

Research into the Promotion of Nursing and Midwifery as a Career of Choice Involving the Medium of Film



Bord Altranais agus
Cnáimhseachais na hÉireann
Nursing and Midwifery
Board of Ireland



John Goodwin, Rachel Gough, Jan Cattoni, Ciara Chambers, Sinead Cronin, Clare Crowley, Margaret Curtin, Caroline Dalton, Marie-Therese Keating, Patricia Leahy-Warren, Anne-Marie Martin, Geraldine McLoughlin, Margaret Murphy, Brendan Noonan, Niamh O'Brien, Cora O'Leary, Maria O'Malley & Vera J. C. McCarthy



Authorship Team

Dr John Goodwin

Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Dr Rachel Gough

Research Assistant, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Dr Jan Cattoni

Lecturer, School of Education and the Arts, CQUniversity, Australia

Dr Ciara Chambers

Senior Lecturer, Department of Film and Screen Media, University College Cork

Ms Sinead Cronin

Clinical Skills and Simulation Technical Assistant, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Ms Clare Crowley

Clinical Skills & Simulation Manager, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Dr Margaret Curtin

Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Dr Caroline Dalton

Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Ms Marie-Therese Keating

Clinical Practice Co-Ordinator, Cork/Kerry Community Healthcare

Prof Patricia Leahy-Warren

Dean and Head of School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Dr Anne-Marie Martin

Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Dr Geraldine McLoughlin

Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Dr Margaret Murphy

Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Dr Brendan Noonan

Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Dr Niamh O'Brien

Lecturer, Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, South East Technological University

Ms Cora O'Leary

Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Dr Maria O'Malley

Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

Dr Vera J. C. McCarthy

Senior Lecturer, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork

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Executive Summary

Nurses and midwives are essential components of any healthcare system. These professionals play critical roles in the delivery of healthcare services. However, in recent years, there has been a global decline in interest amongst young people in pursuing careers in nursing and midwifery. In Ireland, fewer students are selecting these professions when making decisions about university courses, with negative perceptions and stereotypes often cited as an influencing factor. Consequently, there is a need to develop age-appropriate interventions to promote nursing and midwifery.

There is emerging evidence that media can impact young people's decisions to pursue careers. Moreover, film is considered an acceptable intervention amongst young people and can be successfully implemented within the secondary school environment. Therefore, the aim of this study was to develop a short film to promote the professions of nursing and midwifery and to evaluate its effectiveness amongst young people.

A mixed methods design was adopted. An email advertising the study was sent through the Head of Student Recruitment, University College Cork, to guidance counsellors in secondary schools throughout Ireland. The study was also promoted over social media. Students from 4th, 5th, and 6th year were recruited, and invited to watch a short film developed by the research team. The short film, titled *Nursing & Midwifery: A Career for You?* (22-minutes in length) was developed through a process of co-design with a researcher with expertise in nursing and film studies, and students and Programme Directors from intellectual disability nursing, general nursing, mental health nursing, children's nursing, and midwifery. In addition to the scripted scenes, each individual short film concluded with a "talking head", featuring a student from each discipline.

Participants completed an online survey, comprising a demographics questionnaire; the Attitude Scale for Nursing Profession (ASNP) (Coban & Kasikci, 2011), adapted to include midwifery; questions at pre-test and post-test on whether or not they would consider a career in nursing or midwifery; a post-test question on whether or not they thought film is an appropriate intervention for their age group; and an open text box to provide any additional feedback. At the end of the post-test survey, the qualitative phase of the study was advertised, with students invited to email the research team if they were interested in partaking in an online 1:1 interview (conducted via MS Teams). Survey data were analysed using SPSS (descriptive and inferential statistics); qualitative data (interview data and responses to open text boxes) were analysed using content analysis.

There was a statistically significant increase in the mean of the ASNP post-test, indicating that the short film intervention was effective in enhancing adolescent respondents' attitudes towards the professions of nursing and midwifery. The proportion of respondents who expressed an interest in pursuing a career in nursing pre-test (n=106, 20.8%) increased at post-test (n=121, 23.8%), with the proportion of respondents disagreeing or strongly

disagreeing to pursuing a career in nursing decreasing from pre-test (n=267, 52.5%) to post-test (n=246, 48.3%). The proportion of respondents who indicated 'neither' to this question correspondingly increased slightly from pre-test to post-test (n=136, 26.7% to n=142, 27.9%). In terms of interest in pursuing a career in midwifery, there was an increase from pre-test (n=45, 8.8%) to post-test (n=53, 10.4%). The proportion of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing to pursuing a career in midwifery decreased from pre-test (n=351, 69.0%) to post-test (n=331, 65%). The proportion of respondents who indicated 'neither' to this question correspondingly increased from pre-test to post-test (n=113, 22.2% to n=125, 24.6%). The short film that appealed to respondents the most was mental health nursing (36.0%, n=183) and the film that appealed the least to respondents was children's nursing (21.4%, n=109).

Eight participants took part in online 1:1 interviews. Three overall categories were identified: Perceptions of Nursing and Midwifery, The Impact of the Short Film Intervention, and Suggestions for How to Promote Nursing and Midwifery for Young People. Participants spoke about what had influenced their opinions of nursing and midwifery prior to watching the short film intervention, and some of the perceived barriers that would prevent them from pursuing a career as a nurse or a midwife. They commented that watching the short film intervention helped them to focus on some of the more positive aspects of nursing and midwifery. The use of visual media facilitated a more nuanced depiction of these professions, helping to clarify some of the roles of nurses and midwives, and, despite some previously suggested opinions and barriers, made them more likely to think about pursuing a career in nursing or midwifery.

A variety of strategies were suggested, other than the use of short films, that could be used to encourage other young people to think about pursuing nursing or midwifery as career options. These included more external speakers with expertise in nursing and midwifery coming to schools, and the opportunity to complete nursing and midwifery work experience or engage in simulated learning.

Given the success of the intervention, *Nursing & Midwifery: A Career for You?* should be made available to all schools for teachers and guidance counsellors to use with students. It should also be made available on media hosting platforms where it can be easily shared, and featured on relevant websites (e.g., the Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland) for the attention of potentially interested young people. Future film-based interventions aimed at promoting nursing and midwifery should focus on the human-to-human aspects of these professions, as this aspect of the professions appealed more to participants when compared to task-based scenarios. More opportunities need to be provided for adolescents to get "hands on" experience of nursing and midwifery, and for adolescents to interact more with those working in nursing and midwifery. There is also a need for nurses and midwives to engage with filmmakers more closely to ensure media portrayals are more positive.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Nurses and midwives are essential components of any healthcare system, playing critical roles in the delivery of healthcare services (Abbott et al., 2023; Hoskote et al., 2023; Lyman et al., 2023). Nurses are often the primary caregiver for patients/service users and are responsible for ensuring the best quality care is provided. In addition to assisting patients/service users with their activities of daily living and monitoring vital signs, nurses also act as advocates, communicating with other healthcare providers on behalf of patients/service users. They build trusting relationships with patients/service users and their families, acting in a caring and compassionate manner (Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland [NMBI], 2021; Walsh et al., 2022). Midwives provide essential care and support for women during their pregnancy and in the postpartum period (Abbott et al., 2023; Geuens & Vermeulen, 2023). They have specialised knowledge and skills that enable them to respond to complications that may arise during pregnancy/birth, and help women to create personalised birth-plans, and act as advocates, ensuring access to relevant information, resources, and care (Feely, 2023; Gianotten et al., 2023; NMBI, 2021).

