

**2023 ICOH Scientific Committee on Occupational Health For Health Workers
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A Lifetime in Nursing

**Perspectives of nurses aged 50-plus on resources for aging
and a long working life in Germany**

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Background

- Older nurses represent a significant proportion of those employed, especially in the American and European areas (Buchan et al., 2020)
- Staying in the nursing profession is often difficult due to work intensification and high physical and psychological demands (Schmucker, 2020)
- Especially for older employees, working in the nursing profession can be very challenging (e.g. Denton et al., 2021; Gabrielle et al., 2008; Ryan et al., 2017; Spiva et al., 2011)

“With an ageing nursing and midwifery workforce in many countries, the act of valuing and retaining older nurses and midwives has never been more important.”

(Haines, 2023, p. 83)

The project “A lifetime in nursing”

- **Aim**

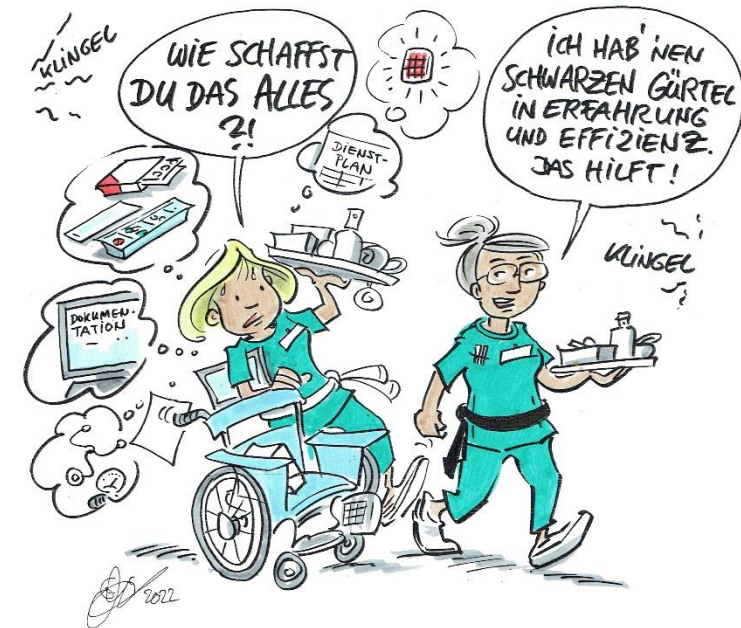
- To identify factors that can be supportive for a long working life in nursing

- **Research questions**

1. What perspective do nurses in the age group 50-plus have on aging in the nursing profession?
2. Which factors influence aging in the nursing profession from the perspective of nurses in the 50-plus age group?

- **Theoretical frameworks**

- Positive aging approach (Clendon & Walker, 2016, p. 337), Salutogenesis (Antonovsky, 1997)
- Ilmarinen’s concepts of “work ability” (Ilmarinen, 1999) and “work capacity” (World Health Organization, 1993, pp. 3-4)



Methods

- **Qualitative research approach**
 - Focusing on the subjective views and individual experiences of older nurses
- **Ethical approval**
 - Ethics committee of the German Society of Nursing Science
- **Inclusion criteria**
 - Nurses aged 50 years and older
 - Currently professionally active or within two years after retirement
 - Able to understand and speak German



