

# Perceptions of Yemeni Undergraduate Nursing Students toward Nursing Profession

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## ABSTRACT

Nursing is a very important profession in the health care delivery system. However, there are many challenges facing the nursing profession e.g. the negative view of society toward the profession. This study aims to identify the perception toward nursing profession among nursing students of the Nursing Departments in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at Hodeidah University, Yemen. A descriptive cross-sectional design was used. A sample of 367 undergraduate nursing students was recruited. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaire on factors that influencing the nursing students' perceptions toward nursing profession. Statistical analysis was presented as frequencies and percentages. A Chi square test was also used for categorized parameters. It was found out that (37.3%) of the participants had very high positive perception towards nursing, followed by (48%) of them with high positive perception while the remaining percentages were stated for low and very low perception. Also, there was a statistical significant relation ( $P < 0.05$ ) between the participants' perception about nursing and age, marital status, reasons for enrollment to the Department of Nursing, having a nurse friend or relative and family's reaction. However, there was no statistical significant relation ( $P > 0.05$ ) to gender and stream in the secondary school.

*Keywords: Perception; nursing profession; undergraduate students; factors and parameters.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, nursing profession considered as an essential part of the health care delivery system and share responsibilities in collaboration with other concerned medical professions for the achievement of optimal health status for all community members, hence, nursing staff are health professionals who are the corner stone of the health care system in each country because they stay long time with the patients and deliver the most patients care than any other concerned medical profession [1]. From this viewpoint, the image of both nurses and nursing as a profession is vital in the successful recruitment and retention of staff in the healthcare industry [2]. As known, in addition to job security, economic/income and prestigious related reasons, the competition on a certain profession comes as a result of the society's perception toward this profession, either positive or negative perception which in turn lead to determine the choices for students for that profession [3]. Therefore, nursing perception as a profession among nursing students has obvious impact on their career in the future as remarkably affect their self-esteem, recruitment, retention, and performance, thus, nurses who have a positive

image on nursing profession will have positive job satisfaction, as well as high performance and strong relations with their peers, patients and community, which in turn will be reflected on the quality of nursing care provided [4]. While those with low perception for nursing profession are not only limited to have low job satisfaction but it may lead to intention to leave the profession [5].

In Yemen, the nursing profession is considered as one of the most important professions in the field of health care services due to the severe demand resulting from the spread of many infectious diseases such as cholera and dengue fever. However, the image of nursing profession among students is not significantly apparent as no enough documented research studies conducted yet in Yemen. While, some Arab countries is improving the nursing image as they consider nursing one of the appreciated and recommended profession, accordingly, much research studies has been conducted in this field [4]. In the same region, some countries in the Middle East, e.g. Bahrain, were satisfied with the image of nursing in spite of the lacked appeal and prestige while some other countries, e.g. Jordan, have had a unique experience in improving its nursing

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image and has significantly increased the number of highly educated nurses who participated actively in organizing the profession by setting the Jordanian code of ethics [6]. More specifically, nursing profession in the Yemen context is still facing multiple challenges such as negative image of nursing among students and low paying and benefits. This has reflected in a huge shortage of nursing staff particularly in the clinical settings such as hospitals, especially within the current security situation resulting from the escalation of the conflict in March 2015. This situation has imposed a severe shortage of nurses due to departure of foreigners' nurses that led to heavy burden on national nursing staff. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify the perception of undergraduate nursing students toward nursing profession to fill the knowledge gap in this regard and set a baseline reference that will be helpful in establishing an intervention program to treat this misperception and motivate the students in future [3,7].

## **2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Nursing perceptions (i.e. either positive or negative) towards nursing as a profession among undergraduate nursing students have a significant impact on the development of nursing as a profession, which in turn reflected on the quality of nursing care provided to the patients on need. Therefore, there is a very persistent need to explore the perceptions of nursing students towards nursing profession through determining the associated factors that are contributing to the change of nursing image to better or worst on long-term scale, and impacting the enrolment of students to this important job. Also, there is no enough documented research studies conducted yet in Yemen which make the image of nursing is not clearly apparent, so the researcher attempted to probe the Yemeni students' perceptions towards nursing as a profession.

