

Assessment of Perception of Nursing as a Career among the Higher Secondary Students and Teachers in Selected Educational Institutions of Kamrup (M), Assam

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Abstract: *Nursing is as old as human life itself. Shortage of the nurses is a worldwide problem that will continue unless and until drastic measures are taken. Higher secondary education is the turning point of students' life and active participation of higher secondary school teachers can be encouraged by providing opportunity for self-learning, teaching and explaining about nursing profession to students and society. The present study aimed to assess the perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary students and teachers. The sample were recruited via proportionate stratified random sampling technique and convenience sampling technique for students and teachers respectively. Data were collected from 194 students and 98 teachers by using self-structured questionnaire. Result revealed that majority of the students (n= 140, 72.2%) and teachers (n=51, 52%) had moderate level of perception regarding nursing as a career. The investigator recommended that career counselor should organize awareness program or career counseling program in higher secondary schools and colleges which will provide career information about nursing profession. The investigator also recommended that community people should also attend the career counseling program, so that their perception towards nursing profession will change and they will encourage their children to join nursing.*

Keywords: Perception, Nursing career, higher secondary student, higher secondary teacher

1. Introduction

Nursing is as old as human life itself. However, the shortage of nurses is not a recent phenomenon, nor one restricted to a specific geographical location.¹ The first half of the twentieth century is the most important revolutionary period in human history. Nursing profession began to take root in Indian society, as a means of subsistence for helpless widows, divorced or forsaken wives and spinsters, mostly belonging to economically poorer sections in the society.²

“What is nursing?” This question creates a challenge for nurse educators. In order to attract and retain bright, capable students in nursing, there must be changes in the nursing curriculum to provide and assure accurate and definitive perceptions of nursing.³

According to Peterson (2006), historically the nurses have been predominantly females who were easily recognized by a white hat and uniform making the professionals and the profession more visible. Today, white uniforms and hats have been replaced by vivid colored scrub suits worn by both male and female nurses. Students' perceptions of nursing are based on visual images that are often limited to bedside care and drug administration. But a highly skilled and well-educated nursing professional play an important role in healthcare front.⁴

Shortage of the nurses is a worldwide problem that will continue unless and until drastic measures are taken. Nurse administrators and educators must ensure that all nurses exemplify positive behaviour and attitude, so that they can act as role models and attract more students to the profession. There is also a need to increase awareness

about nursing, which should begin at the primary school level.⁵

In a modern society people are status-conscious, many a time their choices are also influenced by this factor. Most of those who are opting for the science stream with a first preference to join medical or engineering. In health care system a doctor is seen as the ultimate. Then comes dentists, homeopaths and physiotherapist. There was a time when nursing used to be opted as a last resort.⁶

Students often have misconceptions regarding the reality of nursing and the opportunities available to nurses that sometimes result in poor choices related to pursuing nursing as a career.⁷ Perceptions of higher secondary school students about nursing are important because they offer strategic clues towards successful recruitment of the next generation of nurses. They are the one part of the society and therefore the great impact on the society from what they think and believe about nursing profession.⁸

What do the public think of Nurses? Do they see nurses as nice, but not very bright girls who hold patient's hands and carryout doctors' orders or do they regard them as skilled, independent professionals with their own area of expertise? When it comes to higher secondary school teacher, it becomes necessary that how they look forward toward nursing?⁹ Higher secondary school teachers can guide the students in selection of a profession after completion of class XII. So this is an attempt to check higher secondary school teacher's perception towards nursing profession.

During conversation with higher secondary students and teachers, it was found that they consider nursing as a lower-level profession. They believe that people choose nursing

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because they were not able to get admission for any other degree courses. Active participation of higher secondary school teachers can be encouraged by providing opportunity for self-learning, teaching and explaining about nursing profession to students and society. So that students can be motivated towards the nursing profession. Therefore, it is important to know the perception among the higher secondary students and teachers regarding nursing as a career, since this is the period students' think of their future plans for higher education. Hence this study was undertaken.

2. Statement of the problem

"Assessment of Perception of Nursing as a Career among the Higher Secondary Students and Teachers in selected Educational Institutions of Kamrup (M), Assam".

Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. assess the perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary students.
- ii. assess the perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary teachers.
- iii. find out the association between the perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary students and the selected demographic variables – age, gender, religion, parents' education, parents' occupation, response in opting nursing as a career, family members in nursing profession and experience of hospital stay.
- iv. determine the association between the perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary teachers and the selected demographic variables – age, gender, religion, family members in nursing profession and experience of hospital stay.

Hypotheses:

Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- H₁ - There is significant association between the perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary students and the selected demographic variables.
- H₂ - There is significant association between the perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary teachers and the selected demographic variables.

Assumptions of the study:

The assumptions of the study were:

- a) Higher secondary students possess some knowledge regarding perception of nursing as a career.
- b) Many factors such as age, gender, religion, family members in nursing profession and experience of

hospital stay may influence the higher secondary students and teachers perception of nursing as a career.

- c) Students' and teachers' response regarding perception of nursing as a career reflect their true feelings.
- d) Higher secondary teachers will motivate the students to take up nursing as a profession.

Delimitations:

The study was delimited to:

1. Higher secondary students studying in Government higher secondary schools and junior colleges.
2. Higher secondary teachers teaching in Government higher secondary schools and junior colleges.
3. Higher secondary students and teachers of arts and science stream.

3. Literature Survey

1. Studies related to student's perception of nursing as a career-

A quantitative sequential study was carried out by Alroqi H, Andrew S, Mansour M (2017) to explore the secondary school students' perceptions towards nursing in Riyadh City, KSA. Total 554 final year secondary school students were surveyed by a questionnaire about nursing career choice, in Arabic. Findings depicted that students had a respect for the nursing profession but there was lack of awareness in the community about nursing. The reason for not being interested in nursing as a future career are social status, financial status, and sociocultural factors, such as influence of parents and religion; issues of mixing with other genders; long working hours and doing night shift. Strategies to do require plans to engage family members, particularly parents, as well as leaders from high schools, nursing, the community, media and religious leaders to help reshape the image of nursing.¹⁰

Rajashree J (2016) had undertaken a descriptive study on perception towards nursing profession among higher secondary students of two Government higher secondary schools in Thiruvananthapuram. The main purpose of the study was to attract more and more young adults towards nursing profession. Data were collected from 200 students of science stream by using Kohler and Edward's Career Questionnaire. The findings of the perception towards nursing profession showed that majority i.e. 85.5% of the students' perceived nursing positively while a minority i.e. 14.5% of them had negative perception towards nursing profession.¹¹

2. Studies related to association between students' perception of nursing as a career and selected demographic variables.

A descriptive study was employed by Vaithilingan S, Kumar B, Mariyappan C (2017) to explore the pre-nursing

students' perception on nursing profession in Kirumampakkam, Puducherry. The samples for the study were 109 pre-nursing students. Results revealed that majority i.e. 64 (58.7%) of them had very good perception, 44 (40.30%) had moderate perception and only 1 (0.91%) of the pre-nursing student had fair perception towards nursing profession. None of the demographic variables i.e. age, gender, religion, class, medium of instruction in higher secondary and source of information regarding nursing profession were associated with perception of pre-nursing students. The study concluded that the perception of pre-nursing students towards nursing profession could be made better by sensitizing the students regarding profession through carrier awareness and counselling programme.¹²

Mistry KR (2016) conducted a descriptive study on perception of nursing as a career among 200 higher secondary students in Gujarat. It was found that 82% students had positive perception regarding nursing as a career but did not transmit into a desire to join nursing. Result demonstrated that in relation to other health professions nursing professions got 2nd and 3rd rank and competed with pharmacy and physiotherapy profession. They had less knowledge regarding nursing courses and career opportunity in nursing profession. Socio-demographic data had no association but their contact with the nurse had association with their thinking to become a nurse. For the parent's education and occupation, it was found that there was positive correlation with thinking to become a nurse.⁸

4. Methods / Approach

Research Approach

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the quantitative descriptive research approach was adopted to assess the perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary students and teachers in selected educational institutions of Kamrup (M), Assam.

Research Design

A descriptive survey design is used for the present study.

Settings of the study

Out of two blocks under Kamrup (M), the researcher has selected Guwahati block. Three higher secondary schools and one junior college are selected randomly from Guwahati block, Kamrup (M), Assam. The selected institutions are Ganesh Mandir Higher Secondary School, Karmashree Hiteswar Saikia Junior College, Dispur Govt. Higher Secondary School and Gopal Boro Govt. Higher Secondary School.