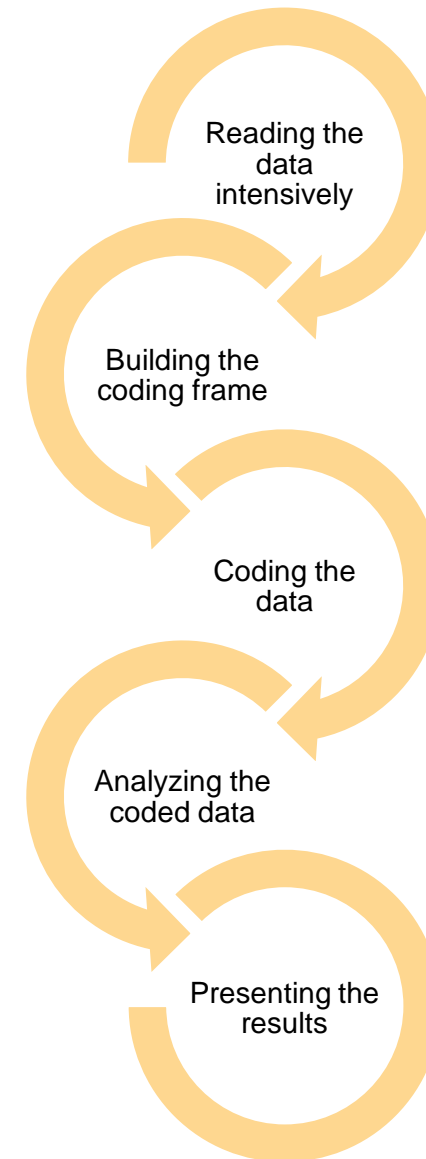
Methods

- **Data collection**

- 19 interview sessions in form of semi-structured episodic interviews and group discussions (Flick, 2011), audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim
- Short questionnaire on sociodemographic and occupational information

- **Data analysis**

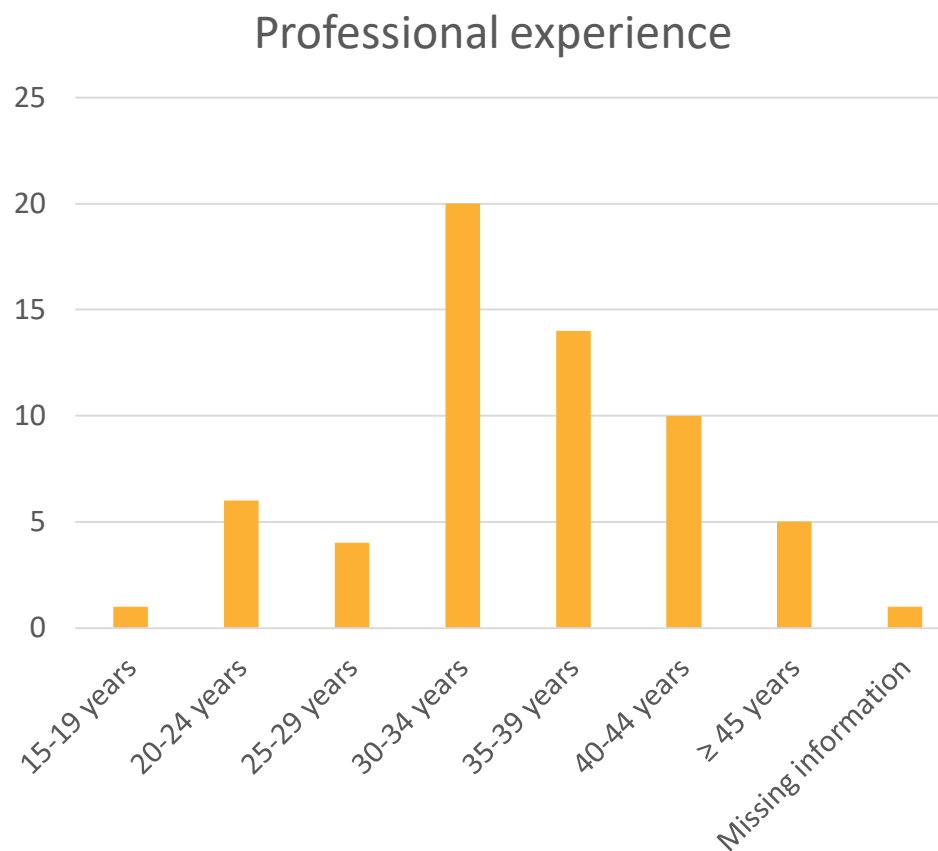
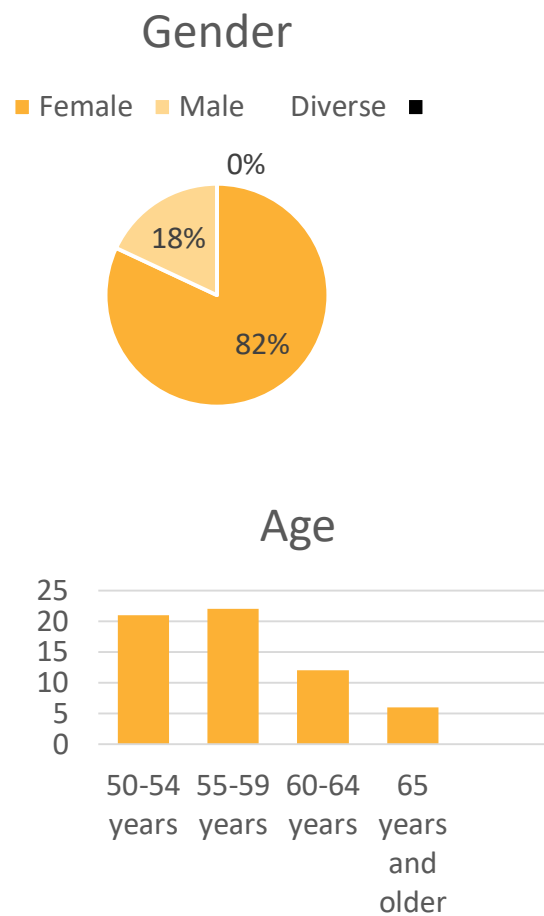
- Using 'qualitative content analysis' (Kuckartz, 2019)
- Data was coded and systematized using inductively and deductively formed categories in a multi-stage process, supported by the program MAXQDA (VERBI software)