## **3. AIMS OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to

- a. Identify the perceptions of undergraduate nursing students toward nursing profession in the Nursing Department, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Hodeidah University, Yemen.
- b. Explore the factors influencing students' perceptions toward nursing profession.

- c. Find out whether there is any relationship between the students' perception and other demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status, reasons for enrollment to the Department of Nursing, having a nurse friend or relative, family's reaction and stream in the secondary school.

## **4. QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY**

1. What are the perceptions of Yemeni undergraduate nursing students towards nursing profession?
2. What are the factors influencing students' perceptions toward nursing as a profession?
3. Is there a relationship between the students' perceptions and other demographic factors?

## **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 Study Design**

The present study has a descriptive cross-sectional design that was used to assess the student's perception towards nursing profession among B.Sc. Nursing students enrolled in the Department of Nursing - Faculty of Medicine and Health Science - Hodeidah University.

### **5.2 Study Setting**

The study was conducted at the Department of Nursing in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Science at Hodeidah University, which offers a four-year Nursing Program and awards a B.Sc. (i.e., Bachelor's Degree in Nursing).

### **5.3 Study Population**

The study targeted the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students enrolled in the B.Sc. four-year course in Nursing in the Department of Nursing, Faculty of Medicine and Health Science - Hodeidah University. Permission was obtained from the Student Affairs Division and the Department of Nursing before commencing the study. Participants were assured of confidentiality of all information provided and anonymity was maintained.

### **5.4 Sampling and Sample Size**

This study adopted convenience sampling of 367 undergraduate students of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> levels of nursing department were recruited at the data collection days. This sample includes 146 students from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year level, 124 students from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year level and 97 students from the 4<sup>th</sup> level.

### 5.5 Data Collection Tool and Technique

To fulfill the aim of the study, data were collected with permission using self-administered questionnaire which adapted from similar previous studies. To test both face and content validity, tool was reviewed by a panel of teaching staff members in the nursing department where some modification was taken to ensure appropriateness and relevance of content. To ensure students' understanding of the questionnaire contents and to get reliable results, the questionnaire has been translated into Arabic (i.e., the native language of the participants). The questionnaire composed of three main sections as follows:

Section 1: This part covers the questions related to socio-demographic characteristics of the study subjects such as sex, age, marital status, furthermore the reasons for enrollment in the Department of Nursing, and family's reaction to students' enrollment.

Section 2: This part focuses on questions that explored the nursing students' feelings and perceptions toward the nursing as a profession and probe their beliefs, ideas and impressions that they have on nursing as a profession. Grading of student's perception was done using a Likert scale through 22 statements which were answered on a 5-point scale of response as follows: strongly agree (5), agree (4), not sure (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1).

Section 3: This part has questions related to the factors that influencing the perception of the nursing students toward Nursing as a profession.

### 5.6 Data Analysis

The Data was collected and statistical analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS/version 20) software. Data was

analysed using descriptive statistics which presented as frequencies and percentages. For categorized parameters, the correlation between perception of nursing as a profession and socio-demographic variables were analysed using the bivariate statistical tests (Chi-square), then the significant factors analysed by using multiple logistic regression analysis to detect the most significant factors. The level of significant was 0.05.

## 6. RESULTS

### 6.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 shows socio-demographic data of the total number of the respondents (i.e., 367(of whom 195 (53.1%) were males and 172 (46.9%) were females. Here, it is clear that the male respondents outnumber the females. The statistics of the study showed that those with age > 20 had higher ratio 264 (71.9%). On the other hand, almost more than half of the respondents 210 (57.2%) attributed reason behind their enrollment to the Nursing Department for their desire to help others followed by secondary school grade 101 (27.5%). Almost two third 236 (64.3%) of the total number of the respondents had a friend/relative nurse. Concerning to family's reaction to students' enrollment in the Nursing Department, the positive reaction was higher 264 (71.9%) followed by neutral reaction 81 (22.1%) and negative reaction 22 (6%).

