



Original Article

Exploring the relationship between nursing professional values and job satisfaction in Vietnam

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ARTICLE INFO

Received 14 July 2024
Accepted 24 November 2024

Available online at:
<http://npt.tums.ac.ir>

Keywords:

professional values;
job satisfaction;
activism;
justice;
Vietnam

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DOI: 10.18502/npt.v12i1.17525

ABSTRACT

Background & Aim: Nursing professional values and job satisfaction are two significant concepts that are influenced by culture and working conditions, and therefore their evaluation in different societies may provide different results. This study explores the relationship between five factors of nursing professional values (i.e, caring, activism, trust, professional, and justice) and job satisfaction among nurses in Vietnam a developing country.

Methods & Materials: A cross-sectional survey is conducted with a total of 669 Vietnamese nurses through the Vietnamese Nursing Association network by purposive convenience sampling. The main questionnaire with 32 items was used to measure nurses' professional values and job satisfaction. The data is analyzed by using IBM SPSS 26 and Smart PLS 3 software. A structural equation model of partial least squares (SEM-PLS) was utilized.

Results: Among five factors of professional value, activism is the most influential factor on job satisfaction, followed by justice. Caring, professionalism, and justice did not show significant influence, which could be explained by the structure and organization of healthcare systems in Vietnam context characterized by hierarchical structures, resource constraints, high patient-to-nurse ratios, limited professional development opportunities, and cultural factors.

Conclusion: This study explores the relationship between nursing professional values and job satisfaction among Vietnamese nurses, revealing that activism and justice significantly influence job satisfaction.

Introduction

The nursing profession stands at the cornerstone of healthcare delivery, with nurses comprising the largest segment of healthcare workers worldwide (1). As healthcare systems face mounting pressures from staff shortages, burnout, and high turnover rates, understanding the factors that influence nurses' job satisfaction has become increasingly crucial (2). Professional values, which encompass the fundamental beliefs and principles that guide nursing practice, may play a significant role in shaping nurses' work experiences and their overall satisfaction with their careers (3). The concerning trend of nurses reporting job dissatisfaction with many considering leaving the profession entirely not only affects the quality of patient care but also

places additional strain on healthcare systems and remaining staff (4). While various factors contributing to job satisfaction have been extensively studied, the specific relationship between professional values and job satisfaction among nurses remains understudied, despite its potential significance (5).

Nurses' professional values are fundamental beliefs and principles that guide their behavior, decision-making, and interactions in their professional practice. These values are often instilled during nursing education and reinforced throughout their careers. They play a crucial role in shaping nurses' identities and their approach to patient care, including a commitment to putting patients' needs first and providing compassionate

Please cite this article as: Pham T.P.T, Huang M.C. Exploring the relationship between nursing professional values and job satisfaction in Vietnam. Nursing Practice Today. 2025; 12(1):55-64.



care (Altruism), adhering to ethical principles, and maintaining honesty in all professional interactions (Integrity), respecting the inherent worth of all individuals, regardless of their background or condition (Human dignity), advocating for fair and equitable access to healthcare for all (Social justice), and respecting patients' right to make informed decisions about their care (Autonomy). These values are often codified in professional nursing codes of ethics, such as those published by the International Council of Nurses (ICN) or country-specific nursing associations (6). Nurses' professional values form the core of their practice and significantly influence their job satisfaction. The ability to deliver care that aligns with one's values can be a significant source of professional fulfillment (7). Strong professional values guide nurses in making ethical decisions, which can lead to increased confidence in their practice and, consequently, higher job satisfaction (8). Nurses with a clear professional identity often report higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment to their careers. Professional values that are shared among nurses can also facilitate better interprofessional relationships, leading to improved teamwork and job satisfaction (11). It can act as a buffer against burnout and promote resilience in challenging work environments, indirectly contributing to job satisfaction (12). When nurses perceive that their workplace supports and aligns with their professional values, they tend to have higher organizational commitment and job satisfaction (13). Nurses who strongly identify with professional values are more likely to engage in continuous learning and professional development, which can lead to increased job satisfaction through career advancement and skill mastery (14).

