

The Perspective of Nursing Students on their Future Career: A Descriptive Correlational Study

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Abstract—Nursing is perceived to be the health care profession of the 20th century. Currently, nurses are still the largest segment of healthcare's present workforce. With this current trend in health care, this caring profession has now been perceived as a viable profession to pursue by students. With the increasing number of students pursuing nursing and the different images of the nursing profession depicted by the society, the researchers was able to formulate the research question, Does students' perception of the nursing have an influence them in their decision to choose this caring career as their course in College? The study utilized a Descriptive correlational design that aims to describe the relationship between the selected demographic profile of the respondents and their own perceived image of the profession. This study utilized a developed self made questionnaire which has two-parts; first is obtaining the demographic characteristics and the second consists of 25 items concerning the view of students about the nursing profession. The results of the study illustrate that the study population stated that their perception of their future career was totally positive. Furthermore, majority of the students perceived that nursing is a very complicated, filthy and stressful profession but offer great opportunities and rewards after. The study showed that there were no significant difference between the identified demographic data and the perception of nursing student about their future career. However, it was noted that male students score (62.28) was slightly higher than female students (61.10) in the perception scale based on their mean scores. In addition, there was significant difference between the mean scores of traditional (61.90) and non traditional (59.63) college students. The study mainly recommends building partnership and collaboration between nursing groups and local communities to further improve the perception of future students about the nursing profession.

Keywords— Nurses, perception, nursing image, career & student nurses.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nursing is perceived to be the health care profession of the 20th century. Currently, nurses are still the largest segment of healthcare's present workforce. In the United States, 2,583,770 nurses constitute fifty-nine per cent (59%) of the total population of healthcare providers^[1]. In the Philippines, based from the records of the Professional Regulation Commission, there are almost 500,000 registered nurses in the country^[2].

With this, the nursing workforce has been on an exciting crossroad of change and has been said to be one of the most pursued professions this past decade. The changing environment of health care, particularly of nursing has caused students to perceive nursing as a viable profession to pursue.

Throughout time, there have been many different perceptions of what nursing profession is. In its early history, the nursing profession has been established through the foundations of caring qualities considered by many as a profession ideal for women. Since Florence Nightingale's pioneering work, different stages of the nursing profession have been historically & publicly recognized. Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1998) stated that during the early part of the history, the innate gender based images of nursing influence the perceptions of the society regarding the profession^[3]. Historically, nursing has been an occupation of women, as seen in all female nursing management, staffing, teaching, discipline, and organization. Even with the establishment of nursing as a formal profession, the society still see nursing as a career for women. Issues such as the embedded image of the nurse being a woman, accompanying low status of the profession and social stereotyping are some of the issues experienced by students who wanted to pursue a career in nursing. Thus, nursing has struggled for recognition and independence as well as opportunity while often overshadowed by its partner, medicine. Munding (1998) says nursing has proven that it can advance its future by establishing quality education, securing public recognition and continuous development of the profession through research will help the nursing profession establish its own identity and image as a professional and a viable career for students^[4]. Throughout this time, nursing has grown enormously in knowledge, skill, prestige, and value. Western countries witnessed the development of the profession through home visiting and community-based care. In addition, during the World War II, nurses were cited for their ability to care for injured patients while physicians were at war.

As the profession progress, negative perceptions continued to exist such as gender stereotyping, low academic standards, poor pay, and poor working conditions. Many believed that these negative images was further aggravated by media which often portrays nurses as subservient to the doctors and in some worst cases showing them as sex objects^[5]. Even with the

negative images surrounding the caring profession, some parts of the society still sees the positive side of the profession particularly its innate caring and nurturing aspect. Many believed that these qualities require a great deal of physical and emotional strength, patience, and knowledge which made nursing as an independent profession and one of the most valuable pieces in the puzzle of healthcare. Consequently, the nursing profession has made another turn around by experiencing scarcity of nurses in several parts of the world. With this, the profession must assure the society that there will still be an adequate nurse workforce, both now and in the future. Literature suggests that students' career perceptions are highly individual, and are the product of their own images which are highly influenced by parents, friends and media. In addition, students also often view the status of a profession largely based on the influence of how the society perceives it^[6]. Thus students' own career perceptions may be less define, which usually results in a high attrition rates of students pursuing a degree in College. With the increasing number of students pursuing a career in nursing and the different images of the nursing profession depicted by the society, the researchers was able to formulate the research question, With the current trend of this caring profession, what is the perception of students regarding their future career in nursing?

II. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a Descriptive Correlational Design that aims to describe the relationship between the selected demographic profile of the respondents and their own perceived image of the profession. The study described the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of their year level, age, gender, student classification, and family class. The study will also describe the perception of students regarding the nursing profession. The study also determined the difference between the above mention variables. Data will be obtained from the officially enrolled BSN students/participants during the semester. Participants were nursing students officially enrolled during the Academic Year 2016 – 2017 1st semester in one of the most prestigious higher educational institution in Cavite. This study utilized a developed self made questionnaire which was based from local and international literatures. The two-part instrument consists of 25 items concerning the nursing profession. Each statement will ask students to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement both for positive and negative perception on nursing. The positive perception scales range from “strongly disagree” with a value of “1” to “strongly agree” with a value of “5.” For negative perception scales will be reverse. The overall perception of the participants will be obtained by summing their scores from the 18 questions that were coded using the Likert scale. The scores will determine if the participants represents a positive perception about the two categories, nursing image and nursing as a future career. The possible range of values for the total score was 18-90. Scores from each subcategory was also obtained. The range of possible scores

for nursing image is 10-50 and for nursing as a future career is 8-40. The second part of the instrument was the demographic form which was developed from relevant literatures. The demographic information requested individual characteristic such as year level, current student classification, family members in healthcare, age, gender and family class.

A. Reliability and Validity

A pilot testing of the developed instrument was performed. 15 recent BSN graduates of the institution were selected to examine the reliability of the tool. The tool had a good reliability index in terms of the application of Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis (0.83). Face validity was also established by five senior nursing educators with nursing academe and clinical expertise. Their recommendations for readability, simplicity and shortening of the perception statements were incorporated. The experts also gave their opinion about the classification of perception statement into positive and negative categories based on the actual concepts of nursing in the Philippine setting.

Responses for each question were calculated and reported using percentages of the total number of participants. The statements which conveys positive perception of nursing followed the ordinal scale equivalent to 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Responses to Likert scale questions exhibiting negative perception were reversely coded. The overall score was obtained by summing the response values of the 18 items. The interpretation for the findings will be the higher the score represents positive perception of nursing while lower the score will signify negative perception. The possible range of values will be 90 – 18. Data were entered into a spreadsheet and exported to statistical software (SPSS). Simple descriptive statistics were calculated to establish sample profiles and summarize data. Means and standard deviations were also calculated for the Likert scale items determining the perception of students about nursing. Bivariate relationships between the Likert scale scores and the respondents demographic variables were assessed using parametric independent t-test and analysis of variance.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 63 nursing students were enrolled during the time of data gathering and 58 of those were surveyed. From the total population, 6 students were excluded from the study due to incomplete data and responses. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents in terms of their demographic data. 35% of the respondents are on their graduation year and 44% belongs to Level 2 and 21 % came from Level 3. The academic institution currently has no first year students due to the current educational structure and the implementation of the K-12 program of the Department of Education. The nursing student population has been on a declining status due to several factors such as declining work opportunity abroad due to strict visa requirements^[7]. Most of the participants belonged to the age group of 15-20 (65%). In addition to this 79% of the total respondents stated that they were part of the

newly secondary graduates who directly went into college to pursue nursing. Nursing has been a long gender sensitive profession and the study also proves that the profession is still dominated by females^[8]. The feminine population of the study comprise of 73% while the masculine population was made up of 27%. Another variable obtained in the research study was identifying if the students have a family member working in a health care profession. 79% (41 students) reported that they have family members working in the health care setting. These results of the study contradicts the study of Punjab et.al (2011) which surveyed nursing students and majority of the respondents reported that they were not influence by a family member to pursue a nursing degree. Most of them were self motivated to pursue nursing and does not have an affiliation with a family member in the health care profession^[9]. Majority of the respondents (69%) stated that they belong to the middle class family, and the remaining reported that they belong to the high class (27%) and low class (4%) family respectively.