Alongside increasing demand for healthcare, many developed nations have noted significant decreases in applications for undergraduate nursing and midwifery programmes in recent years (Hill 2023; Moncrieff et al., 2023; O'Brien, 2022; Quann, 2022; White, 2023). A recent report indicates decreasing interest among 15-year-old students in pursuing careers as nurses in at least half of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries between 2018 and 2022 (OECD, 2024). In Ireland, for example, in 2022, nearly 1,700 fewer students selected these programmes as their first choice when compared with previous years (Quann, 2022). Moreover, healthcare systems have reported challenges with short staffing (Connor 2021; Molloy, 2022; Ryder et al., 2022), reflective of a global shortage of nurses and midwives. Indeed, it is estimated that, by 2030, there will be 4.5 million fewer nurses and 0.31 million fewer midwives than is required (Boniol et al., 2022; World Health Organization, 2025). Owing to these decreases in healthcare students/staff, in addition to increased service demands, there is a need to attract more people to nursing and midwifery programmes. However, there is evidence that young people have negative perceptions of nursing and midwifery as career options (Rodríguez-Pérez et al., 2022; Tadese et al., 2020). Nursing is often considered a “low-status” profession amongst young people (Glerean et al., 2017), and the capacity for nurses to act as leaders is not well known (Rodríguez-Pérez et al., 2022). Tadese et al. (2020) reported that many young people have negative perceptions about midwifery and are unlikely to consider it as a career option. This indicates that educational and promotional interventions need to be developed to enhance the image of nursing and midwifery as career options for young people.

There are several factors that can influence a person's decision to pursue a career in nursing and midwifery, including gender (Chenery-Morris & Divers, 2024; Prosen, 2022) and having someone in the family who is a nurse or midwife (McLaughlin et al., 2010). The influence of media and film should also be considered. Film has the potential to significantly influence public and personal perceptions across a wide range of subjects, from mental health (Goodwin et al., 2024), to alcohol usage (Merrill et al., 2023), to politics (Rasul & Raney, 2021). Indeed, watching films can have an influence on young people's decisions to pursue certain careers. For example, in a US national representative cross-sectional study, girls in school, and women in college aged 18-24 were asked about media influences and their intentions to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). For 82.7% of respondents, seeing girls/women in STEM careers on TV was regarded as important. Characters such as April Sexton from *Chicago Med*, Addison Montgomery from *Private Practice*, and Temperance Brennan from *Bones* inspired many of these respondents to pursue careers in STEM (Davis, 2018). In a study undertaken in Hong Kong, comprising 1,246 Form 6 students Law and Arthur (2003) found that almost half (n=528) of respondents cited media as their main source of information about nursing. More recent evidence supports these findings. In a qualitative descriptive study with 33 African American and Latinx adolescents, television programmes such as *Grey's Anatomy* and *Nurse Jackie* were highlighted as having an influence on young people's attitudes towards nursing (McGee et al., 2019). From a midwifery perspective, using a qualitative descriptive design, several midwifery students in Australia (n=41) reported that they had sought out information about the profession from television programmes prior to commencing their studies (Carolan & Kruger, 2011).

Film-based interventions have been implemented successfully with adolescents. In the United Kingdom, the acceptability of a film-based intervention targeting adolescent boys to prevent sexual risk-taking was examined (Aventin et al., 2019). Process evaluation data collected using focus groups with adolescents (n=17) indicated that 91% (n=145) were satisfied with the intervention. In Canada, Burk et al. (2018) evaluated a film-based intervention to reduce sexual orientation prejudice in schools amongst 184,821 adolescents. They found reduced odds of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students experiencing discrimination, being bullied, and considering suicide. The authors also reported increased levels of school connectedness. In Ireland, the use of a film-based intervention amongst adolescents (n=101) resulted in a statistically significant increases in wellbeing, resilience, and attitudes towards mental health help-seeking (Goodwin et al., 2024). In addition, qualitative data revealed that the film-based intervention encouraged adolescent participants to speak more openly about mental health, and that this medium of communication was acceptable among this population group. However, respondents suggested that, rather than using a feature film, the intervention should employ the use of a shorter film to more successfully engage the target audience (Goodwin et al., 2024). Given evidence from other studies using film-based interventions, and reports that film/media impacts on attitudes towards nursing and midwifery, educating young people using a short film approach has the potential to improve attitudes towards these professions.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this study was to develop a short film to promote the professions of nursing and midwifery and to evaluate its effectiveness amongst young people.

Chapter 2: Methods

2.1 Design

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed methods design that included a quantitative phase (pre-test-post-test) followed by a qualitative phase (qualitative descriptive). A mixed methods design acknowledges that the combined strengths of quantitative and qualitative approaches can allow for a much greater understanding of the phenomenon under investigation than either method alone could (Creswell, 2021). In explanatory sequential mixed methods research, quantitative data is collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to explain or elaborate on the initial quantitative findings. This approach aims to build on initial quantitative results, refining them through qualitative insights (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017).

2.2 Ethics

Ethical approval was granted by the Social Research Ethics Committee, University College Cork (UCC) (log: 2024-128). Throughout the study, the core moral principles of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice, and the four core behavioural norms of veracity, privacy, confidentiality, and fidelity were adhered to (Beauchamp and Childress, 2013).

Autonomy was respected by explaining to all potential participants and their parents/guardians that participation in the study was entirely voluntary. We adhered to veracity by providing explicit written and verbal information about the study to participants. We explained that participants could withdraw from the survey up to the point of submission and from the qualitative phase two-weeks post-interview, thus maintaining the behavioural norms of privacy and confidentiality. Throughout the study, we endeavoured to do no harm, and we ensured that we secured participant assent in addition to parent/guardian consent (if the participant was <18 years of age), thus upholding the principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence, and the core behavioural norm of fidelity. We were transparent regarding the benefits and the risks of taking part in the study; moreover, we treated all participants equitably. As such, we upheld the final core moral principle of justice.

2.3 Intervention Description

The short film, titled *Nursing & Midwifery: A Career for You?* was developed through a process of co-design, where a diverse group of stakeholders come together to apply a collective creative approach when designing a product or service (Goh et al., 2022; Sanders & Stappers, 2012). Redval (2024) argues that co-creation is a suitable methodology for content creation for young people, as it enhances relatability and authenticity. The lead researcher holds a master's degree in film studies and a PhD in Nursing. He held initial exploratory meetings with Programme Directors and students from intellectual disability nursing, general nursing, mental health nursing, children's nursing, and midwifery.

Students were asked to suggest a nursing or midwifery scenario that would appeal to school-going students. The lead researcher took notes during these meetings and wrote up the initial five individual short screenplays, which were sent to Programme Directors and students to review. The screenplays were created through several rounds of revisions, informed and shaped by the feedback and commentary of students and Programme Directors. An overview of the short films produced is provided in **Table 1** and screenshots are provided in **Figure 1**.

Table 1: Overview of short films in Nursing & Midwifery: A Career for You?

Short Film	Description
Intellectual Disability Nursing	Eddie, an intellectual disability nurse, meets Cian, a young boy with an intellectual disability, and his mother, Jane. Cian has been experiencing difficulties swallowing food and is being fitted with a PEG tube. Eddie explains the process to Cian and Jane and Eddie also jokes with them.
General Nursing	Fiona, a general nursing student, and her preceptor, Yvonne, meet Sean, following his angiogram. Fiona checks Sean's blood pressure, and then Yvonne asks her to remove the band that was fitted post-angiogram. Fiona removes the band, explaining the process as she does so, and then receives positive comments from Yvonne.
Psychiatric Nursing	Dave, a psychiatric nurse, provides Dr. Walsh, a consultant psychiatrist, with an update about a service user, Mark, who is ready for discharge. Mark and his girlfriend, Leanne, then speak with Dave about the discharge process. Mark speaks positively about the care he has received in the acute ward. Leanne becomes upset and Dave acknowledges how difficult it has been for her supporting Mark. Dave provides an overview of the supports available to both Mark and Leanne.
Children's Nursing	Feng, a children's nurse gives a hug to Jess, a young patient leaving the ward in a sling. Feng's colleague, Paul, lets her know that James, a child she looked after in the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU) is alert and awake. Feng brings James his lunch and talks to him about the care he received while in PICU. Through flashbacks, we see Feng in the PICU administering medications and fluids to James and giving him a bed bath. James comments that Feng has a hard job, but she tells him it is worth it, just as James's parents enter the room and hug him.
Midwifery	Over voiceover, we hear Caroline, a midwife, talking about a "very special moment" in her job. Caroline receives a phone call saying that Julie is ready to give birth. Caroline meets Julie and her partner, Barbara, in the antenatal suite. After an examination, she informs Julie that she is ready to go to the birthing suite. Caroline supports Julie through the birthing process, explaining what is happening to Helen, a student midwife. After the baby is born, Julie and Barbara smile at Caroline, and she tells the audience that this is the "very special moment", when she is always very glad that she is a midwife.