Understanding how professional values align with or influence job satisfaction could provide valuable insights for healthcare organizations, nursing educators, and policymakers in developing strategies to enhance nurse retention and workplace satisfaction. Therefore, numerous studies have explored the association between nurses' endorsement of professional values and their levels of job satisfaction, recognizing the profound impact of this relationship on patient care quality, nurse

retention, and organizational outcomes. The relationship between nursing professional values and job satisfaction is complex and multifaceted. Some studies have reported mixed or inconsistent findings, suggesting that the strength and direction of this relationship may be influenced by other factors such as work environment, organizational culture, and individual characteristics (15). Additionally, researchers have highlighted the need to consider the dynamic nature of professional values and job satisfaction throughout a nurse's career context. Most of the previous studies on nurses' professional value and job satisfaction were initially conducted in a Western context, and recently a few scholars tried to explore it in an Eastern context. This is an interesting angle that highlights the importance of cultural and regional considerations in nursing research. Asian cultures, including Vietnamese culture, often have distinct value systems that can influence how professional values are perceived and enacted in nursing practice. For instance, the emphasis on collectivism and hierarchy in many Asian cultures may affect how nurses interpret and apply professional values (16). This cultural context necessitates a re-examination of established Western findings. The structure and organization of healthcare systems in Asian countries, particularly in Vietnam, may differ significantly from Western contexts where much of the existing research has been conducted. These differences could affect how professional values translate into job satisfaction (17). Nursing education systems in Asia and Vietnam may emphasize different aspects of professional values compared to Western countries. This could lead to variations in how nurses internalize and apply these values in their practice, potentially affecting the relationship with job satisfaction (18, 19). The socioeconomic context of nursing in Vietnam and other Asian countries may differ from Western contexts, potentially altering the relationship between professional values and job satisfaction. Factors such as salary, social status of nursing, and working conditions may play a more significant role (20).

Following, aspects that remain unclear in the Vietnamese context include the relative importance of different professional values in Vietnamese nursing culture, how Vietnamese

nurses balance traditional cultural values with professional nursing values, and the impact of rapid healthcare system changes on nurses' professional values and job satisfaction in Vietnam. It's necessary to identify unique cultural, and social factors in examining how the relationship between professional values and job satisfaction evolves in the rapidly changing Vietnamese healthcare system. Providing insights into how nursing education in Vietnam can better integrate professional values to enhance future job satisfaction, offering evidence-based recommendations for healthcare policies that support the alignment of professional values and job satisfaction in the Vietnamese nursing workforce. This study aims to explore the influence of professional nursing values (caring, activism, professional, trust, justice) on Vietnamese nurses' job satisfaction to add value to that contribution.

Methods

Research design and sampling

This study employs a quantitative approach, utilizing a questionnaire survey. To ensure a diverse representation of respondents, a sampling plan was developed. The research used purposive convenience sampling to select participants in hospital settings. The questionnaire was distributed through the Vietnamese Nursing Association network from May to September 2023, encompassing both a pilot test (10 nurses for only translation validity and not included in the main test) and the final survey (main stage). An online platform was designed for self-administered questionnaires, with links sent out accompanied by research information to ensure respondents' understanding and consent. The study targeted Level I and II hospitals, as classified by the Vietnam Ministry of Health. For the final survey, approximately 1,000 potential respondents were contacted.

Ethical considerations

Before conducting the survey, the Research Ethics Committee of Hanoi University of Public Health approved the study (approval number 68/2023/YTCC-HD3). All participating

nurses were briefed on the study's details and provided their written informed consent.

Measurement tool

A cross-sectional method is conducted to achieve the goal of this study. The questionnaire of the Nursing Professional Value Scale – Revised (NPVS-R) used in this study was developed by Weis and Schank (20) to measure nurses' professional values. The NPVS-R is an updated version of the original NPVS. It was revised to reflect the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics, which outlines the fundamental ethical commitments and values of nurses. The latest ANA code also encompasses the expanding roles and responsibilities of nurses for patient health, safety, and population health. The 26-item NPVS-R utilizes a Likert scale format with responses ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (most important). Each item describes a specific code provision and its interpretation in the form of a positive phrase. Job satisfaction for nurses is measured by a questionnaire of 7 items which were extracted and adopted from Muya et al. (21). The content focuses on positive emotion toward work, autonomy as a professional, confirmation of work achievements, support from superiors, perceived significance in the workplace, pleasant working environment, and general satisfaction.

