

A Study on the Career Preparation Behaviors and Stress Coping Strategies in Nursing University Students

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to identify the status and relationship of career preparation behaviors and stress coping strategies for nursing students. This study is a descriptive study that uses a convenient sampling. In regard to the data collection, this study targeted a total of 216 third and fourth year nursing students by utilizing a self-report questionnaire. The data was analyzed by using SPSS/WIN 20.0 program. Moreover, descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation coefficients, t-test, ANOVA and Scheffe's test were utilized. As a result, this study found that those students of higher grades tended to do career preparation behaviors more often. Those students with a good economic situation whose mother had a high educational level, tended to use stress coping strategies more often. Specifically, this study found more cases in which "social support seeking stress coping strategies" and "problem-solving centric stress coping strategies" were used. Moreover, this study also found that those who were satisfied with their major tended to use "avoidance-centric stress coping strategies" less frequently. There was a correlation between career preparation behavior level and stress coping strategies. The results of this study would make it possible to utilize the stress coping strategies of each individual student as preliminary data for identifying their career preparation behaviors.

Key words: Career counseling, career preparation, behaviors, coping, stress coping strategies, identifying

INTRODUCTION

Necessity of study: A majority of students who choose nursing studies enter nursing department in the hope of becoming a nurse. Moreover, their employment rate is relatively higher than the other majors. Hence, nursing students tend to do career preparation behaviors less frequently as compared with students of other majors (Kim, 2013). However, many new nursing programs and hospitals have opened in recent years. As a result, nursing graduates are also forced to do diverse career preparation behaviors just like students of other majors. This leads to a high degree of stress among nursing students (Hwang, 2012; Kim, 2013).

The number of new nurses and registered nurses had increased by 5.24% per annum from 2000-2012. The enrollment in nursing programs had increased by 70% from 13,897 in 2000-23,619 (including those specially enrolled students) in 2013. That is to say, nursing graduates may get a lot of stress in this fast-changing era. In particular, career related stress might have a huge negative impact on them (Park *et al.*, 2002).

Career preparation behaviors refer to actual behaviors rather than cognitive or emotional behaviors. In other words, this is about how much an individual person is

trying to do for determining a career and also how diligently this person is making behavioral efforts in order to achieve a determined career goal (Lee, 2003). In regard to the prerequisites of career preparation behaviors, it is imperative to first get a proper understanding of what occupation one really wants. Then, it is required to identify what efforts will be needed to get a desired job. Lastly, it is required to make continuous efforts along with preparations for getting a desired job.

It has been reported that employment stress influenced the school life adaptation and health condition of nursing students who would find it relatively easy to find a job. Those students who perceive a high degree of employment stress cannot have a healthy university life. Moreover, these students lack confidence, thereby having trouble preparing for employment reasonably (Ka, 2013). Furthermore, nursing students should acquire the national certification before graduation in order to get a job. That is, they experience a high degree of stress under psychological pressure in relation to the national examination.

Stress coping strategies refer to behaviors of consciously determining what kind of coping behavior will be shown when an individual person is unable to adapt to a given situation or when an individual person uses his

or her adaptation ability excessively. Humans make all kinds of efforts to maintain their psychological balance and wellbeing by escaping from stress when they are under a stressful situation. Coping is a behavior to terminate a stressful situation (Amirkhan, 1990; Shin, 2002; Jeon, 2006). Hence, determining consciously what kind of coping measure to be taken can be referred to as a stress coping strategy. Each individual person has a different way of coping with stress. This is caused by a difference in coping strategies. In this regard, coping strategies perform an important role in increasing coping effect and helping individuals adapt (Lee, 2003).

The universities conduct the employment guidance counseling programs for students who suffer from stress in relation to career. They help students develop an alternative for overcoming stress through counseling. However, there is not a sufficient degree of interest in the career preparation behaviors and stress coping strategies of nursing students.

