

Age-Related Differences in Information Gathering among Nursing Students: Implications for Nursing Education

Yuriko Inoue^{1*}, Mikako Tanaka², Hiromitsu Ezure¹, Junji Ito³, Akiko Sasaki⁴, Takashi Takaki⁵, Harumi Hata⁶, Masaaki Takayanagi⁷, Naruhito Otsuka¹

¹Department of Anatomy, School of Medicine, Showa University, Tokyo, Japan

²Faculty of Engineering, Yokohama National University, Kanagawa, Japan

³Department of Nursing, School of Nursing and Rehabilitation Sciences, Showa University, Kanagawa, Japan

⁴Department of Pharmacology, School of Medicine, Showa University, Tokyo, Japan

⁵Center for Electron Microscopy, Showa University School, Tokyo, Japan

⁶Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Teikyo Heisei University, Tokyo, Japan

⁷Center for University-Wide Education, Saitama Prefectural University, Saitama, Japan

Email: *inoue1978@med.showa-u.ac.jp

How to cite this paper: Inoue, Y., Tanaka, M., Ezure, H., Ito, J., Sasaki, A., Takaki, T., Hata, H., Takayanagi, M. and Otsuka, N. (2025) Age-Related Differences in Information Gathering among Nursing Students: Implications for Nursing Education. *Open Journal of Nursing*, 15, 60-66.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojn.2025.151007>

Received: November 5, 2024

Accepted: January 21, 2025

Published: January 24, 2025

Copyright © 2025 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Background: For nursing students, gathering social information is essential for understanding healthcare and social issues and developing critical thinking and decision-making skills. However, the choice of information sources varies by age and individual habits. With the widespread use of the internet, there are notable differences between younger and older generations in their reliance on the internet versus traditional media sources like newspapers and television. Given the wide age range and diverse backgrounds of nursing students, understanding generational differences in information-gathering methods is important for implementing effective education. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to identify how nursing students in different age groups obtain social information and to examine media usage trends by age group. Additionally, we aim to use the findings to provide insights into effective information dissemination methods in nursing education. **Results:** The results showed that nursing students in their teens to forties, regardless of gender, primarily relied on the internet as their main information source, with television playing a secondary role. In contrast, students in their fifties tended to obtain information more often from newspapers and television than from the internet. This highlights an age-related difference in preferred information sources, with older students showing a greater reliance on traditional media. **Conclusions:** This study demonstrates that nursing students use different information-gathering methods based on their age, suggesting a need to custo-

mize information dissemination strategies in nursing education. Digital media may be more effective for younger students, while traditional media or printed materials might better serve older students. Educational institutions should consider these generational differences in media usage and adopt strategies that meet the diverse needs of their student populations.

Keywords

Nursing Students, Social Information Sources, Media Usage Trends, Generational Differences

1. Introduction

For nursing students, gathering social information is crucial for both their education and clinical practice. Awareness of current events and developments in healthcare enhances decision-making skills, critical thinking, and understanding of patients and communities [1]. However, individual preferences for information sources are influenced by factors such as age, lifestyle, and personal habits [2]. As digitalization accelerates, younger and older age groups often differ in their reliance on the internet versus traditional media sources like newspapers and television [3].

Given that nursing students span a wide range of ages and come from diverse backgrounds, their methods of obtaining social information likely vary by age group [4]. However, limited research systematically examines these generational differences in information-gathering habits among nursing students. Understanding which sources are predominantly used by different age groups can offer valuable insights for educational institutions to optimize information delivery [5].

This study investigates how nursing students obtain social information and examines age-based trends in media usage. We aim to clarify the characteristics of media usage among nursing students across different age groups and gain insights into effective methods of information dissemination within nursing education.

2. Methods

2.1. Data Collection

All first- to third-year nursing students (188 individuals) at Seiwa Nursing College in Tokyo, Japan, were asked to answer a specific question (see 2.2 Question) (**Figure 1**). The percentage of answers from each source was analyzed to identify trends. In the first year, there were 44 nursing students (37 women and 7 men). In the second year, there were 30 students (27 women and 3 men). In the third year, there were 58 students (54 women and 4 men) (**Figure 2** and **Figure 3**). We also examined sex-based differences in disaster preparedness awareness changes among first- to third-year students after enrollment (**Figure 2** and **Figure 3**).

Among the students, there were 46 teenage women and 7 teenage men. In their 20s, there were 77 women and 11 men. In their 30s, there were 25 women but no

men (Figure 4 and Figure 5). We also investigated changes in disaster preparedness awareness among nursing students in different age groups (Figure 4 and Figure 5). All data were gathered in 2022.

