

Original Article

Attitude of the Nursing Students and Practicing Nurses toward Nursing Profession in Nepal

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Abstract

Introduction: Nursing is considered as a respectful profession giving a sense of value of life through their hard work such as comforting, caring and serving people and saving lives. Attitude can be formed from a person's past and present. This profession continues to grow and the attitude of the society toward it has been changing gradually. There have been a few studies on the attitude of the nurses toward their own profession in Nepal. The primary objective of this study is to compare the attitude of the nursing students and the practicing nurses toward nursing profession.

Methods: A quantitative, prospective comparative cross sectional study design was adapted for this study. Nursing students studying proficiency certificate level (PCL) in a Nursing campus, and the practicing nurses working at a Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH) in Kathmandu, Nepal were selected as study population. Attitude scale for nursing profession (ASNP) developed by Ipek-Coban and Kasikei in 2011 was adapted for the purpose of this study.

Results: A total of 240 participants were selected for the study. One hundred and twenty were nursing students and 120 were practicing nurses. Only 0.8% of nursing students had negative attitude and all practicing nurses had positive attitude toward nursing profession. The t test { $t(238) = -2.868$, $p = 0.005$ } value of the comparative study denoted the attitude of the students and practicing nurses was different statistically.

Conclusion: Contrary to previous beliefs, there is a strong positive attitude on nursing profession among both nursing students and practicing nurses, the attitude of the latter reaching 100%. This should be considered by health care planner in formulating national policy to take a major step toward creating more scope for trained nurses which will in turn reduce brain drain.

Key Words: *Attitude, Nursing Profession, Nursing Students, Practicing Nurses,*

Introduction

Generally, attitudes are belief systems that direct human thought, feelings and actions with regard to other people, situations and ideas⁽¹⁾. Attitude can be formed from a person's past and present. In ancient times, nursing was considered as the job of the women who belong to the poor families and those who have low reputation in the society. Due to this, nursing was not considered

as profession of choice⁽²⁾. Florence Nightingale, the lady with the lamp, who was the founder of the modern nursing, was a well-educated woman from an affluent family. She became a nurse and improved the profession drastically in the 19th century. Thereafter, the society gradually began to accept nursing as a respectable profession⁽³⁾. In Nepal also, one of the royal ties princess Prekshya Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah selected the nursing as her profession of choice in early seventies

and encouraged many other young girls to pursue this profession⁽⁴⁾.

In this modern society nursing students and nurses make up the backbone of the health care forces in every country, whose attitudes can be influential on other health care providers. Nursing profession continues to grow and the attitude of the society toward it has been changing gradually. However, most of the nursing students' attitude is believed to be negative toward this profession in developing countries⁽⁵⁾.

In order to attract and retain bright, capable students and staffs in nursing, it is imperative to change certain aspect of nursing curriculum to provide and assure accurate and definitive perceptions of this profession. Factors which contribute to students' attitude toward the profession must be identified. This will help the new comers to create the concept of professionalism in future and develop keen interest in it.

Nursing Profession

Nursing has been seen as a respectable profession giving a sense of value of life through comforting, caring for people and saving lives⁽⁶⁾. In present situation, the nursing students and the practicing nurses appears unclear in developing countries like Nepal whereas the profession has been established as a very attractive one in the developed world.

Bedside care and drug administration, despite being highly skilled and well-educated personnel with an important role⁽⁵⁾. Many students have not spent time with a nursing professional or volunteered in a healthcare setting to acquire background information on which to establish attitude about Nursing. Thus, they have limited opportunities for more informed career decision-making skills. As cited by Cockrell in 2002, students' career perceptions are highly individualistic. They are the product of contracted images of jobs they see for themselves, derived images from media, and delegated images from parents and friends. A study conducted in Pokhara, Nepal regarding attitude of nursing students is worth-mentioning here⁽⁷⁾. They concluded that the majority of both PCL and Bachelor level students of nursing had fair knowledge about the profession. However, they had both positive and negative attitudes on various components⁽⁷⁾. Thus, students' career attitude may be less defined, resulting in frustration, low job satisfaction, change of role and brain drain.

As already discussed, nurses are the key members of the society and play a central role in any health care system. The attitude toward Nursing is apparent and positive in developed countries. However, this may not be true in developing countries.

The objective of this study is to compare the attitude of the nursing students and the practicing nurses toward this profession. The study was carried out to ascertain if there is a relationship between the nursing students and practicing nurse's attitude toward nursing profession by hypothesizing a significant difference between the two groups. The outcome of this study will help define the role of nurses in the society in the Nepalese context. Also, this will hopefully stimulate others to conduct further research on this topic.

Methods

This is a quantitative, prospective comparative cross sectional study. Nursing students studying PCL in Nursing Campus, Kathmandu and the practicing nurses working at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH), Kathmandu were enrolled. The sampling method was probability purposive technique. Finite population sampling formula ($n_0 = \frac{z^2 pq}{E^2}$ and $n = \frac{n_0}{1 + n_0/N}$) was adapted to calculate sample size. Out of 624 nurses and nursing students, a total 240 were taken for the purpose of this study. One hundred and twenty were nursing students and same number of practicing nurses. PCL nursing students who were in second and third year of their study course and practicing nurses working at TUTH less than five years included in this study.

