

Factors Associated with Learning Happiness of Nursing Students, Faculty of Nursing, Srinakharinwirot University

นิพนธ์ต้นฉบับ

Original Article

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วารสารไทยเภสัชศาสตร์และวิทยาการสุขภาพ 2559;11(3):98-105.

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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์: เพื่อศึกษาปัจจัยที่สัมพันธ์กับความสุขในการเรียนรู้ของนิสิตพยาบาล คณะพยาบาลศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ **วิธีการศึกษา:** การวิจัยเชิงบรรยาย กลุ่มตัวอย่างคัดเลือกแบบเจาะจง เป็นนิสิตพยาบาลชั้นปีที่ 3 - 4 หลักสูตรพยาบาลศาสตรบัณฑิต คณะพยาบาลศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ ปีการศึกษา 2558 จำนวน 169 คน เก็บข้อมูลโดยใช้แบบสอบถาม 3 ส่วน ได้แก่ 1) แบบสอบถามข้อมูลส่วนบุคคล 2) แบบประเมินระดับความสุขของนิสิตพยาบาล และ 3) แบบสอบถามปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อความสุขในการเรียนรู้ของนิสิตพยาบาล ความตรงของเนื้อหาของแบบสอบถามส่วนที่ 2 และ 3 เท่ากับ 0.87 และ 0.80 ตามลำดับ ส่วนค่าความเชื่อมั่นเท่ากับ 0.89 และ 0.95 ตามลำดับ วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยค่าร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ยและส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และสถิติ Pearson correlation เพื่อทดสอบความสัมพันธ์ของปัจจัย **ผลการศึกษา:** กลุ่มตัวอย่างมีความสุขในการเรียนอยู่ในระดับมาก ปัจจัยภายใน ได้แก่ ความสุขทางใจ ความสุขภาพกาย มีความสัมพันธ์ทางบวกกับความสุขในการเรียนรู้ที่มีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ 0.01 ปัจจัยภายนอก ได้แก่ การจัดการเรียนการสอน สถานที่พักอาศัย สิ่งแวดล้อม ครอบครัวอบอุ่น และความมั่นคงของชีวิตมีความสัมพันธ์ทางบวกกับความสุขในการเรียนรู้อย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ 0.01 **สรุป:** สถาบันการศึกษาพยาบาลควรจัดการเรียนการสอนภายใต้บรรยากาศที่เสริมสร้างการเรียนรู้ จัดสิ่งสนับสนุนการเรียนรู้ที่เพียงพอ ให้ความสำคัญกับการส่งเสริมสุขภาพต้านร่างกายและจิตใจเพื่อให้ผู้เรียนมีความสุขในการเรียนรู้อย่างแท้จริง **คำสำคัญ:** ความสุขในการเรียนรู้, ปัจจัยภายในบุคคล, ปัจจัยภายนอกบุคคล, นิสิตพยาบาล

Abstract

Objective: To examine the factors associated with learning happiness of nursing students. **Method:** This descriptive study recruited a purposive sample of 169 third and fourth-year nursing students in the Bachelor of Nursing Science Program, Faculty of Nursing, Srinakharinwirot University, academic year 2015. Data were collected by the questionnaires consisting of three parts, namely 1) personal information, 2) assessment of learning happiness level and 3) factors associated with learning happiness. Coefficients of content validity of part 2 and 3 were 0.87 and 0.80, respectively and coefficients of reliability were 0.89 and 0.95, respectively. Data were presented as percentage, and mean with standard deviation. Correlations between learning happiness and related factors were tested by Pearson's correlation coefficient. **Results:** Students had a high level of learning happiness. The internal factors including mental health and physical health, and external factors including teaching and learning, accommodation, environment, family bond and security of life, were positively associated with learning happiness ($P < 0.01$). **Conclusion:** Nursing schools should create a teaching and learning environment that encourages learning, provides adequate supporting materials, and promotes physical and mental health of nursing students to help them achieve a learning happiness. **Keywords:** learning happiness, internal personal factor, external personal factor, nursing students

