

Perception towards Male Enrolment in Nursing among High School Students at Selected Schools of Bharatpur, Chitwan

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ABSTRACT

Nursing profession has been a gender lopsided profession which has limited the opportunity for male students to prefer nursing as career choices. However, the perception of male enrolment in nursing among the students is extremely important to maintain the diversity in nursing workforce. This study aimed to assess the perception towards male enrolment in nursing among the students at selected schools of Bharatpur, Chitwan. A cross-sectional survey design consisted of 222 students studying in private and government schools of Chitwan districts. Samples were selected purposively and self-administered structured questionnaire containing of 28 items for perception of male enrolment in nursing were used to collect data. Collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Majority of participants (54.5%) showed positive perception towards male enrolment in nursing whereas less than half (45.5%) showed negative perception towards male enrolment in nursing. The result indicated that perception towards male enrolment was not significantly associated with socio demographic variables. Despite having a positive notion about male in nursing, considerable number of participants were negative about male in nursing. The hiring and maintaining of male nurses in the nursing field is a very apparent issue nowadays. Therefore, this indicates the urgent need by concerning authorities in identifying the predictors in improving the professional nursing image and misconceptions regarding the gender based profession for better health care outcomes.

Key Words: Perception, Male enrolment, Nursing

INTRODUCTION

Nursing is a dynamic profession and an integral part of health care system.¹The profession has growing demand worldwide and load of challenges of which attraction of male students to become a nurse is an important concern.^{2,3} Nursing is traditionally dominated female profession^{4,5} despite the progress made by women into male dominated professions such as business or medicine.⁶ Nursing has been portrayed as a feminine occupation ever since the appearance of Nightingale nursing training in the mid-nineteenth century which

favoured women over men.⁷ The perception that nursing is inherently appropriate for women might deter the applicants from seeking the admission to the nursing programs.⁶ The historiography of the nursing profession has significant issue to attract male membership due to various female dominant positions.^{8,9} Nowadays, In various countries male nurses have been studying in nursing schools and developing a career traditionally female.⁸ In Nepal, the patriarchal cultures lead to the discontinuation of male enrolment in nursing after training 80 males from

Tribhuvan University in the past.¹⁰ The public perception of nursing exclusive to females is well entrenched societal belief that might influence younger generation to resist their interest in choosing nursing career.¹¹ However, perceiving the importance of recruiting male nurse, Nepal nursing council has issued notice regarding the inclusion of 15% of male students in June 2018¹² and estimating 1000 male nurse graduates by 2021.¹³ Perception is highly subjective and usually not based on the facts that greatly influence choosing nursing as a career especially among younger generation. It could be a well-planned strategy to change the perception of high school students towards nursing and its career perspectives. In this context, understanding the perception is the primary part in enrolling the male students to adopt career in nursing. Hence, this study aimed at assessing the perception towards enrolment of male in nursing among high school students at selected schools of Bharatpur, Chitwan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional survey was conducted at selected schools of Chitwan i.e. Narayani Namuna Madhyamik Bidhyalaya, Balmiki Sikshya Sadhan. There were 222 students studying in the selected schools where 113 were from Narayani Namuna Madhyamik Bidhyalaya and 109 were from Balmiki Sikshya Sadhan. Non-probability purposive sampling technique was used as the study sample for study. Structured self-administered questionnaire was developed based on the prior literature that related to the male enrolment in nursing^{9,14,15} and consulting various experts in the field of nursing. In total, there were 40 items at the beginning and after the consultation with the experts, pre-testing the tool, 12 items were removed from the questionnaire. Each item was rated on a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3= Neutral; 4= Agree; 5= strongly Agree). Higher scores indicated positive perception towards the male

enrolment in nursing. Pretesting of the instrument was done in Prerana English boarding school, Bharatpur among 34 students. To verify the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha was calculated using the pilot study data and the resultant Cronbach's alpha for the instrument was 0.566 indicating that the tool was reliable for further study.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Chitwan Medical College Institutional Review Committee (Ref: CMC-IRC/077/078-095). Administrative approval for data collection was obtained from the concerned authority of each school. Data was collected from 15/01/2021 to 15/02/2021 by researchers themselves. Date and time of data collection was set on mutual plan consulting with their class coordinators and informed to all participants. Written informed consent was taken from each participant prior to data collection. Obtained data were analysed in IBM SPSS version 20 for window using descriptive as well as inferential analysis. Chi-square test was used to measure the association between levels of perception towards male enrolment and selected variables.