The questionnaire on professional value and job satisfaction was translated into English using the back-translation method performed by three expert translators who are bilingual. The Vietnamese form and the original form were presented and discussed among three nursing experts to determine both language and content validity. The experts were Vietnamese nursing scholars who were excellent at English and had research experience in nursing. A pilot survey was carried out with ten nurses who fit the inclusion criteria after the translated version was completed with the full process and agreement of experts. No modifications were made because each item was found understandable in the pilot study.

Data analysis

This study used SPSS Statistics version 26.0 to explore demographic characteristics and

conduct preliminary data screening. We utilized Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0.9.5, a technique well-suited for predicting and developing theory augmentation (22). The measurement model's reliability and validity were thoroughly assessed to guarantee the accuracy and consistency of construct measures. Subsequently, the structural model was thoroughly assessed, and we also examined the coefficient of determination (R²) and predictive relevance (Q²). These rigorous assessments established a strong basis for the empirical examination of the constructs and their interrelationships, successfully directing our study's objectives.

Results

Sample characteristics

The 700 responses were received, but 31 were deemed invalid, resulting in a final sample of 669 questionnaires for data analysis. The respondents in this study were nurses working in hospitals across Vietnam. The vast majority were female, comprising 86% of the participants. In

terms of age distribution, half of the respondents (52%) were between 31 and 40 years old, followed by those aged 41 to 50 years, who made up 23.5% of the sample. Regarding work experience, a significant portion of the respondents (34.5%) had been working as nurses for 11 to 15 years, while 15.1% had been in the profession for 16 to 20 years. Additionally, 151 nurses had worked for 6 to 10 years, and 106 nurses had less than 5 years of experience. The rest (12%) of the respondents had more than 20 years of experience in the clinical nursing field.

Content validity and reliability assessment

The validity and reliability were assessed through frequencies, descriptive statistics, factor loadings, and reliability tests as shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3. The factor loadings were also strong, especially for professional nursing value factors (0.865 to 0.919), and a good one for job satisfaction (0.634). Reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha, with all subscales showing excellent internal consistency (alphas between 0.861 and 0.895).

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of factor items

Subscales	Items	Mean±SD
Caring	Safeguard patient's right to privacy	4.58 ± 0.54
	Maintain confidentiality of patient	4.44 ± 0.57
	Provide care without prejudice to patients of varying lifestyle	4.12 ± 0.67
	Practice guided by principles of fidelity and respect for the person	4.54 ± 0.53
	Protect the rights of participants in research	4.26 ± 0.61
	Protect the moral and legal rights of patients	4.44 ± 0.58
	Act as a patient advocate	3.97 ± 0.69
Activism	Confront practitioners with questionable or inappropriate practice	4.33 ± 0.59
	Refuse to participate in care if an ethical opposition to own professional values	4.26 ± 0.66
	Participate in activities of professional nursing associations	4.20 ± 0.67
	Participate in nursing research and/or implement research findings appropriate to practice	4.07 ± 0.66
	Advance the profession through active involvement in health-related activities	4.44 ± 0.62
Trust	Recognize the role of professional nursing associations in shaping healthcare policy	4.24 ± 0.68
	Participate in public policy decisions affecting the distribution of resources	4.01 ± 0.72
	Maintain competency in the area of practice	4.48 ± 0.59
	Accept responsibility and accountability for own practice	4.33 ± 0.60
Professional	Engage in ongoing self-evaluation	4.26 ± 0.60
	Request consultation/collaboration when unable to meet patient needs	4.10 ± 0.61
	Seek additional education to update your knowledge and skills	4.25 ± 0.63
	Establish standards as a guide for practice	4.24 ± 0.65
Justice	Promote and maintain standards where planned learning activities for students take place	4.17 ± 0.63
	Participate in peer review	3.88 ± 0.72
	Initiate actions to improve environments of practice	4.16 ± 0.67
Job satisfaction	Promote equitable access to nursing and healthcare	4.20 ± 0.64
	Protect the health and safety of the public	4.33 ± 0.62
	I am proud of my current job	4.09 ± 0.75
	I feel trusted by patients and their families	4.01 ± 0.71
	The nursing supervisor evaluates me fairly	3.77 ± 0.83
	My colleagues readily support me at work	3.97 ± 0.71
	I receive a sufficient salary for my work	3.32 ± 0.94
I can balance work with my private life	3.82 ± 0.71	
I am satisfied with my nursing career.	3.83 ± 0.84	