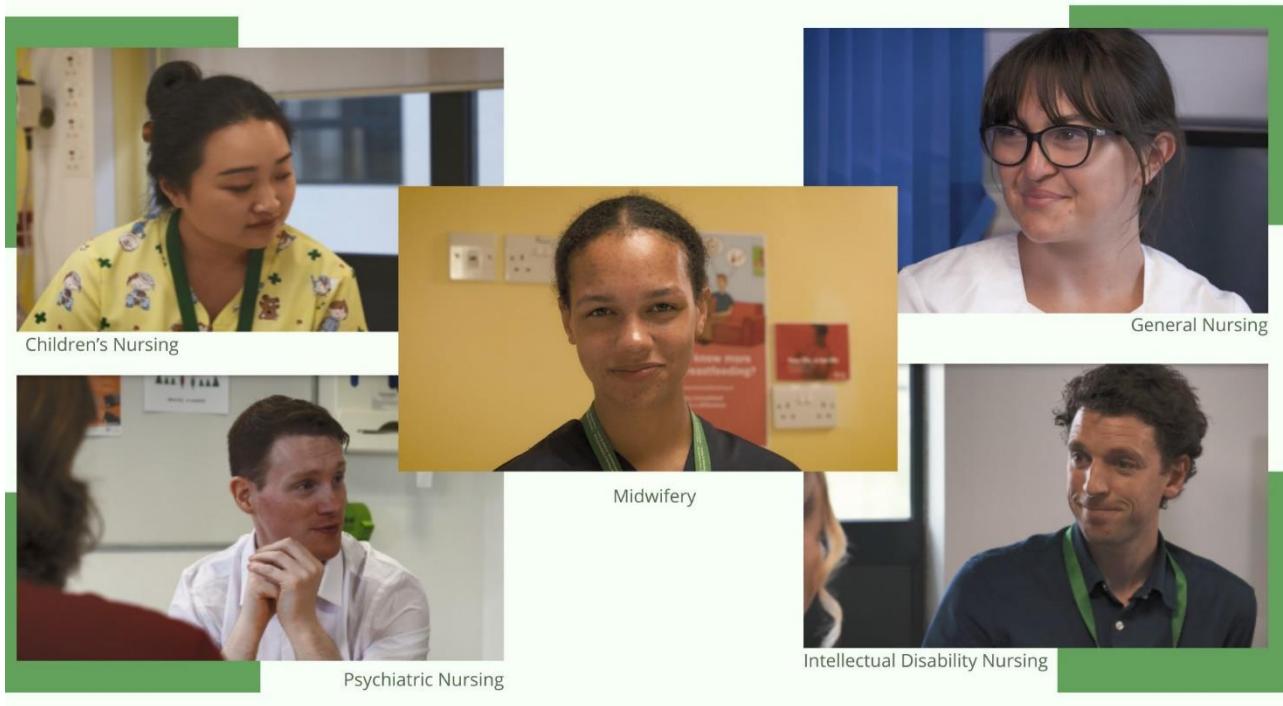


Figure 1: Screenshots from *Nursing & Midwifery: A Career for You?*

Wombat Media, a professional film production company with experience in developing healthcare-related multimedia were employed to produce the short film. During filming, representatives from each of the disciplines were available on-set to advise the filmmakers.

In addition to the scripted scenes, each individual short film concluded with a “talking head”, featuring a student from each discipline. These students spoke about their love of their chosen field of study, the combination of theory and clinical practice, and job prospects.

Although Wombat Media performed the majority of the editing, this was also a collaborative process, and included the lead researcher, a lecturer in screen media from UCC, and an international (Australia) lecturer in screen media who also holds a registration in nursing. To ensure the short film was appropriate for the intended audience, and in line with co-design principles, school-going students were invited to view the rough cuts and provide feedback. Each party provided detailed production notes on the content and form of the films; however, no further changes were made to the edits, as it was felt that the films were coherent and authentic. *Nursing & Midwifery: A Career for You?* is 22 minutes in length.

2.4 Recruitment

We targeted students in secondary schools in Ireland in 4th (transition year), 5th, and 6th year. During these years, there is often a focus within schools on students’ choice of career (Fenwick, 2023).

The Head of Student Recruitment, UCC, sent correspondence via email directly to all career guidance counsellors throughout Ireland. This email informed the career guidance counsellors

of the study and asked them to contact the lead researcher for further information if they were interested in their school participating. The study was also advertised via the X (formerly Twitter) accounts of the School of Nursing & Midwifery, UCC, and the Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI).

2.5 Data Collection – Quantitative

Interested career guidance counsellors contacted the lead researcher directly, acting as gatekeepers. The lead researcher sent information packs to gatekeepers by email which provided them with the details of the study. The packs included an information leaflet, links to an online assent form for respondents aged <18 to complete and an online consent form for their parents/guardians to complete, an online consent form for respondents aged ≥18 to complete, a link to the short film intervention, and links to pre and post-test surveys. Respondents were instructed to create a unique code to facilitate matching of pre-and-post data.

Surveys were developed and completed via QualtricsXM. In addition to a short demographics questionnaire, respondents were asked to complete the Attitude Scale for Nursing Profession (ASNP) (Coban & Kasikci, 2011), adapted to include midwifery, which has been previously validated with school-going adolescents (Bahçecioğlu Turan et al., 2021). The scale comprises 40 Likert-type items, with responses scored from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Eight of these items are reverse scored. The 40 items were summed and a total score for the ASNP was obtained with a theoretical range of 40-200. A higher score indicated a more positive attitude to the profession.

The instrument's reliability has been tested previously and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.91 has been reported (Coban & Kasikci, 2011). The Cronbach's alpha for our study was pre-test 0.89 and post-test 0.92.

Additionally, we asked two questions about the respondent's interest in nursing and midwifery in the pre-test and post-test surveys. These questions were: are you interested in pursuing a career in nursing, and are you interested in pursuing a career in midwifery.

Once respondents completed the pre-test survey and viewed the short film intervention, they were asked to complete the same survey, with additional questions included in the post-test survey. These additional questions asked respondents to reflect on their favourite and least favourite of the five short films, and to provide any insights into the use of film as a tool to promote the disciplines of nursing and midwifery. There was also the option to add "additional comments" through an open text box.

2.6 Data Collection – Quantitative

At the end of the post-test survey, the qualitative phase of the study was advertised, with students invited to email the research team if they were interested in partaking in an online 1:1

interview (conducted via MS Teams). Three members of the team (BN, RG, MOM) conducted interviews using a semi-structured interview guide.

2.7 Data Analysis – Quantitative

Data obtained from the online questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences® (IBM SPSS Version 27.0). The data were checked and rechecked in SPSS for any errors. Descriptive and inferential statistics were conducted. Descriptive analysis was carried out on data relating to respondents' age, race, school year, location of school, and whether a family member was a nurse or midwife. We calculated the mean and standard deviation of the ASNP as data were normally distributed. Paired Sample t-Tests were conducted to examine the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on the ASNP, with $p \leq 0.05$ considered statistically significant. We also conducted chi-square tests to explore the relationship between respondents' interest in nursing or midwifery as a career pre- and post-watching the short films.

2.8 Data Analysis – Qualitative

Elo and Kyngäs's (2008) approach to inductive content analysis was followed to analyse data, with integration of interview data and responses to the survey free-text boxes (O'Brien et al., 20024; Kilty et al., 2021; Sanders et al., 2023). This process was facilitated using NVivo 14 (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2023). Coding was completed by the lead researcher (JG). From these codes, categories and subcategories were identified. The categorisation matrix was reviewed by several members of the team (RG; MOM; BN) in a collaborative manner, which enhanced credibility and reduced bias (Ahn & Shin, 2023). Findings were then written up, with supportive quotations from participants used to illustrate interpretations.