Introduction

Globalization affects changes in society and population, economy, industry, science technology and environment, politics and government, including education which must be reformed to intentionally change in order to be the main base to support such changes. The importance of educational development is to develop the students to be good and talented people.¹ This means it aims to allow learners to have academic knowledge and professional competence, as well as moral and ethical behavior. It also expects happy learners who possess knowledge seeking traits, and a pursuit of happiness and physical and mental health throughout their life. The learners are also expected to be able to work and

live happily with others and live under the principle of sufficiency economy philosophy.¹

Happiness is the basic requirement of human beings of which it is the state of life that could help the individual handle problems in life, has the potential to achieve a better quality of life, including the virtue under the social and environmental changes.² Happiness is the key factor for sustainable learning, learning new things, and helping students to live in a changing environment. Teaching and learning that aims at making the students happy should be based on the learners' readiness, both mental and physical, learning process, instructor, and the environment that supports learning.

The learning happiness is a process within persons as a reflection of the students' interest and enthusiasm, the happiness occurring in the learning process, role acquisition, opinion sharing, knowledge application ability in various situations.³ The factors associated with learning happiness consist of internal and external personal factors. The internal personal factors include good physical health with treatment available when sick, adequate rest, self-esteem, mental strength, acceptance on the change, and being realistic. In terms of external factors, significant ones included family bond, life security, safe residence, and good environment. In addition, teaching and learning external factors included teaching method, instructor style and supporting learning materials.^{4,5}

Recently the learning processes that could result in a practical skill are composed of remembering, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation, and creation. Each of these processes could occur simultaneously or sequentially, both forward and backward.⁶ To achieve learning happiness, the six learning management steps include 1) the activation of the brain or brain gym, 2) realization of value of learning, 3) the use of concept mapping, 4) the use of experiential learning, 5) learning reflection, and 6) information feedback.⁷

As a professional practice, nursing offers care towards individual, family and community, either by teaching, suggestion, consultation, providing care both physical and mental, environment management necessary for symptom reliefs, deceleration of disease progression, and rehabilitation. Nursing practice also includes basic cares for common illnesses, and immunization. Under professional nursing laws and regulations, and based on the principle of science and the art of nursing, nurses perform health condition assessment, diagnosis, as well as nursing care plan, actual care, and evaluation on the nursing care outcomes. To be eligible for professional practice, nurses must be licensed by the Thailand Nursing and Midwifery Council.⁸ To prepare nursing students for entering the nursing profession as guided by the professional standards, nursing and related sciences, both in theoretical courses and practicum sessions, are the strict requirement. Such Bachelor's degree in nursing science curriculum needs to meet the criteria set by the Thai Qualifications Frameworks for Higher Education (TOF: HEd), Ministry of Education (issued on November 16, 2009, published in the government gazette on January 11, 2010). The criteria entail the desirable

quality of nursing graduates as those equipped with knowledge, morality and ethics, critical thinking, problem-solving skill, interpersonal interactions, responsibilities, and skills in communication, information technology, and nursing.⁹

Nursing learning is not only intensive, but also extensive. Pressure and stress could be originated from didactic course learning and training sessions, adjustment to the environment of learning and training, and interactions with peers, instructors, preceptors, patients, healthcare providers, and community leaders. If unable to properly self-adjust, this exhaustive learning process could lead nursing students to an unpleasant and unhappy state of mind. A previous study suggests that various internal factors directly influencing learning happiness include student-centered learning and self-esteem.¹⁰ Based on student-centered learning concept, the learning is active in nature, and allows for good interaction between students and teachers, student participation, process learning, obvious learning outcomes, and applications. Self-esteem leads to learning happiness through various attributes including self-acceptance, self-respect and confidence in their own learning abilities.¹⁰ In addition to internal factors, some external factors relating to happiness and suffering of nursing students include a good relationship with friends, hard-working family with self-reliance, the absence of quarrelsome or confrontational family encounters, being available for each other and for discussion, and a good relationship with instructors.¹¹