Table 2. Factor validity analysis

Subscales	Factor loading	Mean	Std. deviation	Cronbach alpha
Caring	.865	4.33	.429	.877
Activism	.889	4.20	.544	.871
Trust	.919	4.29	.498	.877
Professional	.906	4.12	.564	.862
Justice	.889	4.22	.566	.861
Job satisfaction	.634	3.83	.613	.895

Table 3. Reliability inter-subscale correlation test

	Caring	Activism	Trust	Professional	Justice	Job satisfaction
Caring	1.00					
Activism	.728	1.00				
Trust	.763	.801	1.00			
Professional	.737	.770	.805	1.00		
Justice	.720	.714	.790	.808	1.00	
Job satisfaction	.448	.509	.500	.469	.484	1.00

Nurses’ perception of professional value

In general, the average mean scores for all items of caring, activism, trust, professional, and justice were quite high, ranging from 4.0 to 4.5 on a 5-point scale, suggesting generally high endorsement of these professional behaviors and values. The items with the highest means tend to be those related to patient privacy and professional competency, while items involving peer review and public policy participation tend to have slightly lower means.

For CARING, the highest priority items (Mean>4.5) focus on Safeguarding Patient Privacy (4.58) which is particularly crucial in Vietnamese culture where "saving face" and reputation are important, and Fidelity and Respect (4.54) which aligns well with Vietnamese cultural values of respect for authority and elders, reflecting traditional values of care and respect in Vietnamese society. The high priority items (Mean 4.3-4.5) are Patient Confidentiality (4.44) which is of growing importance with the digitalization of health records in Vietnam; Protecting Patient Rights (4.44) and Confronting Questionable Practices (4.33) which is evolving area in Vietnamese healthcare system and important for improving healthcare quality and safety. The moderate priority items (Mean 4.0-4.3) include Research Rights Protection (4.26) which is an emerging focus as Vietnam increases medical research capacity, Ethical Opposition

(4.26) which is complex in the Vietnamese context where refusing care may conflict with duty and require balance between personal values and professional obligations, and Non-prejudiced Care (4.12) which is important in serving diverse ethnic minorities in Vietnam. The lower scoring item is Patient Advocacy (3.97) which reflects traditional Vietnamese medical culture.

The ACTIVISM subscale has the highest priority item (4.44) on Advance the profession through health-related activities, which is a strong tradition of community health programs; Policy Awareness (4.24) and Professional Association Participation (4.20) which fits to growing influence of Vietnam Nurses Association and increasing recognition of nursing as a profession; Research Engagement (4.07) which show a growing number of nursing publications and international research collaborations. The lowest score (4.01) is "Participate in public policy decisions affecting resource distribution" which reflects the hierarchical healthcare system limiting nurse input and complex bureaucratic processes in Vietnam.

For TRUST subscales, Maintaining Competency (4.48) is the highest priority, which shows the nurses’ strong emphasis on technical skills, and established continuing education programs. Professional Responsibility with a

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mean of 4.33 expresses a strong sense of duty in Vietnamese culture, and high respect for healthcare professions as well as a collective responsibility mindset. Self-Evaluation (4.26) and Knowledge Updates (4.25) show growing acceptance of reflective practice and increasing use of performance metrics, development of self-assessment tools, and a growing number of specialized training programs. The lowest score is Consultation/Collaboration (4.10) which implies traditional hierarchical barriers and limited interdisciplinary collaboration.

PROFESSIONAL subscale results show the highest score on Standards Establishment (4.24), Learning Environment Standards (4.17), and Environment Improvement (4.16) which express the growing alignment with international standards, and increased focus on quality improvement with the development of national nursing standards in Vietnam. The lowest score for Peer Review (3.88) may be explained by traditional hierarchical structures or face-saving cultural considerations in the Vietnamese context.

