Professionalism values of Generation Z nursing students

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Abstract:
During nursing education, professional values are developed in theoretical and clinical education. Nursing students are expected to cultivate professional values when they enter university and continue their nursing practice. This study aims to analyze the professionalism values of Generation Z nursing students. The research employed a descriptive design, including 182 respondents selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a questionnaire. The research instrument used the Nurse Professional Values Scale-Revised (NPVS-R) questionnaire. Data analysis used descriptive analysis with data not normally distributed (median). The average age of the students was 21, with a majority being female. The indicators of professional values nursing students' altruism, autonomy, human dignity, integrity, and social justice have median values of 31, 30, 50, 46, and 27. The results showed that nursing students who had good and less professional values were in the same amount. This shows that Generation Z nursing students have a different understanding of the current values of professionalism. The results of this study are expected to be a reference in improving the ability of professionalism values in Generation Z nursing students.
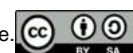
INTRODUCTION

Professionalism values among Generation Z nursing students have become a topic of growing concern in the healthcare education sector. Nursing students often encounter clinical challenges during their practice, which are closely tied to moral awareness and ethical decision-making (Spekkink & Jacobs, 2020). These challenges can significantly impact the professionalism values of Generation Z nursing students, as evidenced by recent cases where students have breached patient confidentiality by sharing sensitive information on social media without consent (Firdaus, 2022). Such actions contradict the core professional values of nursing, which emphasize autonomy, human dignity, and ethical responsibility (Franco et al., 2020). Disseminating patient privacy not only damages public trust in healthcare services but also constitutes a violation of medical ethics (Park & Jeong, 2021). This raises critical questions about how nursing education can address these lapses and instill stronger ethical foundations in students.

Another significant issue is the communication gap among Generation Z nursing students (Edwards-Maddox et al., 2021). Research by Zhu et al. (2021) indicates that this generation prefers interacting with smartphones over face-to-face communication, which can hinder their ability to develop essential interpersonal skills. Poor communication skills directly affect clinical competence, leading to suboptimal patient care, ineffective nursing management, and even adverse events such as medical errors or fatalities (Sanchis-Giménez et al., 2023). This reliance on digital devices poses a serious challenge in a profession where clear and empathetic communication is vital. It underscores the need for nursing educators to incorporate strategies that enhance interpersonal skills and encourage meaningful interactions with patients and colleagues (Hardie et al., 2022).

Cultural shifts brought about by globalization have further complicated the professional landscape for nursing students (Hassan & Modanloo, 2024). Unlike previous generations, Generation Z views professional responsibility differently, often prioritizing personal convenience and digital engagement over traditional ethical norms (Tan & Chin, 2023). This generational shift has been linked to lower adherence to key professional values such as human dignity and autonomy. According to Zemlak et al. (2024), there are five critical indicators of professional values in nursing students: altruism, autonomy, human dignity, integrity, and social justice. However, research by Abu-El Noor et al. (2023) reveals that Generation Z students exhibit weaker adherence to human dignity and autonomy, primarily due to a lack of respect for others' privacy and declining moral ethics. These findings highlight the urgent need to address these gaps during the educational process.

The role of nursing education in shaping professional values cannot be overstated. Robichaux et al. (2022) emphasize that the professional values of nursing students must be cultivated and refined throughout their education to ensure they meet clinical standards and ethical norms. This requires a multidimensional approach that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical experience. Nursing programs should focus on honing skills that align with nursing ethics, such as empathy, accountability, and ethical decision-making (Amin et al., 2025). By embedding these values into the curriculum, educators can help students develop a strong nursing identity that adheres to the principles of professionalism (Poole & Patterson, 2021). This transformation is essential for preparing students to navigate the complexities of modern healthcare environments (Honkavuo, 2021).

One potential solution is incorporating experiential learning opportunities that allow students to apply ethical principles in real-world scenarios (Martin et al., 2021). Simulation-based training, case studies, and reflective practices can provide students with hands-on experience in handling ethical dilemmas and respecting patient rights (Rasesemola & Molabe, 2025). Additionally, mentorship programs pairing students with experienced nurses can foster a deeper understanding of professional values (Cleary et al., 2023). These initiatives can help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring that students internalize the importance of autonomy, human dignity, and integrity in their daily practice (Combrinck et al., 2022).