### 6.2 Students Perceptions toward Nursing as a Profession

Table 2 shows the aggregated distribution of the respondents regarding perceptions of nursing as a profession which extracted from nursing perception statements. Concerning the statements that explore and probe the views of the respondents toward the image of nursing as a profession, almost 176 (48%) of them showed high positive perception of nursing as a profession followed by those who had very high positive perception 137 (37.3%), then 52 (14.2%) and 2 (0.5%) for those with low and very low perception respectively.

**Table 1. Socio-demographic data of the study's respondents**

Variables	Frequencies	Percent
Gender		

Male	195	53.1
Female	172	46.9
<b>Age</b>		
<18 year	4	1.1
18-20 year	99	27.0
>20 year	264	71.9
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	321	87.5
Married	46	12.5
Divorced	0	0.0
<b>Reasons for enrollment to the Nursing Department</b>		
Secondary School Grade	101	27.5
Desire to help others	210	57.2
Financial reasons/ Availability of work	26	7.1
Advice from family members	30	8.2
<b>Stream in the secondary school</b>		
Scientific	359	97.8
Vocational Nursing	8	2.2
<b>Do you have a nurse friend or relative?</b>		
Yes	236	64.3
No	131	35.7
<b>Family's reaction to students' enrollment:</b>		
Positive	264	71.9
Negative	22	6.0
Neutral	81	22.1

**Table 2. Distribution of the respondents regarding perceptions of nursing profession**

Perception toward nursing as a profession	Frequencies	Percent
Very high	137	37.3
High	176	48.0
Low	52	14.2
Very low	2	0.5

**Table 3. Distribution of the respondents regarding factors influencing perceptions toward nursing profession**

Studied factors	Frequencies	Percent
<b>Social ranking of nursing profession</b>		
1st rank	65	17.7
2nd rank	62	16.9
3rd rank	58	15.8
4th rank	27	7.4
5th rank	25	6.8
6th rank	39	10.6
7th rank	40	10.9
8th rank	18	4.9
9th rank	17	4.6
10th rank	16	4.4
<b>Feeling about nursing profession when talking with others</b>		
Proud	243	66.2
Shy	40	10.9
Change topic	22	6.0
Defensive	52	14.2
Attack nursing profession	10	2.7
<b>Factors contributing to the change to better</b>		

<b>Studied factors</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Working conditions	142	38.7
Clinical training	223	60.8
Effect of faculty members	82	22.3
Relationship with medical staff	234	63.8
Relationship with friends	86	23.4
Family member opinion	107	29.2
Public view about nursing	247	67.3
<b>Factors contributing to the change to worst</b>		
Working conditions	217	59.1
Clinical training	115	31.3
Effect of faculty members	119	32.4
Relationship with medical staff	114	31.1
Relationship with friends	85	23.2
Family member opinion	88	24.0
Public view about nursing	200	54.5
<b>Join after graduation/diploma</b>		
<b>Teaching institution</b>		
Yes	260	70.8
No	52	14.2
Not sure	55	15.0
<b>Bedside nursing</b>		
Yes	290	79.0
No	39	10.6
Not sure	38	10.4
<b>Nursing Administration</b>		
Yes	267	72.8
No	45	12.3
Not sure	55	15.0
<b>Plan for higher education</b>		
Yes	299	81.5
No	19	5.2
Not sure	49	13.4
<b>Plan to change the profession</b>		
Yes	208	56.7
No	105	28.6
Not sure	54	14.7

### 6.3 Factors Influencing Perceptions toward Nursing as a Profession

Table 3 shows distribution of the respondents regarding factors affecting their perceptions toward Nursing. Concerning respondents' feeling toward nursing, almost 243 (66.2%) students feel proud when talking about nursing in public while very few number 10 (2.7) attack it as profession when talking about it. Regarding the factors contributing to the change of nursing to better, the majority of students 247 (67.3%) think that the public view about nursing is the most affective factor, while 234 (63.8%) and 223 (60.8%) of the students attributed those factors to the relationship with medical staff and clinical training respectively after the first aforementioned factor. However, the factor of working conditions was selected by 217 (59.1%)

of the students as the most contributing one to change the nursing to the worst, followed by the factor of public view about nursing as it was selected by 200 (54.5%) of the students. In the same context, it is surprising that about half 208 (56.7) of the students plan to change their profession after graduation.