Attitude scale for nursing profession (ASNP) developed by Ipek-Coban and Kasikci in 2011 was adapted to collect data for this study⁽⁸⁾. The instrument contains two parts. Part one includes demographic parameters of the participants. Similarly, part two of the study consists of 40 items concerning the nursing profession. Nine items (1, 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30, 33, 39) are negative questions. Each statement asks the respondent to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement on a Likert scale. The total score of the scale is 200. The negative attitude was defined as score below 120. Permission from the tool developer was taken before using this tool. Pre-testing and periodic discussion with colleagues and experts were done to make this study more valid and reliable. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the Institute of Medicine, Tribhuvan University prior to data collection. The collected data was edited,

coded and entered in epi Data which was subsequently analyzed by using SPSS version 17. Variables analyzed were age, family member being in health care service, reason to choose nursing, and attitude toward their profession. Descriptive statistics was expressed as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviations. Independent t-test was used to compare the proportions between two groups. Statistical significance was considered when p value was $<0.05\%$.

Results

One hundred and twenty practicing nurses and same number of students category selected for the study. The age range of nursing students was 16 to 29 years (Mean = 18.55 years, SD = 1.45), whereas practicing nurses aged between 20 and 40 years (Mean = 25.65 years, SD = 4.50 years).

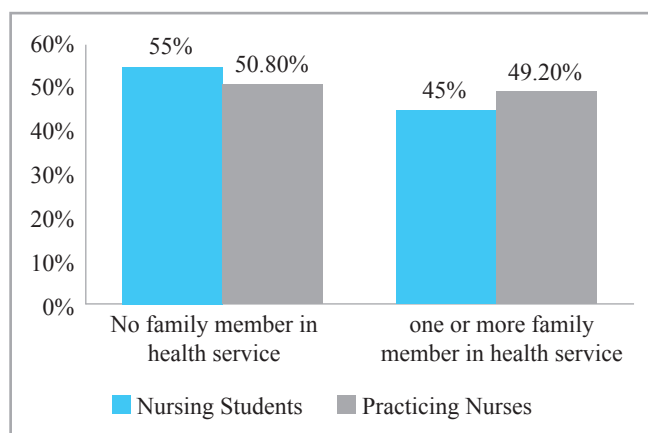


Figure 1. Relationship between the participants and presence of a family member in the health care service.

Here, 45% nursing students and 49.2% of practicing nurses were living with at least one family member who was in health care services (Figure 1). Fifty five percent of the students and 48% of practicing nurses had chosen nursing as a career by observing a nurse in action.

Table 1. Attitude of nursing students and practicing nurses toward nursing profession.

| Variable | N | Mean Score | Range | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------|-----|------------|---------|--------------------|
| Nursing Students | 120 | 155.17 | 117-184 | 11.84 |
| Practicing Nurses | 120 | 159.30 | 122-183 | 10.48 |

As shown in Table 1, only 0.8% of nursing students had negative attitude toward nursing profession. The t test $\{t(238)=-2.868, p=0.005\}$ value of the comparative study denoted the attitude of the students and practicing nurses was different statistically significant.

Discussion

Our study result indicates that 55% of students and 48% of practicing nurses had chosen nursing as a career by observing a nurse in action, which reflected the high self-motivation and role model. 45% students and 49.2% of practicing nurses are living with family members who are in health care. This shows that family members also have a significant influence in selecting the profession⁽⁹⁾.

The majority (78.3%) of practicing nurses and 56.7% of the students had chosen nursing as a career for the desire to help others, whereas only 5% of practicing nurses and 6.7% of the students had chosen this profession just for 'pure' work experience. This finding is comparable with the research by Joseph in 2016. Choosing nursing with a desire to help others (with the image of caring and helping sick and disabled people) was the dominant factor in developed countries in his study⁽¹⁰⁾.

This report also indicates that 0.8% of nursing students and none of the practicing nurses had negative attitude toward nursing profession. This finding is similar to the study by Ali et al from Iran where 0.4% of nurses were reported to have negative attitude toward their profession⁽⁵⁾. Another study by Joolae et al in 2006, reported an 18.3% of nursing students had negative attitude toward the nursing profession⁽¹¹⁾. Another study by Zhang et al. in 2008 reported 53.3% of positive attitude by nursing students toward their profession⁽¹²⁾. The reason behind such differences may be the use of different instruments, geographical location, socio-cultural factors and time duration of the study⁽¹¹⁾.

This study showed a statistically significant difference between the two groups in their attitude toward their profession, there was no significant between these two groups (both showed more than 99% positive attitude)⁽⁵⁾. The slight difference between these groups may be due to their increasing age, more responsibilities and their sense of usefulness, education, job experiences and job identity. This is in conformation with Herzberg's theory of work motivation, which states that job nature and responsibility are the intrinsic motivating factors influencing one's professional attitude⁽¹³⁾.

Conclusion

In Nepal, the image of nursing profession has changed from very low reputed job to a respectable and often demanding profession across the country. Our study showed a very high degree of positive attitude toward nursing profession by both nursing students and practicing nurses. This may have a very strong implication for policy makers to take a major step to create new job opportunities and scope of practice in positive outlook, and increase job satisfaction both in Nepal and other developing countries. Further studies in this area is recommended involving a larger group of participant from different parts of the country to make the results more generalizable.

Conflict of Interest: None declared

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