



Perception and aspiration of higher secondary students towards nursing profession: A study on the government schools of Jorhat town, Assam.

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In all health care and community setting, nursing as an intrinsic part of the health care system, covers the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and care of disabled people of all ages and physically or mentally ill. Within this broad spectrum of health care, the phenomena of particular concern to nurses are individual, family, and group "responses to actual or potential health problems" (ANA, 1980, P.9). The scope of nursing is range broadly from health care of an individual's illness to the development of policy for the promotion of the long-term health of the population.

The nurses have unique functions of cares for individuals, sick or well. Nurses have to assess the responses of the patients regarding their health status and they assist them in performing those activities which contribute in gaining health or in recovering, or to have dignified death. Henderson (1977) states that sometimes nurses have to perform unaided also on the basis of strength, will, or knowledge and by doing this they help the patient to gain full or partial independence as rapidly as possible. International Council of Nursing (1987) on nurses' duty states that nurses and other health professionals shares services and those nurses who are in other sectors of public service provide the functions of planning, implementation, and evaluation to ensure the adequacy of the health system for preventing illness, caring for ill and disabled people, promoting health within the total health care environment.

Definition of a Nurse:

According to the International Council of Nursing, a nurse is a person who has finished a basic, generalised nursing education programme and is qualified to practice nursing in their nation. For the general practice of nursing, for a leadership position, and for post-basic education for specialized or advanced nursing practice, basic nursing education is a professionally recognised plan of study that offers a comprehensive and solid basis in the behavioural, life, and nursing sciences. The nurse is prepared and authorised to: (1) engage in the

general scope of nursing practice, which includes the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and care of physically ill, mentally ill, and disabled people of all ages in all health care and other community settings; (2) carry out health care teaching; (3) fully participate as a member of the health care team; (4) supervise and train nursing and health care auxiliaries; and (5) be involved in research. (ICN, 1987).

Socio-cultural perception of nursing profession:

The socio-cultural perception means an iconic and simple creation based on stereotypes which represents through the aspects of a concrete socio cultural setting of a social reality. The socio- cultural perception of a social reality varies from society to society. The existing norms, values, the stereotypes of a particular society form the social image. To understand the overall position of a profession, the socio- cultural ideas are also needed to be investigated. Here is an attempt have been made to review some of the existing literatures based on socio- cultural perception of nursing profession.

Various studies like Nikunj Makwana's *Gender Perspective and Sociology in Nursing* (2017), Kate Clayton-Hathway, Anne Laure Humbert, Rachael McIlroy and Schutz's *Gender and Nursing as a Profession: Valuing nurses and paying them their worth* (2020), Reema Gill's *Gender Stereotypes: A History of Nursing in India* (2016) etc show that the social image of nursing is blurred and based on certain gender stereotype. Many studies like Reema Gill's *Gender Stereotypes: A History of Nursing in India* (2016), Wendy Madsen's *The Age of Transition: Nursing and Caring in Nineteenth Century* (2003), Eve T. Keenan's *The Social Construction of the Definition of Nursing* prove that throughout the history, gender consideration influences nursing by conceiving the concept of gendered division of labour which believes that care and nurturing are activities inherent to women. So socio-culturally the evolution and development of nursing profession has been conditioned in such a way that it is struggling to attain its goals.

Although nursing profession is indispensable in health sector still the image of the profession is devalued and rather nursing profession is marginalized in many ways. As a result of stereotypical gender role male collective in nursing is still a minority. This is limiting its boundaries for this essential profession.

Cristina Heierle Valero in her study *The image of the nurse through the mass media: The Written Press* writes about the relation of communication media and socio-cultural perception of nursing profession. The communicating media as well as the mass media immensely impact on creating a social reality and in transmitting it. The way a profession is replicated and portrayed through various communication channels influences its social image, and the mass media has enormous potential to both create and convey social reality. According to the author, it is quite clear that the skewed stereotyped picture of nursing that is projected by communication media like advertisements, movies, TV shows, and certain important programmes with bigger consequences like news has nothing to do with the dedication of their profession. It has a profoundly detrimental impact on how the public views and perceives the

nursing profession. Nineteen photographs of nurses as they were portrayed in the media were collected for her study and in those pictures nurses aren't seen as distinct people but rather as parts of a work team. The portrayals of nurses in the media are not flattering, and they do not aid in understanding the skills of nurses or the value of the nursing profession.

The socio-cultural perception of nurses is so pejorative that it was discovered during the IV Valencia Nursing Conference that 60.5% of the patients did not trust the medical advice given by nursing staff. Another conclusion was that consumers mistakenly believe that nursing activities are restricted to the purview of health organisations and are under the control of medical collectives.