In thriving for excellence of nursing curriculum of Srinakharinwirot University, the psychological well-being of nursing students is one of the most crucial factors. However, before learning happiness could be encouraged, the understanding of the issue was needed. It was therefore imperative that learning happiness of the students should be determined. In addition, to solve the problems, if any, efficiently, influencing factors on learning happiness in this group of students must also be examined. The results could be helpful in promoting learning happiness among nursing students. This study specifically aimed to determine the happiness level and to examine the relationships between select factors associated with learning happiness of nursing students, at the Faculty of Nursing, Srinakharinwirot University.

Materials and Methods

This descriptive study was conducted in the academic year 2015 at the Faculty of Nursing, Srinakharinwirot University. With a purposive sampling method, the sample was all 169 third and fourth year nursing students in the Bachelor's of Nursing Science program. They were purposively recruited because of their experience with nursing practice training in various in-patient departments.

Data collection tools

We used questionnaire as a tool to collect data. The first part collected demographic and personal information from the students including year of study, hometown, monthly family income, student's monthly expense, grade point average (GPA), average sleep hours daily, and number of close friends.

The second part was a questionnaire to assess happiness among nursing students developed by Thongsom.¹¹ The 32 questions comprises of 5 domains including learning interest, satisfaction in learning, self-satisfaction, anxiety, and attitude towards nursing profession. The response is a 5-point Likert-type rating scale ranging from very low to very high. Scoring for items with positive content is in ascending order, i.e., 1-very low, 2-low, 3-moderate, 4-high, and 5-very high, and vice versa for those with negative content. With the total average score ranging from 1 to 5, mean scores of 1.00 - 1.80, 1.81 - 2.60, 2.61 - 3.40, 3.41 - 4.20, and 4.21 - 5.00 were considered very low, low, moderate, high and very high levels of happiness, respectively.

The third part asked students about factors that could potentially associate with learning happiness of nursing students. These 43 questions were modified from the work of Asawasiroj.¹² It consists of 1) internal personal factors including physical health and mental health, 2) external personal factors which are family bonding, security of life, accommodation, university environment, and teaching and learning. All questions are context-positive with a five-level rating scale ranging from 1-very low, 2-low, 3-moderate, 4-high and 5-very high. The average total score was categorized into five levels of 1.00 - 1.80, 1.81 - 2.60, 2.61 - 3.40, 3.41 - 4.20, and 4.21-5.00 and interpreted as very low, low, moderate, high, and very high, respectively.

The questionnaire was tested for quality. For content validity, the questionnaire was given to three experts to criticize and rate the content validity. It was found that part 2 and part 3 had an acceptable content validity as indicated by content validity index (CVI) coefficients of 0.87 and 0.80, respectively. For internal consistency reliability, a sample of 30 nursing students from an institute comparable to the Faculty of Nursing, Srinakharinwirot University, was used for testing. The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was found to be high as suggested by the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.89 and 0.95 for the learning happiness questionnaire and factors associated with learning happiness, respectively.

Data Analysis

Demographic data of the student participants were presented as mean with standard deviation, and frequency with percentage. Scores of learning happiness, and each of the factors potentially associated with the happiness were presented as mean with standard deviation. The associations between learning happiness and each of the factors were determined using the statistic of Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients, with a statistical significance of $P < 0.05$.

Results

A total of 169 nursing student participants consisted of students from third and fourth year somewhat equally, 49.70% and 50.30%, respectively (Table 1). The majority came from the central region (46.70%), had a GPA of 3.01 or greater (59.20%), had a monthly family income higher than 20,000 Baht (59.80%), and had a monthly personal expense of 5,000 - 7,000 Baht (50.30%). In addition, most of them had three to five hours of sleep daily (56.80%), followed by 41.40% having six to eight hours of daily sleep. In terms of the number of close friends, the majority had three or more close friends (56.20%), followed by 42.60% having one to two close friends (Table 1).

