

Shaping Views: Nursing Students' Perception Towards the Profession

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Abstract

Nurses play a vital role in the healthcare system, providing essential care across diverse populations. As the backbone of health services in the 21st century, the nursing profession demands skilled practitioners who contribute significantly to patient care, health promotion, and disease prevention. However, global shortages of nursing professionals, particularly in countries like India, threaten healthcare quality and accessibility. Understanding nursing students' perceptions of their profession is crucial, as these views shape their professional identity, job satisfaction, and career retention. This study explores nursing students' attitudes toward the nursing profession, focusing on how their perceptions evolve during their education and the influence of demographic factors. Prior research indicates that while many students enter nursing with idealistic views, exposure to theory and clinical practice can alter these perceptions. Additionally, misconceptions about the profession and low societal recognition often contribute to challenges such as attrition, reluctance to engage in bedside care, and migration to more lucrative opportunities. By investigating the perceptions of nursing students in India, this research aims to identify prevailing attitudes and potential barriers to career commitment. The findings intend to guide interventions that promote positive professional identity, improve working conditions, and attract young people to nursing roles essential for quality patient care. This study aligns with global initiatives like the International Council of Nurses' 2023 campaign, "Our Nurses, Our Future", which highlights the critical need for nurses worldwide. Addressing the nursing shortage requires efforts to reshape perceptions and foster a sustainable nursing workforce dedicated to advancing healthcare outcomes.

Keywords: Nursing students, perception of nursing, nursing profession, nursing shortage, professional identity

INTRODUCTION

The health industry is underpinned by nurses essential to providing all citizens with high-quality care. In the 21st century, the nursing profession is the thread that binds the continuum of care [1]. According to the International Council of Nurses, nursing is a vocation that entails providing independence and cooperation to sick or healthy individuals, families, groups, and communities. Nursing involves tasks that have been scientifically demonstrated to be effective in boosting patient care, preventing sickness, and improving the overall health of an individual.

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Received Date: August 16, 2025

Accepted Date: October 09, 2025

Published Date: October 19, 2025

Citation: Suja Kumari S., Abhirami K.S., Abhirami Prakash, Adithya Subash, Aiswarya Lakshmi, Sunil M. Shaping Views: Nursing Students' Perception Towards the Profession. Journal of Nursing Science & Practice. 2025; 15(3): 1–10p.

Nurses are the most common health professionals who play a crucial role in health. Students' views of caring altered during their school experiences. They improved their professional self-concepts, such as satisfaction, talent, leadership, adaptability, communication, and the ability to deal with the demands of nursing [2, 3]. How one is perceived significantly impacts how one develops as a person

and a professional. When it comes to issues like quitting their jobs, moving to developed nations in search of a better life and a better wage and being selective about whether to work in rural or metropolitan regions, nurses' love for their profession can be one of the most effective solutions [4]. According to several researches, nursing experts believe that patients do not know about or grasp the responsibilities and tasks involved in nurses' professional performance [5, 6]. Before beginning the nursing degree, even nursing students who could not define what nursing is or what nurses do exhibit this lack of knowledge [7]. Currently, nurse organizations like the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the Indian Nursing Council, and others place a strong emphasis on nursing education skills because they are fundamental to the nursing profession and practice [8, 9]. This competency-based structure provides fresh guidelines for working as a nursing practitioner or student and understanding and studying nursing.

The “*Our Nurses, Our Future*” Campaign by the International Council of Nurses for the year 2023 aiming to address the global health challenges and improve global health for all, will shine the light on nurses and a brighter future [10].

Advocating, fostering a safe atmosphere, research, and training, as well as participating in policymaking and the management of the healthcare system, are some of the critical tasks and responsibilities of nurses. According to a Nursing Times article, by the US Department of Labour Statistics, there will be a need for more than 275,000 additional nurses between 2020 and 2030. Nurses will have more job vacancies (9%) than all other occupations from 2016 to 2026.