Furthermore, addressing the digital habits of Generation Z students is crucial. While technology plays a vital role in modern healthcare, its misuse can undermine professional values (George, 2024). Nursing programs should educate students on the responsible use of social media and digital platforms, emphasizing the ethical implications of sharing patient information (O'Connor et al., 2022). Workshops and seminars on digital literacy and professional conduct can equip students with the tools to navigate the digital world responsibly. By fostering a culture of accountability and respect, educators can mitigate the risks associated with excessive smartphone use and promote healthier communication habits (El-Sayed et al., 2024).

The professional values of Generation Z nursing students require targeted interventions to align with the ethical demands of the nursing profession (Shorey et al., 2021). The challenges posed by moral lapses, poor communication, and cultural shifts necessitate a comprehensive approach to nursing education (Groothuizen, 2024). By focusing on experiential learning, mentorship, and digital responsibility, educators can empower students to uphold altruism, autonomy, human dignity, integrity, and social justice (McLaughlin-Borlace et al., 2024). Ultimately, these efforts will enhance nursing students' professionalism, improve patient outcomes, and strengthen public trust in healthcare services.

METHOD

The research design employed in this study is quantitative descriptive, which aims to provide a detailed overview of the professional values held by Generation Z nursing students. This approach is suitable for identifying patterns and trends within a specific population, allowing researchers to quantify and analyze the data systematically. The study utilized a total sampling technique, encompassing all 182 nursing students from the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Jember who met the inclusion criteria. Total sampling ensures that the findings represent the target population, providing a comprehensive understanding of the professional values among nursing students in this

cohort. By focusing on the class of 2021, the study captures insights from students at a critical stage in their educational journey, particularly those engaging with the agronursing application for the first time.

Specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure the sample's accuracy and relevance. The inclusion criteria required participants to be officially registered students at the Faculty of Nursing, University of Jember, as verified by their student ID cards. Additionally, only students from the class of 2021 who were actively participating in the agronursing application were eligible. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria eliminated students classified as expert types, whether employed or unemployed, as well as exchange students and those who declined to participate as respondents. These criteria helped maintain the homogeneity of the sample, ensuring that the data collected was relevant to the study's objectives and reflective of the targeted group of nursing students.

Data collection was conducted using the Nursing Professional Values Scale-Revised (NPVS-R), a validated and reliable questionnaire designed to measure the professional values of nursing students. The NPVS-R consists of 40 question items that assess key indicators of professionalism, including altruism, autonomy, human dignity, and social justice. Before its use, the questionnaire underwent rigorous testing for validity and reliability. The instrument's validity was confirmed with correlation coefficients ranging from $r > 0.362$ to $r > 0.833$, while its reliability was demonstrated by a high Cronbach's alpha value of 0.959. These metrics underscore the robustness of the questionnaire, ensuring that the data collected accurately reflects the professional values of the nursing students under study.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Before the study commenced, ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee (KEPK) of the Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Jember, as evidenced by the letter 346 / UN25.1.14 / KEPK / 2024. This approval ensured that the study adhered to ethical guidelines, safeguarding the rights and confidentiality of the participants. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, emphasizing their voluntary participation and the option to withdraw without consequences. Such measures uphold ethical standards and enhance the credibility and integrity of the research findings.

The study employed univariate data analysis to examine the professional values of nursing students. Univariate analysis focuses on summarizing and describing individual variables, providing a clear picture of the distribution and central tendencies within the dataset. This method allows researchers to identify the prevalence and intensity of specific professional values among the participants, offering valuable insights into areas of strength and potential improvement. By analyzing the responses to the NPVS-R questionnaire, the study aimed to highlight the current state of professional values among Generation Z nursing students, ultimately contributing to developing targeted interventions and educational strategies to enhance their professional competence and ethical awareness.

RESULT

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents by age, nursing student in Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Jember (N=182)

Characteristics	Mean	Min-Max	Std. Deviation
Age	21.36	20-24	0.586

Table 2. Characteristics of respondents by gender, nursing student in Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Jember (N=182)

Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Male	29	15.9
Female	153	84.1
Total	182	100

Based on the normality test results, the values of professionalism of Generation Z nursing students have a p-value of 0.000 <0.005, which means that the data on the variable values of professionalism of nursing students are not normally distributed. Nursing student professionalism values variable data, which is not normally distributed, so the data displayed is median and categorized using the median cut-off point.