The overall **learning happiness** of nursing students was at a high level with a mean score of 3.52 ± 0.96 . For individual domains, self-satisfaction, attitude toward nursing profession and satisfaction in learning were also at the high level (3.94 ± 0.76 , 3.93 ± 0.75 , 3.4 ± 0.85 , respectively). However, the

domains of learning interest and anxiety were at the moderate level (3.38 ± 0.84 and 2.72 ± 1.81 , respectively) (Table 2).

Table 1 Characteristics of nursing students (N = 169).

Characteristics	Number	%
Study year		
Third	85	50.30
Fourth	84	49.70
Region of hometown		
Northern region	22	13.00
Central region	79	46.70
North-Eastern region	34	20.10
Eastern region	25	14.80
Southern region	9	5.31
GPA		
1.00 - 2.00	0	0.00
2.01 - 3.00	69	40.80
3.01 or greater	100	59.20
Family Income (Per Month)		
Less than 5,000 Baht	1	0.60
5,000 - 10,000 Baht	20	11.80
10,001 - 15,000 Baht	16	9.50
15,001 - 20,000 Baht	31	18.30
More than 20,000 Baht	101	59.80
Monthly personal expense (Baht)		
Less than 5,000	44	26.00
5,000 - 7,000	85	50.30
7,001 - 9,000	28	16.60
9,001 - 11,000	9	5.30
More than 11,000	3	1.80
Number of sleep hours per day		
Less than 3	2	1.20
3 - 5	96	56.80
6 - 8	70	41.40
More than 8	1	0.60
Number of close friends		
None	72	42.60
1 - 2	95	56.20
3 or more		

Table 2 Learning happiness levels of the nursing students (N = 169).

Domains of learning happiness	Happiness level		
	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
1. Self-satisfaction	3.94	0.76	High
2. Attitude towards nursing profession	3.93	0.75	High
3. Satisfaction in learning	3.41	0.85	High
4. Learning interest	3.38	0.84	Moderate
5. Anxiety	2.72	1.81	Moderate
Overall	3.52	0.96	High

In terms of factors potentially associated with learning happiness, it was found that, for internal personal factors, both physical and mental health was at the moderate level (3.73 ± 0.71 and 3.22 ± 0.82 , respectively). For external factors, family bonding was at a very high level (4.25 ± 0.84)

while security of life, accommodation, environment, and teaching and learning were at the high level (3.99 ± 0.72 , 3.85 ± 0.93 , 3.70 ± 0.93 , and 3.86 ± 0.53 , respectively) (Table 3).

Table 3 Factors associating with learning happiness among nursing students (N = 169).

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Level of perception
Internal Personal Factors			
Mental health	3.73	0.71	Moderate
Physical health	3.22	0.82	Moderate
External Personal Factors			
Family bond	4.25	0.84	Very high
Security of life	3.99	0.72	High
Teaching and learning	3.86	0.53	High
Accommodation	3.85	0.93	High
Environment	3.70	0.93	High

It was found that learning happiness among nursing students was positively associated both with physical and mental health with a statistical significance ($r = 0.48$ and 0.46 , respectively, and $P < 0.01$ for both). For the external factors, teaching and learning, accommodation, environment, family bond and security of life were all significantly positively associated with learning happiness ($r = 0.60$, 0.47 , 0.43 , 0.30 and 0.24 , respectively, $P < 0.01$ for all correlations) (Table 4).

Table 4 Correlations between learning happiness among nursing students and internal and external factors (N = 196).

Variable	Correlation coefficient (r) [#]
Internal Factors	
Mental health	0.48*
Physical health	0.46*
External factors	
Teaching and learning	0.60 [†]
Accommodation	0.47 [*]
Environment	0.43 [*]
Family bond	0.30 [†]
Security of life	0.24 ^{††}

[#] Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient * P -value < 0.01 [†] P -value < 0.05

Discussions and Conclusion

Our study on the third- and fourth-year nursing students of Srinakharinwirot University in the academic year 2015 found that their learning happiness was in a high level. To elaborate such finding, relevance of each domain of learning happiness is discussed as follows.