Thus, this study aims to identify the status of career preparation behaviors and stress coping strategies for the third and fourth year nursing students. This would contribute to differentiating the career counseling for each student. Also, this would help identify the career related stress of nursing students.

Objectives of study: It would be possible to contribute to differentiation of career counseling for nursing students. Also, it would be possible to help prepare an alternative measure such as an adequate coping strategy as to career related stress that students are feeling. Following are the specific research questions:

- Is there any difference in the career preparation behaviors of nursing students depending on personal variables?
- Is there any difference in the stress coping strategies of nursing students depending on personal variables?
- Is there any relationship between career preparation behaviors and stress coping strategies for nursing students?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Method of study

Subjects of study: In this study, the third and fourth years nursing students from University A that does not have a university hospital and University B that has a university hospital were sampled conveniently by utilizing the non-probabilistic sampling method.

The minimum required number of subjects for this study was calculated at 129 people when the effect size of mid-level was set at 0.25 and the significance level was set at 0.05 with 4 groups at the maximum for securing 95% of statistical power for ANOVA using G*Power 3.12 program. The number of subjects who gave consent to this study was 180. This is an adequate number of subjects considering the minimum sample size and the dropout rate of 20%. A total of 216 people were used in the final analysis.

Tools of study: Career preparation behaviors used in this study consisted of a total of 18 questions based on the tool developed by Jeon (2006). Each question is based on the 4-point Likert scale with 1 point for "Never likely", 2 points for "Not likely", 3 points for "Likely" and 4 points for "Highly likely". A high score of career preparation behaviors means a high degree of career preparation behaviors. In contrast, a low score of career preparation behaviors means a low degree of career preparation behaviors. The reliability of this was Cronbach's α 0.904 which was similar to 0.88 at the time of development.

In regard to the measurement tool of stress coping strategies, this study utilized Korean-Coping Strategy Indicator (K-CSI) which was translated and validated by Shin and Kim (2015) based on the stress coping strategy indicator developed by Amirkhan (1990). This test indicates the degree of coping reaction after recalling one of the stressful situations in the past 6 months based on the 3-point scale (1 point for "Never done so", 2 points for "Done so rarely" and 3 points for "Done, so, very frequently"). The sub-scale score was calculated based on the sum of the scores. Cronbach's α was 0.857 which was similar to 0.84 at the time of development.

The Korean version of stress coping strategy test which was translated for reviewing whether the stress coping strategy evaluation could be applied with intercultural validity in the Korean culture was conducted with 279 Korean university students. As a result, similarly to the results of the original test, this test also confirmed the following three factors: social support seeking, problem-solving centric and avoidance-centric. The Korean version of stress coping strategy test is the self-report questionnaire with 33 questions which consists of three sub-scales, each of which consists of 11 questions. There is a low degree of correlation between the sub-scales. As a result, it was evaluated that there was a mutual independence for each coping aspect along with factor matrix.

Data collection: As for the data collection, this study collected the data through the questionnaire from

December 5-15 in 2014. The preliminary survey was conducted with 30 qualified nursing students before the main survey. In doing so, this study measured the understanding level of the questionnaire as well as the expected duration. The data collection was undertaken by the researcher of this study and one research assistant. To reduce the measurement error between the data collectors, the preliminary meeting was conducted. That is this preliminary meeting was to get a proper understanding of the questions and keep consistency in the description of questionnaire. The purpose and intention of this study was explained to the subjects. Those subjects who gave written consent were instructed to fill up the questionnaire by themselves. The researcher of this study and the research assistant collected the questionnaires.

Ethical considerations: The study plan was submitted to the Public Institutional Review Board designated by Ministry of Health and Welfare for ethical considerations of the subjects before the study was conducted. As a result of the review, this study was approved (P01-201409-SB-05-03). Those selected as a research subject received full description on the purpose and intention of this study. Also, they were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. They were also instructed that they did not need to answer in the questionnaire if they did not want to reveal their personal information. Moreover, they were given the contact information, so, that they could contact us anytime if they did not want to participate in this study even after the questionnaire was completed. The ethical aspects of the subjects were fully taken in account by sincerely answering to the questions that were not even relevant to the study.