In the study *The Image of the Nurse through the Mass Media: The Written Press*, conducted by Cristina Heierle Valero the public views the nursing profession has been discussed where 17% of young people and 15% of adults have indicated that the primary duty of nurses is to assist the medical figure, and 40% believed that the nurses assist the medical professionals. Only 39% of young people and 50% of adults believe that nursing professionals can employ intellect, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

According to Andrew Foong, J.C. Rossiter, and P.T. Chan's *paper Socio-cultural views on the image of nursing: The Hong Kong dimension* (1999), nursing has a very low reputation among teens in Hong Kong, and high school students are not particularly interested in nursing as a vocation. According to the study's findings, lack of financial resources—namely, nurses' poor salary, standing, and knowledge of their responsibilities—are the root causes of the problem. This results in a loss of opportunity for improved nursing profession recruiting.

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In his study *Nursing as Profession beyond Tropes of the Image among Public, Media, and the Identity Crisis: A Discussion Paper*, Mahendra Kumar discovers that nurses experience identity crises as professionals as a result of society's stereotypical views of the profession and media portrayals of nurses. Nurses' reputation in society as solely the assistants of doctors is diminished by the media's portrayal of them in servile roles with low intelligence and inadequate compensation. Because of these representations, nurses are not seen as one of the sector's major contributors. The sense of subordination has a big impact on how nurses develop their roles.

The material already in existence that has been studied demonstrates that the socio-cultural perspective of nursing is not yet favourable. Societal stigmas are associated with the nursing profession, which is subject to many societal stereotypes.

So, to understand, analyse and to find out the perception and social realities regarding nursing profession, the following objectives have been considered for this study.

Objectives of the study:

1. To understand the perception of the respondents on nursing profession.
2. To relate the respondents' perception with the broader socio-cultural sphere they live.

Field and Methodology:

The concept of the field and fieldwork originated with Bronislaw Malinowski, whose classic writings placed a strong emphasis on a lone fieldworker undertaking rigorous fieldwork to investigate the "native point of view" (Malinowski, 1922; 1948). Through his work in Rampura, M. N. Srinivas in India described the field as a 'dynamic' phenomenon. As a high-caste majority in the field, Srinivas demonstrated in his book *The Remembered Village* (1976) how this demographic makeup influenced his research and how hard it is to protect one's work from such effects. Additionally, the fact that research is a contextual activity adds to the field's significance. As a result, research is the examination of a social phenomenon in a specific setting, and it is crucial to have a firm grasp of the topic in order to establish oneself as a researcher there.

For this study the field of study is the government schools in Jorhat town area of Jorhat district. Jorhat district is one of the major districts of Assam with two subdivisions and 82.78% of literacy. There are three government higher secondary schools in Jorhat town area.

These are:

1. Jorhat Government boys HS and MP School
2. Jorhat Government Girls' HS School
3. Jorhat Model Composite School **

Research Design:

According to Jahoda, Deutch & Cook, research design is basically the set up of conditions for the collection and as well as analysis of data which combines relevance to the research objectives with economy and procedure. They added that the plan, structure, method and strategy for investigation concaved to achieve search question and control variance is known

as research design. In this study exploratory research design has been adopted as this research aims to formulate an issue for a more precise inquiry. Exploratory research design is used when there aren't many researches or studies to which references may be made of or little research knowledge is available. This study's emphasis is on game insights, with a more thorough exploration of the topic to follow. As exploratory investigations are typically more suitable for problems about which little research is known and in Assam, notably in Jorhat few studies has been found on this topic, therefore, for this study also exploratory research design has been adopted.

The total number of students studying in higher secondary level is the sample frame for the study. There are 225 students in Jorhat Govt. Boys' HS & MP School, in Jorhat Govt. Girls' HS & MP School total numbers of students are 295 and in Model Composite School there are total 10 students are pursuing higher secondary education. To calculate the number of samples the Taro Yamane formula has been used with 95% of confidence level. The formula is

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + n(e)^2}$$

n= sample size required
 N= the total population
 e =allowable error (%)

$$n = \frac{530}{1 + 530(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 228$$

After getting the sample size random sampling has been used to get samples from each school. Using simple random sampling 100 samples from Jorhat Govt. Boys' HS & MP School, 124 samples from Jorhat Govt. Girls' HS & MP School and 4 from Model Composite H.S School has been selected for the study among which 103 respondents are male and 125 respondents are female.

Data Sources:

For this investigation, both primary and secondary data sources of data have been used. While secondary data was gathered from books, study reports, newspapers, legal and official documents, magazines, journal articles, working papers, booklets, electronic, and web-

based materials, both academic and non-academic in nature, primary data was obtained directly from the respondents during the fieldwork using a structured interview schedule.

Techniques of data collection:

Two techniques of data collection had been used in this study. For collecting primary data this study has resorted to personal interviews conducted using a structured interview schedule.

Discussion and analysis:

To understand the perception and aspiration of the respondents towards nursing profession some investigations have been done. For the investigation an interview schedule has been formed and there both close ended and open ended questions are there.