Target population

All the higher secondary students and teachers are the target population of this study.

Accessible population:

All the higher secondary students and teachers from arts and science stream of four selected institutions of Guwahati block, Kamrup (M), Assam are the accessible population.

Sample:

In the present study, the accessible populations are 390 students who were studying in 11th and 12th standard and 98 higher secondary teachers who were teaching in 11th and 12th standard students at three higher secondary schools and one junior college of Guwahati block, Kamrup (M), Assam.

Sampling technique: Multistage sampling technique was adopted for this study.

Stage I: Selection of block

Two blocks are there in Kamrup (M) namely Guwahati and Dimoria block. From these two blocks Guwahati block was selected randomly.

Stage II: Selection of schools

There are 17 Government higher secondary schools and three junior colleges under Guwahati block. Out of that three higher secondary schools and one junior college are randomly selected by the researcher.

Stage III: Selection of sample

From these four educational institutions, each school is stratified into two stratum on the basis of their standard i.e. 11th and 12th standard, and then from each stratum is collected by using stratified proportionate random sampling technique for students. For teachers, convenience sampling technique was used to collect data.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Students of 11th and 12th standard science and arts stream.
- Teachers teaching 11th and 12th standard students of science and arts stream.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Students and teachers from commerce stream.

Variables

- Research variables:

In this study, perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary students and teachers was the research variable.

- Demographic variables

In this study, the demographic variables for students were - age, gender, religion, parents' education, parents' occupation, response in opting nursing as a career, family members in nursing profession and experience of hospital

stay. The demographic variables for teachers' were - age, gender, religion, family members in nursing profession and experience of hospital stay.

Development of the Tool

A self-structured questionnaire was developed in Assamese i.e the local language to gather data from participants. The questions were assessed by using '5' points Likert scale. Responses to the Likert scale questions that contained statements exhibiting a positive perception of nursing are coded by using the following ordinal scale: Strongly disagree=1, Disagree=2, Undecided=3, Agree=4, Strongly agree=5

Statements that exhibit a negative perception of nursing are reverse coded. This consisted of total 34 items which were used to find out the perception of nursing as a career among higher secondary students and teachers. The maximum possible score was 170 with lowest score 34. The total score of each subject was calculated and converted into percentage. Thus scoring for each classification was done according to Mean \pm Standard deviation. Scores were allotted as follows:

Perception of nursing as a career

>(Mean + Standard deviation)
= Good level of perception
(Mean + Standard deviation) to (Mean - Standard deviation) = Moderate level of perception
<(Mean - Standard deviation)
= Low level of perception

Content validity of the Tool:

The tool along with statement of problem, objectives, hypotheses and operational definitions were given to 7 experts of nursing field. The tools were modified and prepared as per suggestions and advice by the experts.

Language validity of the Tool: An Assamese version of the tool was prepared and language validity was established by experts.

Reliability:

The reliability of the tool was performed among the higher secondary students and higher secondary teachers, who met the required population criteria, by using Guttman Split-Half Coefficient method (0.813 for students and 0.82 for teachers), which showed a definite reliability.

Pilot study:

After obtaining formal permission from the concerned authority, the pilot study was conducted at Sonaram Higher Secondaryschool and Beltola Mahavidyalaya Junior College, Kamrup (M), Assam. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that majority of the students i.e. 65% had moderate level of perception regarding nursing as a career. Similarly, majority of the teachers i.e. 75% had moderate level of perception regarding nursing as a career.

5. Result / Discussion

Analysis of the study findings were categorized organized and presented under the following headings:

Section-A: Description of the demographic characteristics of students in frequency and percentage.

Majority of the students i.e. 185 (95.4%) were between 15-17 years of age and regarding gender, 177 (91.2%) students were female and 17 (8.8%) were male. Maximum numbers of students i.e. 168 (86.6%) were from Hindu religion and only 26 (13.4%) were Islam. With respect to parents' education, majority of the students' fathers i.e. 64 (33%) and mothers i.e. 81 (41.8%) had completed graduation. In relation to parents' occupation, maximum numbers of students' fathers i.e. 107 (55.2%) were businessmen and maximum number of students' mothers i.e. 143 (73.7%) were housewives. Majority of the students i.e. 101 (52.1%) wanted to join nursing and rest 93 (47.9%) didn't want to join nursing. Regarding family members in nursing profession, maximum number of students i.e. 150 (77.3%) had reported that they don't have family members in nursing profession. In relation to experience of hospital stay, majority of the students i.e. 124 (63.9%) had experience of hospital stay.