Data analysis: The data collected in this study was statistically computed by using SPSS/WIN 20.0 program. Following is the data analysis method used in this study. The descriptive statistics were obtained in relation to the research variables along with the general characteristics of subjects.

t-test and ANOVA (Scheffei test for post-verification) were utilized in relation to the differences in career preparation behaviors and stress coping strategies in accordance with the general characteristics of subjects. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the career preparation behaviors and stress coping strategies of subjects.

Grades and career preparation behaviors were divided into three parts after frequency analysis. Those with a mean score of 3.84-4.5 in the previous semester were classified as “high” level whereas those with a mean score

of 3.5-3.83 were classified as “mid” level and those with a mean score of 3.5 or less were classified as “low” level. In regard to career preparation behaviors, those with a mean score of 2.28-4.0 were classified as “high” level whereas those with a mean score of 1.83-2.27 were classified as “mid” level and those with a mean score of 1.83 or less were classified as “low” level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General characteristics: The general characteristics of the subjects are as shown in Table 1. The mean age of the subjects was 22.28 years old. The female students were

Table 1: General characteristics of subjects (n = 216)

Individual factors	n (%)
Gender	
Age	22.28±2.28
Female	22 (10.19)
Male	194 (89.81)
Years of students	
3	111 (51.39)
4	105 (48.61)
Location of university	
Capital region	69 (31.94)
Non-capital region	147 (68.06)
Grade	
High	60 (27.78)
Mid	84 (38.89)
Low	72 (33.33)
Location of graduated high school	
Capital	44 (20.37)
Metropolitan city	61 (28.24)
Small and medium sized city	78 (36.11)
Rural city	33 (15.28)
Satisfaction level for major	
Well satisfied	46 (21.30)
Moderately satisfied	137 (63.42)
Moderately dissatisfied	31 (14.35)
Well dissatisfied	2 (0.93)
Residential status	
Living with family	63 (29.71)
Living alone or living in a boarding house	143 (66.20)
Living with relatives	2 (0.93)
Dormitory	8 (3.70)
Household economic level (per month)	
KRW 5 m or more	54 (25.00)
KRW 3-5 m	80 (37.03)
KRW 1-3 m	76 (35.19)
Under KRW 1 m	6 (2.78)
Educational level of father	
University degree or higher	111 (51.39)
High school diploma	94 (43.52)
Middle school diploma	8 (3.70)
Elementary school diploma	3 (1.39)
Educational level of mother	
University degree or higher	78 (36.11)
High school diploma	127 (58.80)
Middle school diploma	8 (3.70)
Elementary school diploma	3 (1.39)
Religion	
Catholic	25 (11.57)
Buddhism	17 (7.87)
Christianity	66 (30.56)
Other	108 (50.00)

KRW = Korean Won

194 people (89.81%) and the year students were 105 people (48.61%). Those students attending the universities located in the non-capital region accounted for the largest proportion with 147 people (68.06%). In regard to the grade, “high” level accounted for 27.78% (60 people) whereas “mid” level accounted for 38.89% (84 people) and “low” level accounted for 33.33% (72 people). In regard to their high school, “small and medium sized city” accounted for 36.11% (87 people), followed by “metropolitan city” accounted for 28.24% (61 people). As for their satisfaction level for major, “Moderately satisfied” accounted for the largest proportion with 137 people (63.42%). As for their residential status, “Living alone or living in a boarding house” accounted for the largest proportion with 143 people (66.20%). As for their household economic level, “a monthly household income of KRW (Korean Won) 3-5 m” accounted for the largest proportion, followed by “a monthly household income of KRW1-3 m” and “a monthly household income of KRW5m or more”. As for the educational level for their father, “university degree or higher” accounted for the largest proportion with 111 people (51.39%). As for the educational level for their mother, “high school diploma” accounted for the largest proportion with 127 people (58.80%). As for their religion with the exception of “other”, “Christianity” accounted for the largest proportion with 66 people (30.56%).