The JUSTICE with Equitable Access to Healthcare (4.20) and Public Health and Safety (4.33) show the nurses' promoting willingness for healthcare access and public health. In Vietnam, the current situation shows strong urban healthcare infrastructure but limited rural healthcare facilities, which requires more promoting activities to reduce this disparity, as well as national development of healthcare for all citizens.

Nurses' job satisfaction

The average mean score of job satisfaction is high (3.83), but lower than those of professional value. In detail, the highest-rated factor is feeling trusted by patients and their families (4.01). This reflects the importance of trusting relationships between healthcare workers and patients in Vietnamese culture, where respect and trust in medical expertise are highly valued. Colleague support is also highly rated (3.97), which shows that the working environment in the Vietnamese healthcare sector is united and supportive, reflecting cultural values of community spirit and cooperation. But salary satisfaction has the lowest score (3.32). This is a common issue in the Vietnamese healthcare sector, where healthcare workers' salaries are often considered to be inadequate for their work and responsibilities.

The overall career satisfaction and work-life balance are moderately high (3.83 and 3.82 respectively). This shows that despite the challenges in terms of salary, Vietnamese healthcare workers still feel relatively satisfied with their career choices and can maintain a balance between work and personal life. These results reflect the reality of the Vietnamese healthcare sector, where values of trust, peer support, and job satisfaction are highly valued, while the issue of salary remains a challenge that needs to be improved.

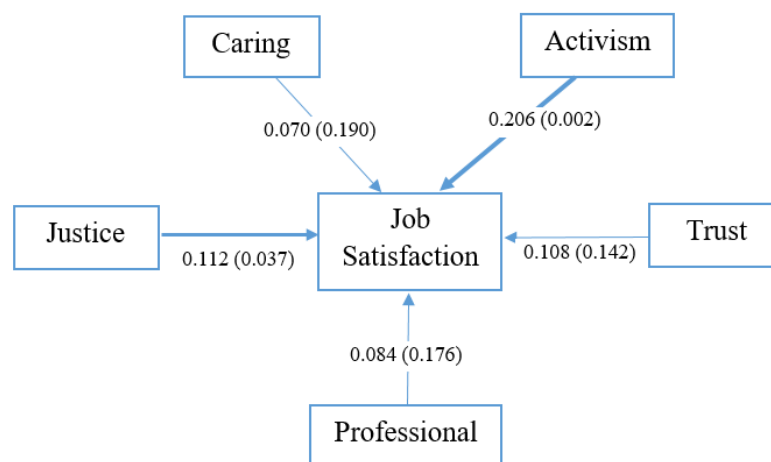


Figure 1. Structured Equation Model

Relationship between nursing professional value and job satisfaction

Table 3 and Figure 1 display the results using job satisfaction as the dependent variable and the nursing professional value which includes caring, activism, trust, professional, and justice as independent variables. All the path coefficients were tested for significance with the

help of bootstrapping functions with 5000 samples. The result of the path coefficient and the T-value are shown in Table 4. ACTIVISM has the most significant direct impact on job satisfaction ($P = 0.002$), JUSTICE is the second factor that affects the nurses' satisfaction ($P=0.037$). Other factors (i.e. CARING, TRUST, PROFESSIONAL) show no influence on the nurses' satisfaction.

Table 4. Path coefficients

Relationship	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
ATC -> JSA	0.206	0.208	0.067	3.097	0.002
CAR -> JSA	0.070	0.074	0.054	1.310	0.190
JUS -> JSA	0.122	0.119	0.058	2.084	0.037
PRO -> JSA	0.084	0.085	0.062	1.353	0.176
TRUS -> JSA	0.108	0.106	0.074	1.469	0.142

Discussion

Professional value on job satisfaction

The study on Vietnamese nurses revealed that activism in upholding professional values is the most influential factor in job satisfaction, followed by justice. Interestingly, caring, professional, and trust values did not show a significant influence on job satisfaction. These findings both support and contradict previous research in the field. The importance of activism and advocacy aligns with existing literature. Structural empowerment, which includes advocacy, significantly impacts nurses' job satisfaction (23). This supports the current study's emphasis on activism as a key factor in job satisfaction.

