

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY TO EXPLORE THE IMAGE OF NURSING PROFESSION AS PERCEIVED BY UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS OF SELECTED NURSING COLLEGES IN KERALA

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Received: 27 Jul 2021

Accepted: 28 Jul 2021

Published: 31 Jul 2021

ABSTRACT

*Nursing is a profession within health-care sector focused on care of individuals, families and communities, so that they may attain, maintain and recover optimal health and quality of life. The **objective** of the present study was to explore the image of nursing Profession as perceived by undergraduate nursing students of selected nursing colleges. A phenomenological study approach was used for this study and purposive random sampling technique was adopted to select 24 B.Sc Nursing students from selected colleges in Kerala. The structured interview method was used to collect the data regarding socio-demographic variables and the image of nursing profession as perceived by undergraduate nursing students. The data were collected and analyzed by using thematic analysis.*

*The **results** of study revealed that, all the participants responded that nursing profession ` has 100% job opportunity. 83.3% of the participant's family has good opinion about nursing profession. The responses of 75% participants reflect that 'nursing is a respectful profession". 75% participants responded as nurses are going to abroad because of high salary. 41.66% of participants are satisfied in nursing profession because of the respect, smile and blessings from the patients. The responses of 41.6% of participants about 'suggestions to improve nursing image' is that 'provide awareness to the society'.*

KEYWORDS: *Phenomenological Study, Image, Perception, Nursing Profession*

INTRODUCTION

Nurses play a vital role in providing health services. These are people who devote their lives to caring for mothers and children, giving life saving immunizations and health advice, looking after older people and generally meeting everyday essential health needs. They are often, the first and only point of care in their communities. Nursing is a noble profession. It requires loving heart and deserve for compassionate care. It is one of the most delightful arts, which needs blending of knowledge, skills and values.¹ **Virginia Henderson** was the first modern nurse to define nursing. She wrote "The unique function of the nurse is to assist the individual, sick or well in the performance of those activities contributing to health or its recovery or to a peaceful death that he would perform unaided if he had the necessary strength, will or knowledge, and to do this in such a way as to help him gain independence as rapidly as possible." Henderson described nursing in relation

to the client and client's environment². The image of nursing is vital to the profession, necessary in today's changing workplace, and an important concept for future nurses to understand. It is imperative to establish and maintain a proper image of nursing, particularly in current society, where the accomplishments of nurses are seldom given the recognition they deserve³.

Although there is enormous advancement in the nursing Profession, nurses still face multiple challenges in relation to their professional image⁴. Despite the great advances in the nursing Profession, nurses still face considerable challenges related to its image that impact on status, power and the ability to affect changes in health-care, where a negative image of nursing has a number of negative consequences⁵. India is short of 1.94 million nurses, according to India spend analysis data from Indian Nursing Council and WHO⁵. The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed in May last year that 2020 would be dedicated to nurses and midwives. It chose the theme to coincide with the 200th birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale on 12th of May. Unfortunately this year the outbreak of the COVID-19 infection happened across the world which took the lives of many people globally. The nursing response to the corona virus (COVID -19) crisis has gone way beyond the core purpose of 2020 as the International Year of the Nurses and Midwives. The work put in by nurses in the COVID 19 crisis is powerful & practical demonstration of the potential that nurses possess, to address big health care challenges, which the theme of nurses day this year aims to achieve⁶.

Globally there is already a change to the way the world is viewing nurses and health care professionals. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought Nurses to the forefront of people's minds and the media attention and public gratitude towards health care professionals is being captured on a daily basis. As not everyone understands what happens in a health care facility, and the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of the contribution of the nurses to health care prevention & promotion⁶. So it is essential to assess the image of nursing Profession to understand how nursing students perceive their professional image. It will motivate the upcoming students to become nurses and to serve for others.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

- **Research Design:** Qualitative research design- Phenomenological study.
- **Setting:** The setting located for the study is Kerala.
- **Sample Size:** The sample size was 24 Nursing students who are studying in different nursing colleges in Kerala. Purposive sampling is used for selection of most conveniently available person as study participants.

Development of Tool

Tool was constructed by reviewing the recent research studies and clinical experience of student nurses. The questions were aimed at eliciting relevant information concerning image of nursing profession as perceived by undergraduate nursing students. The instrument used for study was structured interview schedule. There were 12 questions in interview. Then the proposed interview questionnaire was given to 5 experts to review. The experts returned the questionnaire with evaluation and researcher adjusted the questionnaire according to the experts' advice. Subjects were then instructed to respond to the questions according to their perceptions and viewpoints.

