

Views, Perceptions, and Choices of Nursing Profession Among Students: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The top priority of the students to choose nursing is not in service today. The nursing institutions are in a position to really gain insight of the changing perceptions among the students. It has become expedient to identify what the perceptions of nurse aspirants are about nursing. The present study aimed to explore the views, perceptions and choices of nursing from the perspective of students. A phenomenological design was used to examine the views, perceptions and choices of nursing utilising qualitative approach. It was conducted at a college of Nursing, Bhopal. A total of 10 BSc Nursing first year students were selected through purposive sampling. Data was collected through semi-structured interview. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Colaizzi's phenomenological analysis method was employed to analyse the transcribed qualitative data encompassing identification of significant quotes pertaining to students' views, perception and choices of nursing. The themes of views drawn from the perspective of students were nursing, profession, rank offered and feeling while communicating with others; from choices were reasons, influence, motivation and professional growth; from the perceptions were interpretation, feeling of satisfaction, critical thinking and aspects of care. It is essential that individuals who want to become nurses should possess particular qualities that are not just desirable but essential. With the changing generation, the values seem to fade in nursing. The findings of this study may help us to blend value-based education that could sustain motivation, passion, enthusiasm and all the more to retain them in nursing.

Professional nursing began with Florence Nightingale. She assumed that nursing is an independent calling that embraces intellectual and social liberty for women who had limited career options then. With end of 19th century, nurses' role extended beyond bedside care givers. In the advent of 20th century, nursing progressed to emerge with professional organisations and programmes were created to meet challenges of nursing profession. Clinical competence in nursing led to higher roles supplemented with critical functions. The escalating emphasis on national and international work in developing countries and the recommendation of healthy and safe environment has nourished the nursing profession (D'Antonia & Buhler-Wilkerson, 2013).

Several factors shape a person's decision while choosing a profession. It encompasses image of the profession, future plans and possibility of long lasting victory. This decision is important with respect to the nursing profession. Selecting a career is a significant milestone for a person in their lifetime. In order to select aptly, individuals acquire education within the stream of their choice and then move ahead. These

activities ascertain their future profession (Fletchers, 2007). The positive views and perception of nursing profession is of utmost importance for the students who select their profession and for society as well.

In nursing and other professions related to human health, choice establishes a happy life in the future for the individual but also to link the health and safety of the people to which the individual renders services (Mc Kenn et al, 2010). A study done in Hong Kong designated that the students' determination to choose nursing was remarkably influenced by factors like gender, biology, subjects pursued, previous academic achievement, mother's occupation and the students perception (Law & Arthur, 2003). A career in nursing proposes plenty of employment choices and life experiences. The members of the nursing profession are at advantage to see people in all stages of life and share their most particular and important moments (Hoke, 2006). Various studies suggest that nursing profession is not only a job for drawing salary but service to mankind. Therefore, it is essential to give information to the candidates before entering college what nursing is all about so that they know what it necessitates, thus reducing the rate of dropouts and retaining them in profession.

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Review of Literature

Students entering nursing education have limited idea of nursing. They decide to enter into a nursing career based on the perceptions from conventional and apotheosised images. A study that evaluated the perception of nurses, nursing profession and nursing image among 831 non-nursing students, professionals and non-nursing individuals revealed that majority of the participants believed nursing is most closely associated with the concept of caring (Huffstutler et al, 1998). Students develop their notions of nursing from books, social media and social support groups and nurses encountered in the health care setting. The reality of practice may alter the nursing students' perception of profession during her course of study. Harvey et al (1997) postulated that providing precise information about the reality of nursing as compared with what students hear in the media can lead them to consider nursing as a career choice. Moreover, it is encouraging to accurately inform students about the roles, responsibilities and opportunities within the profession to promote a higher degree of satisfaction with a career choice of nursing (Sand Jecklin & Schaffer, 2006).