Chapter 3: Quantitative Findings

3.1 Demographics

Initially, 43 schools across Ireland agreed to take part in the project; however, 20 schools withdrew, with many gatekeepers highlighting time commitment as a barrier. In total, 1,124 respondents completed the survey at pre-test. At post-test, data from 509 respondents across 23 schools could be matched with pre-test surveys. Only data from these respondents (who completed both pre- and post-test surveys) are presented in these results.

Demographic details are presented in full in **Table 2**. Most respondents identified as female (n=356, 70.4%). Over 90% of respondents (n=468, 92%) reported being of white background, with over half of them (n=248) in 4th (transition) year, and 69.6% (n=342) 14-16 years old. Almost three quarters of the respondents came from schools that were categorised as non-urban (n=365, 72.3%). Most respondents hailed from Cork (n=185, 36.6%). Just over a fifth (n=127, 25.0%) of the respondents had a member of their family a nurse or a midwife.

Table 2: Survey demographics

	n (%)
Gender	
Female	356 (70.4)
Male	135 (26.7)
Non-binary / Prefer to self-describe	6 (1.2)
Prefer not to say	9 (1.8)
Age	
14-16	342 (69.6)
17-18	149 (30.4)
Race/ethnicity	
Any White Background	468 (92.0)
Any Black Background	6 (1.2)
Any Asian Background	17 (3.3)
Any Other Background	18 (3.5)
Year in school	
4 th (transition year)	248 (50.5)
5 th	147 (29.9)
6 th	96 (19.6)

	n (%)
County of school	
Cork	185 (36.6)
Kerry	94 (18.6)
Dublin	57 (11.3)
Tipperary	60 (11.9)
Carlow	50 (9.9)
Kilkenny	28 (5.5)
Laois	27 (5.3)
Mayo	5 (0.9)
School Area	
Urban	140 (27.7)
Non-urban	365 (72.3)
Family member a nurse or a midwife	
Yes	127 (25.0)
No	382 (75.0)

*Note: Missing data occurred as respondents were able to proceed with the survey without answering a question should they choose not to or neglect to do so in error.

3.2 Attitudes towards Nursing and Midwifery

Table 3 shows the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) for the ASNP scale. The pre-test mean (SD) for the ASNP was 144.20 (14.5) and the post-test was 145.63 (18.1). There was a higher (better) mean for the ASNP at post-test with an increase of 1.43 [(95% CI -2.38, -0.50) $p < 0.01$] from the pre-test mean. This indicates that the short film intervention was effective in enhancing adolescent respondents' attitudes towards the professions of nursing and midwifery. Although there was a statistically significant difference, the effect size was small at -0.13.

Table 3: The Attitude Scale toward Nursing (and Midwifery) Profession Questionnaire: Mean differences pre-test and post-test

Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval (CI)	t	df	p	Cohen's d
144.20 (14.5)	145.63 (18.1)	-1.43	-2.38,-0.50	-3.00	508	<0.01	-0.13

3.3 Interest in Pursuing a Career in Nursing

One hundred and six (20.8%) respondents expressed an interest in pursuing a career in nursing pre-test (**Table 4**). This proportion increased post-test to 121 (23.8%) with a corresponding decrease in the proportion of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing to pursuing a career in nursing from 267 (52.5%) pre-test to 246 (48.3%) post-test. Those who indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed increased post-test from 136 (26.7%) to 142 (27.9%).

Table 4: Interest in pursuing nursing pre-test and post-test

	Pre-test n (%)	Post-test n (%)
Agree/Strongly Agree	106 (20.8)	121 (23.8)
Neither	136 (26.7)	142 (27.9)
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	267 (52.5)	246 (48.3)

From the crosstabulation of pre-test and post-test interest, of those that disagreed/strongly disagreed in pursuing a career in nursing pre-test, 15 (5.6%) changed their mind to agreed/strongly agreed, 48 (18.0%) were unsure, and 204 (76.4%) remained as disagree/strongly disagreed post-test to pursue a career in nursing (**Table 5**). Of those who neither agreed nor disagreed pre-test (n=136), 27 (19.9%) of respondents wanted to pursue a career in nursing post-test with over half of them remaining as neither agree/disagree (n=76, 55.9%). Seventy-nine (74.5%) of the 106 respondents who agreed/strongly agreed to pursue a career in nursing pre-test also chose this option post-test. Eighteen (17.0%) of them were unsure post-test and nine (8.5%) had changed their minds and now disagreed/strongly disagreed about pursuing a career in nursing. There was a significant association between pursuing a career in nursing and seeing the short films (Pearson Chi-Square = 299.54, df=4, $p < 0.01$).

Table 5: Crosstabulation of pre-test and post-test responses to pursuing a career in nursing

Interest in Pursuing Nursing				
Post-test				
	Agree/Strongly Agree n (%)	Neither n (%)	Disagree/Strongly Disagree n (%)	Total
Pre-test				
Agree/Strongly Agree	79 (74.5)	18 (17.0)	9 (8.5)	106

Neither Agree/Disagree	27 (19.9)	76 (55.9)	33 (24.3)	136
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	15 (5.6)	48 (18.0)	204 (76.4)	267

3.4 Interest in Pursuing a Career in Midwifery

In relation to respondents expressing an interest in pursuing a career in midwifery, 45 (8.8%) of the sample agreed or strongly agreed with this pre-test (**Table 6**). Post-test, this proportion increased to 53 (10.4%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that they would be interested in pursuing a career in midwifery. The proportion of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with pursuing a career in midwifery post-test decreased from 351 (69.0%) pre to 331 (65.0%) post. Those who indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed increased after seeing the short films from 113 (22.2%) to 125 (24.6%).

Table 6: Interest in pursuing midwifery pre-test and post-test

	Pre-test n (%)	Post-test n (%)
Agree/Strongly Agree	45 (8.8)	53 (10.4)
Neither	113 (22.2)	125 (24.6)
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	351 (69.0)	331 (65.0)

From the crosstabulation of pre-test and post-test interest, of the 351 respondents that disagreed/strongly disagreed before seeing the film, 8 (2.3%) changed their mind to agreed/strongly agreed, 54 (15.4%) remained unsure and 289 (82.3%) did not want to pursue a career in midwifery post-test (**Table 7**). Of those who neither agreed nor disagreed pre-test (n=113), 11.5% of them (n=13) wanted to pursue a career in midwifery post-test. Thirty-eight (33.6%) of the 113 respondents who were undecided pre-test indicated that they did not want to pursue a career in midwifery post-test. Sixty-two (54.9%) of them remained unsure, choosing neither agree nor disagree post-test. Thirty-two (71.1%) of the 45 respondents who were interested in pursuing a career in midwifery pre-test remained interested post-test. In addition, nine (20.0%) of the 45 respondents were unsure post-test and four (8.9%) changed their mind and were uninterested in a career in midwifery after viewing the film. There was a significant association between pursuing a career in midwifery and seeing the short films (Pearson Chi-Square = 291.44, df=4, $p < 0.01$).

Table 7: Crosstabulation of pre-test and post-test responses to pursuing a career in midwifery

Interest in Pursuing Midwifery				
Post-test				
	Agree/Strongly Agree n (%)	Neither n (%)	Disagree/Strongly Disagree n (%)	Total
Pre-test				
Agree/Strongly Agree	32 (71.1)	9 (20.0)	4 (8.9)	45
Neither Agree/Disagree	13 (11.5)	62 (54.9)	38 (33.6)	113
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	8 (2.3)	54 (15.4)	289 (82.3)	351

3.5 Short Film Preferences

In response to the question, “do you think that film is a good way to promote the disciplines of nursing and midwifery to people of your age group?”, 444 (87.2%) of respondents answered, “yes”. Respondents were also asked about which of the five short films appealed to them the most and which appealed to them the least (**Table 8**). The short film that appealed to respondents the most was psychiatric nursing, preferred by 183 (36.0%) of respondents, with only 41 (8.1%) citing this as their least favourite of the short films. This was followed by intellectual disability nursing, preferred by 111 (21.8%) of respondents. The short film that appealed the least to respondents was children’s nursing, preferred by 60 (11.8%) of respondents. This was followed by general nursing, preferred by 69 (13.6%) of respondents; this was also cited as the film that appealed the least to respondents (n=171, 33.6%).