To ensure the content validity of the tool, along the objectives was submitted to the experts in the field of Mental health nursing, Child health nursing, Obstetrics/Gynecology nursing research. The suggestions of the experts were considered for the modifications of the scale. Certain questions were reconstructed with newer modifications and the tool was accepted for the study.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The project was done with consideration of ethical issues and obtaining permission from the Institutional ethical committee of St. James Hospital trust and obtained the written consent of participants after explaining the objectives of the study. Among the nursing colleges of Kerala, 24 BSc nursing students were selected by purposive sampling technique. The data was collected via voice recordings in the phone. It took about 15-40 minutes depending on the response of the participants. The data collection process was then terminated by thanking the respondents.

DATA ANALYSIS

- **Section A** include the socio demographic variables of the participants and it shows that 37.5% of the samples were in the age group of 21-22. All the participants are females. Majority of them were Christians (70.8%), remaining 29.16% are Hindus. The B.Sc. Nursing students included 25% (6) from each year- First year, second year, third year and fourth year- of B.Sc. Nursing course. And all participants like nursing profession, 91.6% choose nursing as their own choice and 8.3% choose nursing profession as forced by others.
- **Section B:** Qualitative interview was conducted to assess the perception of nursing students regarding the image of nursing. There were total 24 nursing students from different nursing colleges in Kerala. The data is analyzed based on the questions asked to the participants. The content was recorded; transcribed and thematic analysis was done. **Braun & Clark's (2006)** step-by –step guide for thematic analysis was used for analyzing the content of interview.

Table 1: Reason for Deciding the Career as a Nurse

Sl No	Suggestions	Frequency(f)	(%)
1	Nurses can serve the society by doing the charity works.	10	41.67
2	Nursing profession has good job opportunities.	9	37.5
3	From childhood onwards I love nursing very much.	7	29.17
4	Nurses have more job opportunities in abroad.	4	16.67
5	Selected nursing because of the compulsion and interest of parents and relatives.	3	12.5
6	Chance to mingle with others, and understand others in better way.	3	12.5
7	Nurses get blessings from the patients, when they help them.	2	8.33
8	High salary	1	4.16
9	Possibilities for higher studies	1	4.16
10	Nurses are angels on earth	1	4.16

The responses of 41.67% participants have decided their career as a nurse because, 'nurses can serve the society by doing the charity works'. 37.5% participants responded that it is because of 'good job opportunities'.

A few verbatim observation of the interview are as follows;

- *'I believe that I can do lots of charity work through nursing. I like charity work very much. So I took this course'*
- *'I love nursing from childhood onwards. So I took this course. We can serve the patients. Because of that I started to study this course.'*
- *'I had dreamed of working as a nurse from childhood onwards. Because, we all having only one life. We can maximum serve others by this job and heart full blessing from the people is good for our future and life. So that I took this course.'*
- *'I love nursing. It is a variety profession. We can serve others by this profession. There is more scope in nursing.'*

Table 2: Opinion about Nursing as a Nursing Student

SI No	Suggestions	Frequency (f)	(%)
1	As a nursing student feeling proud to be a nurse.	7	29.16
2	Nursing student can provide good care to the patient in good manner	7	29.16
3	Understand the difficulties of nursing profession.	5	20.83
4	Able to understand the feelings and needs of patient.	4	16.66
5	Nursing is a good profession.	4	16.66
6	Nursing helps how to interact with others.	4	16.66
7	As a nursing student I need to improve more.	2	8.33

The response of 29.16% participants have their opinion about nursing as a nursing student is that, feeling proud to be a nurse. 25% participants respond like nursing student can provide good care to the patient. Only 4.16% responded like as a nursing student doing their responsibilities in a good manner.

A few verbatim observations of the interview as follows;

- *'As a nursing student I feel proud of myself. Because suppose if I choose another profession we will not able to understand the pain and feeling of others and we will not be able to help them.'*
- *'After entering to this profession, we learn how to interact with others and understand their problem, even a bedridden patient through their facial expression.'*
- *'At first I was afraid how to mingle with the patients. But now, the patient smile after we give care to them, provide satisfaction.'*
- *'As a nursing student my opinion is that 'nurses are the angels of earth.'*
- *'In nursing profession we get scolding from others may be due to our fault or due to fault of others. But we need to suffer.'*

The data related to whether Nursing is a respectable profession shows that 75% participants reflect that 'nursing is a respectful profession'. Only 4.16% of participants responded as 'nursing have more respect in abroad than Kerala', 'giving respect is depending on patients.' And one participant responded that nurses does not get due respect.