Table 3. Question items of professionalism values of Generation Z nursing students in the Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Jember

Sub-Scale	No	Items	Median	Standard deviation	Min-Max	Rank
Altruism	1.	Give full attention to the patient/family when giving care	5	0.716	14-35	16
	2.	Improve knowledge/skills through additional education	4	0.706	14-35	15
	3.	Collaborate with other health workers	5	0.697	14-35	19
	4.	Maintain nursing standards in action	5	0.669	14-35	35
	5.	Provide positive support to peers	4	0.749	21-35	10
	6.	Act as a patient advocate	4	0.778	14-35	6
	7.	Consultation/collaboration to meet patient's need	5	0.712	14-35	18
Autonomy	8.	Respect the rights of others in care plan decisions and meet patient needs	5	0.731	12-30	22
	9.	Support patient's independent decisions	4	0.822	12-30	7
	10.	Respect the confidentiality of patient information	5	0.620	12-30	39
	11.	Respect the rights of others to input in planning care	4	0.862	6-30	3
	12.	Honor individual right to refuse treatment	4	0.852	12-30	1
	13.	Protect/respect the moral and legal rights of patients	5	0.748	6-30	25
Human dignity	14.	Respect the individual's right to make choices and express one's own opinions	4	0.750	33-55	12
	15.	Provide care without discrimination of the individual's culture	5	0.745	22-55	21
	16.	Respect the values, beliefs, and selves of others	5	0.709	22-55	24
	17.	Respect cultural/spiritual differences in patients, peers, and staff	5	0.726	33-55	17
	18.	Carefully protect patient rights/privacy	5	0.634	33-55	38
	19.	Discuss differences of opinion respectfully	5	0.774	11-55	14
	20.	Enhance the self-esteem of others through words and actions	4	0.753	22-55	8
	21.	Provide equitable care	5	0.679	22-55	35
	22.	Participate in scientific peer review	4	0.830	11-55	2
	23.	Maintain confidentiality of patients/family	5	0.585	33-55	40
	24.	Provide constructive criticism	4	0.870	11-55	5
Integrity	25.	Take accountability for your own actions and accept the consequences of those actions	5	0.694	20-50	23
	26.	Report unethical practices objectively and factually	4	0.796	20-50	9
	27.	Be honest, truthful and respects the confidentiality	5	0.686	10-50	34
	28.	Keep commitments and is dependable, punctual, and trustworthy	5	0.695	20-50	32
	29.	Maintain competency in the area of practice	5	0.687	30-50	28
	30.	Document nursing care accurately and honestly	5	0.741	10-50	26
	31.	Clarify misunderstandings in nursing actions	5	0.729	20-50	20

Sub-Scale	No	Items	Median	Standard deviation	Min-Max	Rank
	32.	Make decisions based on professional standards, research, and data	5	0.671	20-50	27
	33.	Seek to remedy errors made by self	5	0.679	20-50	33
	34.	Establish standards as a guide for practice	5	0.695	20-50	30
Social justice	35.	Ensure patient safety and comfort	5	0.679	12-30	29
	36.	Advocate for patient and profession	4	0.739	12-30	13
	37.	Provide fair access to nursing and healthcare	5	0.663	18-30	31
	38.	Refuse to participate in illegal practices	5	0.769	6-30	37
	39.	Accept different points of view on problems and ideas	4	0.758	12-30	11
	40.	Authorize the performance of nursing duties.	4	0.838	6-30	4

Table 4. Frequency Distribution Based on the professional values of Generation Z nursing students in the Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Jember (N=182)

Variable	Indicator	Median	Category	f	%
Professionalism values of Generation Z nursing student	Altruism	31	Low	99	54.4
			High	83	45.6
			Total	182	100
	Autonomy	26	Low	92	50.5
			High	90	49.5
			Total	182	100
	Human Dignity	50	Low	97	53.3
			High	85	46.7
			Total	182	100
	Integrity	46	Low	92	50.5
			High	90	49.5
			Total	182	100
	Social Justice	27	Low	91	50
			High	91	50
			Total	182	100

Table 5. Frequency Distribution professionalism values of Generation Z nursing students in Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Jember (N=182)

Variable	Median	Category	f	%
Professionalism values of Generation Z nursing student	179	Low	91	50
		High	91	50
		Total	182	100

Based on table 3. shows the highest question item at number 12, "honor the individual right to refuse treatment," the autonomy indicator in the good category, namely (49.5%). Table 3 shows the lowest question item at number 23, "maintaining patient/family confidentiality," with human dignity indicators in the less category (53.3%). Based on the research results in Table 5. shows the professionalism values of Generation Z nursing students in the good category, namely (50%), and the professionalism values of Generation Z nursing students in the less category (50%).

DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

The research findings from the study of 182 nursing students at the Faculty of Nursing, University of Jember, reveal that the average age of participants is 21 years, with the youngest being 20 years old and the oldest 24 years old. These results align with the findings of Incieser et al. (2021), who also reported an average age of 21 years among nursing student respondents. This age range is significant as it represents a critical personal and professional development period for Generation

Z nursing students. According to Allen (2022), this stage is marked by increasing maturity and emotional growth, essential for forming a strong professional identity. During this time, students internalize values, ethics, and knowledge that shape their approach to nursing practice. Researchers suggest that students develop stronger professionalism values as they grow, reflecting their ability to integrate theoretical learning with practical experiences.

In addition to age, the study highlights the gender distribution among nursing students, with the majority being female and a smaller proportion male. Specifically, the data shows that most respondents are female, consistent with the findings of Incieser et al. (2021), where 82% of respondents were female, and 18% were male. This gender disparity in nursing education is not unique to this study but reflects a broader global trend. Researchers attribute this imbalance to historical and societal perceptions of nursing as a women-dominated profession. Since the time of Florence Nightingale, nursing has been stereotypically associated with feminine qualities such as care and compassion, leading to lower participation rates among men in nursing programs (Incieser et al., 2021). This perception persists today despite efforts to promote gender diversity in the field.

The dominance of female students in nursing education raises important questions about the impact of gender on professional values and practice (Turan et al., 2021). While both male and female students are equally capable of excelling in nursing, societal expectations and cultural norms may influence their experiences and approaches to patient care. For instance, societal conditioning might make female students more inclined to adopt nurturing roles. In contrast, male students might face challenges in breaking stereotypes and asserting their place in the profession. However, Rached et al. (2023) argue that increasing gender diversity in nursing can enhance the quality of care by bringing diverse perspectives and skills to the profession. Encouraging more men to enter nursing education could help address workforce shortages and broaden the scope of nursing practice.

Researchers also emphasize the importance of understanding Generation Z nursing students' unique behavioral characteristics, particularly their age and gender. As digital natives, Generation Z students are highly adept at using technology, which can be leveraged to enhance their learning experiences. However, their reliance on digital tools and social media may also pose challenges, such as potential breaches of patient confidentiality or reduced interpersonal communication skills (Abujaber et al., 2023). These behaviors, combined with their age-related maturity and gender dynamics, create a complex interplay of factors influencing how they engage with nursing education and practice. Addressing these challenges requires tailored educational strategies for this generation's distinct needs and strengths.

Finally, the findings underscore the need for nursing educators to adopt inclusive and adaptive teaching methods that cater to students' diverse backgrounds and characteristics. By recognizing the impact of age and gender on professional development, educators can design curricula that foster the growth of professionalism values among all students, regardless of their demographic profiles. For example, incorporating role models from both genders and providing opportunities for students to reflect on their professional identity can help bridge gaps in confidence and competence. Additionally, promoting awareness of the evolving nature of nursing as a gender-neutral profession can encourage greater participation from underrepresented groups. Ultimately, these efforts will contribute to a more equitable and effective nursing workforce capable of meeting the demands of modern healthcare.

Professionalism Values Of Generation Z Nursing Students

The research findings on the professionalism values of Generation Z nursing students reveal fascinating insights into their adherence to key ethical principles. The highest-rated question item, number 12, "honor individual right to refuse treatment," falls under the autonomy indicator and is categorized as good. This suggests that nursing students are generally aware of respecting individual rights in healthcare settings. Researchers interpret this result as evidence that students recognize the value of collaborative care planning, where input from nurses, health workers, and other medical personnel is essential for achieving optimal patient outcomes. Pursio et al. (2021) support this perspective, emphasizing that collaborative care enhances efficiency and improves care quality. During the care process, complementary roles among healthcare professionals strengthen

autonomy and reinforce professionalism, ultimately leading to high-quality, patient-centered care. As a core professional value, autonomy plays a critical role in decision-making and the development of care processes that prioritize patient safety and satisfaction (Arreciado Marañón & Isla Pera, 2019).