Differences in career preparation behaviors in accordance with the general characteristics: The results of the analysis on the differences in career preparation behaviors in accordance with the general characteristics of the subjects are as shown in Table 2. It was found that there was a statistically significant difference in career preparation behaviors depending on the grade ($t = -3.73$, $p < 0.001$). That is to say, the fourth year students did career preparation behaviors more frequently than the third year students.

Differences in stress coping strategies in accordance with the general characteristics: The results of the analysis on the differences in stress coping strategies in accordance with the general characteristics of the subjects are as shown in Table 3. It was found that there was a statistically significant difference in stress coping strategies depending on the household economic level ($F = 4.16$, $p = 0.007$) and the educational level of their mother ($F = 2.89$, $p = 0.036$). That is to say, those students with a household monthly income of “KRW5m or more” used stress coping strategies more frequently than those students a household monthly income of “KRW

Table 2: Differences in career preparation behaviors in accordance with the general characteristics

Individual factors	N	Mean	SD	t/f(Scheffei)
Gender				
Female	22	2.24	0.67	1.11
Male	194	2.11	0.51	
Years of students				
3	111	1.99	0.47	-3.73*
4	105	2.25	0.55	
Location of university				
Capital region	69	2.07	0.44	-1.14
Non-capital region	147	2.15	0.56	
Grade				
High	60	2.12	0.54	2.14
Mid	84	2.04	0.46	
Low	72	2.11	0.57	
Location of graduated high school				
Capital	44	2.18	0.48	0.62
Metropolitan city	61	2.05	0.53	
Small and medium sized city	78	2.14	0.53	
Rural city	33	2.14	0.57	
Satisfaction level for major				
Well satisfied	46	2.21	0.58	1.61
Moderately satisfied	137	2.11	0.49	
Moderately dissatisfied	31	1.99	0.54	
Well dissatisfied	2	2.56	0.55	
Residential status				
Living with family	63	2.17	0.54	0.78
Living alone or living in a boarding house	143	2.11	0.51	
Living with relatives	2	2.17	0.16	
Dormitory	8	1.89	0.60	
Household economic level (per month)				
KRW 5 m or more	54	2.14	0.51	0.08
KRW 3-5 m	80	2.11	0.55	
KRW 1-3 m	76	2.11	0.51	
Under KRW 1 m	6	2.19	0.58	
Educational level of father				
University degree or higher	111	2.12	0.51	0.27
High school diploma	94	2.13	0.57	
Middle school diploma	8	2.15	0.24	
Elementary school diploma	3	1.85	0.20	
Educational level of mother				
University degree or higher	78	2.09	0.51	0.88
High school diploma	127	2.16	0.54	
Middle school diploma	8	2.01	0.51	
Elementary school diploma	3	1.76	0.23	
Religion				
Catholic	25	2.01	0.52	1.16
Buddhism	17	2.30	0.58	
Christianity	66	2.09	0.56	
Other	108	2.14	0.49	

SD = Standard Deviation; KRW = Korean Won* $p < 0.05$

1 m or 3 m”. In addition, those students whose mother’s educational level was “university degree or higher” are used stress coping strategies more frequently than those whose mother’s educational level was “high school diploma” or “elementary school diploma”.

