

Perceptions of intermediate students towards nursing as a career choice in Swat Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Abstract

The study aimed to explore the views of intermediate students toward nursing as a career of choice. A cross-sectional design was used for the study conducted between June and July 2022, in two public colleges in district Swat Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The sample size of the study was 146, obtained through random sampling using a self-administrated questionnaire on a 3-point Likert scale.

Previous studies show that (61%) agreed, (19%) were neutral, and (20%) disagreed for selecting nursing as a career. Eighty-two (56%) students in the current study agreed, 47 (32%) disagreed, and 17 (12%) were neutral when asked if they planned to enrol in nursing school.

The study noted that intermediate students in district Swat have a positive attitude towards nursing as a result of the establishment of multiple nursing colleges and the opportunity to work as a nurse in government hospitals or as a nurse educator.

Keywords: Perception, Career choice, Nursing students..

DOI: 10.47391/JPMA.7768

Submission completion date: 16-09-2022

Acceptance date: 09-03-2023

Introduction

In the past, career choices were made early in people's lives. Once you make a decision, you usually continued in the profession for the rest of your life. At present, if you are not satisfied, you can change your profession due to the abundance of choices.¹ In the 21st century, the youth have unlimited career choices and a change is also being seen in families as a tradition. Students who select pre-medical subjects can apply for admission in nursing as a career choice. The presence of information technology and global connections through social media have made

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career choices more difficult, as students' expectations have risen. The higher education institutions in Pakistan are struggling to meet the constantly increasing demands of students and society.²

In Pakistan, nursing was considered a second option for those students who could not get admission in medical colleges. Since 2009, the government has taken interest in the improvement of nursing profession. However, some public sector institutes are leading from the front to present nursing as an important pillar of the healthcare system and to make it a first choice for students who care for humanity. Nursing is an important part of Pakistan's healthcare system. It was a common choice for female students, due to its increased demand within the country as well as in developed countries.

The factors which make nursing the largest component of the health care industry include chance to work in multiple specialties with different levels of authority. The way nurses care for patients, educate them, and the scope of their practice can set them apart from other healthcare professionals.³ The goal of nursing profession is to provide high-quality care to everyone while upholding standards, competencies, code of ethics, credentials, and life-long learning.⁴ Nurses in Pakistan have shown their competencies in all the four waves of Covid-19, and many of them have sacrificed their lives.⁵ In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, nursing is becoming an emerging profession. Therefore, it is important to obtain the view of intermediate students from different specialties about nursing as a career choice in Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Subjects and Methods

A cross-sectional study was conducted in two higher secondary schools in the tehsil Khwaza Khela, district Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in June and July 2022.

Students enrolled in the selected secondary school aged 15 to 20 years from both genders were included in this study through simple random sampling. Those students who were on leave, or terminated were excluded from the study.

The total population of these institutes was 250 that was calculated, through Raosoft Calculator using 50%

response distribution, 95% confidence and 5% margin of error that was 152, while the data of six students was incomplete; hence, sample size of 146 was finalised.⁶

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review committee of Khyber Medical University KMU INS/14-10/5677, while for data collection the permission was obtained from the principal of secondary schools. Informed consent was taken from each student before being included in this study. The students were informed that their participation is voluntary and they can withdraw any time from this study.

Data was collected via a self-structured questionnaire that contains two parts: part one consists of demographic data, while part two contain 20 items with a three point Likert scale (agree, neutral, and disagree). The questionnaire regarding nursing as a career of choice (NCOC) was designed with the help of two published articles^{7,8} and was reviewed by three experts: two clinical nurses and one subject specialist of English for validity. A pilot study was conducted on 30 students having reliability (Cronbach alpha of 0.88). Microsoft Excel and SPSS 20 were used to analyse the data.

Results

The data showed that males comprised the major participant group, i.e. 98 (67%), while 48 (33%) were

Table-1: Demographic data.

Characteristics	Numbers n-146	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	98	67%
Female	48	33%
Age		
15-20 years	114	78%
21-25 years	32	22%
Class		
1st year	91	62%
2nd year	55	38%
Speciality		
Science (Medical)	106	73%
Science (Engineering)	25	17%
Arts	15	10%
College status		
Private	73	50%
Public	68	47%
Trust	5	3%
Occupation of father		
Businessman	17	12%
Job-worker (Govt)	31	21%
Job-Worker (private)	32	22%
Farmer	31	21%
Out of country	18	12%
No job	8	6%
Others	9	6%

females. The major age group of 114 (78%) was 15-20 years. (Table 1).

Regarding student's perception towards nursing as a career of choice, 82 (56%) students answered in the affirmative. Furthermore, the overall positive response was 1783 (61%) while the negative response was 543(19%), as shown in Table 2.