TABLE I:
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF THE RESPONDENTS (N=52)

Characteristic	n	%
<i>Year Level</i>		
2 nd year	23	44.23
3 rd year	11	21.15
4 th year	18	34.62
<i>Age (years)</i>		
15-20	34	65.38
21-25	10	19.23
26-30	6	11.54
31-35	2	3.85
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	14	26.92
Female	38	73.08
<i>Student Classification</i>		
Traditional	41	78.85
Non Traditional	11	21.15
<i>Family Members in Health care</i>		
Yes	41	78.85
No	11	21.15
<i>Family Class</i>		
High	14	26.92
Middle	36	69.23
Low	2	3.85

A. Students’ Perceptions of Nursing

In totality, the respondents stated that they have positive perception about their current course. Table 2 presents the Likert scale scores from the 18 statements that describe the

students perception about nursing. In terms of how the respondents view the image of their profession the students scored between 30 – 39 with a mean score of 35.75. In terms of how students view their future career, they have also scored it positively as their scores range from 21 – 35 with a total mean score of 25.67.

TABLE II:
SCORES FOR THE LIKERT SCALE ITEMS RELATED TO NURSING IMAGE AND NURSING AS A FUTURE CAREER

SCORE	POSSIBLE RANGE	RANGE	MEAN	S.D.
NURSING IMAGE	10-50	30-39	35.75	2.88
NURSING AS A FUTURE PROFESSION	10-40	21-35	25.67	2.88

In Table 3, the participants’ distribution of the responses for each statement is shown. The results present that the student nurses have perceived nursing as a very expensive, stressful and filthy course to pursue. The participants also mentioned the perceive poor structure of the profession in the country by agreeing in the statements limited job opportunity and poor compensation packages offered to nurses in the country. This was also the same report made by Umil (2015) which she mentioned about the worsening condition of Filipino Nurses in the country [10]. They have also reiterated that there is more working opportunities abroad and the lucrative benefits have motivated them to pursue nursing. However, societal views statement such as nursing is suited for female occupation and nurses are subordinates of physicians were contradicted by the respondents. The reports were in agreement with the results of the comparative study conducted in Egyptian and Jordanian male nurses[11]. They have also perceived the nursing profession as a career that have many roles and future opportunities for professional advancement.

Bivariate relationships between the dependent variables which is the total perception of nursing students about their future career and the demographic variables such as year level, age, gender, student classification, family members in health care and family class were assessed using parametric t-test and one way ANOVA. No significant differences were found among the variables (Table 4 & 5). However, when gender and student classification were compared, a significant difference were found in their mean scores. Male students and traditional college students have scored a higher mean total score than the female and non traditional college student (Table 6).

TABLE III:
PERCEPTION OF NURSING AMONG NURSING STUDENTS (N = 52)