Table 8: Short films that appealed the most and least

Short Film	Appealed the Most n (%)	Appealed the Least n (%)
Psychiatric Nursing	183 (36.0)	41 (8.1)
Intellectual Disability Nursing	111 (21.8)	98 (19.3)
Midwifery	86 (16.9)	90 (17.7)
General Nursing	69 (13.6)	171 (33.6)
Children’s Nursing	60 (11.8)	109 (21.4)

Chapter 4: Qualitative Findings

In this chapter, the results of the content analysis of interview and survey data (from open text boxes) are presented. Eight participants took part in online 1:1 interviews. Demographic information is included in **Table 9**. Pseudonyms are used throughout to preserve participant anonymity.

Table 9: Interview demographics

	n (%)
Gender	
Male	2 (25.0)
Female	6 (75.0)
Age	
15	3 (37.5)
16	5(62.5)
Year in School	
4th (transition year)	6 (75.0)
5th	2 (25.9)
Race/Ethnicity	
White Irish	7 (87.5)
Asian or Asian Irish	1 (12.5)
County of School	
Cork	1 (12.5)
Tipperary	3 (35.5)
Kerry	4 (50.0)
Area of School	
Urban	1 (12.5)
Non-urban	7 (87.5)
Family member a nurse or midwife	
Yes	3 (37.5)
No	5 (62.5)

Three overall categories were identified: Perceptions of Nursing and Midwifery (comprising the sub-categories: Influences on Opinions of Nursing and Midwifery, and Barriers to Pursuing a Career in Nursing or Midwifery), The Impact of the Short Film Intervention (comprising the sub-categories: Visualizing Nursing and Midwifery through Film, Clarifying Views of Nursing and

Midwifery, and Transforming Views of Nursing and Midwifery), and Suggestions for How to Promote Nursing and Midwifery for Young People (see **Figure 2**).

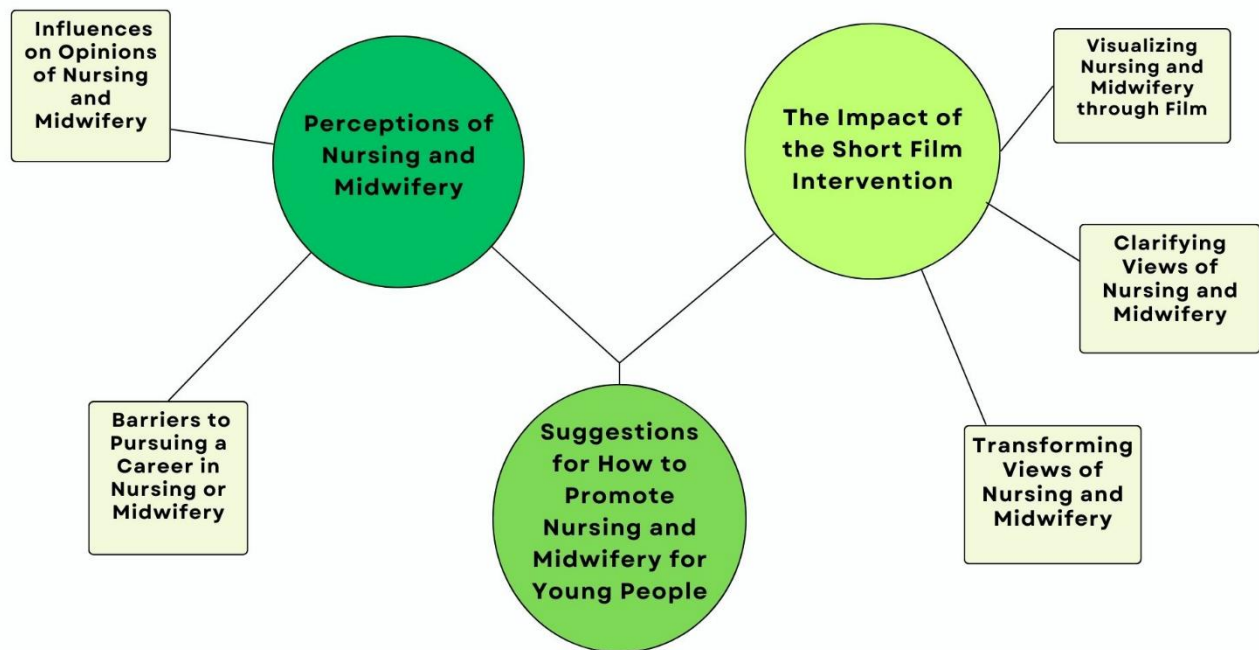


Figure 2: Categorisation matrix

4.1 Preconceptions of Nursing & Midwifery

Under the first category, general perceptions about nursing and midwifery are addressed. Participants spoke about what had influenced their opinions of nursing and midwifery prior to watching the short film intervention, and some of the perceived barriers that would prevent them from pursuing a career as a nurse or a midwife.

4.1.1 Influences on opinions of nursing & midwifery

Several participants commented that their opinions of nursing and midwifery were influenced by key family members. As a consequence of interactions with family members, participants developed insights about these professions, both positive (linked with helping people and making a difference) and negative (linked with long hours and a busy work environment):

My aunt: she's the midwife and she just, from the story she told me how the environment and how you know the joy you feel about how bringing happiness and [...] just the joy it brings people when you help them (Adam)

I do know that my auntie in particular, she's a nurse and she works crazy hours and she does night shifts and stuff (Georgina)

Opinions were also influenced by the media (TV and movies), in addition to personal experiences with the hospital environment. These participants again emphasised the “busy” nature of the nurse and midwife’s role:

I guess just being in the hospital and even with, like, family and stuff and just seeing everything they do, where they're running around there with different patients all the time and they're carrying out all these tests. Even like all the TV shows and everything: you'd see how hard they work when they're running around (Beth)

When referring to influences on opinions of nursing and midwifery, participants also spoke about what they considered to be barriers to pursuing a career as a nurse or midwife. These are addressed under the next sub-category.

4.1.2 Barriers to pursuing a career in nursing or midwifery

Many participants referred to the professions of nursing and midwifery as being “hard”. They believed that owing to challenging conditions, and the long (and unsociable) hours one has to work, the nature of the job can have a detrimental effect on staff:

It's definitely a very hard profession, [...] like, it's definitely not easy. And, so, it's a very, like, wearing down career, 'cause obviously nights and days and everything (Edmond)

I don't want to be a nurse as it is a very difficult job (Survey Respondent [SR] 18)

The “hard” nature of these professions was also spoken about in the context of the emotional impact on staff. It was suggested that nurses and midwives are very disciplined and committed to the work they do. While such dedication was admired by participants, they also acknowledged how challenging this must be:

Obviously, it's a very, very hard job. And, like, you need to be very involved in it. I think so. Like, it's not something that's easy to do (Dana)

I'd say that it's very emotionally straining (Edmond)

It was also suggested that short staffing impacts the professions, which further adds to the challenges they experience in the working environment:

There isn't really enough nurses, like, there isn't enough nurses (Cara)

Despite the hard work that nurses and midwives engage in, participants believed that they were not sufficiently remunerated. It was acknowledged that there are many other professionals who work in the healthcare environment, and that, in comparison to these professionals, nurses and midwives were unfairly paid:

I believe that they deserve higher pay, such as, like, doctors or, like, pharmacists and all the others in the healthcare system. I don't think they're making as much as I would say they deserve (Beth)

Although I admire nursing as a profession, I would not want to become a nurse because of the long hours, relatively low pay, and hard-working conditions (SR351)

As such, there was a perception that nurses and midwives are not valued in comparison to other healthcare professionals:

Yeah, because they do a lot for everyone. So, I think they should be valued more (Dana)

This first category addressed how participants view nurses and midwives. Under the next category, the impact of the short film intervention on challenging these views is presented.