SECTION-B: Description of the demographic characteristics of teachers in frequency and percentage.

Majority of the teachers i.e. 41 (41.8%) were between 50-59 years of age. Similarly, 79 (80.6%) teachers were female and 19 (19.4%) were male. Again, majority of the teachers i.e. 96 (98%) were Hindu and only 2 (2%) were Islam. Regarding family members in nursing profession, maximum number of teachers i.e. 90 (91.8%) had reported that they don't have family members in nursing profession. In relation to experience of hospital stay, majority of the teachers i.e. 75 (76.5%) had experience of hospital stay.

SECTION-C: Mean and Standard Deviation on assessment of perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary students.

Among the students, majority i.e. 140 (72.2%) had moderate level of perception regarding nursing as a career. The mean and standard deviation were 138.11 and 8.21 respectively.

SECTION-D: Mean and Standard Deviation on assessment of perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary teachers.

Similarly, among the teachers, majority i.e. 51 (52%) had moderate level of perception regarding nursing as a career. The mean and standard deviation were 130.93 and 11.32 respectively.

SECTION-E: Association between students' perception of nursing as a career and demographic variables.

In case of students, perception level was significantly associated with age ($\chi^2 = 7.08$; df = 2; $P = .029$), gender ($\chi^2 = 39.34$; df = 2; $P < .001$), fathers' education ($\chi^2 = 86.49$

; $df = 8$; $P < .001$), mothers' education ($\chi^2 = 48.13$; $df = 8$; $P < .001$), fathers' occupation ($\chi^2 = 18.15$; $df = 8$; $P = .020$), mothers' occupation ($\chi^2 = 143.35$; $df = 4$; $P < .001$), opting nursing as a career ($\chi^2 = 14.89$; $df = 2$; $P = .001$), family members in nursing profession ($\chi^2 = 73.64$; $df = 2$; $P < .001$) and experience of hospital stay ($\chi^2 = 31.57$; $df = 2$; $P < .001$). Therefore, the research hypothesis (H_1) could be retained.

SECTION-F: Association between teachers' perception of nursing as a career and demographic variables.

The Chi-square value to see the association between teachers' perception of nursing as a career and family members in nursing profession was 6.633 with 2 df ($p = 0.036 < 0.05$). This value of chi-square is significant. Hence, there is significant association between teachers' perception of nursing as a career and family members in nursing profession. Therefore, the research hypothesis (H_2) could be retained.

The findings of the study were discussed under the following headings:

Section-I: Summarization of demographic variables in frequency and percentage.

Section-II: Descriptive analysis of level of perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary students.

Section-III: Findings related to association between the perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary students and selected demographic variables.

Section-I: Summarization of demographic variables in frequency and percentage.

The present study consisted of 194 higher secondary students studying in four selected educational institutions, aged 15-20 years. Similar study was done by **Ogunyewo OA, Afemikhe JA, Ajio DK, Olanlesi-alin A¹³** among 240 secondary school students with the age group of 13-21 years in Nigeria where they examined the adolescents' perception of nursing as a career.

Regarding gender, the present study showed that 91.2% were female and 8.8% were male. Similar to this finding, **Pillitteri A¹⁴** investigated the young adults' perception of nursing in Boston where majority of the samples i.e. 75% were female and rest 25% were male.

The current study found that majority of the students i.e. 86.6 % were Hindu. The study was supported by the findings of the study reported by **Devi AM, Devi AS¹⁵** where 95% students belonged to Hindu religion.

The present study showed that 33% students' fathers and 41.8% students' mothers had completed graduation. The findings of the study reported by **Mistry KS⁸** opposed the present study where 50% respondents' fathers and 47% respondents' mothers had taken the secondary level education.

In this study 55.2% students' fathers were doing business. The study findings of **Ogunyewo OA, Afemikhe JA, Ajio DK, Olanlesi-alin A¹³** also showed that 28.75% respondents' fathers were doing business. Regarding mothers' occupation, the present study showed 73.7% students' mothers were housewives. The study findings of **Mistry KS⁸** also showed that 88% students' mothers were housewives.