Five phases of qualitative content analysis based on Kuckartz (2019, p. 186)

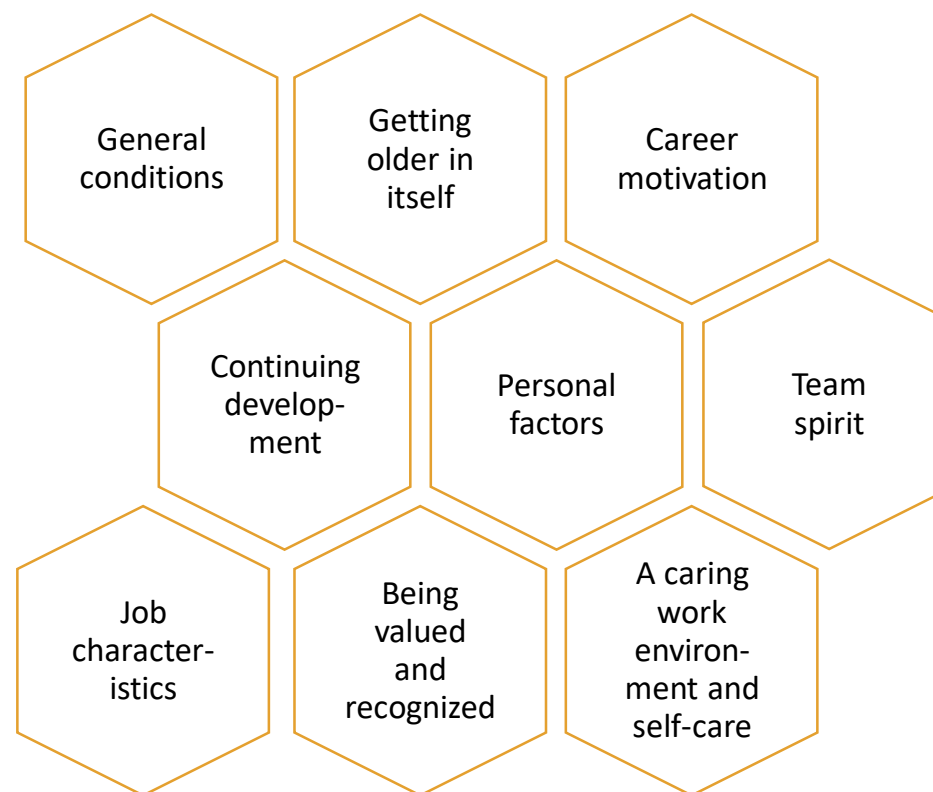
Results

- Study participants: N=61 nurses aged 50 years and older from various nursing sectors