Question:

How do you obtain social news? Please select the option that best applies to you and mark it with a circle. If you use other methods, please specify them below.

	people	%
News Paper	5(people)	3%
Television	64(people)	34%
Internet	112(people)	60%
Books	1(people)	1%
Others	6(people)	3%
Total	188(people)	100%

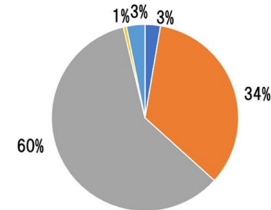


Figure 1. Sources of social news among respondents.

Differences in Social Information Sources Between Male and Female Students Across Academic Years

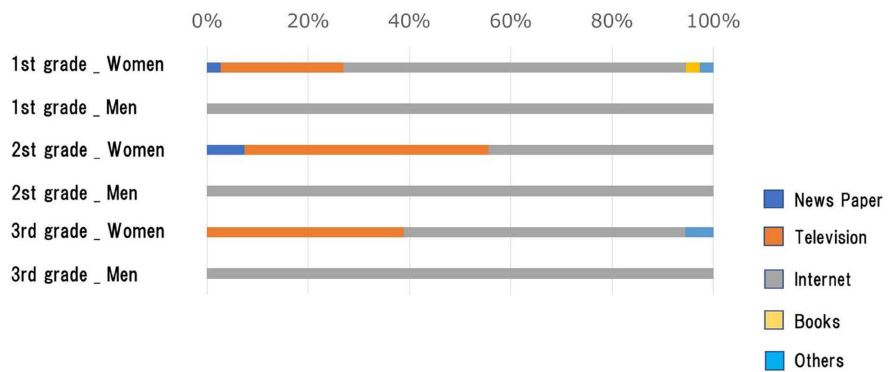


Figure 2. Differences in social information sources between male and female students across academic years.

Grade x Gender x get your social news						
Answer	1st grade _ Women	1st grade _ Men	2rd grade _ Women	2rd grade _ Men	3rd grade _ Women	3rd grade _ Men
News Paper	1		2			
Television	9		13		21	
Internet	25	7	12	3	30	4
Books	1					
Others	1				3	
Total(People)	37	7	27	3	54	4
Answer	1st grade _ Women	1st grade _ Men	2rd grade _ Women	2rd grade _ Men	3rd grade _ Women	3rd grade _ Men
News Paper	3		7			
Television	24		48		39	
Internet	67	100	45	100	56	100
Books	3					
Others	3				5	
Total(%)	100	100	100	100	100	100

Figure 3. Sources of social news by grade and gender.

Gender-Based Differences in Sources of Social Information Across Age Groups

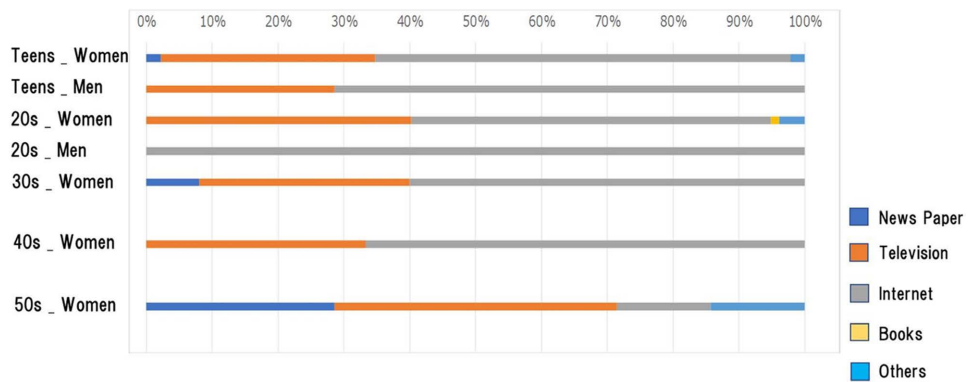


Figure 4. Gender-based differences in sources of social information across age groups.

Different age groups x Gender x get your social news							
Answer	Teens _ Women	Teens _ Men	20s _ Women	20s _ Men	30s _ Women	40s _ Women	50s _ Women
News Paper	1				2		2
Television	15	2	31		8	3	3
Internet	29	5	42	11	15	6	1
Books			1				
Others	1		3				1
Total(People)	46	7	77	11	25	9	7

Answer	Teens _ Women	Teens _ Men	20s _ Women	20s _ Men	30s _ Women	40s _ Women	50s _ Women
News Paper	2				8		28
Television	32	29	40		32	33	42
Internet	64	71	55	100	60	67	15
Books			1				
Others	2		4				15
Total(%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Figure 5. Sources of social news by age group and gender.

2.2. Question

Regarding the sources of social news:

“How do you obtain social news? Please choose the option that best applies to you and circle it. If you have other methods, please specify them.”