A few verbatim observation of interview are as follows;

- *‘Nursing is a respectful job. Because we care a patient and we get respect from them. And a respectful job in society’*
- *‘I understood that nursing is a respectful job. All of the people will not give this. The patients say thankful words for our care and services. It indicates respect towards us.’*

The data related to the opinion about nursing in family reveals 83.3% of the participant’s family has good opinion about nursing. Only 8.33% participants responded as ‘nursing is difficult job.

A few verbatim observation of the interview are as follows;

- *‘I took this course at the insistence of my family. As the elderly child in a normal family has to look after things, only if the elder get a job, the younger one can study. So my family told me to choose this job.’*
- *‘The opinion of my family is nursing is a good job. It is a turning point in the life. Being able to work in the social service ministry is a good thing.’*

The responses of 41.66% of participants regarding their experience as nursing students show that it helped to improve their knowledge since the first day of nursing. 25% of participants responded as interested in nursing.

A few verbatim observation of the interview are as follows;

- *‘At the time of starting nursing it seemed to be difficult. Because there is a lot to be done and a lot to suffer. But now in this third year it looks like a good service. Because we are happy to see a smile on their face. And not only had some people put us on the blessing. It has always felt like a positive energy in life’.*
- *‘My life has changed a lot since I entered the nursing field. And I learned to forgive. I was able to see my life with responsibility.’*

Table 3: Nursing is a Stressful or Boring Occupation

SI No	Suggestions	Frequency (f)	(%)
1	Nursing is a stressful job.	16	66.67
2	Nursing is not a boring profession.	15	62.5
3	Nursing focused on patient health and care.	9	37.5
4	Nursing have overwork and study.	8	33.33
5	Nursing not a stressful profession.	4	16.66
6	Nursing is a good service.	1	4.16
7	Nursing helps to good interaction with others.	1	4.16

The above table shows 66.67% participants have felt that nursing is stressful job. 62.5% responded like nursing is not a boring profession. Only 4.16% responded like nursing is a good service and nursing helps to good interaction with others.

A few verbatim observation of the interview are as follows;

- *‘Nursing is a stressful job because we work for someone’s life. That is a very stressful job.’*

- *'I don't think nursing is a job that gives as such high pressure. Because every single thing we do with commitment for the patient it becomes pretty easy'.*
- *'No I never felt that way. It is a good profession. I see it is a good service.'*
- *'Nursing is a difficult degree to tell any of the Students they studying nursing. High pressure is present. Because there is lot to study and write.*
- *'We have lot of assignment, care plan, presentation. Night also we give time to write to complete this tasks.'*

Table 4: Satisfaction with Job of Nursing

Sl No.	Suggestions	Frequency(f)	(%)
1	Feel proud to be a nurse	11	45.83
2	Satisfied with choosing nursing profession	10	41.6
3	Nurse is able to save lives	3	12.5
4	Consider as a blessing	1	4.16
5	Nurses can give comfort and love	1	4.16
6	Nurse is able to face situations in life		4.16
7	No other noble profession than nursing	1	4.16
8	Interaction give satisfaction	1	4.16

The responses of 45.83% of participants 'feel proud to be a nursing student'.41.6% of participants are satisfied with choosing nursing profession.

A few verbatim observations of interview are as follows;

- *'I am very much satisfied, and also feel very proud. Because of me many lives are able to save. So I am really proud.'*
- *'I am satisfied with this profession. Proud to be a nurse and it is sound good to hear that I am one of the Angels. It is my privilege to say that my duty and responsibility to care every movements of my patients. Happy to be a nurse.'*

With regard to the job opportunity, all the participants responded that nursing has 100% job opportunity. 79.16% of participants responded as 'job satisfaction depending on each person'. Only 4.16% of participants responded as 80% job satisfaction.

A few verbatim observations of interview are as follows;

- *'I agreed to the statement, because nursing provides 100% job opportunity. Diseases are increasing day by day .So that nurses are needed for the society and also job satisfaction is there'*
- *'Nursing has 100% job opportunity. But I am not satisfied in the job because of low salary.'*

Among the participants, 41.66% of participants are satisfied in nursing profession because of the respect, smile and blessings from the patients. 25% of participants are satisfied because of they can give emotional support to patients.

A few verbatim observations of interview are as follows;

- *'A situation, when nursing seemed satisfactory is the time when the nurses spend their time to bring a patient back to life. Sometimes the patient may not return back to life but the pain and effort each nurse take to bring a patient back to health is so precious and an example for satisfaction'*
- *'When I was posted in the ward, I got a patient, who has limited movement of leg. The stool and urine were gone in the bed. I clean and give bath to her every day. Then last day she gave blessings and kiss on my hand. I feel more satisfaction.'*
- *'I have no much experience. During this Covid period I realized that even if the relatives are all away, there will only nurse'.*

The opinion of 75% participants reveals that nurses are going to abroad because of high salary. 29.16% responded nurses can improve the lifestyle and skills .25% responded nurses have more opportunities in abroad.

