs

should consider the motivations of their students when evaluating the ability of their programs to meet their needs and goals.