It is significant to determine how students perceive nursing and the decision to choose nursing to be their career or any other career is highly influenced by one's previous idea about the career (Mooney et al, 2008). Self conception, self esteem, recruitment and performance are thought to have an impact on nursing students' perception of nursing as a profession (Wallace, 2007). Denat et al (2016) explored that perceptions changed towards positive way as they advanced through the nursing education. A research on highly academic students in UK revealed a different perception of how people perceive nursing. These students would not consider taking a nursing career because of the perception that doctors cure patients so long as nurses only care for patients. Students accepted that nursing was not for high achievers but for low achievers and dim students (Neilson & Lauder, 2008). Students perceive nursing as a caring profession and as an opportunity to assist people in gaining optimal health. In contrast, a study performed in Taiwan revealed that 65.4 percent of nursing students did not choose nursing as career after graduation (Lai et al, 2006).

Another study by Spindola et al (2005), among 62 high school students indicated that the students associate the nurse figure to the assisting function and visualise nurses as an auxiliary of the physician and that they were not aware of different categories of the nursing profession and the education level of the profession.

Objectives

The present study was aimed to explore the views,

perceptions and choices of nursing from the perspective of students of a nursing college in Bairagarh, Bhopal (MP)..

Methodology

A phenomenological design of qualitative approach was adopted. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board. Written consent was obtained from the participants. The study setting was the board room at Chirayu College of Nursing, Bhopal. The accessible population was the first year BSc Nursing students. Participants who were fluent in English, willing to take part in the study and available during data collection period were selected. Using purposive sampling technique, participants were chosen. Descriptive data was gathered by one to one interview that began with an open-ended statement and few questions like: (1) Can you narrate what nursing is? (2) What are your reasons to choose nursing? (3) Are there any who influenced you to select nursing? (4) How do you rank nursing profession among other professions? (5) Can you describe your feeling while communicating with others about nursing?

The researcher utilised open-ended cues and prompted to obtain clarification and depth. A self-constructed semi-structured interview was prepared to provide direction. And the interview augmented with the questions pertaining to students' perspectives of views, choices and perceptions of nursing. The average time taken for an interview was about 45 minutes (range 40- 50). Follow-up clarification was obtained as required. Data saturation was achieved with 10 participants. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Confidentiality and anonymity of the data was maintained. Data collection was done in July 2019.

Results

Table 1 depicts the characteristics of the participants. Majority (80%) were females; 50 percent were Hindu; 60 percent belonged to rural area; and 60 percent of the participants had relatives who are in nursing profession (Table 1). The study findings related to the factors impacting the profession choice of the students showed that majority (50.7%) had a relative who was a nurse. Another study found that students' decision to choose the nursing profession was strongly related with them having a relative who was a nurse.

Data was analysed utilising Colaizzi's phenomenological analysis method to analyse the transcribed qualitative data encompassing identification of significant quotes pertaining to students' perspectives on their views, choices and perceptions of nursing, formulating meaning by making general restatements of statements verbalised by participants, clustering themes based on the formulated statements, developing an exhaustive description of student views,

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of characteristics of participants

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	2	20
Female	8	80
Religion		
Hindu	5	50
Christian	4	40
Muslim	1	10
Area of living		
Rural	6	60
Urban	4	40
Relationship with relatives		
Yes	6	60
No	4	40

choices and perception; and producing fundamental structure of the aspects to the phenomena of the participants views, choices and perceptions.

The main themes extrapolated from the aspects of views, perceptions and choices are shown in Fig 1.

The themes of views drawn from the perspective of students were nursing, profession, rank offered and feeling while communicating with others (Figs 2-4). The sub themes fragmented from nursing are: all participants reported that they view nursing as being compassionate (100%); fulfilling needs of the patients (80%); understanding the health problems of the patients (60%); 40 percent reported nursing to be a health care profession; 30 percent viewed nursing as a multitasking job; 20 percent viewed nursing as offering emotional support; and 20 percent expressed nurses pose motherly figure. Sample elucidation are follows:

(Participant 1) "Nurses provide a variety of services. Nursing is giving care to the patient and it is a health care profession". The sub-themes taken out are: all participants viewed nursing as noble profession

(100%); 50 percent expressed it as a profession that exercises humanity; 50 percent believed it as a profession that provide selfless care; 50 percent agreed that nursing profession augments large responsibility besides caring patients; 40 percent described nursing profession as an accountable work; 30 percent reported that nursing profession is primarily about ensuring safety of patient; and 20 percent stated that nursing is a profession that augments ethics.