### 6.4 Statistical Significance between Variables

Table 4 shows the relation between the students' perceptions towards nursing as a profession and their socio-demographic data. Regarding gender, among those 313 with high nursing perception, almost 165 (52.7%) was reported for males and 148 (47.3%) for females while those 54 who was reported with low nursing perception, 30 (55.6%) were males and 24 (44.4%) were females.

Regarding factors which were related directly to the students and reflected either positively or negatively on the perception of nursing profession, and resulted in the enrollment to the Department of Nursing, statistics revealed that the desire to help others was higher in high perception group 198 (63.3%) and advice from family members was higher in low perception group 25 (46.3%). Besides that, those who have a nurse friend or relative were higher in high perception group 224 (71.6%) while those who have not a nurse friend or relative were higher 42 (77.8%) in low perception group. Regarding to family's reaction to students enrollment, positive reaction was higher in high perception while neutral reaction was higher 31(57.4%) in low perception.

There was statistical significant relation between perception of nursing and age, marital status, reasons for enrollment to the Department of Nursing, having a nurse friend or relative, family's reaction ( $P < 0.05$ ) while there was no statistical significant relation regarding to gender and stream in the secondary school ( $P > 0.05$ ).

Table 5 shows the multiple logistic regression analysis of different potential factors that influence the perception of nursing as a profession, it was found that the reasons for enrollment to the Department of Nursing, stream in the secondary school, having a nurse friend or relative and family's reaction to students' enrollment were the most significant factors which affected the students perception toward nursing as a profession.

## 7. DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the perceptions of the nursing students, toward nursing as a profession, in the Nursing Department of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at Hodeidah University. It was revealed that male students (53.1%) enrolled in the Nursing Department outnumber the females (46.9%). This finding contrasts with the stereotype of the claim that nursing profession is predominantly for women. Here, male students are more perceived with nursing profession and have the desire to join nursing specialty. This may be due to the conservative Yemeni society which rigidly

**Table 4. Relation between perception of nursing as a profession and socio-demographic data**

Perceptions of nursing Profession and socio-demographic data	Perception of nursing as a profession				Total	X <sup>2</sup> P-value
	High "n=313"		Low "n=54"			
	No.	%	No.	%		
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	165	52.7	30	55.6	195	0.149
Female	148	47.3	24	44.4	172	0.699
<b>Age</b>						
<18 y	0	0.0	4	7.4	4	20.4
18-20	80	25.6	19	35.2	99	0.0003*
>20	233	74.4	31	57.4	264	
<b>Marital status</b>						
Single	288	92.0	33	61.1	321	40.1
Married	25	8.0	21	38.9	46	0.0001*
Divorced	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	
<b>Reasons for enrollment to the Faculty of Nursing</b>						
Secondary School Grade	85	27.2	16	29.6	101	
Desire to help others	198	63.3	12	22.2	210	
Financial reasons/ Availability of work	25	8.0	1	1.9	26	128.0
Advice from family members	5	1.6	25	46.3	30	0.0001*
<b>Stream in the secondary school</b>						
Scientific	305	97.4	54	100.0	359	0.169
Vocational Nursing	8	2.6	0	0.0	8	0.742
<b>Do you have a nurse friend or relative?</b>						
Yes	224	71.6	12	22.2	236	48.2

No	89	28.4	42	77.8	131	0.0001*
<b>Family's reaction to students' enrollment:</b>						
Positive	260	83.1	4	7.4	264	
Negative	3	1.0	19	35.2	22	62.3
Neutral	50	16.0	31	57.4	81	0.0001*