Table-2: Perception of students towards nursing as career of choicea

No	Questions	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	Nursing is a respectable profession?	126 (86%)	17 (12%)	3 (2%)
2	I respect the nursing profession as I respect other medical professions?	129 (88%)	13 (9%)	4 (3%)
3	Nursing is a profession that doesn't take appreciation from the patients and hospital authorities.	103 (71%)	23 (16%)	20 (14%)
4	Nurses have a lot of chances for career advancement in nursing.	111 (76%)	24 (16%)	11 (8%)
5	Nurses take care of their families as well as their work.	125 (86%)	13 (9%)	8 (5%)
6	Nursing is a positive image in public.	106 (73%)	18 (12%)	22 (15%)
7	Nursing is a profession where you have a chance to serve the community?	109 (75%)	20 (14%)	17 (12%)
8	Nursing is a caring profession?	115 (79%)	19 (13%)	12 (8%)
9	The nursing profession is a way to gain recognition in society.	97 (66%)	34 (23%)	15 (10%)
10	Nursing is only for females a career choice?	50 (34%)	35 (24%)	61 (42%)
11	Nurses play a major role in patient care within the hospital.	96 (66%)	30 (21%)	20 (14%)
12	Nurses are the subordinate of doctors?	68 (47%)	36 (25%)	42 (29%)
13	Nurses can't take independent decisions because it is not an independent profession.	36 (25%)	67 (46%)	43 (29%)
14	Nursing job is similar to housemaid job.	49 (34%)	43 (29%)	54 (37%)
15	Nursing is a low category job?	65 (45%)	22 (15%)	59 (40%)
16	Intelligent students should join the nursing profession.	66 (45%)	29 (20%)	51 (35%)
17	Only weak students take admissions in nursing?	65 (45%)	30 (21%)	51 (35%)
18	Nurses had a successful future.	97 (66%)	26 (18%)	23 (16%)
19	Nurses earn a lot of money.	88 (60%)	27 (18%)	31 (21%)
20	I have planned to join nursing in future as a career.	82 (56%)	17 (12%)	47 (32%)
Overall score of the participants		1783 (61%)	594 (20%)	543 (19%)
Overall mean and SD		89 ± 28	27 ± 12	30 ± 19
Male Mean and SD		56.6 ± 17	21.1 ± 6.6	20.3 ± 2.4
Female Mean and SD		34.1 ± 9	4.5 ± 7	9.4 ± 7

Discussion

In the current study, most of the participants were males {98(67%)}, and most of the participants, i.e. 114 (78%) were between the ages of 15 and 20 years. The findings are similar to those of a previous study, which observed that the majority of participants (50.7%) were male, with most being between the ages of 17 and 22 years.⁹ Similar findings are reported in the Al-Jarrah study, which reveals that males outnumber females by 69.1% to 30.9%, with a major age group of 18–20 years.¹⁰ The current study reports that 73% of participants were from science (pre-medical), which contradicts another study that shows 39% of science students.⁷ In our study, 97 (66%) participants showed that nursing as a profession is gaining recognition in society, while a study conducted in 2016 showed that 91.25% agreed that nurses are respected and valued by society.⁹

The present study concluded that the overall positive perception of nursing as a career of choice has reached 61%. Similar and partially consistent findings were reported in the study by Islam A. (2020), which reported that a positive perception among the participants was 66.5%.⁷ Similar but more consistent findings were revealed in another study that showed a positive perception of 85.5% towards nursing as a career of choice.¹¹

In the current study, 56% of the participants revealed that they will choose nursing as a career of choice in future. The findings are in line with a study that reported that 46.25% of the participants are considering nursing as a career in future.⁴

The image of a profession in a community and its role influence people to join it as a career of choice; therefore, the present study reported that (86%) participants considered nursing as a respectable profession. Similar findings are reported in a study conducted in Bangladesh which showed that 58.2% of participants accepted nursing as a respectable profession.⁷ Furthermore, the current study reports that 34% of the participants considered that nursing was only for women, while 42% disagreed with this statement. Our findings contradicted the published reports that reveal that 70% of participants consider females to be more caring than males, making nursing a female profession.⁷

Conclusion

Nursing is a responsible profession and nurses play a vital role in the health care industry. Nurses not only provide service within the hospital but also play a vital role in

providing care within the family and community. The study concluded that intermediate students of district Swat have a positive perception towards nursing due to the establishment of multiple nursing colleges and a chance of becoming a nurse in government hospitals or being a nursing educator. The public image of a profession plays a vital role within society in determining the career of choice in future.

Limitations: The study was conducted in two institutes of Swat, KP with a small sample size. The results therefore cannot be generalised. Studies in multiple institutes could provide better results.

Disclaimer: None.

Conflict of Interest: None.

Source of Funding: None.

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