Globally, there is a rising need for nurses in the 21st century. India suffers from a severe nursing shortage, and the nurse-to-patient ratio is inappropriate, increasing the strain on nurses and compromising patient care [11]. Numerous initiatives are required to solve the severe nursing shortage compromising healthcare quality. Increasing young people's interest in the nursing profession is one technique. According to several research studies, the majority of nursing graduates are hesitant to work in bedside nursing, even though the healthcare industry desperately needs it, and those who do have the wrong attitude towards the profession compromise the quality of nursing care, which is crucial in this era of quality assurance [12].

A study among nursing students conducted by Paudal and Koirala in Nepal reported that only 25.2% of respondents believe that nursing offers the chance to receive a better marriage proposal [4]. Nursing is seen by 98.5% of respondents as a chance to benefit mankind, 46.6% to have financial security, 84.7% to be adequately recognized in society, 87.8% to have a reputable and dignified career, and 91.6% to earn blessings. Many students had idealistic perceptions of nursing at the start of their courses, according to research by Jothishanmugam *et al.* [13], but those perceptions altered due to the influence of nursing theory, science, and practical experience.

To meet the demand for nurses to provide direct patient care, bedside nursing must be made appealing regarding working conditions. There has been very little research in India on the perception of the nursing profession among aspiring nurses. Students come into nursing education believing it has evolved over the years and enables them to socialize in nursing. The scientists hope to learn about nursing students' evolving attitudes toward the nursing profession over 4 years. The research question inquired about the students' perceptions of their nursing career. The major goal was to identify students' perceptions of the nursing profession, and the secondary goal was to discover the relationship between students' perceptions of the profession and demographic characteristics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional online survey was utilized to determine how students felt about their nursing profession. Ethical clearance was obtained from Amrita School of Medicine (ECAMS-AIMS-2022-162). Formal permission was obtained from the head of a Nursing College in South India. The study was conducted among 1st- to 4th-year nursing students. 200 B.Sc. Nursing Students from

different academic years were selected as participants. The trial was registered under CTRI (No. CTRI/2023/01/049233). The Slovincs formula was used to calculate the sample size since the population is known to researchers, $n=N/1+N(e^2)$, and N is 393. Students who were present while the data was collected were included. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted for this study as the population consists of students from 4 years of nursing course. Based on the equal proportion method, each stratum consisting of 50 students from each year was selected by lottery method for the study.

The data collection instrument consists of Information related to socio-demographic variables like age, year of study, religion, birth order, family income, parents' profile, reasons to join nursing, and interest in the nursing area after completion of the study. A checklist with a reliability of 0.9 was used to determine the nursing students' perception towards their profession. Before the main study, it had been submitted to the clinical trial registry. After obtaining permission, the tool was modified, and scoring was added for the scale by net promoter score calculation. Based on that, more than 60% of the score was considered positive, and below 60% was considered negative. The modified tool was again validated by eight experts from the field of nursing and psychology.

Data were collected over 2 weeks. Consent was obtained after thoroughly explaining the study's aim and objectives to participants. The survey was distributed online using Google Forms. The demographic data was gathered, and a checklist was used to evaluate how students perceived the nursing profession.

RESULTS

The surveyed questionnaires were extracted from Google Forms as an Excel sheet and analysed by SPSS Statistics version 29. Descriptive statistics was performed to obtain the patient's profile and assess the perception association with selected variables.

According to Table 1, out of 200 students, 46% were 18–20 years old, 53% were 21–23 years old, whereas only two were more than 24 years old. Since the sampling design is stratified, 50 students from 1st to 4th year were included in the study. It is also observed that the majority (84%) of participants were females. 72% of students were rural, but only 28% were in the urban area. Most (196 students) were unmarried, while three were married, and one got divorced. Based on the birth order, students were categorized, and it has been noted that 59% of students were the 1st child, 71% were the 2nd child, and 9% were the 3rd child for their parents, while only 2% of students were the 4th child of their parents. Interestingly, an equal percentage of students (50%) reported having relatives or family members who work in the nursing field.