PERCEPTION OF NURSING	SD (%)	D (%)	U (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
1. Students who wish to pursue and finish nursing would need to spend a big amount of money.	7.6	14.8	17.3	28.9	36.6
2. Learning to become a nurse can be a tedious and time-consuming process.	1.92	17.3	25.0	25.0	30.8
3. Nursing profession is most suited for female students.	48.1	44.2	3.9	1.9	1.9
4. Nursing education has seasoned and experienced professors.	0.00	1.9	1.9	42.3	53.9
5. Graduates from a BS nursing program can be employed in a wide variety of medical areas.	0.00	3.9	9.7	46.2	40.3
6. Student nurses have to take many science related subjects in order to become a competent nurse.	0.00	0.00	1.9	53.9	44.2
7. Nurses are called on to fulfil multiple roles as nursing professionals.	0.00	0.00	5.8	48.1	46.2
8. Nurses make many important decisions in providing care to their patients.	0.00	0.00	3.9	42.3	53.9
9. Nursing is regarded as a highly ethical and honest profession.	0.00	3.8	13.5	25.0	57.7
10. There is currently a shortage of registered nurses in the Western Countries and an oversupply of nurses in the country.	3.8	13.5	17.3	40.4	25.0
11. Nurses has no work or limited opportunity to work in health care setting for newly graduate nurses.	5.77	11.1	17.3	42.3	28.9
12. Nurses who work currently in hospitals in the country are overworked and underpaid.	0.00	0.00	19.2	40.3	28.9
13. Filipino families would like to have a nurse in their family who would take care of their health.	0.00	3.9	11.5	42.3	42.3
14. Nurses have many opportunities for advancement such as medicine and other advance nursing programs.	5.7	0.00	15.4	50.0	28.9
15. Nursing students understands the roles and responsibilities of being a professional nurse.	17.3	25.0	19.2	25.0	13.4
16. RNs cannot make decisions about patient care without first consulting with a physician.	40.3	40.3	9.6	7.6	1.9
17. Nurses pursued their nursing career due to high salaries and lucrative benefits abroad.	0.00	13.6	28.8	25.0	32.6
18. Nurses have to do a lot of dirty things such as cleaning the waste of patients, dealing with blood and a lot of unpleasant things.	3.8	5.7	19.3	38.5	32.7

TABLE IV:
INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T TEST RESULTS FOR SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Variables	t Value	df	P value (Sig.)	Interpretation
Student Classification	1.357	50	.466	No Significant Difference
Family Members In Health Care	-.023	50	.710	No Significant Difference
Gender	.758	50	.200	No Significant Difference

TABLE V:
ONE WAY ANOVA TEST RESULTS FOR SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Variables	F Value	df	P value (Sig.)	Interpretation
Age	.811	17	.670	No Significant Difference
Year Level	.525	17	.921	No Significant Difference
Family Class	1.461	17	.169	No Significant Difference

TABLE VI:
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Overall Score	Possible Range	Male (n = 14)		Female (n = 38)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
90	18 -90	62.28	6.74	61.10	4.19
Overall Score	Possible Range	Traditional (n = 41)		Non Traditional (n = 11)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
90	18 -90	61.90	5.23	59.63	3.38

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The results of the study illustrate that the study population stated that their perception of their future career was totally

positive. However, the significant number of nursing students perceived nursing as a very expensive, tedious and dirty course. They have also added that currently in the country there is limited job opportunity for them to work in health care settings. While it is encouraging that nursing students still wanted to pursue this caring career there is still a sign of concern regarding their primary motivation to pursue their career. Majority of the future nurses are willing to work abroad due to the lucrative and rewarding benefits. Males and traditional college students perceive nursing positively as compared to their other counterparts. This current perceptions and views of the students regarding nursing may have affected the declining nursing student enrolment.

Information deprivation and misinformation may be one the important factors that affects how the public view nursing. It is vital that nursing groups and local communities build and establish partnerships to promote nursing. They can also collaborate with other educational institutions particularly secondary institution to promote the profession by discussing the cost benefit analysis of pursuing a nursing degree and explaining the landscape and scope of nursing profession. In addition, creating media advertisements and campaigns which can promote awareness about the current image and stature of the profession is seen as a helpful way of building the image of the profession. In the area of the academe, nurse educators and practitioners are responsible for the development of nursing students' perceptions. As part of their role, they must be able to further strengthen the motivation of students to pursue their career by providing a conducive environment for learning. In terms of future research, it is best to undertake a research study on the perception of other population group particularly high school students and their parents.

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