Comparison on mean difference between the sub-scales of stress coping strategies in accordance with the general characteristics: The comparison on the mean differences between the sub-scales of stress coping

Table 3: Differences in stress coping strategies in accordance with the general characteristics

Individual factors/stress coping strategies	Mean	SD	t/f(Scheffe)
Gender			
Female	2.13	0.26	0.89
Male	2.08	0.27	
Years of students			
3	2.07	0.27	-0.79
4	2.10	0.26	
Location of university			
Capital region	2.12	0.22	1.51
Non-capital region	2.06	0.29	
Grade			
High	2.05	0.29	0.57
Mid	2.09	0.27	
Low	2.10	0.25	
Location of graduated high school			
Capital	2.10	0.23	1.98
Metropolitan city	2.04	0.28	
Small and medium sized city	2.13	0.25	
Rural city	2.03	0.31	
Satisfaction level for major			
Well satisfied	2.06	0.42	1.35
Moderately satisfied	2.11	0.26	
Moderately dissatisfied	2.00	0.27	
Well dissatisfied	2.02	0.64	
Residential status			
Living with family	2.10	0.25	0.16
Living alone or living in a boarding house	2.08	0.28	
Living with relatives	2.08	0.41	
Dormitory	2.05	0.20	
Household economic level(per month)			
KRW 5m or more	2.18	0.26	4.16 ^a (a>c)
KRW 3-5 m	2.06	0.26	
KRW 1-3 m	2.03	0.25	
Under KRW 1 m	2.22	0.29	
Educational level of father			
University degree or higher	2.11	0.27	1.47
High school diploma	2.05	0.26	
Middle school diploma	2.00	0.14	
Elementary school diploma	1.93	0.47	
Educational level of mother			
University degree or higher	2.10	0.27	2.89 ^a (a>b,d)
High school diploma	2.09	0.26	
Middle school diploma	1.97	0.17	
Elementary school diploma	1.69	0.12	
Religion			
Catholic	2.04	0.30	0.51
Buddhism	2.13	0.23	
Christianity	2.09	0.25	
Other	2.08	0.27	

SD = Standard Deviation; KRW = Korean Won* p<0.05

strategies in accordance with the general characteristics of the subjects is as shown in Table 4. “Social support seeking stress coping strategies” among the stress coping strategies were found to have a statistically significant difference in accordance with the satisfaction level of major ($F = 3.33, p = 0.021$) and the educational level of mother ($F = 3.75, p = 0.012$). That is to say, those who were “moderately satisfied” with their major were found to use social support seeking stress strategies more frequently than those who were “moderately dissatisfied” with their major. Similarly, those whose mother’s educational level was “university degree or higher” were

found to use social support seeking strategies more frequently than those whose mother’s educational level was “middle school diploma”.

“Problem-solving centric stress coping strategies” among the stress coping strategies were found to have a statistically significant difference in accordance with the grade ($F = 3.33, p = 0.038$) and the household economic level ($F = 3.44, p = 0.018$). That is to say, those who were “moderately satisfied” with their major were found to use social support seeking stress strategies more frequently than those who were “moderately dissatisfied” with their major. Similarly, those whose household monthly

Table 4: Comparison on mean difference between the sub-scales of stress coping strategies in accordance with the general characteristics