In contrast, the lowest-rated question item, number 23, "maintaining patient/family confidentiality," scored poorly under the human dignity indicator, falling into the insufficient category. Researchers attribute this finding to Generation Z nursing students' apparent lack of focus on patient privacy during clinical practice. Preliminary interviews with students revealed that they neglected basic privacy measures, such as failing to close curtains or use blankets during nursing actions. Lindwall and Lohne (2021) highlight that neglecting patient privacy is symptomatic of a broader issue: a lack of professionalism and values related to human dignity. Ignoring patients, disrespecting personal space, and being rude can lead to conflicts and erode trust in healthcare services. Shojaei et al. (2023) define human dignity as a subjective concept tied to an individual's sense of self-worth, emphasizing that maintaining dignity in nursing involves upholding privacy, ensuring confidentiality, fostering honest communication, involving patients in care decisions, and treating them as unique individuals.

The study results presented in Table 5 indicate that Generation Z nursing students exhibit professionalism values that fall into both the less and good categories, with equal representation in each. Researchers hypothesize that the lower professionalism values observed in some students may be influenced by their heavy reliance on technology, which often leads to reduced interpersonal interactions. This characteristic of Generation Z students poses challenges in developing strong professional values, as Allen (2022) noted. The findings align with Lin et al.'s (2016) research, which reported lower average scores for professionalism values among nursing students. However, researchers also note that students who demonstrate good professional values tend to understand their importance better. These findings resonate with Paramitha et al.'s (2024) study, which highlights that Generation Z nursing students possess a positive attitude toward improving their professionalism, driven by their personal beliefs and commitment to ethical principles.

Values are crucial in shaping individual behavior and guiding decision-making in everyday life, particularly in professional settings like nursing. Abu-El-Noor et al. (2023) emphasize that nursing students consider professional values integral to their practice, as they influence their actions and interactions with patients and colleagues. Aydın et al. (2022) further explain that professionalism values can positively or negatively impact social and professional environments. For instance, firm adherence to values such as integrity, altruism, and human dignity fosters trust and respect, while neglecting these values can lead to ethical lapses and compromised care. Developing and internalizing these values during nursing education is essential for preparing students to navigate complex clinical scenarios and uphold ethical standards in their practice.

The development of nursing professionalism values is vital for enhancing the quality of patient care and the professional socialization of nursing students. Li and Li (2024) argue that instilling professionalism values in students helps them transition from novices to competent practitioners capable of delivering compassionate and ethical care. As students apply these values in real-world settings, they gain a deeper appreciation for their role in promoting patient well-being and advancing the nursing profession. Moreover, integrating professionalism values into nursing curricula ensures that students are equipped with the multidimensional skills needed to address the evolving demands of modern healthcare. This holistic approach to education fosters a culture of accountability, empathy, and lifelong learning among future nurses.

Despite the challenges Generation Z nursing students face, there is significant potential for growth and improvement in their professional values. By addressing the factors that hinder their development, such as over-reliance on technology and limited interpersonal engagement, educators can create tailored interventions to enhance students' ethical awareness and clinical competence (Adel et al., 2024). For example, incorporating experiential learning opportunities, mentorship programs, and reflective practices can help students internalize the importance of autonomy, human dignity, and social justice. Also, fostering open discussions about the ethical dilemmas encountered in clinical practice can encourage students to evaluate their actions and align them with professional norms.

Cultivating professionalism values among Generation Z nursing students is a shared responsibility between educators, healthcare institutions, and students. By prioritizing the development of these values, nursing programs can produce graduates who are technically proficient, ethically grounded, and socially responsible (Sharifikia et al., 2024). This dual focus on competence and character will improve patient outcomes and strengthen public trust in nursing. As the healthcare landscape continues to evolve, nurturing the next generation of nurses with strong professional values will ensure that they are prepared to meet the challenges of tomorrow while upholding the highest standards of care and ethics.

CONCLUSION

The average age of nursing students is 21, and most are female. The professionalism values of z generation nursing students are altruism in the less category, autonomy in the less category, human dignity in the less category, integrity in the less category, and social justice in the less category. Generation z nursing students with professional values in the less and good categories are the same. The limitations of this study are related to the limited sample size and the fact that it only took 2021 nursing students who have taken Agronursing Application Practice at the Faculty of Nursing, University of Jember, which causes bias in the study. The large number of question items on the research questionnaire caused respondents to feel tired because the duration of filling out was too long. Suggestions for future researchers are expected to pay attention to sampling by comparing nursing students and Ners professional students. Future researchers can identify factors that influence the professionalism values of nursing students. The study results are expected to be an evaluation and learning for current nursing students to develop professionalism values better.

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