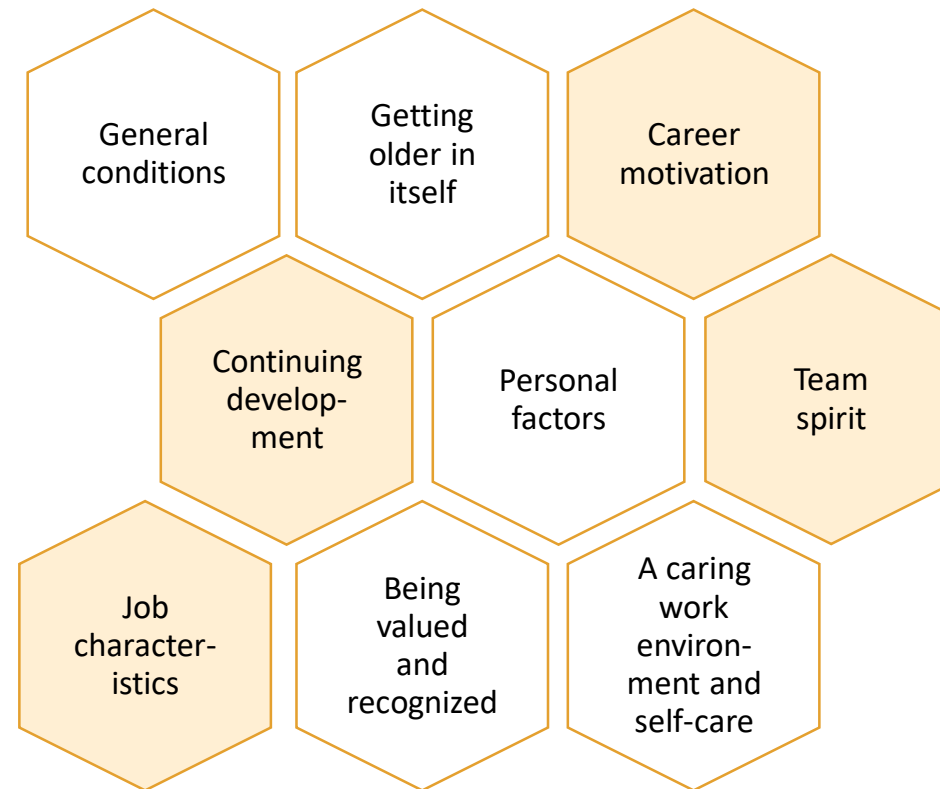
Results

- Overall, nine overarching categories could be identified, which were conceptualized as resources for aging in nursing and a long working life



Results

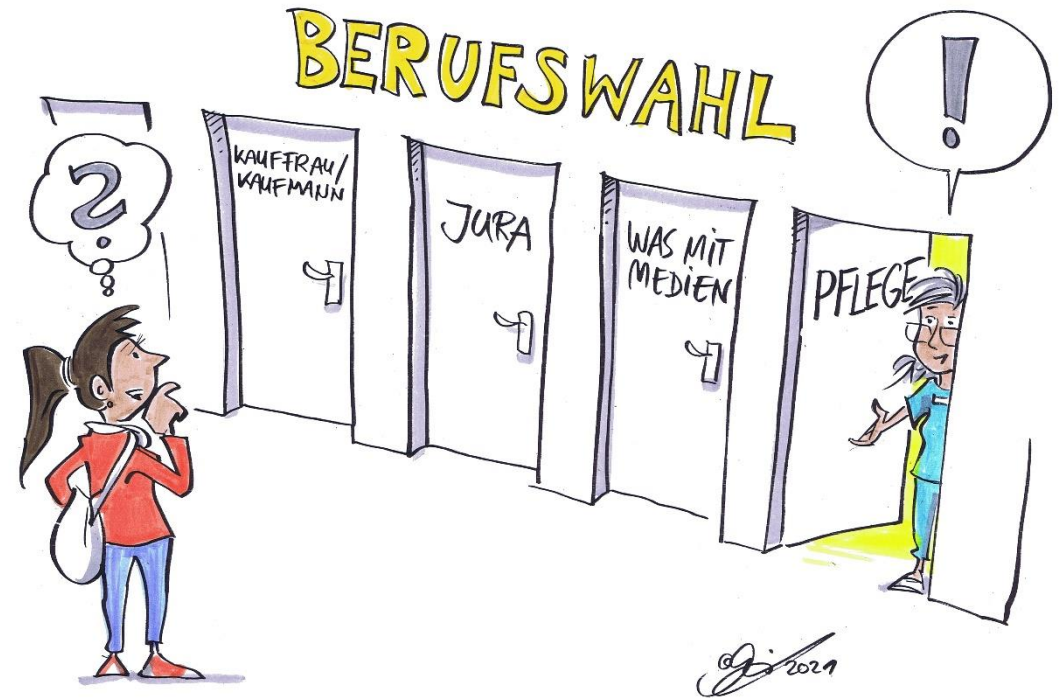
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Results