The impact of justice on job satisfaction is consistent with broader organizational research. Colquitt et al. (24) demonstrated strong correlations between various forms of organizational justice and job satisfaction across multiple professions, including healthcare. This aligns with the current study's identification of justice as the third most significant factor influencing job satisfaction among Vietnamese nurses. However, the lack of influence of caring professionals, and trust values on job satisfaction contrasts with some previous studies. For instance, Kim et al. (25) found that professional values were positively correlated with nurses'

job satisfaction. This discrepancy highlights the need for further research to understand the role of these fundamental nursing values in different cultural contexts.

To enhance professional values and job satisfaction, healthcare organizations should focus on several key areas. Promoting activism by encouraging nurses to advocate for patients' rights and professional standards can foster a sense of empowerment. Building trust through transparent communication, skill development opportunities, and recognition of nurses' contributions can strengthen job satisfaction at individual, organizational, and professional levels. Moreover, ensuring justice through fair workload distribution, transparent decision-making processes, and a respectful work environment can enhance perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. While caring and professional values didn't directly influence job satisfaction in this study, integrating these fundamental nursing values into daily practice remains crucial. Continuous education on professional values and ethical decision-making, along with leadership development programs, can reinforce the importance of these principles in nursing practice. Regular assessments of job satisfaction and perceptions of professional values can help identify areas for improvement and track progress over time. By implementing these strategies, healthcare organizations can create an

environment that nurtures professional values and enhances job satisfaction among nurses, ultimately leading to improved patient care and a stronger nursing profession.

The role of cultural contexts

The structure and organization of healthcare systems in Vietnamese contexts affect the translation of professional values into job satisfaction among Vietnamese nurses. Vietnamese healthcare systems tend to be more hierarchical compared to many Western systems. This can affect how nurses' professional values, particularly those related to autonomy and shared decision-making, translate into job satisfaction. In Vietnam, the strong hierarchical structure may limit nurses' ability to fully express their professional values related to autonomy and decision-making, potentially reducing job satisfaction (26). The availability and distribution of resources differ significantly between Vietnam and many Western countries, affecting how professional values related to quality care translate into job satisfaction. Vietnam with limited resources may create challenges for nurses trying to provide care that aligns with their professional values, potentially leading to moral distress and reduced job satisfaction (27). Meanwhile, in a Western context, generally, better-resourced systems may allow nurses to more fully enact their professional values related to quality care, potentially increasing job satisfaction. Staffing levels can significantly impact how professional values translate into job satisfaction. Vietnam with higher patient-to-nurse ratios may make it challenging for nurses to provide the level of care they believe aligns with their professional values (16). Moreover, limited professional development opportunities may frustrate nurses' ability to fulfill their professional value of continuous learning, potentially reducing job satisfaction (28).

The interplay between cultural values and nursing professional values can importantly affect job satisfaction differently in the Vietnam context. A strong cultural emphasis on respect for authority and collectivism may sometimes conflict with nursing professional values of patient advocacy and individual care, potentially

creating tension and affecting job satisfaction (29). In addition, the social status of nursing as a profession can affect how professional values translate into job satisfaction (30). Vietnamese nursing is often viewed as a lower-status profession compared to medicine, which may conflict with nurses' professional values of being respected healthcare professionals, potentially reducing job satisfaction (28).

Conclusion

This study explores the relationship between nursing professional values and job satisfaction among Vietnamese nurses, revealing that activism and justice significantly influence job satisfaction. The study emphasizes the importance of nurses' activism in advocating for patients' rights and quality care, which contributes to a sense of purpose and empowerment. Justice, including fair resource allocation, transparent decision-making, and equitable treatment, also emerges as a critical factor. Based on these findings, healthcare organizations and policymakers should prioritize strategies to promote and uphold the professional values of activism, and justice within the nursing workforce. This can be achieved through initiatives encouraging advocacy efforts, implementing fair policies, and providing opportunities for shared decision-making. By acknowledging and addressing the unique aspects that impact job satisfaction for nurses, healthcare organizations can create a supportive work environment that aligns with nursing professional values, enhances job satisfaction, retains talented professionals, and ultimately improves the quality of patient care and the overall healthcare system. This study focused only on the Vietnam context, the results should be carefully generalized. It suggests conducting a comparative analysis between Vietnam and other Asian countries to identify commonalities and differences in how professional values relate to job satisfaction.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express our thanks to the Vietnam Nurse Association for their support in data collection.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest among authors.

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