It was found that these students had a high level of self-satisfaction (3.94 ± 0.76). As self-satisfaction is reflected as being friendly and talented, and having self-esteem, good personality and fun with life, the students in this study presented such quality. This is consistent with the previous study which found that nursing students had a high level of self-esteem and perceived that they were respectable and useful to their family and others.¹³ Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs¹⁴, once basic needs are met, more sophisticated needs are required. This suggests that among these nursing students, their basic needs including physical, safety and social ones are sufficiently met. As a consequence, there was a high possibility that higher-level needs including their self-esteem, self-appreciation, human relations, respect for others, confidence in their actions and the happy living were at least partially, if not fully, met.

Learning happiness could also be reflected in the attitude towards nursing profession. With a high level in the attitude (3.93 ± 0.75), it could be attributable to the facts that these students were reportedly willing to engage in the training with no disdain to patient care, willing to work as assigned, feeling proud of the patient care practice, applying their knowledge in nursing training to the fullest of their ability, and holding nursing care as their professional life goal. Our finding was consistent with the previous study that found nursing students had a positive attitude towards nursing profession. They considered nursing as a mere charitable job, were proud to help all human beings to stay healthy, and held themselves responsible for appropriate interactions with others and for the progression in the profession.¹⁵ It may also be explained by the fact that the Faculty of Nursing, Srinakharinwirot University, has long been determined to produce quality nursing graduates who are able to work with passion, ethics, morale, and positive attitude towards the professions.

In the process to produce the graduates with such attributes, the Faculty have incorporated various behavior enhancement interventions in various activities including competency-based learning classes, basic professional nursing course called Concept and Theories of Nursing to introduce students to the on-site nursing care at the medical wards, direct observation on the actual nursing practice, the development of the leader role. The Faculty have also arranged meetings for all current students to meet with senior graduates to listen to their professional experiences in the

hope of getting inspired, feeling proud and building positive attitude towards the profession, specifically exceptional nursing performance, and quality and efficient patient care.

Learning happiness could also be reflected by **satisfaction in learning**. A high level of satisfaction in learning found (3.41 ± 0.85) in our students could be attributable to their reported commitment to succeed in the work assigned and in activity participation, as well as their satisfaction in the results of their own learning and the regulations set forth by the Faculty. In addition, in terms of more tangible factors, such satisfaction could be contributed by teaching and learning methods at the Faculty of Nursing. These methods include student-centered learnings by means of group and practice-based learning where students design and plan the work together with the support by the teachers and consultants. This learning process along with the facilitators could steer the students' learning to be more cooperative and creative, hence possibly the happy learning.

For the **satisfaction in results of learning**, it was found that the majority of the students (59.20%) had a GPA of 3.01 or greater. Even though the association between GPA and level of satisfaction was not examined in our study, we could, with a certain level of confidence, say that GPA was possibly positively associated with the satisfaction. This association is consistent with that in the study by Thongsom that learning happiness of nursing students under the Ministry of Public Health was positively associated with GPA.¹¹

As we found that the students were **satisfied with rules and regulations**, it is different from the study by Rerkluenrit that found the students at the same institute but from different academic year felt uncomfortable with the expectations of the teachers. Specifically they felt they were forced to follow rules, even with those perceived as impractical. For example, to take sick-leave, students needed to submit the doctor's proof of illness after such leave of absence. This rule was deemed impractical, since for most cases only self-care was sufficient. Having to go see the doctor was therefore unnecessary, if not entirely detrimental to the illness. In fear of the need to see the doctor, many ill students decided to attend the class, instead of taking a rest. As expected, their learning ability was limited by the illness.¹⁶

In terms of **learning interest**, these students expressed the attribute at a moderate level (3.38 ± 0.84). The moderate level of this positive attribute among these students could be

attributable to their reported behaviors of preparing before attending classes by reviewing the assigned reading materials, paying attention to the study, asking questions, expressing opinions, and using technology to search for educational information. It seems that our findings on the moderate, if not high, level of learning interest was reasonable. As these nursing students were in the later years of their curriculum therefore they were more likely to comprehend what they were learning. With the courses and trainings with highly specific objectives, unlike the general and basic knowledge in the early years of the curriculum, these students could pay more attention to their study. Nursing students usually get to the class in time, pay attention in class, and express opinions and ask questions at a certain level. They, like other students, use technology to search for information and learning fluently.