(Participant 2): "... it is a noble profession. Nurses care selflessly and provide care to patient continuously". The sub themes pulled out from the rank offered to nursing were: 40 percent claimed nursing to be topmost profession; 30 percent believed it a good profession; 20 percent asserted it is equivalent to other professions; 10 percent reported it as an average profession.

(Participant 3): "... nursing is as good as any other profession". The sub themes extricated from feeling while communicating with others about nursing are: 70 percent reported to have felt proud; 50 percent felt good; 50 percent felt happy; 40 percent felt satisfied; 40 percent felt motivated; 30 percent felt interesting; 20 percent felt confident.

(Participant 6): "I am confident and feel satisfied while talking ot others about nursing. Infact, I feel proud". The themes deduced from choices were reasons, influence, motivation and professional growth. The upcoming sub themes were derived from reasons to choose nursing: placement overseas (80%) and increase in earning potential (80%) were the highest agreement of choice among the participants. Subsequently, helping people (70%) and participants reported nursing to be a good profession (70%). Half of them (50%) believed it is possible to settle early in life; and 40 percent opined to have job security as a reason to choose nursing. Sample description of participant follow:

(Participant 7): "I want to go abroad and raise the financial position of my family". The sub-themes pulled out from influences were as follows: 60 percent of the participants agreed that they chose nursing due to their parents influence; 20 percent said they were influenced by maternal uncle; 20 percent expressed that their siblings were in nursing profession and therefore, they were influenced. Narration of participant follows:

(Participant 4): "...there are many nurses in my family and my parents influenced me a lot to choose nursing". The sub-themes extricated from motivation were: 80 percent said that they were self-motivated as well to choose nursing; 40 percent reported that they were motivated to work in health care profession; 30

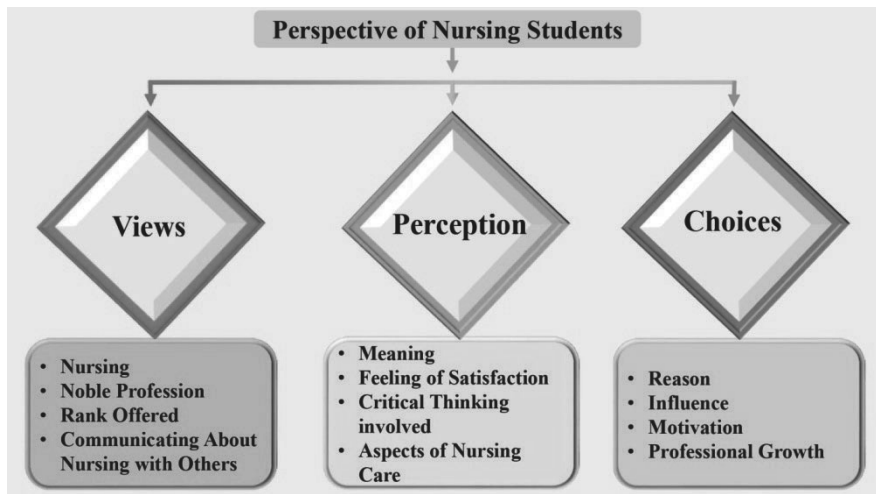


Fig 1: Themes of views, perceptions and choices from the perspective of participants.