A few verbatim observation of the interview are as follow;

- *'Many students are studied nursing by taking loans. If there is enough salary in our country, I will search here for job. Because of less salary here, we have to go abroad for job to refund the loan.'*
- *'My opinion about going abroad for job is better for health and for good income.'*
- *'All are interest to give service in our country. Because of lack of opportunity here going abroad for job; It is not bad in my opinion.'*
- *'In Kerala the value of nurse is only when pandemic situation arised. Doctors get more value than nurses and salary is very low in Kerala. So they chose abroad for job.'*

Factors that affect the image of nursing profession according to the participants reveals 41.6% of participants responded that lack of salary is the main that affect the image of nursing. 29.16% participants responded as the main factors are attitude of society and more workload.

A few verbatim observation of interview are as follows;

- *'The factors that affect the image of nursing Profession are less salary and negligence of society towards nursing. Even though we are called as God's angels, society is having negligence towards us.'*
- *'The factor that affect image of nursing Profession is that no support from families, more workload, not getting enough acceptance.'*
- *Everyone has a mentality that nurses will do any job. We are also educated, but no one is giving respect as that of our qualification in our country.*

The responses of 41.6% of participants about 'suggestions to improve nursing image' is that 'provide awareness to the society'. 29.16% of participants responded as 'improve salary'. Only 8.3% of participants responded as 'improve field of education and continuous education'.

A few verbatim observations of interview are as follow;

- *'The patient and care givers need to be made aware of how much knowledge nurses have. Nurse also work for that and also give care to the patient. This way can improve the image of the nursing.'*
- *'Appreciation and reinforcement provide to the nursing student and also provide good salary according to their work and effort. Also improve the value in front of the society.'*
- *'Work with a dedicated mind, work together with health care team with coordinated mind, the status and image will improve.'*

DISCUSSION

The present study shows 41.6% of participants responded that lack of salary is the main that affect the image of nursing. 29.16% participants responded as the main factors are attitude of society and more workload. The present study shows that 83.3% of the participant's family has good opinion about nursing. Only 8.33% participants responded as 'nursing is difficult job. This study supported by a study conducted by Miyki k Takase Philip maude etal, on impact of perceived public image of nursing on nurse's work behavior. A convenient sample of 346 Australian nurses participated in the study. The result shows that nurses have more positive aptitude for leadership than they thought the public viewed them. It help to enhance nurses job performance and reduce their turnover intension. It is important to improve both the public image and self image of nurses⁷.

The present study shows that, 29.16% participants have their opinion about nursing as a nursing student is that, feeling proud to be a nurse. 25% participants respond like nursing student can provide good care to the patient. Only 4.16% responded like as a nursing student doing their responsibilities in a good manner. This study supported by a quantitative study conducted by Aruna Jothishanmugam et al on perception of nursing students about nursing profession, with a probability sample of 66 students. A questionnaire was administered to assess the perception about nursing profession. The willingness of the family members' category resulted that 58 (87.9%) students have a positive reaction and 7 (10.6%) has a negative reaction to student enrolment in nursing. Deciding factor for the job preference of 52 students (78.8%) is the influence of others. 8 (12.1%) were influenced by the classmates and 5 (7.6) were self-motivated⁸.

The present study shows that, 41.67% participants have decided their career as a nurse because, 'nurses can serve the society by doing the charity works'. 37.5% participants responded that it is because of 'good job opportunities'. This study supported by a study conducted by Dr. Raisa Gul on The Image of Nursing from Nurses and Non-Nurses Perspective in Pakistan. A convenient sample of 487 subjects of doctors, nurses, patients, and members of the public comprised the study. Data were obtained through the use of structured questionnaires. The study depicts the wide variety of factors that influenced nurses' decisions to join nursing as well the people who influenced their decision. Although 20% indicated that they entered nursing to become independent and 16% cited financial reasons, these reasons have similarities. Contrary to societal norms, it was surprising to see that almost 62% of nurses decided to choose nursing because of their personal decision, whereas 38% were influenced by family members⁹.

CONCLUSIONS

Nursing is considered as a critical resource, which is why it is essential to know its image to contribute to consolidating its identity and consequently increase its number and place among health-care professionals and society. This research helped to explore the image of nursing Profession as perceived by nursing students as they are going to be the future of nursing Profession. It provided insights into the areas of the strengths and weakness of Nursing profession and revealed its opportunities in the future.

Conflict of Interest: “Authors declare no conflict of interests”.

Source of Funding: Self

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