The present study showed that majority of the students i.e. 52.1% want to join nursing. The findings of the study reported by **Mistry KS⁸** supported the present study where 29 % of the students were thinking to become a nurse.

The current study found that 77.3% of the students have no family members in nursing profession. The study findings of **Rajashree J¹¹** also showed that 51% of the students were not having relatives in nursing profession.

The present study revealed that majority of the students i.e. 63.9% have experience of hospital stay. This is supported by the study findings of **Alexander H¹⁶** where 86.9% of the students had experience of hospital stay.

Section-II: Descriptive analysis of level of perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary students.

The present study showed that out of 194 subjects, majority i.e. 140 (72.2%) of the students had moderate level of perception, 35 (18%) had good level of perception and the rest 19 (9.8%) had poor level of perception regarding nursing as a career. On the other hand, a study finding reported by **Vaithilingan S, Kumar B, Mariyappan C¹²** revealed that majority i.e. 64 (58.7%) of them had very good level of perception, 44 (40.30%) had moderate level of perception and only 1 (0.91%) had fair level of perception towards nursing profession.

Section-III: Findings related to association between the perception of nursing as a career among the higher secondary students and selected demographic variables.

In the present study, Chi square was computed to see the association between students' perception of nursing as a career and demographic variables. The result showed that there is significant association between students' perception of nursing as a career and demographic variables such as age, gender, parents' education, parents' occupation, opting nursing as a career, family members in nursing profession and experience of hospital stay. This finding is supported by the study findings of **Mistry KS⁸** which showed that age and gender had no association but parents' education, parents' occupation and their contact with a nurse had association with their thinking to become a nurse. So, contact with nurse or having family members in nursing profession made impact on their career choice in nursing.

6. Conclusion

From present study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Higher secondary students have moderate level of perception regarding nursing as a career.
2. Higher secondary teachers have moderate level of perception regarding nursing as a career.
3. Significant association was present between students' perception of nursing as a career and demographic variables such as age, gender, parents' education, parents' occupation, response in opting nursing as a career, family members in nursing profession and experience of hospital stay.
4. Significant association was present between teachers' perception of nursing as a career and demographic variable i.e family members in nursing profession.

7. Future Scope

1. Implications for nursing practice

In the sphere of practice, nurses should develop a positive attitude towards their profession, work and career. Making good experience with the nurse and showing the ability of the nurse will improve the image of nurse and raise the motivation of people to choose nursing as a career.

There is also a lack of communication and co-ordination between nursing school administrators and high school career counselors or teachers, which in turn creates a knowledge-gap about the benefits of nursing. There is a need to establish open lines of communication between parents, career counselors and nursing administrators. There is a lack of role models for men choosing to enter nursing. There is a need for male nurses to take an active role in recruiting more men into nursing.

2. Implications for nursing education

Education is a form of learning in which knowledge and skills of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training and research. Nurses are the backbone of health care settings. Preparing highly educated nurses to provide quality care, formulate health policy, administer health care delivery systems and educate the next generation of health care providers are critical steps for improving health care outcomes.

3. Implications for Administration

The Program administrators are responsible for recruitment and should focus on extrinsic rewards when marketing the profession to male students. In addition, the salary of the nurses has to be increased in order to attract more students into the profession. Nursing School administrators should approach and work closely with career counsellor and should organize awareness program or career counselling program in higher secondary schools and colleges which

will provide sufficient information about nursing profession, admission criteria and career opportunities in nursing profession. It will also help the higher secondary teachers in motivating their students to join nursing profession.

4. Implications for nursing research

Research findings have no value if they are not put into action. The findings revealed that there is a great need to explore the nursing as a career in order to understand the general and complete picture of nursing image in Northeast. Nurses can contribute their research findings in newer strategies and plans for educating community people about nursing in order to attract more and more individuals to this profession.

8. Limitations

The present study has its own limitations like any other study. Some of the drawbacks of the study may be summarized as follows:

1. The study was limited to only higher secondary students and teachers from arts and science stream.
2. The samples were drawn from selected educational institutions of Kamrup (M), Assam and so it cannot represent the whole population under study.

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