It has been found that, among all study participants, 28.5% of their fathers were diploma holders, and 23.5% were graduates, while 11 students reported that their fathers had postgraduation. 34.5% of students' mothers graduated, and 13 reported that their mothers had a postgraduation. Most students' (102) fathers were nonprofessional, and 27% reported that their fathers were professional. In contrast, the majority (103 students) reported that their mothers had no occupation, while the remaining were either professional or non-professional. 82% of study participants belonged to nuclear families, while 17 and 1% belonged to joint and extended families.

- *Frequency Distribution of Sample in Terms of Annual Income:* Among the study participants, 62% (123) reported an annual income of more than Rs. 1 lakh. 27% (54) had an income between Rs. 1 and 3 lakhs, 16 participants reported an income of Rs. 4 to 6 lakhs, and only 7 participants (3%) had an income exceeding Rs. 6 lakhs. This indicates that the majority of participants fall into the income category of above Rs. 1 lakh per year.
- *Frequency Distribution of Sample in Terms of Motivation to Join the Nursing Course (n=200):* Regarding motivation for joining the nursing profession, 65% of participants stated that their decision was self-motivated. Parental influence accounted for 18% of the responses, while friends and relatives motivated 5 and 8% of participants, respectively. Additionally, 4% reported that their school teachers influenced their decision, and a small portion had no specific reason for joining nursing.

Table 1. Frequency, distribution, and percentage of sample based on selected socio-demographic variables (n=200).

S.N.	Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Age (in years)		
	18–20 years	91	46
	21–23 years	107	53
	>24 years	2	1
2.	Year of Study		
	First-year	50	25
	Second-year	50	25
	Third-year	50	25
	Fourth-year	50	25
3.	Gender		
	Male	32	16
	Female	168	84
	Other	0	0
4.	Habitat		
	Rural	144	72
	Urban	56	28
5.	Marital status		
	Married	3	1.5
	Unmarried	196	96
	Widowed/Separated/Divorced	1	0.005
6.	Birth order		
	1st	118	59.0
	2nd	71	35.5
	3rd	9	4.5
	4th	2	1.0
7.	Annual Family Income (Rs.)		
	<1 lakh	123	62
	1–3 lakh	54	27
	4–6 lakh	16	8
	>6 lakh	7	3
8.	Any family members or relatives in the Nursing Profession		
	Yes	100	50
	No	100	50
9.	Motivation to join nursing		
	Self-motivated	131	65.5
	Forced by parents	36	18
	Friends	11	5
	Relatives	15	7.5
	Any others	7	3.5

10.	Parental education father		
	Primary	21	10.5
	Secondary	64	32
	Diploma	57	28.5
	Graduate	47	23.5
	Postgraduate	11	5.5
	No formal education	0	
	Mother		
	Primary	12	6.0
	Secondary	52	26.0
	Diploma	53	26.5
	Graduate	69	34.5
	Postgraduate	13	6.5
	No formal education	1	0.5
11.	Parental occupation father		
	Professional	53	27
	Non professional	102	51
	Others	45	22
	Mother		
	Professional	51	26
	Non professional	31	15
	Housewives	103	52
	Others	15	7
12.	Type of Family		
	Nuclear	163	82
	Joint	34	17
	Extended	3	1
13.	Plan to work after course completion		
	Teaching	28	14
	Bedside/Clinical	137	68.5
	Administration	31	16
	Others	4	0.02

- *Frequency Distribution of Sample Based on Plans to Work After Course Completion:* Out of 200 students, the majority (137 students or 68.5%) expressed a desire to work in clinical or bedside nursing after course completion. 31 students (16%) planned to pursue administrative roles, 28 students (14%) intended to work in teaching, and only four students had not yet decided on their future plans.

Association Between Demographic Variables and Students' Perception Towards the Nursing Profession

Pearson's chi-square test examined the association between socio-demographic variables and students' perception of the nursing profession.

Table 2 shows, the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and the nursing profession, there was a significant association between type of family, motivation to join in nursing, and plan to work after completion of the course, at 0.05 level.