RESULTS

Out of 222 the median age was 17 years (Range: 15 – 20 years). Majority of them were female (58.1%), belonged to Hindu religion (91.4%), and 76.1% were Brahmin and Chhetri. More than half (50.9%) of respondents' were from government school and 70.3% studied in 12th standard. Majority of the respondents' (73.0%) resided in metropolitan/ submetro-politan city. [Table 1]

Regarding respondents' parents related information, almost all (96.4%) respondents' father were literate, 46.7% studied up to bachelors and above and more than half (50.8%) were self employed. Almost all (92.3%) of respondents' mother were literate, 59.0% studied up to secondary level and majority (80.6%) were self employed. [Table 2]

Table 1. Respondent's Socio demographic Information, n=222

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age (in years)		
< 17	44	19.8
≥17	178	80.2
Median age = 17 years, IQR=Q3-Q1=18-17, minimum = 15, maximum = 20		
Sex		
Male	93	41.9
Female	129	58.1
Religion		
Hinduism	203	91.4
Buddhism	14	6.3
Islam	4	1.8
Christian	1	0.5
Ethnicity		
Brahmin/Chhetri	169	76.1
Janjati	26	11.7
Others	27	12.2
Types of school		
Private school	109	49.1
Government school	113	50.9
Standard		
11th standard	66	29.7
12th standard	156	70.3
Place of residence		
Rural Municipality	19	8.6
Municipality /Sub Municipality	41	18.4
Metropolitan/Sub Metropolitan city	162	73.0

Table 2. Respondents' Parents related Information, n=222

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Father's educational status		
Literate	214	96.4
Illiterate	8	3.6
Father's level of education(n=214)		
Basic level	23	10.7
Secondary level	91	42.5
Bachelor and above	100	46.7
Father's occupation		
Self employed	112	50.5
Government service	64	28.8
Private service	46	20.7
Mother's educational status		
Literate	205	92.3
Illiterate	17	7.7
Mother's level of education(n = 205)		
Basic level	36	17.6
Secondary level	121	59.0
Bachelor and above	48	23.4
Mother's occupation		
Self employed	179	80.6
Government service	20	9.0
Private service	23	10.4

In table 3, majority of the participants (65.3%) had not known about male nurse, more than half (64.9%) did not have nurse in a family. Regarding choosing

occupation 25.7% considered doctor as a profession followed by 17.6 % in health field and 14.4% as nurse by profession. [Table 3]

Table 3. Respondents' General Information n=222

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
know a nurse who is male		
Yes	77	34.7
No	145	65.3
family members as a nurse in family		
Yes	78	35.1
No	144	64.9
Considering occupation		
Agriculture	18	8.1
Doctor	57	25.7
Engineering	29	13.1
Health Field	39	17.6
Not decided	23	10.4
Nurse	32	14.4
Others	24	10.8

Regarding item wise distribution, majority of the students agreed on the statements like "Nursing is totally a female profession so I don't want to see men in nursing" (87.8%), "Nursing is only the feminine profession" (79.75%), "inappropriateness for males to work with females" (79.5%), "male can take full responsibility in an emergency situation (77.4%)". However, considerable proportion of the students was unbiased on the statements like "I believe all the male nurses is considered Gay" (46.4%), "I believe male nurses would be respected more than female nurses" (41.4%). Furthermore, majority of the students' showed disagreement on the statements like "Nursing profession should encourage the entry of men"(93.7%), "I believe male nurses should be included as a backbone in health care delivery system"(86.5%), "Men are appropriate for combative and abusive patients"(68.1%)," The presentation by the mass media as being more suited for women discourages men from choosing as a nursing career "(68%) [Table 4]

Table 4. Item Wise Description of the Perception towards Enrolment of Male in Nursing n=222

S.N.	Items	Strongly Disagree No. (%)	Disagree No. (%)	Neutral No. (%)	Agree No. (%)	Strongly Agree No. (%)
1.	I believe that nursing is not perceived as a very masculine career for males to pursue in our society	29(13.1)	75(33.8)	32(14.4)	45(20.3)	41(18.5)
2.	I feel that nursing is more appropriate for female because they tend to be more caring and compassionate than male	52(23.4)	75(33.8)	59(26.6)	21(9.5)	15(6.8)

Table 4 Continued...