4.2 The Impact of the Short Film Intervention

Watching the short film intervention helped participants to focus on some of the more positive aspects of nursing and midwifery. The use of visual media facilitated a more nuanced depiction of these professions, helping to clarify some of the roles of nurses and midwives, and, despite some previously suggested opinions and barriers, made participants more likely to think about pursuing a career in nursing or midwifery.

4.2.1 Visualizing nursing & midwifery through film

Participants felt that the short film intervention was appropriate to their age group, as film is a

medium that young people enjoy:

I think the idea of a film was a very good idea as it appeals to teenagers (SR.651)

I think it was great. The film was, like, an amazing thing for promoting nursing (Andrea)

Expanding on this, participants commented that a film's appeal is a direct link to their visual senses. They felt that film can grab young people's attention, and provide a clear reference point to illustrate unfamiliar scenarios, such as those that take place in healthcare settings:

Films [...] capture your eye more for people my age. And it kind of keeps your attention span going, because reading something long, they won't focus on it. But films is a better way to catch your attention (Fiona)

I think they are a great way to just show it, especially because then you get a real insight into what nursing is actually like (Beth)

Despite the "short" nature of the intervention, participants felt that the film provided them with a great deal of depth about intellectual disability nursing, general nursing, psychiatric nursing, children's nursing, and midwifery. They noted that shorter form media (e.g., short clips in isolation) may not provide very rich accounts of narratives, and that the quality of the information would be negatively impacted:

Because it goes through everything, like, doesn't just go through like quick like 5 second thing: it goes through like 5 minutes for each [of the] different types of nursing (Cara)

I think the short film was a great idea for people to see what part of nursing they might want to do and I thought it went into detail of every type of nursing very well and explained it perfectly to us (SR. 251)

In terms of the different styles featured within the short film intervention (i.e., the combination of scripted narrative and "talking heads" segments with students), participants appreciated the blended approach, as it provided them with diverse perspectives. The scripted narratives gave participants a good insight into what the role of a nurse or midwife is like, and provided an understanding of the engaged activities of the profession:

I thought that the actual video where you got to see what, like, kind of your day-to-day task would be like if you were in that profession. I found that to, like, it stood

out to me a bit more (Georgina)

Participants also gleaned a lot of important information from the student “talking heads” interviews. Considering these were real students talking about their real experiences in college and the clinical environment, it gave a sense of authenticity to the film as a whole. They also learned from these students that studying nursing and midwifery was an enjoyable experience, which sparked interest in potentially pursuing these areas as careers:

The interviews with real nursing/midwifery students between each segment were helpful to get a second perspective on the careers, aside from the acted portions of the movie (SR.691)

I think they're very good because like they gave you, like, an insight of like the course and stuff that they were doing in [college]. And to hear all of them, they'd nothing but good to say, you know, and they all loved it. So, it all kind of definitely gets you thinking about going to [college] (Edmond)

One improvement that participants felt could be implemented in future with the short film intervention is the addition of a forum where students could ask nurses and midwives questions. The relevant staff members would then have an opportunity to address these questions, providing clarity about the relevant nursing and midwifery career pathways:

It was very well done and can't think of anything at the moment. Perhaps there should be an option to ask questions at the end that could be answered at a later stage (Beth)

In addition to facilitating the visualization of nursing and midwifery, the short film also helped challenge some preconceptions participants held. This is addressed under the following sub-category.

4.2.2 Clarifying views of nursing & midwifery as a career

The short film intervention provided a lot of clarity for participants about nursing and midwifery. Owing to media exposure and some conversations with family members, participants reported they held certain images in their minds about these professions. However, they noted that such images were vague (or inaccurate), and the short film intervention gave them a more authentic insight:

I wouldn't have really had an idea of what it would be like. You know, I have, like a couple of thoughts in my head, but it wouldn't have been very accurate. And then since seeing the video, you just get a proper representation of what it's like
(Georgina)

Indeed, some participants acknowledged that the views they held bordered on stereotypical. Prior to seeing the short film, there was a sense that nursing and midwifery were very medical professions, with participants emphasising the task-orientated approach. However, the short film helped to develop an awareness about the person-centered nature of nursing and midwifery:

I think this was a really good way of showing how the industry works and what happens inside as there are sometimes stereotypes in these professions (SR.162)

It's about interacting with patients, making sure that you know they're well kept and, like, looked afterwards. I just assumed like it was just running tests and helping (Beth)

Participants also began to question some of the negative views they previously held about the professions of nursing and midwifery. Although their initial thoughts were that these professions are very hard and associated with challenging working conditions, the scenarios presented in the short films facilitated a less “black and white”, more nuanced perspective:

It's just very clear and it kind of shows the, like, what you will be doing in each kind of nursing sector, and it shows that it's not always, like, bad (Dana)

Owing to the short film intervention, a new-found appreciation was developed for the person-centered nature of these professions and the emphasis on human-to-human interactions. Participants began to realise that there is a great deal of job satisfaction for nurses and midwives, and that helping people can be rewarding:

And definitely after watching it, I got a completely new perspective about how they do their jobs and how they [...] can, you know, be satisfied with the job once you put in the work and you need to be able to work good with people (Adam)

I think the film really helped humanise nursing. It can sometimes be perceived as such a hard job with so much sacrifices it's almost a vocation. While I've no doubt this is true, it was wonderful to see nurses interacting with people as both nurses and as people (SR.637)

The short film provided participants with a visual reference point for nursing and midwifery, and provided some clarity about these professions, also. Under the next sub-category, transformations in views about nursing and midwifery is presented.

4.2.3 Transforming views of nursing & midwifery

Aside from developing an interest in nursing or midwifery, there was evidence from participants that the short film made them more interested in finding out more about these careers, or in actually pursuing them. Two male participants expressed that the short film intervention sparked up the conversation within their peer group about nursing and midwifery, a subject they had previously not spoken about:

We kind of just chatted amongst ourselves. If you'd like to work in that environment? And you know what we think it would be like? What our perception would be. So, we definitely talked about that a lot, yeah. [...] There's a few in my class that they would consider after the videos (Adam)

It definitely gets everyone thinking about it (Edmond)

One participant spoke about attending university open day events where she purposefully sought out representatives from nursing and midwifery. She commented that, had she not seen the short film intervention, she would not have developed an interest in this area, and so would not have looked for information about these career pathways:

I wouldn't have really thought about it very much until I saw the video and then went to a couple of open days and stuff. And it was, like, I wouldn't have gone out and spoken to a couple of different nursing students if I hadn't seen the video, so it kind of spiked my interest in it a little bit and then I carried it on from there (Georgina)

Several other participants highlighted how the short film intervention shifted their thinking about their career pathways and the college course they were going to choose. As a consequence of viewing the short film, they were now much more likely to consider a career in nursing or midwifery:

This video made me realise I want to go down this route (SR.162)

I like the paed's. They definitely, like, made me think like about doing that anyway (Edmond)

Different filmed scenarios stood out to different participants. For some participants, this was due to an interest already fostered by personal circumstances. For others, previously unconsidered pathways were cited as potentially interesting career options:

I enjoyed the film and it made me consider being a children's nurse (SR.435)

I'd probably be more interested in the mental health nursing (Beth)

The other one I actually liked was the one of the intellectual disability one. I have an uncle and a little cousin and they both have intellectual disabilities and it's something that's kind of near to the heart. So, I just found it to be interesting (Georgina)

Indeed, one participant spoke about her original intention to study primary school teaching but noted that she was now considering a career as a mental health nurse instead. This participant emphasised the power of the visual image and its ability to influence young people's decision-making surrounding future career choices:

I kind of had my heart set on primary school teaching at the time, but I guess seeing it visually and seeing them interacting with patients just kind of the whole visual aspect of it really gave me a feel for the job. [...] Now, I'm thinking about nursing, mental health of kids (Beth)

Another participant acknowledged that nursing and midwifery seemed like interesting careers, but their mind was made up already:

Different careers seem really interesting and rewarding but I have decided what I want to do (SR.508)

Having gained an interest in nursing and midwifery, participants had several suggestions for promoting these professions. These are presented under the next category.