Year of Study and Perception Towards the Nursing Profession

Among nursing students, 96% of both 1st-year and 4th-year students have a positive perception of the nursing profession. The highest positive perception was observed among 3rd-year students, with 98% reporting a positive view. In comparison, 2nd-year students showed a lower positive perception at 88%.

Table 2. Association between demographic variables and nursing students' perceptions (positive versus negative) towards the profession (n=200).

S.N.	Variables	Positive perception	Negative perception	X ²	df	P value
1.	Age (in years)			.950	2	.622
	18–20 years	85	6			
	21–23 years	103	4			
	>24 years	2	0			
2.	Year of Study			1.368	3	.713
	First-year	48	2			
	Second-year	44	6			
	Third-year	49	2			
	Fourth-year	48	2			
3.	Gender			1.535	1	.215
	Male	161	7			
	Female	29	3			
4.	Habitat			.752	1	.386
	Rural	138	6			
	Urban	52	4			
5.	Marital status			5.327	3	.149
	Married	3	0			
	Unmarried	2	1			
	Widowed/Separated/Divorced	184	9			
6.	Birth order			3.003	3	.391
	1st	114	4			
	2nd	65	6			
	3rd	9	0			
	4th	2	0			
7.	Annual Family Income (Rs.)			.460	3	.928
	<1 lakh	117	6			
	1–3 lakh	7	0			
	4–6 lakh	51	3			
	>6 lakh	15	1			
8.	Any family members or relatives in Nursing Profession			1.684	1	.194
	Yes	93	7			
	No	97	3			

9.	Motivation to join nursing					
	Self-motivated	122	5	11.927	11	.017903*
	Forced by parents	34	2			
	Friends	9	2			
	Relatives	13	2			
	Any others	8	3			
10.	Parental education father			2.880	4	.578
	Primary	21	0			
	Secondary	59	5			
	Diploma	55	2			
	Graduate	45	2			
	Postgraduate	10	1			
	Mother			1.058	5	.958
	Primary	12	0			
	Secondary	49	3			
	Diploma	50	3			
	Graduate	66	3			
	Postgraduate	12	1			
	No formal education	1	0			
11.	Parental Occupation			3.260	2	.196
	FATHER					
	Professional	96	6			
	Non professional	45	0			
	Others	49	4	1.200	3	.753
	Mother					
	Professional	49	2			
	Non professional	29	2			
	Housewives	49	2			
	Others	15	0			
12.	Type of Family			19.9223	2	.000047*
	Nuclear	155	8			
	Joint	32	2			
	Extended	1	2			
13.	Plan to work After Course Completion			38.3305	3	0.00001*
	Teaching.	27	1			
	Bedside/Clinical	132	5			
	Administration	29	2			
	Others (Not decided yet)	1	3			

*Significant at 0.05 level.

Student's Perception Towards the Nursing Profession

Table 3 depicts that 97.5% of nursing students perceive the nursing profession as a prospect to serve humankind and for personal growth. 95.5% as a mode to have optimistic prospects abroad, and 93% perceived it as a way to enjoy financial safety. Most (99%) of students considered maintaining ethical standards of care a vital component of the nursing profession. 94.5% of students believed that going

into nursing would help them gain the respect and blessing they deserved from society. Of 200 students, 30 disagreed that nursing is a respectable and dignified career. 127% of students considered that nursing was on par with other occupations, whereas 56% of students alone thought that nursing offered the chance to receive better marriage proposals.

Table 3. Frequency, distribution, and percentage of sample based on perception towards nursing profession.

S.N.	Nursing profession is	Yes		No	
		<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%
1.	An opportunity to serve humanity	195	97.5	5	2.5
2.	An opportunity for personal growth	195	97.5	5	2.5
3.	A way to have bright prospects abroad	191	95.5	9	4.5
4.	A way to enjoy economic security	186	93.0	14	7.0
5.	A caring profession in which ethical standards of care are maintained	198	99.0	2	1.0
6.	A way to get due recognition in society	189	94.5	11	5.5
7.	A dignified and respectful profession	170	85.0	30	15.0
8.	A means to earn the blessing	189	94.5	11	5.5
9.	Actually, it is equal to other professions	127	63.5	73	36.5
10.	An opportunity to get better marriage offers	112	56.0	88	44.0