3.	The current presentation by the mass media as being more suited for women discourages men from choosing as a nursing career	61(27.5)	90(40.5)	31(14.0)	32(14.4)	8(3.6)
4.	I would encourage a male family member to follow nursing as a challenging and rewarding career choice	72(32.4)	83(37.4)	51(23.0)	10(4.5)	6(2.7)
5.	I believe Nursing is only the feminine profession	15(6.8)	8(3.6)	22(9.9)	80(36.0)	97(43.7)
6.	I believe that only male can take full responsibility in an emergency situation	6(2.7)	9(4.1)	35(15.8)	82(36.9)	90(40.5)
7.	I believe the quality of patient care will increase when men enters nursing	14(6.3)	61(27.5)	89(40.1)	40(18.0)	18(8.1)
8.	Nursing is totally a female profession so I don't want to see men in nursing	7(3.2)	5(2.3)	15(6.8)	74(33.3)	121(54.5)
9.	I believe male can tolerate more pressure than female	29(13.1)	56(25.2)	59(26.6)	52(23.4)	26(11.7)
10.	I believe male can work on ward which requires strength	32(14.4)	104(46.8)	54(24.3)	20(9.0)	12(5.4)
11.	I believe male entering the nursing can pose a threat to the controlling in nursing profession for female	9(4.1)	28(12.6)	74(33.3)	71(32.0)	40(18.0)
12.	I believe patient regardless of gender would not trust and accept male nurse in society	14(6.3)	46(20.7)	62(27.9)	68(30.6)	32(14.4)
13.	I believe the quality of patient care will increase when men enter the nursing profession	19(8.6)	82(36.9)	70(31.5)	34(15.3)	17(7.7)
14.	Men are appropriate for combative and abusive patients	29(13.1)	100(45.0)	51(23.0)	25(11.3)	17(7.7)
15.	Nursing profession should encourage the entry of men	101(45.5)	107(48.2)	9(4.1)	3(1.4)	2(0.9)
16.	Men can be threat to the progression in female nurses career	6(2.7)	36(16.2)	50(22.5)	78(35.1)	52(23.4)
17.	I believe it is a gender biases and discrimination against men in nursing as a profession	40(18.0)	66(29.7)	49(22.1)	48(21.6)	19(8.6)
18.	I believe male nurses should be included as a backbone in health care delivery system	46(20.7)	126(56.8)	34(15.3)	9(4.1)	7(3.2)
19.	I believe the role of nurses like bathing, cleaning feeding and medication administration is entirely a suitable work of female nurses	27(12.2)	49(22.1)	54(24.3)	56(25.2)	36(16.2)
20.	I believe it is inappropriate for males to work with females	6(2.7)	16(7.2)	23(10.4)	87(39.2)	90(40.5)
21.	The duties and responsibilities in nursing is entirely female oriented	3(1.4)	20(9.0)	49(22.1)	89(40.1)	61(27.5)
22.	I believe all the male nurses is considered Gay	21(9.5)	58(26.1)	103(46.4)	32(14.4)	8(3.6)
23.	I believe male nurses would be respected more than female nurses	9(4.1)	18(8.1)	92(41.4)	64(28.8)	39(17.6)
24.	High level of knowledge, skills and sound character are keys to become a nurse which is suitable for the males	23(10.4)	73(32.9)	67(30.2)	36(16.2)	23(10.4)
25.	I believe men would be considered as assistance to doctors	39(17.6)	106(47.7)	48(21.6)	20(9.0)	9(4.1)
26.	Role ambiguity between male nurses and doctors can bring the dissatisfaction for males towards the nursing as a career	16(7.2)	37(16.7)	85(38.3)	65(29.3)	19(8.6)
27.	I believe it is easy for male nurses to get secure job opportunities	25(11.3)	65(29.3)	83(37.4)	36(16.2)	13(5.9)
28.	Male nurses can get the job easily than females in abroad	28(12.6)	54(24.3)	74(33.3)	48(21.6)	18(8.1)

Table 5. Respondents' Level of Perception towards Male Enrolment in Nursing

Level of perception	Frequency	Percentage
Positive perception \geq median (84)	121	54.5
Negative perception $<$ median (84)	101	45.5
Total	222	100.0