Career motivation

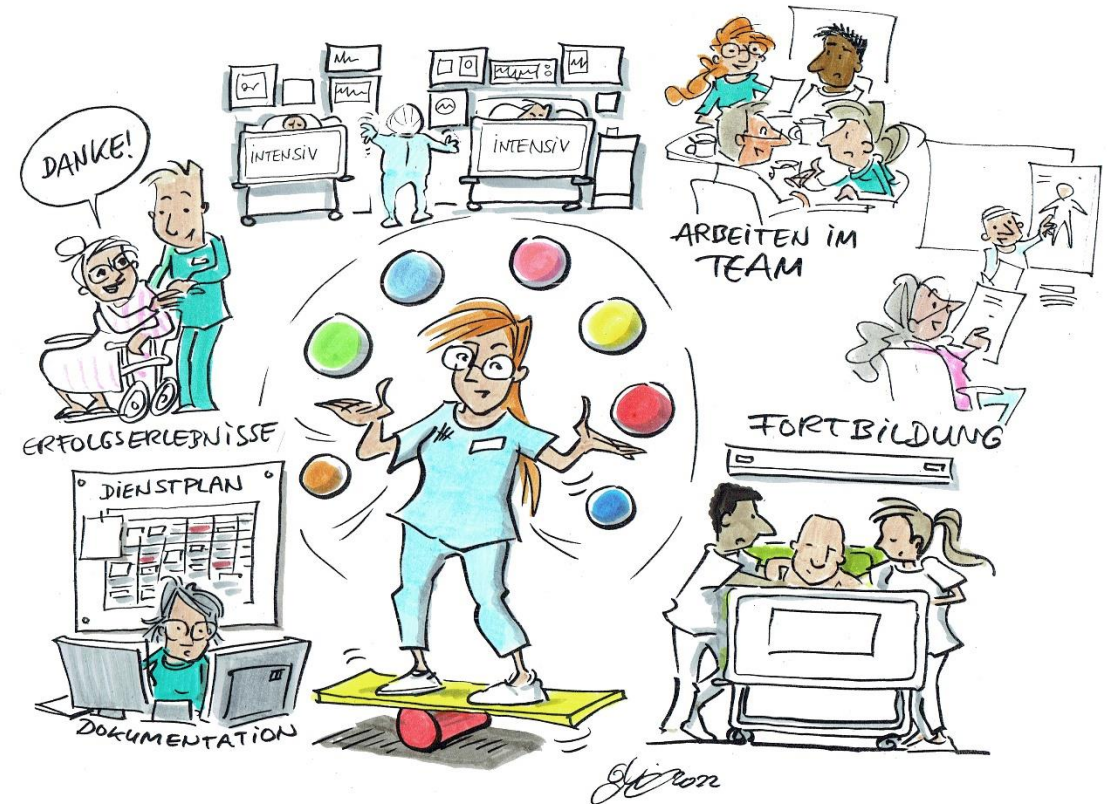
- High importance: initial career motivation and various ways to enter the profession
- Influence of previous personal experience with nursing care
- Often intentional career choice that continues further on → occupational retention
- Good understanding of the nursing profession as an important prerequisite and resource for a long professional life