Theoretically learning interest is the driving force within the person. People who are interested in pursuing learning will have enthusiasm, patience, and goal and hope to succeed. They then will try to achieve the expectations. In addition, the environment has contributed to the interest in learning as well, such as living together in a group of friends and the student-centered learning. Such environment allows the students to have analytical thinking. On the provider side, the Faculty of Nursing, Srinakharinwirot University, has been implementing the learning environment and encouragement from the first day of student enrollment. Students are firstly assessed for their attitude towards nursing profession. The Faculty helps students set goals of learning in the nursing profession, continuously implement methods that encourage students to learn, and motivate the students in learning to contribute to their goals.

As the present study has found that the learning interest is at the moderate level. The student-centered learning model could have contributed to such moderate achievement. While the model helped guide students incorporate the theory together with the practice on the medical wards, such intensive learning assignment could also be a limiting factor. The preparation and the actual on-site training could have made the students anxious and exhausted. This is consistent with the study of Rerkluenrit that found that the third-year students of the same institute were stressed because of intensive study and practice, and specifically the very early and late classes. They reported having only three to four

hours of sleep, hence the exhaustion and no time for self-study.¹⁶

Our present study found that **anxiety** was presented at a moderate level (2.72 ± 1.81) as reported by feelings of being forced to study, feeling lonely even among classmates, feeling unsafe, and fear of being sued by the patients. Overall the nursing students had a moderate level of attitude towards learning and were anxious at a low level. This could be explained by the fact that the Faculty has been using the student-centered learning both in classes and training sessions. Students can self-study, group-work on assignments, consult with their advisors, review class materials, and practice on simulated cases. With all these learning facilitations, the Faculty expect the students to be ready for the actual practice training with less anxiety. The anxiety among nursing students was not uncommon. Previous studies found that the third- and fourth-year nursing students were stressed when in the training they were uncomfortable with. The study reported nursing students had a moderate level of stress in the delivery room. Specifically they were worried they were going to make mistakes in the training and were unable to control themselves.^{17,18}

In terms of **factors** that could potentially affect the learning happiness, internal and external factors were found associated with the learning happiness. As the internal factors, both physical health and mental health was significantly positively associated with learning happiness ($r = 0.48$ and 0.46 , respectively, $P < 0.01$ for both correlations). These factors included feeling comfortable for adequate sleeping hours, receiving appropriate care for illness, getting exercise more than once a week, having close friends for consultation, and staying healthy. This is consistent with the previous study which found that having friends among pre-clinic medical students accounted for a substantial level of learning happiness.⁴ This phenomenon could possibly be reasoned by the Maslow's hierarchy of needs that everyone requires physiological needs, such as food, clothes, habitats, medicines, air, drinking water and relaxation. Once the persons' needs are met, they can develop their desired goals in life.¹⁴ Therefore, having good physical health and mental health is the important elements for the nursing students to be happy in learning.

As one of the external factors, teaching and learning was found significantly positively associated with learning happiness ($r = 0.60$, $P < 0.01$). The attributes of such

teaching and learning included, for example, 1) teaching style with no tense atmosphere, having many teaching methods, assigning appropriate works and evaluating transparently and fairly, 2) the teachers' understanding on the nature of students, preparing for teaching, conveying knowledge with good understanding, and believing in and being a role-model in nursing professions, and 3) availability and adequacy of supporting learning materials, such as documents, textbooks, computers, nursing equipment and laboratories. Our finding is consistent with the previous study which found that physical environment, teaching and learning, extra curriculum activities, administration and services provided to the students supported the learning happiness. It could be explained that the Faculty of Nursing, Srinakharinwirot University has been using the student-centered learning with many teaching methods such as project-based learning, problem-based learning and action after review. However, the nursing students reflected that they needed the teaching and learning that encourages the happy learning. They requested that exams and work submissions should be scheduled at different times. Classes should not be postponed, cancelled or made up. The teachers should start and finish classes on time. The teachers should also have clear explanation in their classes and allow for consultation outside the classes. In practice sessions, all students should be supervised and evaluated fairly. Students should not be blamed in front of their peers.