Out of 222 participants, more than half (54.5%) had positive perception towards male enrolment in nursing whereas

less than half (45.5%) had negative perception towards male enrolment in nursing [Table 5]

In table 6, the level of perception towards male enrolment was not significantly associated with respondents' socio- demographic variables

Table 6. Association between Level of Perception towards Male Enrolment in Nursing and Respondents' Socio demographic Variables

Variables	Level of Perception		χ^2	p value
	positive perception No. (%)	Negative perception No. (%)		
Age (in completed years)				
< 17 yrs	23 (52.3)	21 (47.7)	0.110	0.740
\geq 17 yrs	98 (55.1)	80 (44.9)		
Sex				
Male	47 (50.5)	46 (49.5)	1.016	0.314
Female	74 (57.4)	55(42.6)		
Religion				
Hindu	111 (54.7)	92 (45.3)	0.029	0.864
Other than Hindu	10 (52.6)	9 (47.4)		

Types of School				
Private	57 (52.3)	52 (47.7)	4.22	0.516
Government	64 (56.6)	49 (43.4)		
Standard				
11 th standard	31 (47.0)	35 (53.0)	2.150	0.143
12 th standard	90 (57.7)	66 (42.3)		
Place of residence				
Rural Municipality	11 (57.9)	8 (42.1)	0.172	0.918
Municipality/Sub Municipality	23 (56.1)	18 (43.9)		
Metropolitan/Sub Metropolitan city	87 (53.7)	75(46.3)		

Table 7 shows that the level of perception towards male enrolment was not significantly associated with respondents' parents' related information.

Table 7. Association between Level of Perception towards Male Enrolment in Nursing and Respondents' Parents Information

Variables	Level of Perception		χ^2 value	p- value
	Good perception No. (%)	Poor perception No. (%)		
Father's educational status			-	1.000
Literate	117(54.7)	97 (45.3)		
Illiterate	4(50.0)	4(50.0)		
Mother's educational status				
Literate	114 (55.6)	91(44.4)	1.319	0.251
Illiterate	7(41.2)	10 (58.8)		
Mothers' occupation				
Self employed	97 (54.2)	82 (45.8)		
Government service	8(40.0)	12 (60.0)	3.808	0.149
Private service	16(69.6)	7(30.4)		
Know a nurse who is male				
Yes	43(55.8)	34 (44.2)	0.085	0.770
No	78 (53.8)	67 (46.2)		
Nurse in a family				
Yes	42 (53.8)	36(46.2)	0.021	0.885
No	79 (54.9)	65(45.1)		

DISCUSSION

Nursing is an important part of the health care system due to the importance of care and nurture that it holds for the needy. Retaining male students in adopting career in nursing is challenging in reality and the steps have already been taken by allocating the seats for male in nursing in line with the country's policy of main streaming gender equality in every sector. However, despite the growing trend of a demand for nurses, worldwide it is still a profession that is largely dominated by women with various conflicting perception especially among the high school students. Hence, it has been a great concern to all the education authorities in bringing the change in nursing profession.

We found that majority of the participants (65.3%) were unknown about the nurse who is a male, more than half (64.9%) did not have nurse in a family. Majority (25.7%) considered doctor as a profession followed by 17.6 % in health

field and 14.4% as nurse by profession. Our finding regarding the consideration of other profession other than nursing is consistent with the finding reported in USA where male students' represented nursing as a second career while majority were likely to consider profession such as physical therapist and military.¹⁶ Similarly, MP Maloni, (1995) reported that majority 78.6% did not view nursing as a career preference while only 8.6% high school students' responded nursing as a career option.¹⁷ This might be attributed to the fact that there might be vast array of career opportunities with regards to choosing a profession which might decrease the interest among high school students in nursing.