Results

Job characteristics

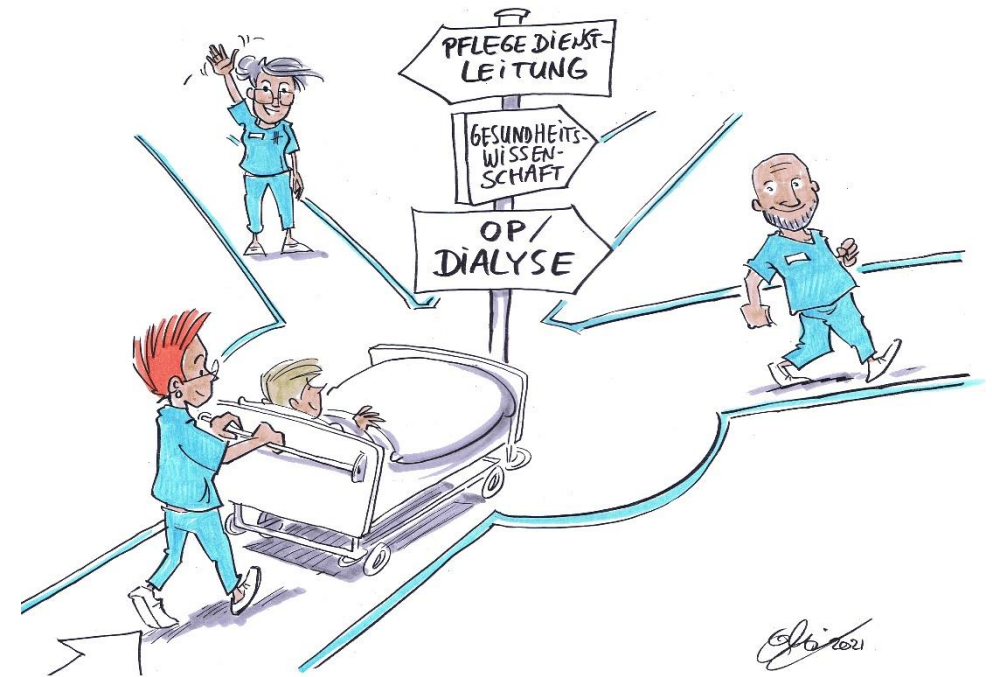
- Valuing the nursing profession and its characteristics
- Nursing profession = diverse, varying, meaningful, and potential for personal growth
- Interesting fields of work, opportunities for further development, physical and mental activity, interaction with people
- Importance and impact of nursing interventions in the nursing process
- Interactions in supporting patients at different stages of life



Results

Continuing development

- Multiple fields of nursing practice → taking advantage of development opportunities and finding a suitable workspace
- Employee efforts, but also the support of managers and employers to find a suitable work place and supportive working conditions
- Prerequisites:
 - Readiness for change
 - Being guided by interests
 - Keeping an open mind
 - Access and utilization of opportunities for qualification and specialization



Results

Team spirit

- Importance of the team and good working atmosphere
- Team as a backbone
- Working together → joint work effort, feeling of belonging, knowing each other, building trust and learning from each other
- Enjoying working together, sharing happy moments, resolving conflicts, facing difficult situations together
- Being open to new colleagues and new impulses



Discussion

- **Resources for a long and healthy working life are embedded in the entire course of the professional career**
 - Occupational biographical perspective is emphasized
 - Broadens the view and points to the compatibility between individual needs and resources as well as the general conditions and work requirements, referring to the “work ability”-approach of Ilmarinen (2001)
 - Support strategies should be oriented towards the needs of nurses throughout their career and should be complemented by age-related measures
- **Focus on the perspective of the nurses themselves is of great importance and reflected in other recent studies** (e.g. Lipp et al., 2021)
 - Should complement research on strain and limitations in order to develop and implement support strategies, which meet the strengths, preferences and opinions of the person concerned
 - Focusing on resources is an important shift of perspective, especially in the context of vulnerable target groups

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