For the supporting learning materials, as a part of accommodation, libraries should be readily available to support the study outside the classrooms. This is crucial especially during the practice sessions where references, such as textbooks and journal papers, are needed for more understanding on the patient case. They also requested adequate public utilities, and no noise or air pollutions. These accommodation factors were positively associated with happiness ($r = 0.47, P < 0.01$) with statistical significance. This need is consistent with the Maslow concept¹⁴ that everyone requires the physiological needs for living. In these students' context, to reach such expectations, the Dormitory Management Center of the Srinakharinwirot University was the responsible agent. The Center made the room safe for students, and ready for students to relax and learn. Materialistically, the Center provided room furniture, such as bed, wardrobe, desk and chair, as well as other

facilities including reading room, television room, religious ceremony room, drinking water and wi-fi internet.

Another external factor was the **university environment** which consisted of facilities for exercise, places for other recreational activities, and parks. This university environment was also positively associated with learning happiness ($r = 0.43, P < 0.01$). This could be explained based on the fact that the Ongkharak campus of the university provides a physical environment to allow students a pleasant living by having a sport center, open fields for outdoor activities, dormitories, waterfront pavilion, recreational areas, and small parks. Trees are grown all over the university campus area. However, many nursing students did not use or rarely used these facilities. The reasons for such rare use of recreational facilities could be that the students could have had other ways to relax or they were too busy with classes, assignment, and training sessions, or simply busy commuting back and forth between the university campus and training site. Furthermore some of them had to stay at the training site. Thus, the university environmental factor and learning happiness had a low association.

Family bond, an external factor, was positively associated with learning happiness with a statistical significance ($r = 0.30, P < 0.05$). A previous study was also found that parents or guardians who understood and encouraged the students to their full potentials, nurtured them, and had a good relationship with them, had both direct and indirect influences on the learning happiness of the nursing students significantly ($P < 0.01$).¹⁰ Other factors include having a diligent and self-reliant family. The good family was also expected to have an open discussion among its members, and spend time together. The absence of quarrelsome encounters was also expected. In a good family, family members are reliable, respect one another, and share responsibility amongst the members. These attributes contribute to a strong family bond, as well as will-power to help each other to overcome obstacles.¹¹

As we found that **security of life** was positively associated with learning happiness ($r = 0.24, P < 0.05$). This was reflected by having no debts, their own house, adequate diet, adequate income, and money adequate for the expenditure. With the national policy, students have the opportunity to access educational funding. Students who lack financial support can apply for the government's student loans for tuition fees, and educational and personal expenses

during the study following the Student Loan Act B.E. 2541 (1998). Moreover, the Faculty of Nursing also provides funding and hiring for part-time jobs.

Our findings suggest that nursing school should create a learning atmosphere that helps reduce tension, and encourage the instructors to try more effective teaching methods applicable to various learning settings. The supporting learning materials need improvement both in content and forms including the use of advanced information system to deliver the content and enhance learning, the availability of and access to the resources, specifically, textbooks, references, journal articles, either in hardcopy and electronic forms. These could help students research information needed in a timely fashion especially during the training sessions. Furthermore, a more systematic and readily available consultation system, by academic advisors, course instructors and counselors, must be in place for any matters possible. Finally, as learning happiness is based on the basic human needs, to help each individual student reach such goal, a tailor-made approach taking into account their physical health, mental health, families, economical status, and all environmental factors, is needed.

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Editorial note

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