At the very beginning the respondents have been asked about their interest in nursing profession and in this investigation two different pictures have been come in light from male counterpart and as well as from female counter part. But their thought processes, ideologies which is constructed in the patriarchal world plays a vital role in identifying their interest or disinterest.

The data and information which have been collected from the investigation have been presented below and in the following table the data regarding the interest of the respondents have been presented for the better understanding.

Table: 1.1: Status of interest among the respondents on adopting nursing as their profession

Status	Schools						Total	
	Jorhat Govt. Girls' H.S & M.P School		Jorhat Govt. Boys' H.S & M.P School		Model Composite H.S School Total			
	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	percentage	Numbers	percentage
Interested	80	64.51	00	00	2	50	82	36
Not-Interested	32	25.8	95	95	2	50	129	56.57
No opinion	12	9.67	5	5	00	00	17	7.45
Total	124	100	100	100	4	100	228	100

(The data presented in this table are the primary data which has been collected by the researcher herself)

So, in the above mentioned table it can be observed that only 36% students have shown their interest in nursing profession and the all students who are interested in nursing profession are female. No students from Jorhat Government Boys' HS and MP School have responded as interested in nursing profession.

An investigation also has been conducted to analyse the causes behind the disinterest among the students towards nursing profession. While sorting their responses five causes have been found which matter for the respondents. Low pay, low social status given to nursing profession, the idea that nursing profession exclusively only for women, the social construction that believes nursing as a secondary profession and interest in other professions are the causes behind their disinterest. In the following table the data collected in this regard has been presented.

Table No: 1.2: Causes of disinterest in nursing profession among the respondents

Causes of disinterest	Schools						Total	
	Govt. Girls' HS & MP		Govt. Boys' HS & MP		Model composite school		Number	Percentage
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
Low pay	03	9.37	----	-----	-----		03	2.32
Low social status	02	6.25	-----	-----			02	1.55
Profession for women only	-----	-----	82	86.31	02	50	84	65.11
Interested in other profession	10	31.25	10	10.52			20	15.5
Secondary profession with dirty and manual works	17	53.12	03	3.15			20	15.5
Total	32	100	95	100	2	100	129	100

The primary data which have been presented in the above mentioned table clearly shows that the prime cause (65.11%) of disinterest among the male students is a gender based cause. They are not interested to be in a profession which they consider as a feminine profession. They have inculcated this belief within themselves through the socialization process which exists in this patriarchal society.

Among the respondents of Jorhat Girls' H.S & M.P School the major cause (53.12%) of disinterest is the consideration of nursing as secondary profession in which one has to involve in manual dirt clean works. Low pay (2.32%) and low societal status (1.55%) also plays the roles as causes of disinterest in nursing profession.

Table no 1.3: Causes of interest in nursing profession among the respondents

(The data presented in this table are primary data which has been collected by the researcher herself).

Causes	School				Total	
	Jorhat Govt. Girls' H.S & M.P School		Model composite school		Number	Percentage
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
Suitable Profession for women.	32	40	-----	-----	32	39.02
High chances of employment	43	53.75	02	100	45	54.87
Available facilities to pursue education	05	6.25	-----	-----	05	6.1
Total	80	100	02	100	82	100

So, to analyses the causes of disinterest among respondents the causes of interest are also needed to be investigated. In this study this part also has been investigated and in the following table the collected data has been presented.

From the data presented in the table shows that there are three causes because of which 36% of respondents show interest to opt nursing as their profession. But in this regard also the concept of gendered division labour influences the interest of the respondents (39.02%). 54.87% of total interested respondents have stated that because of the employment opportunities present in nursing profession they are interested to opt nursing profession.

Findings and conclusion:

From this study some findings can be drawn. These are:

1. Nursing is still considered as a profession for women only. The male respondents have not shown interest in opting nursing profession. They consider caring and nursing as assigned work for women and they have not considered nursing a masculine job to be in.
2. The students who have been interested to be in nursing profession also influenced by the gendered division of labour. In their patriarchal household they have been taught that nursing, caring, nurturing, these jobs suit women and till this age they have believe on this idea.
3. All the respondents unaware of the differences between nursing and caring.
4. Because of ignorance the respondents don't know the types, work, qualification, promotional facilities in nursing profession.
5. Lack of high regard for the profession has been seen among the respondents.

Conclusion:

So, from the study it can be concluded that the general perception of nursing is very much gendered and devalued. It affects on the profession negatively. Nurses are being considered as only assistants of physicians who have to do the dirty menial works. This perception creates global scarcities of nurses. As it is considered as feminine profession so somehow it is deprived the male counterpart from a great opportunity of employment. Awareness programmes from government side as well as from non government side can help in encouraging people in accepting nursing profession a valuable and one of the most important professions for the whole mankind.

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