Individual factors	Social support seeking stress coping strategies (M±SD)			Problem-solving centric stress coping strategies (M±SD)			Avoidance-centric stress coping strategies (M±SD)		
	M	SD	t/f	M	SD	t/f	M	SD	t/f
Gender									
Female	2.34	0.47	0.780	2.38	0.38	0.093	1.67	0.36	-0.783
Male	2.27	0.40		2.22	0.41		1.76	0.37	
Years of students									
3	2.24	0.40	-1.319	2.22	0.41	0.463	1.73	0.39	0.566
4	2.32	0.42		2.26	0.41		1.71	0.35	
Location of university									
Capital region	2.32	0.37	1.029	2.29	0.36	1.271	1.74	0.36	0.406
Non-capital region	2.26	0.43		2.21	0.43		1.72	0.38	
Grade									
High	2.22	0.46	0.956	2.16	0.45	3.330*(a<c)	1.77	0.35	1.328
Mid	2.31	0.41		2.21	0.36		1.74	0.36	
Low	2.29	0.37		2.33	0.42		1.67	0.40	
Location of graduated high school									
Capital	2.30	0.41	1.983	2.26	0.39	1.063	1.75	0.37	0.399
Metropolitan city	2.23	0.39		2.20	0.43		1.68	0.40	
Small and medium sized city	2.35	0.42		2.29	0.41		1.74	0.34	
Rural city	2.17	0.42		2.16	0.40		1.75	0.40	
Satisfaction level for major									
Well satisfied	2.32	0.42	3.328*(b>c)	2.28	0.44	2.049	1.59	0.34	3.778*(a<c)
Moderately satisfied	2.31	0.41		2.26	0.40		1.74	0.37	
Moderately dissatisfied	2.08	0.34		2.08	0.40		1.85	0.39	
Well dissatisfied	2.00	0.13		2.05	0.06		2.00	0	
Residential status									
Living with family	2.28	0.39	0.201	2.25	0.39	0.697	1.77	0.37	0.661
Living alone or living in a boarding house	2.28	0.43		2.23	0.42		1.71	0.37	
Living with relatives	2.14	0.58		2.64	0.00		1.45	0.64	
Dormitory	2.19	0.24		2.20	0.41		1.75	0.46	
Household economic level(per month)									
KRW 5 m or more	2.36	0.41	1.881	2.37	0.40	3.441*(a>c)	1.80	0.37	1.573
KRW 3-5 m	2.23	0.39		2.19	0.42		1.74	0.35	
KRW 1-3 m	2.25	0.43		2.17	0.37		1.67	0.38	
Under KRW 1 m	2.53	0.41		2.47	0.51		1.67	0.54	
Educational level of father									
University degree or higher	2.33	0.43	1.306	2.26	0.43	0.463	1.75	0.34	1.132
High school diploma	2.23	0.39		2.22	0.39		1.71	0.40	
Middle school diploma	2.19	0.35		2.11	0.20		1.70	0.40	
Elementary school diploma	2.15	0.59		2.27	0.48		1.36	0.40	
Educational level of mother									
University degree or higher	2.34	0.45	3.756*(a>c)	2.27	0.42	0.556	1.70	0.33	1.958
High school diploma	2.24	0.38		2.23	0.40		1.75	0.39	
Middle school diploma	1.95	0.30		2.18	0.50		1.77	0.43	
Elementary school diploma	1.79	0.23		2.00	0.09		1.27	0.09	
Religion									
Catholic	2.19	0.46	0.722	2.15	0.49	1.281	1.77	0.36	0.804
Buddhism	2.26	0.34		2.35	0.35		1.78	0.37	
Christianity	2.33	0.42		2.28	0.41		1.67	0.34	
Other	2.28	0.41		2.21	0.39		1.74	0.37	

M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; KRW = Korean Won; * P<0.05

problem-solving centric coping strategies more frequently than those whose household monthly income was “KRW1-3 m”.

“Avoidance-centric stress coping strategies” among the stress coping strategies were found to have a statistically significant difference with the satisfaction level of major ($F = 3.78, p = 0.011$). In other words, those who were “very satisfied” with their major were found to use avoidance-centric stress coping strategies less frequently than those who were “moderately dissatisfied” with their major.