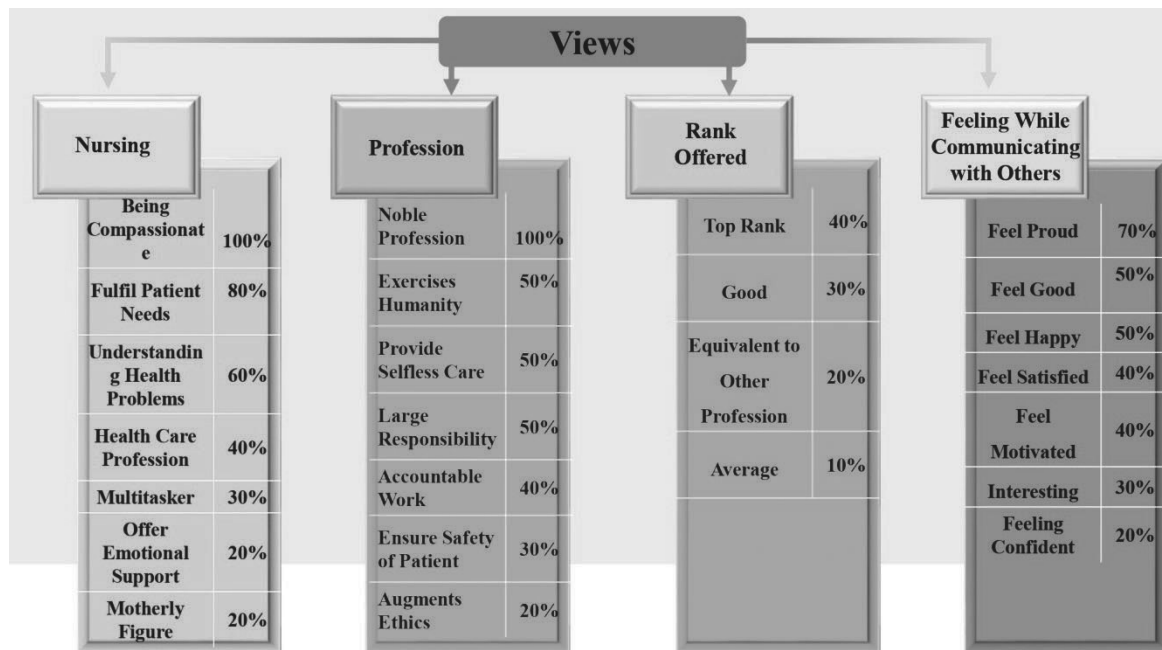


Fig 2: Sub-themes of views from the perspective of students.

percent expressed they wanted to serve Navy/Army and they believed that through nursing they could make it; and 10 percent accepted they were inspired to do nursing. Sample elucidation:

(Participant 5): "I am self-motivated. I wanted to work in a health care profession". The sub-themes deduced from professional growth is: 90 percent of the participants agreed that nursing had good scope; 70 percent accepted that nursing had several opportunities unlike other profession; 70 percent believed there are chances of higher studies; 60 percent expressed that they could reach to higher position in nursing; 20 percent consented that there is an opportunity for specialisation in nursing.

(Participant 9): "I understand there is a good scope in

upon; 60 percent of participants' interpreted nursing as dignified and respectful profession; 50 percent described as life saving profession; another 50 percent of participants perceived nursing as good communicator; 20 percent believed that nurse plays a pivotal role; 30 percent perceived it as hardworking job; 20 percent agreed that nurses are messenger of God.

(Participant 7): "My perception of nursing is to care for the sick. It is treating patients with respect, kindness, dignity and compassion". The sub themes of feeling of satisfaction were good satisfaction, majority (60%) reported to have it. The second highest reported was rapport with patients (50%); 40 percent said they were satisfied as they receive blessings; another 40 percent said that it involves technical skills; 40 per-

nursing. Also I believe personal and professional growth is possible in nursing". The themes extricated from the perception were interpretation, feeling of satisfaction, involves critical thinking and aspects of care. The subthemes of interpretation drawn were caring sick which all the participants (100%) agreed