DISCUSSION

200 nursing students participated in this descriptive cross-sectional study to examine and describe student nurses' perceptions of the profession. In a previous study, it was reported that students' idealistic perception might change as the year passes, whereas, in the present study, it was reported that 98% of 1st years, as well as 4th-year students, have positive perceptions. According to the current survey, the vast mainstream of nursing students is found to be uninterested in changing careers, which contradicts findings from other studies. In the latest survey, most graduating students agreed that nursing is a caring profession that upholds an ethical norm of caring and reported that it is the essence of nursing. 137 (68.5%) students wanted to work in the clinical setting, which shows nursing students like to work at the bedside compared to other areas. The findings contradict the reports of previous studies, which stated that more than half of the participating students opted for higher education (18, 19). In the present study, only four students reported having no future plans, clearly indicating that the majority of students are highly career oriented. Furthermore, a significant association was found between the type of family, motivation for joining nursing, and plans to work after course completion, with a p-value of <0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship [14].

In this study, the majority of respondents (95.5%) viewed nursing as a means to secure better prospects in foreign countries, 94.5% perceived it as a way to gain social acceptance, and 85% considered it a respectable and dignified profession. These findings are comparable to a similar study conducted in Nepal, where respondents regarded nursing as a way to achieve promising future opportunities abroad (84.75%), to gain social acceptance (84.75%), and to uphold a respectable and dignified career (87.8%). However, in the present study, most respondents (93%) did not consider nursing as a means to attain financial security. This contrasts with the Nepalese study, where only 76.25% of participants shared the same view. The findings suggest that while nursing continues to be perceived as a noble and socially esteemed profession offering international opportunities, there remains a widespread perception that it does not necessarily guarantee financial stability. This highlights the need for policies that enhance nurses' remuneration and job satisfaction, ensuring that the profession is not only valued socially but also financially rewarding. In a related study, 48.8% of the participants believed that social bias significantly impacts nursing students' decisions to pursue the

profession as a career. In the current study, 97.5% of participants thought that nursing was an excellent approach to gaining the respect they deserved in society. Nearly half (44%) of the nursing students shared that there is no potential to find a better marriage mate through the nursing profession, similar to a study finding in Punjab, India [15].

Recommendations and Limitations

To reduce brain-drain in nursing, the government and authorities should be proactive and pay close attention, and nursing students should be motivated to work initially on bedside nursing. The management and faculty of nursing institutions must take the required actions to ensure the ongoing development of the nursing profession. Teachers are also recommended to have a noteworthy role in building a positive and effective climate in academic settings, directly or indirectly affecting their studies. A cross-sectional study method was adopted due to time constraints. Conducting a longitudinal study to compare nursing students' opinions of nursing between those with and without clinical experience is advised. Other settings can also be included to broaden the sample size and improve the findings' generalizability.

CONCLUSION

The perception of future nurses regarding their profession significantly impacts students' decision to enter the nursing field. The overall patient experience is that nurses go above and beyond to locate and safeguard each person's needs wherever someone needs care. Most students believed that nursing is a job that should be used to benefit mankind and win the approval of the populace. This profession also offers opportunities for financial security, personal development, and a bright future abroad. Nonetheless, the undergraduate nursing students' opinion of the nursing profession was concerning; a sizeable portion did not see nursing as a respectable and dignified career deserving of social acceptance and parity with other professions. Our findings are partially compatible with previous research efforts. The students have a positive attitude towards the nursing profession. Most students believe nursing is a job with a bright and secure future and the opportunity to earn societal recognition.

Acknowledgment

The authors gratefully applaud the principal, teachers, and all Amrita College of Nursing faculty for their unending support and collaboration. The authors also want to acknowledge all the participants for their cooperation throughout this study. Especially acknowledging Dr. Suresh K Sharma, Principal, AIIMS, for permitting the use of the tool for perception.

Funding

No funding sources.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest to this article's research, authorship, and publication.

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