Relationship between the sub-scales of career preparation behaviors and stress coping strategies:

The correlation between the sub-scales of career preparation behaviors and stress coping strategies is as shown in Table 5. The correlation between career preparation behaviors and “social support seeking stress coping strategies” was $r = 0.329$ ($p < 0.05$) whereas career preparation behaviors had a correlation of $r = 0.340$ ($p < 0.05$) with “problem-solving centric stress coping income was “KRW5 m or more” were found to use

Table 5: Relationship between the sub-scales of career preparation behaviors and stress coping strategies

	Career preparation behaviors	Social support seeking stress coping strategies	Problem-solving centric stress coping strategies	Avoidance-centric stress strategies
Career preparation behaviors	1			
Social support seeking stress coping strategies	0.329*	1		
Problem-solving centric stress coping strategies	0.340*	0.519*	1	
Avoidance-centric stress coping strategies	0.037	0.26	-0.089	1

*p<0.05

Table 6: Comparison of stress coping strategies in accordance with the level of career preparation behaviors

Individual factors	Social support seeking stress coping strategies (M±SD)	Problem-solving centric stress coping strategies (M±SD)	Avoidance-centric stress coping strategies (M±SD)
Career preparation behaviors			
High (n = 68)	2.11±0.40	2.07±0.44	1.68±0.33
Low (n = 75)	2.43±0.39	2.38±0.33	1.72±0.41
t	-4.78*	-4.84*	-0.77

M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; *p<0.05

strategies”. The correlation between “social support seeking stress coping strategies” and “problem-solving centric stress coping strategies” was $r = 0.519$ ($p < 0.05$).

Comparison of stress coping strategies in accordance with the level of career preparation behaviors:

To examine whether the mean score of career preparation behavior level and stress coping strategies is statistically significant, the mean difference of career preparation behavior level and stress coping strategies was conducted. As for the classification of career preparation behavior level, it was divided into three parts by conducting frequency analysis on the score of career preparation behaviors. About 68 subjects were classified as a “high” level. The career preparation behavior score of these students was 2.28 points or higher. About 75 subjects were classified as a “low” level. The career preparation behavior score was 1.83 points or less. The comparison on the mean difference between career preparation behavior level and stress coping strategies is as shown in Table 6.

The mean score 2.11 of “social support seeking stress coping strategies” of the students with a high degree of career preparation behaviors was lower than the mean score 2.43 of “social support seeking stress coping strategies” of the students with a low degree of career preparation behaviors ($t = -4.78$, $p < 0.05$). In addition, the mean score 2.07 of “problem-solving centric stress coping strategies” of the students with a high degree of career preparation behaviors was lower than the mean score 2.38 of “problem-solving centric stress coping strategies” of the students with a low degree of career preparation behaviors ($t = -4.84$, $p < 0.05$).

The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between career preparation behaviors and stress coping strategies when nursing students conducted career preparation behaviors. Also, this study

aimed to provide preliminary data, so that, the stress coping strategies of each individual student could be utilized in the career counseling for these students.

The mean score of career preparation behaviors of nursing students was 2.12 points. Hence, their degree of career preparation behaviors was found to be low. This was equivalent to “Done little” given that the scores of career preparation behavior test were as follows: 1 point for “Never done so”, 2 points for “Done little”, 3 points for “Done much” and 4 points for “Done very much”. This result was consistent with the finding of the previous study 5 that the overall degree of career preparation behaviors among university students was low.

In regard to career preparation behavior level, the third year students had 1.99 points whereas the fourth year students had 2.25 points. This result supports the result of the previous study (Kim, 2001) that students conduct career preparation behaviors more frequently as they advance to a higher grade. This result reflects the fact that nursing students ponder over employment more often as they advance to a higher grade. However, students have to invest a lot of time and efforts for their career. On that account, that students actively conduct career preparation behaviors as they get close to graduation may become a serious problem. Hence, it would be imperative to conduct a personalized career counseling so that students can actively conduct career preparation behaviors even when they are in a low grade. The location of university did not show a significant difference in career preparation behaviors in this study that examined nursing students. This indicates that nursing students, unlike students with other majors who have hard time finding a job because of the location of their university are not greatly concerned about the location of their respective university when they search for a job.

The significant individual variables for the mean stress coping strategies of nursing students are as follows: “household economic level” and “educational level of mother”. Those nursing students who were from an affluent family and whose mother’s educational level was university degree or higher use stress coping strategies more often in order to escape from stressful situations.