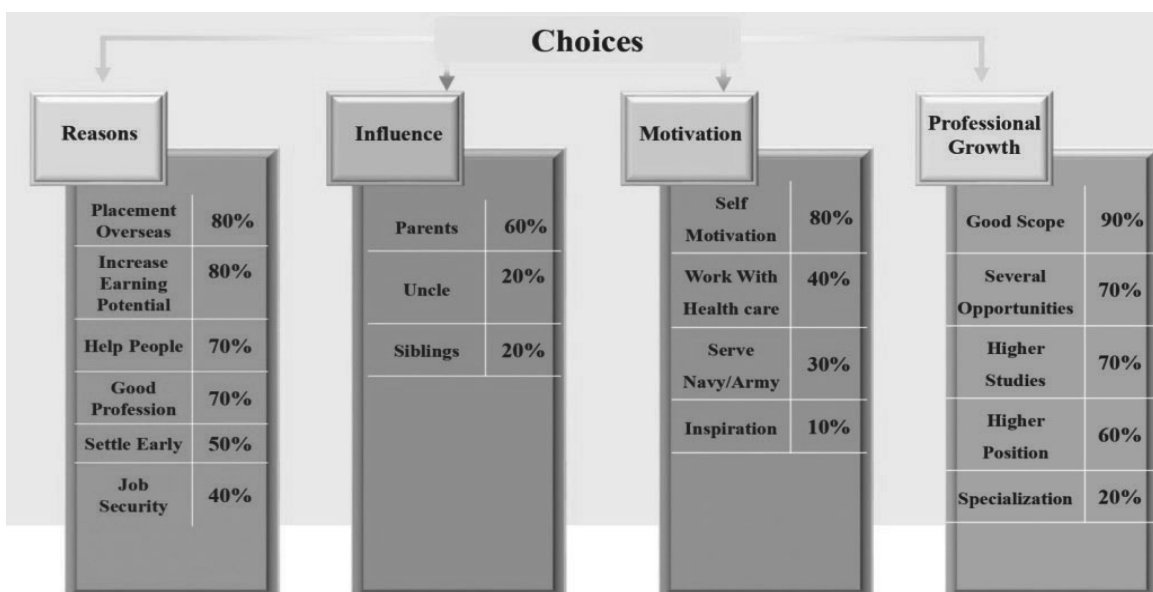


Fig 3: Sub-themes of choices from the perspectives of students.

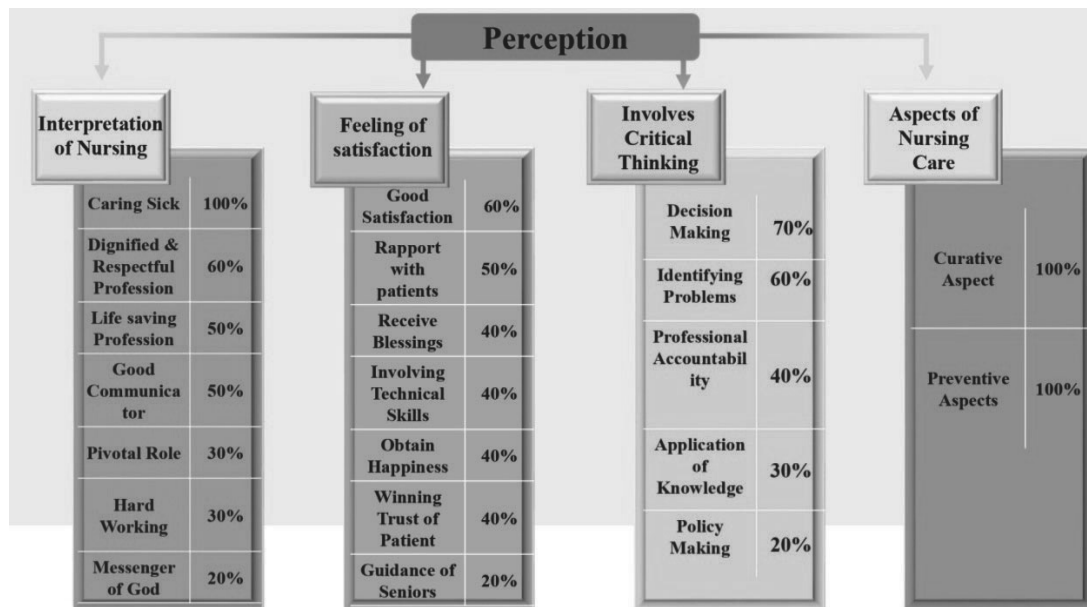


Fig 4: Sub-themes of perception from the perspective of students.

cent accepted that it imparts happiness; 40 percent believed that nursing can win the trust of patients; 20 percent described they were satisfied as they were guided by seniors.

(Participant 8): "It gives me feeling of satisfaction because it involves innovation and technical skills and when patients bless me after providing care to them, I can really feel good satisfaction". The sub themes of critical thinking were decision making, majority (70%) said nursing involves decision making skills; 60 percent described that it involves identifying problems of the patients; 40 percent agreed that it covers professional accountability; 30 percent perceived it as application of knowledge; 20 percent believed critical thinking is required for policy making.