4.3 Suggestions for How to Promote Nursing & Midwifery for Young People

A variety of strategies were suggested, other than the use of short films, that could be used to encourage other young people to think about pursuing nursing or midwifery as career options. Participants felt they had not received sufficient information about nursing and midwifery in their schools and believed that external speakers should be invited into the school environment. This would provide students with an opportunity to ask questions about these

professions and clarify any misconceptions they had already formed. Participants recommended talks from lecturers in nursing and midwifery, but also highlighted the importance of having nursing and midwifery students engage with young people:

I suppose, like, someone who's working in, like, let's say midwifery: for them to come and do a talk with people [...], like someone who is in nursing to come and talk (Dana)

Maybe if the students from the nursing department, like, come to visit different schools to tell them, maybe, about nursing and do a presentation. And if students who are interested in nursing can also ask them questions. They are studying nursing and they'll be the best ones to answer their questions and hear any confusions they have (Andrea)

It was also suggested that a more “hands-on”, practical approach could be taken. Here, participants suggested that there should be more opportunities to engage in healthcare work experience, particularly during Transition Year (TY):

Going into healthcare or nursing environment, particularly for TY students to be able to go in and just you know, see what it's like first-hand or speak to someone first-hand (Adam)

Maybe like do like a block of, like... 'cause in TY we have work experience, so instead of doing work experience, you could do a block of what it's actually like and, like, let them see on their side of what's really in nursing and, like, all the different types of it (Cara)

Alternatively, participants suggested that time could be allocated for students to visit the clinical simulation labs in the university. They believed that such an experience would provide an authentic account of what they would encounter in a real-life healthcare setting:

I suppose maybe, like, bringing schools down to the college for the day to see, like, the School of Nursing and stuff. I definitely think that would help and just showing them, like, the clinical labs and stuff and all the facilities that would entice people anyway, do you know, and make them see what they'd be doing anyway in college (Edmond)

Would love to come to the college to see the nursing facilities while in TY (SR.232)

Finally, it was acknowledged that social media is a popular form of communication with young

people. As such, participants recommended embracing various forms of social media to promote nursing and midwifery:

Well, I think that social media is very popular among my age group and a lot of stuff I'd see would come from social media. That's where I'd, you know, find a lot of my information. So, I do actually think that that would be the best way to kind of spread more information about nursing and stuff is through social media (Georgina)

Social media and videos are a great way really to reach out, like Instagram and Tiktok (Beth)

In summary, participants held certain preconceptions about nursing and midwifery which were challenged by the short film intervention. Seeing these professions represented on screen led to changes in opinion, and for some, even sparked an interest in pursuing a career as a nurse or midwife. Although the short film was considered an appropriate format to promote nursing and midwifery to young people, participants suggested other methods of promotion, also.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

In this chapter, the key findings from Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 are discussed in the context of the extant literature. This discussion will be followed by a statement of the limitations of the research and recommendations for the future.

5.1 Discussion

The aim of this study was to develop a short film to promote nursing and midwifery and to evaluate its effectiveness amongst young people. There was a significant, albeit small, positive shift in attitudes towards the nursing and midwifery professions, as measured by the ASPN. This indicates that the short film intervention, *Nursing & Midwifery: A Career for You?* fostered a more favourable perception of both nursing and midwifery. This finding, alongside the increase in young people expressing an interest in pursuing nursing and midwifery careers, provides support for the efficacy of film-based interventions for promoting nursing and midwifery as career choices. Such tailored, interactive approaches emphasise the diverse career opportunities available and can capture undecided adolescents' attention. Evidence suggests that storytelling, especially through visual media, can be a powerful way of engaging and resonating with contemporary audiences (Aventin et al., 2019; Hisey et al. 2022). Given that international research highlights that adolescents often have negative perceptions of healthcare careers, (Che Hasan et al., 2020; Najafi Ghezeljeh et al., 2024), it is paramount that film-based interventions, such as *Nursing & Midwifery: A Career for You?* are used to challenge preconceptions and stereotypes.

The post-test results also show a decrease in the number of adolescents who were ambivalent (i.e., neither agree nor disagree) about pursuing a career in nursing or midwifery, and a small decrease in adolescents who were interested at pre-test in pursuing a career in nursing or midwifery. Although this may initially indicate that the intervention had a negative impact, this is a further indication of its success and has potentially positive implications for attrition from nurse and midwifery education programmes. While no up-to-date statistics are available on attrition rates in Ireland, in the UK, an average of 8% of student nurses left their courses in the first year of study between 2014 and 2020 (Palmer et al., 2023), with an overall attrition rate of 25% estimated. The estimated attrition rate of midwifery students in the UK is 13.8% (Thompson et al., 2025). Students enter nursing and midwifery programmes with a strong desire to care for people, often influenced by positive personal experiences of care (Ten Hoeve et al, 2017). However, initial exposure to the clinical environment has been shown to result in disappointment for some students, resulting in a decision to withdraw (Soerensen et al., 2023). A realistic presentation of the clinical environment, as shown in the short film intervention, could mitigate against this disappointment and allow second level students to make a much more informed decision as to whether they wished to pursue a career in nursing or midwifery, ultimately resulting in a cohort of students who are less likely to withdraw.

Building on this, nursing and midwifery recruitment efforts often face challenges attracting

interest from prospective students due to perceptions about the profession (Foster 2024). One approach to address this is early engagement, where students are introduced to nursing and midwifery while they are in the exploratory phase of choosing a career path (Faithfull-Byrne et al. 2015; Klemm and Jafrey 2022). Targeting secondary students before they actively make career decisions or while they are undecided presents an opportunity to propose a career in nursing or midwifery. Early exposure may dispel misconceptions and highlight the rewarding aspects of these careers (Curtis et al., 2008). In Ireland, career guidance in post-primary education plays a significant role in influencing and counselling student career choices amongst young people (Indecon, 2019). In the particular context of healthcare education, career guidance is often limited, underscoring the need for authentic exposure to complement existing guidance programmes (McCarthy and Millar, 2006). Furthermore, career guidance teachers often feel they have limited knowledge about the diverse roles and career pathways within nursing and midwifery, reducing their likelihood of recommending it as a career suggestion (Cohen et al., 2004; Matutina, 2004; Tawash, 2023), or even influencing them to actively steer some students away from such careers (Neilson & McNally, 2013). As such, film-based interventions could serve as an aid for career guidance teachers in schools, supporting them in providing accurate and engaging information about careers in midwifery and nursing, particularly given the ease in which they can be implemented within schools (Goodwin et al., 2024). Integrating these films into school curricula, career fairs/days, and community outreach programmes could enhance recruitment efforts and help address the ongoing need for qualified healthcare professionals. Indeed, film has been shown to be a cost-effective way of reaching a broader audience (Davis et al. 2016), meaning it can reach those who may not even attend career days.

In terms of the short films themselves, young people reported that this format is acceptable for their age group. Marus and Bonus (2021) note that most entertainment studies of adolescents' interaction with media have focused on the potentially negative effects of media consumption. However, there is a growing evidence base for how media-based interventions (such as film-based interventions) might be harnessed for enhancing positive outcomes (Aventin et al., 2019; Burk et al., 2018; Goodwin et al., 2021; Goodwin et al., 2024). The current study adds to this growing evidence base on film as a developmentally appropriate intervention to use with adolescent populations.

The inclusion of nursing and midwifery students' lived experience and their knowledge of the intended audience facilitated the creation of authentic diverse characters and narratives that gave a realistic impression of what it is like to work as a nurse or midwife, indicating that the co-creation design was impactful. In a study by Hoeken et al. (2016), the concepts of "story perspective" and "character similarity" were seen as important mechanisms of narrative persuasion, with creators able to adapt content around story and narrative for an intended audience. This is important, as there is evidence that young people's negative perceptions of nursing and midwifery (e.g., that they are inferior to other healthcare professionals) are influenced by media, including TV and movies (Zamanzadeh et al., 2023). This is not surprising,

given that several studies have highlighted how films, TV, and other media negatively depict nursing and midwifery (Girvin et al., 2016; González et al., 2023; Luce et al., 2016). It is imperative that any film-based intervention developed for young people about nursing and midwifery is also developed by young people with lived insights into these careers, given the value their inclusion brings, with the aim of ensuring a more authentic representations of these professions within media narratives.