Nepal has a male dominant culture and nursing is primarily a female dominant profession which practiced by women and males who are practicing nursing are very few. Majority of our students agreed that Nursing is totally a female profession so they don't want to see men in nursing. Other

studies have pointed out that nursing is mainly for girls and every nursing class is dominated by the girls.¹⁸⁻²⁰ Our students also had good agreement with the statement that “Nursing is only the feminine profession and it is inappropriate for males to work with females. Studies from various part of the world had showed that nursing is considered as a female profession and females tends to disagree that males are better suited to nursing than women.^{14, 21-24} In addition, Bartfay (2016) found that nursing was more appropriate for females because of their caring and compassionate nature compared to males.²⁵ Evidences have been variable, with the reports of nursing as men’s work^{26,27} and students’ viewed nursing as a masculine work despite of the contradiction to the stereotypical image of nursing in society.²⁸ Likewise, Keshk et al. (2016)²⁹ and Varaei S, (2012)³⁰ gave a contradictory view with a belief that nursing is a career suitable for both the genders. The variation however, can be due to the different career choices among the genders across various countries. Therefore, gender stereotyping is common in the nursing field which undermines the potential development of men in nursing despite of the necessary steps taken by governing bodies to increase the number of male nursing students and practicing male nurses lately.

The present study finding also resonates with the previous literatures which attributed that male can take full responsibility in an emergency situation.^{31,32} This might be attributed to the fact that male nurses might get more support from the male physicians which fosters their ability to succeed in working into technical areas. Furthermore, almost all of the students disagreed that “Nursing profession should encourage the entry of men “ which is in contrast with the study in USA which showed that the vast majority of female nurses have positive attitudes toward the male nurse and felt more males should be encouraged to enter nursing.³³ Since there is no exact evidence to the resistance of male

entry into nursing, the "sex-typing" of nursing is undoubtedly might be due to social, cultural and economic values that provide disincentives for males to enter this traditionally female occupation. Likewise, majority of the students disagreed that Male nurses are appropriate for combative and abusive patients which is in the line with the study which found that male nurses were uncomfortable with the assignments with the violent and unruly patients.³⁴ Dissimilarity to the thought, various studies have pointed out that male nurses were gravitated toward positions suitable to their masculine nature when assigned with unruly or potentially violent patients.^{35,23} The difference in findings support the notion that each work culture creates a gender role expectation based on the beliefs from the individuals within each system.

Present study revealed that more than half (52.3%) students had good perception towards male enrolment in nursing which is consistent with the finding of the study conducted in Nigeria which revealed that more than half (53%) senior secondary students held a positive perception towards nursing as a career choice for men.²⁶ Similarly, (Hasan, 2020) gave a contradictory view that stigma of nursing profession is suitable only for women and men are not favourable in considering nursing as their career choice.¹⁴ On the other hand, present study resonates with the finding of study which reported no significant association between perception of male enrolment with various socio-demographic variables²⁶ whereas, inconsistent finding conducted in Nigeria revealed the significant association between male and female attitudes towards nursing as a career for men.³⁶ One possible explanation for the variations in view across the various countries might be due to the societal expectations and stigma regarding the career choices for both genders. Therefore, if nursing is serious in its ambition to hire and retain male nurses despite the given derogatory perceptions of men in nursing, more dialogue and actions

need to be implemented to diversify the profession.

This research adds value to the existing literature, through detailed analysis of students' perception towards male enrolment in nursing. It also provides some important insights into how male nurses can be increased in developing countries like Nepal. In between positive and negative images of gender based nursing profession in Nepalese society, confronting a debate that should be resolved in the next few years and health care systems must contribute to emphasize the constructive side for retaining the male nurses in the field considering the various factors. Firstly, there is an urgent need in setting the plan encompassing high school, media and governing bodies to improvise the consideration of both males and females in nursing profession. Secondly, clarifying the role identity of the graduates under different titles but with the same jobs will help both the public and students to accept nursing as a male career. These factors, if positively entertained, will result in the growth of male nurses in our country in the coming decade. Our study has certain limitations. The subjects of this study were from few selected colleges, limiting the generalization of our findings. The use of interviews is encouraged in future studies to draw a more comprehensive assessment. This study could have yielded better results if longitudinal study has been performed.

CONCLUSION

Our county has adopted the inclusion of male nurses to improve the status of nursing to remove the view of gender constraint profession in nursing. Student's perception regarding the male enrolment is an important factor for the effective outcome in the health care. The study aimed to synthesize the perception of male enrolment in nursing among high school students at Chitwan District in Nepal. We found that more than half of the students showed positive perception towards male enrolment in nursing and we also

found that majority of students agreed that nursing was feminine profession and appropriate for females and almost all of the students disagreed that they would encourage male in nursing. Therefore, there is a need for secondary students to be aware of what nursing as a profession entails and that gender is not a determining factor of being a better nurse.

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