The most frequently used stress coping strategy among nursing students was social support seeking stress coping strategies which had a mean score of 2.28 points, followed by problem-solving centric stress coping strategies with a mean score of 2.24 points. The lowest stress coping strategy was avoidance-centric stress coping strategy with a mean score of 1.73 points. This indicates that the third and fourth year nursing students tend to ask for help from their acquaintances or resolve a matter causing stress when they are in a stressful situation. In contrast, they tend not to avoid a problem or situation.

Specifically, those who were moderately satisfied with nursing studies used “social support seeking stress coping strategies” more often than those who were moderately dissatisfied with nursing studies. Those whose mother’s educational level was high tending to ask for help more often when they were in a stressful situation. This finding is believed to reflect the relationship between mother and children in Korean society.

In addition, those who had poor grade were found to use “problem-solving centric stress coping strategies” more frequently than those who had good grade. Similarly, those whose household monthly income was high were found to use “problem-solving centric coping strategies” more frequently than those whose household monthly income was low. This reflects that students with good grade make less effort to analyze and solve stressful situations as compared with students with poor grade. In this context, it would be necessary to develop a personalized counseling program and coping strategy enhancement program.

Lastly, those with a high degree of satisfaction with their major tend to use avoidance-centric stress coping strategies less frequently. This reflects that those who are satisfied with their major tend to ask for help from external supporters or solve a problem actively when they are in a stressful situation. It is also possible to learn that if students believe nursing studies fit their aptitude, their confidence level increases. Furthermore, their early dropout rate decreases even after employment. This

finding can be explained in such context. New nurses get to face a lot of stresses at once due to sudden environmental changes and immaturity. The previous studies have reported that those students who were satisfied with their major adapted better.

Career preparation behaviors, “social support seeking stress coping strategies” and “problem-solving centric stress coping strategies” had a positive correlation. In addition, “social support seeking stress coping strategies” and “problem-solving centric stress coping strategies” had a positive correlation. This indicates that those students with a high degree of active coping strategies might have a high degree of career preparation behaviors. Consequently, the students who tend to actively resolve a problem in a stressful situation would conduct career preparation behaviors actively. Also, this proves that there is a close relationship between stress coping strategies and career preparation behaviors.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the status of career preparation behaviors and stress coping strategies among nursing students and also to identify the relationship between career preparation behaviors and stress coping strategies (Kim *et al.*, 2015; Shin and Kim, 2015). Also, this study aimed to provide preliminary data, so that, could be used in the career counseling for students. This could be utilized as preliminary data for conducting personalized employment counseling and establishing coping strategies in relation to the employment of each student.

As a result of the study, the fourth year students conducted career preparation behaviors more often than the third year students. Those whose household monthly income was more than KRW 5 m and whose mother’s educational background was university degree or higher were found to conduct stress coping strategies more often.

Among the stress coping strategies, those who were “moderately satisfied” with their major and whose mother’s educational background was “university degree or higher” used “social support seeking stress coping strategies” more often. Those with poor grade and high household economic level used “problem-solving centric stress coping strategies” more often. In addition, those who were very satisfied with their major were found to use “avoidance-centric stress coping strategies” less frequently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It was found that there was a correlation between career preparation behavior level and stress coping strategies. That is to say, there was a correlation between career preparation behaviors, “social support seeking stress coping strategies” and “problem-solving centric stress coping strategies”. The following recommendations are proposed based on the aforementioned results. First, it is necessary to conduct a study that includes the concept of stress coping strategies when undertaking a study on career counseling. Second, it is necessary to conduct a study as to the utilization of coping strategies that can be directly used in career counseling. Third, it is necessary to conduct a study on a continuous basis in consideration of diverse personal internal factors along with family, social and environmental factors which influence the career of students, in addition to the variables examined in this study (Jang, 2016).

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