The blend of narrative and “talking heads” approaches used within the short films was appreciated by adolescents. Fahr and Früh (2021) acknowledged that most entertainment theories consider entertainment as related to emotion. Furthermore, McCormack et al. (2021) note how narrative films can be an effective means of changing people’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Ott et al. (2021) found that eudaimonic films (those containing powerful messages or intense life experiences) can enhance people’s ability to make sense of difficulties they experience, in addition to fostering a desire to be a better person and to want to help others. The degree to which one is able to engage in a narrative is a fundamental factor in the enjoyment experienced by a reader or viewer, and this enjoyment influences the impact the narrative might have (Soto-Sanfiel et al., 2020). On the other hand, a more didactic/documentary approach is more impactful in communicating factual information to audiences (Dissen & Crowell, 2020; Goodwin et al., 2021). For the current generation of young people, dissemination of key information through audiovisual media is likely to be far more effective than other formats, such as text-based information (Channel 4, 2025). Findings from the current study indicate that a combination of both narrative and didactic approaches may be beneficial when promoting careers, with narrative elements employed to elicit emotional responses, and “talking heads” approaches used to provide key information in an accessible format.

Psychiatric and intellectual disability nursing were the short films that participants preferred, with general and children’s nursing being the least preferred. Given that participants regarded the “busy” nature of nursing and midwifery negatively, it is possible that the task-orientated elements of the general and children’s nursing short films rendered these less attractive than the psychiatric and intellectual disability nursing short films. Although open communication is a core value of nursing and midwifery (Department of Health, 2024) and can improve quality of care delivery (Ghanbari-Afra et al., 2022), task-oriented nursing or midwifery, where the focus is on completing specific tasks, can be misinterpreted as lacking in human interaction to observers (Bourgault, 2023). Moreover, “busyness” can be a barrier to person-centred care (Kim and Kim, 2022). Indeed, recent research indicates that Gen Z (those born between 1997 and 2015), are reluctant to consider certain career pathways if they are considered “high stress, low reward” (Raval, 2025), with health and wellbeing emerging as key drivers of employment preferences for this generation (Woodgate et al., 2025). Moreover, in a study examining the work ethic between baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) and Gen Z, baby boomers placed greater importance on morality, hard work, and productivity, and view work as a central part of life, whereas Gen Z placed greater importance on leisure and

down time (Seifert et al., 2023). There is also evidence that the main reasons young people choose nursing and midwifery as careers is due to factors such as altruism, and a desire to help and interact with others (Byrom, 2022; Carolan & Kruger, 2011; Jirwe & Rudman, 2012; Teresa-Morales et al., 2023). Taking all this into account, future recruitment and engagement strategies need greater emphasis on the human-to-human nature of the nursing and midwifery professions highlighting the relationship between the nurse or midwife, patient/service user, and their families, and less emphasis on the stressful / busy, task-based aspects of the professions.

Some adolescents suggested using social media as a platform where short clips about nursing or midwifery could be featured. However, others acknowledged that the short film segments they viewed should not be any shorter, as they would lose their impact. Although there is evidence that social media can enhance career guidance outcomes (Tkachuk et al., 2025), media clips on most popular social media platforms (such as TikTok and Instagram) tend to be very short: 36-47 seconds, on average (Kallio & Mäenpää, 2025; Lown, 2024; Yeung et al., 2022). Whilst there is little research comparing the impact of short form narrative with that of shorter social media movies on adolescents and young people, research shows an association between adolescent engagement with entertainment-education narratives and behaviour change. Factors such as personal interest, realism, and identification with main characters are important factors in narrative persuasion (McCoy et al., 2024; Shin & Pettigrew, 2022; Van Leeuwen et al., 2016). Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that, despite adolescents' proclivity for social media, a continuum of approaches, including short film interventions also have a positive role to play in informing young people about careers in nursing and midwifery. Caution should be exercised when using shorter form media (such as brief social media advertisements) as the potential to influence career decisions may be limited by their duration; further research is warranted here.

Adolescents also expressed a desire for more exposure to nursing and midwifery while in school to get a better sense of these professions. They suggested more talks in schools from nurses and midwives, getting TY work experience in healthcare, and university fieldtrips to see clinical simulation labs. Career talks from professionals are essential in helping secondary school students make informed decisions about their future careers (Makola et al., 2021). Engaging with these professionals not only offers valuable resources but also introduces students to meaningful, career-related learning experiences (National Health Service, 2023). Students also learn about careers through work experience, which traditionally occurs in the fourth year of secondary school (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Transition Year Curriculum, 2024). For students considering a career in healthcare, direct exposure through work experience is vital for developing interest (Muncan et al., 2016). Indeed, Shulman (2005) emphasises that such exposure allows students to think, act, and perform like professionals in that field. However, opportunities to shadow healthcare professionals are limited globally, preventing students from witnessing the roles and responsibilities first-hand (Muncan et al., 2016). When practice-based work experience is not possible, simulation-based

activities can be effective in sparking interest in healthcare careers and have been shown to positively influence attitudes toward STEM careers (Berk et al., 2014). Specifically, in healthcare, simulations offer valuable insights into various professions, enhance understanding of essential skills, and provide immersive learning experiences (Moro & Phelps, 2024). For example, hands-on cardiopulmonary resuscitation courses, a form of simulated learning, also help students understand critical healthcare skills and the importance of patient safety (Otero-Agra et al., 2019). Given the suggestions from young people in the current study, and the evidence base to support these suggestions, a wider range of approaches, including career talks, healthcare work experiences, and simulation needs to be employed to stimulate further interest in nursing and midwifery as careers.

5.2 Limitations

This study has limitations. Firstly, the change in mean on the ASNP, while statistically significant, had a small effect size. Second, although a large number of young people responded to the pre-test survey, there was a considerable drop (more than 50%) in those who responded to the post-test survey. The fact that most respondents came from white backgrounds can also be considered a limitation. Lastly, a small number of participants were included in the qualitative element of the study, which reduces the transferability of the study findings.

5.3. Recommendations

The following recommendations were formulated based on the integration of quantitative findings, qualitative findings, and the extant literature. These recommendations are organised into the following three areas: Future Use of *Nursing & Midwifery: A Career for You?*, Promoting Nursing and Midwifery, and Future Research.

5.3.1 Recommendations for Future Use of *Nursing & Midwifery: A Career for You?*

- The short film *Nursing & Midwifery: A Career for You?* should be made available to all schools for teachers and guidance counsellors to use with students.
- The short film should be made available on media hosting platforms where it can be easily shared (e.g., YouTube). It should feature prominently on relevant websites (e.g., NMBI) for the attention of potentially interested young people, and be screened at career open days.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Promoting Nursing and Midwifery

- Given the effect of the intervention and its acceptability amongst adolescents, similar film-based interventions should be developed to further promote nursing and midwifery. The focus of such films should be on the human-to-human aspects of these professions.
- More opportunities need to be provided for adolescents to get “hands on” experience of

nursing and midwifery. This could be achieved by developing work experience schemes or using simulation-based activities.

- Practicing nurses and midwives should be more visible in the school setting, facilitating Q&A sessions with students.
- Given the influence of TV and film on adolescents' perceptions of nursing and midwifery, and the fact that these perceptions were often negative, there is a need for nurses and midwives to engage with filmmakers more closely to ensure media portrayals are more positive.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Future Research

- Future research should be conducted using the *Nursing & Midwifery: A Career for You?* intervention, adopting a cluster randomised or pragmatic trial design. There is also scope to conduct comparative research using both shorter (e.g., social media clips) and longer form media (e.g. feature-length films).
- Consideration needs to be given to using incentives in future research to encourage more schools to participate and to enhance recruitment of student participants.

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