- A. Newspaper
- B. Television
- C. Internet
- D. Books
- E. Other

3. Results

3.1. Differences in Sources of Social Information among Male and Female Students by Academic Year

A survey of the entire student body of the nursing school revealed that more than

half of the students obtained information from the internet (**Figure 1**). Additionally, 30% of students received their information from television. Only a small fraction of students used newspapers or books as information sources, comprising less than 5% of the total (**Figure 1**).

3.2. Differences in Sources of Social Information among Male and Female Students by Academic Year

We examined the sources of social information used by students in each academic year. Across all years, more than 90% of students obtained information through television and the internet. The majority of students, both male and female, primarily sourced social information from the internet, with over 40% identifying it as their main source. This trend remained consistent throughout their nursing education. Notably, all male students in each year obtained their social information exclusively from the internet. A small number of female students gathered social information from newspapers, while books were the least utilized source among students (**Figure 2** and **Figure 3**).

3.3. Differences in Sources of Social Information among Male and Female Students by Age Group

Nursing students ranged in age from their teens to their 50s. There were 7 male and 46 female students in their teens, 11 male and 77 female students in their 20s, 25 female students in their 30s, 9 female students in their 40s, and 7 female students in their 50s. There were no male students over 30 (**Figure 4** and **Figure 5**).

We conducted a survey on sources of social information among nursing students of various age groups. Among students in their teens through forties, the majority—both male and female—obtained social information mainly from the internet, with television as the second most common source. Interestingly, students in their fifties were more likely to obtain social information from newspapers than the internet. Additionally, television was the most popular source of social information for nursing students in their fifties (**Figure 4** and **Figure 5**).

4. Conclusions

The study revealed significant differences in the sources of social information among nursing students across age groups. Students in their teens to forties, regardless of gender, primarily used the internet as their main source of information, followed closely by television. In contrast, students in their fifties showed a stronger tendency to obtain information from newspapers rather than the internet, with television as their primary source of information.

These findings suggest that nursing students' methods of information gathering vary by age group, with older students showing a stronger preference for traditional media. This underscores the need to consider age-appropriate approaches for effectively providing information to different demographic groups within the student population.

5. Discussion

The findings from this study reveal a distinct pattern in how nursing students of various age groups obtain social information, highlighting generational preferences and habits in media consumption. Among younger students (teens to forties), the internet was overwhelmingly the primary source of information due to its accessibility, immediacy, and integration into their daily routines [6]. The high internet usage among this demographic aligns with broader trends in digital media consumption among younger populations, who often favor online sources for their convenience and the breadth of available information [4]. Television, while still widely used, serves as a secondary source, offering a blend of visual content and scheduled programming that complements information obtained online [7].

Students in their fifties showed a preference for traditional media, favoring newspapers over the internet and using television as their most common source [1] [3]. This trend may reflect habits formed before widespread internet access when newspapers and television were the primary media for social information. Additionally, this preference may be influenced by perceptions of credibility, as some older students may view newspapers and televised news as more reliable or in-depth compared to online sources, which often vary in quality and credibility [5] [8].

This age-related divergence in media use offers key insights for tailoring nursing education and enhancing communication within educational settings. Recognizing these differences can help educators tailor information dissemination strategies to effectively reach all age groups [6]. For instance, digital platforms may be optimal for younger students, whereas incorporating traditional media or offering printed information might resonate better with older students [7]. By acknowledging these diverse preferences, nursing programs can enhance the accessibility and relevance of information, thus supporting the varied needs of their student populations.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of understanding and adapting to generational differences in information-gathering methods among nursing students. Future research could explore how these preferences impact students' learning experiences and professional development, as well as the potential role of media literacy training in helping students critically evaluate diverse information sources [8].

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- [1] Okubo, N. (2020) The Impact of Internet Usage on Media Consumption: A Comparative Analysis of Younger and Older Age Groups. *Japanese Media Studies Journal*, **15**, 45-60.

- [2] Suzuki, A., *et al.* (2021) The Role of Critical Thinking and Media Literacy in Social Information Gathering among Nursing Students. *Journal of Japanese Nursing Education*, **25**, 112-126.
- [3] Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan (2019) Information and Communication Usage Trend Survey Report. Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.
- [4] Anderson, M. and Jiang, J. (2018) Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018. Pew Research Center.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/>
- [5] Toda, K. (2018) Trust and Usage Trends in Traditional Media among the Elderly. *Journal of Media Studies on Elderly*, **8**, 31-46.
- [6] Green, T. and Dennis, S. (2019) Digital Media Consumption in Nursing Students: A Comparative Study Across Generations. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, **10**, 145-152.
- [7] Johnson, A. and Smith, B. (2020) Media Preferences and Information Literacy among Undergraduate Nursing Students. *Nurse Educator Today*, **41**, 82-89.
- [8] Oyama, M. (2019) The Need for Media Literacy Education and Evaluation of Information Source Credibility. *Journal of Educational Media Studies*, **14**, 98-112.