(Participant 10): "Nursing requires critical thinking, particularly, to take right decisions timely, it is an important component". The sub themes of aspects of nursing care were, curative aspects and preventive aspects. All participants agreed with these two aspects. However, the activities reported in curative and preventive aspects varied like providing bed side care, administering medications, providing nutritional and elimination needs (curative aspects) and providing health education, health promotion activities and disease prevention activities in preventive aspects.

(Participant 7): "Nursing involves many aspects of care. It includes focusing on assessment, administering medications, counseling, and discharge education on disease prevention and health promotion".

Discussion

Generally people are drawn to a profession not because it suits their own values but because of various factors such as personal, social, economic or politi-

cal. As evidenced by the participants' enumerations, their perspectives were categorised into four themes each under views, perceptions and choices; subsequently sub themes were extricated from each theme.

In relation to the views, 40 percent of them accepted nursing to be the top most profession; in contrast Ibrahim & Jarrah (2013) found that rank of social status of nursing was reported to be 13.24 percent which

is low compared to present study. But the same study elicited that majority (80.9%) felt proud about nursing profession while communicating with others which was 70 percent in the present study. We could not flatly narrate that it was comparatively less because the participants supplemented with feeling of happiness, motivation and satisfaction too.

Pertaining to choices of nursing, nursing students expressed that placement overseas (80%), and increasing earning potential (80%) is high in nursing. Mendez & Louis (1991) advocated that nursing students do not always regard nursing as an ideal career. Therefore, the students choose nursing for other reasons like recruitment opportunities. The reasons students choose to study nursing are, the education and career aspirations which encompass the students' belief that nursing is their choice of career and that there is advancement in the nursing career or nursing education, which is congruent with the present study. The same study states that socioeconomic status which includes job security, images, stereotypes and monetary reward and another is parental and peer encouragement. This expression is also in line with present study where participants (50%) believed that they can settle early and 40 percent accepted that nursing gives them job security than other profession. This is also supported by Mooney et al (2008).

Perceptions of the students towards nursing as a job that involves caring, nurturing and teaching and it also required compassion, patience and strength. Same perception was identified by the participants in the present study. Vanhenen & Janhonen (2000) endorsed the same. Students had idealistic views of the profession with concepts of caring, compassion and nurturing at the beginning of the nursing programme

but later with the exposure to clinical experiences it transferred to in connection with technical, documentation and procedural skills Safadi et al (2011).

McGovern (2006) said that the public viewed nurses as people who care the sick and based on this he concluded that 'nurses care for people at every age, from before birth to death'. He added that nursing is not just a career but it is about making a difference to the patients and their families. Nurses remain to be the most recognisable health service symbol widely as long as it will never be the most financially rewarding career. Similar characteristics were appreciated by the participants that nursing involves hard working (30%), developing rapport with patients (50%), and assuming pivotal role in the health team (30%), decision making skills (70%), and envelopes professional accountability (40%).

Difficulties faced during data collection encompass the contraction of ideas, expressions, suggestions and reasoning skills of the participants as they were beginners and young. The limitations of the study: Only first year BSc Nursing students were included and limited to only three aspects such as views, perception and choices of nursing profession.

Nursing Implications

The present findings delineate the significance of revising nursing curricula to preserve the values of nursing profession. There is a necessity to improve image of nurses in the society to bring in more students into this profession.

Recommendations

Well defined structured orientation programme that encompassing the values and expectations of nursing should help the nurse aspirants to inculcate the same. Consistent reinforcement of value-based teaching may progress the nursing students to imbibe the quality of service to mankind and accomplish professionalism.

Conclusion

Economic reasons were atop when compared with other reasons to choose nursing as a profession. Students may have their own reasons and desires for the same. But choosing nursing cannot be the same as selecting any other profession because it demands accountability and sacrifice. However, the participants had identified serving people as well, though secondary. Health care organisations should introduce methodologies that tailor to sustain motivation, enthusiasm, and passion of students towards nursing profession. This may help prevent drop outs of students from nursing.

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