**Table 5. Multiple logistic regression analysis of different factors which influence on perception of nursing as a profession \***

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.484	.439		3.384	0.001*
Age	.013	.015	.048	0.903	0.367
Marital status	-.089	.111	-.042	-0.799	0.425
Reasons for enrollment to the Faculty of Nursing	-.081	.045	-.095	-2.799	0.013*
Stream in the secondary school	.158	.196	.043	1.804	0.042*
Do you have a nurse friend or relative?	.042	.076	.029	2.549	0.011*
Family's reaction to students' enrollment:	.034	.045	.040	2.758	0.009*

*\*Dependent Variable: Perception*

assigns the night duty of nursing profession to men rather than to women so they have less enrollment to the Nursing Department. This finding concerning gender among undergraduate nursing students is congruent with similar studies conducted in Jordan, Nigeria and Iran which showed that male students outnumber females in the Nursing Departments [2,3,7,8].

Almost, half of the participated students (57.2%) attributed the reason for enrollment to Nursing Department to their desire to help others while two third of the participated students (64.3 and 71.9) reported that they have a nurse friend or relative as well as their families' reactions to nursing enrollment were positive respectively. Thus, it is certain that these positive factors reached have played a role in forming the positive perception towards nursing as a profession among the participated students and hence their selection of nursing as a career. This finding is consistent with a similar different study which concluded that the high knowledge on nursing among the majority of respondents has reinforced by having nurse relative and positive family reaction as a source of information about nursing and motive to create a positive impact on students' perception toward nursing [2,9,10].

Through the statements intended to explore the perceptions toward nursing as a profession among the participated students, it was found out that 176 (48%) of the participants showed high

positive perception toward nursing profession followed by those participants who had very high positive perception 137 (37.3%), then 52 (14.2%) and 2 (0.5%) for the participants with low and very low perception respectively. This finding indicates that the nursing students, to some extent, perceived the nursing profession positively. In accordance with the current finding, Ibrahim A.F. et. al. in a similar study (2015), which was conducted on both Egyptian and Jordanian nursing male students, stated that there is a positive perception among both group as all mean values were more than 3 corresponding to the understanding of students and societal view to the nursing profession [4]. As well, in an earlier similar study conducted by Grainger and Bolan (2006) in Canada concluded that image of nursing among first and fourth nursing students was positive with no statistically significant difference in both batches [11]. However, the current reading contradicts with a similar study carried out by Caroline Zulu, which reported that (30.3%) of the participating nursing students had a negative perception toward nursing profession [12].

Concerning the factors influencing the perceptions of the studied participants toward nursing, it was revealed that only 65 (17.7%) of the participated students ranked nursing in the fifth rank among ten mentioned jobs as a self-evaluation for nursing job which considered, to some extent, low rank in comparison with the ranks of other jobs such as physician and

pharmacist that came in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> ranks respectively. In fact, this expected low ranking may result from the perception of the society toward nurses and nursing profession which underestimate the real value and importance of nursing job. This is in consistence with similar study conducted in Poland on the same topic showed that the nursing profession has historically been undervalued in Poland and this was supported and inferred based on the occupational prestige ranking published in 2013 where nurses ranked sixth behind other different social careers [13]. However, this finding is inconsistent with the finding reached by Ibrahim Ali Tawfiq Al-Jarrah in Jordan (2013), which concluded a remarkable valuation for nursing profession as a social status where (38.24%) of the subjects ranked nursing profession as third, (16.18%) as second and (13.24%) as first among other mentioned professions indicating the development of nursing profession in Arab countries [2]. In spite of the aforementioned finding, almost 243 (66.2%) of the participated students reported that they feel proud when talking about nursing in public while very few number, only 10 (2.7) attacked it as a profession when talking about it. It true that this percentage deemed slightly unsatisfactory but it agrees with two similar studies conducted on nursing students in Jeddah – KSA, which reported that (59.1%) and (69.3%) felt proud and only (6.9%) and (1.3%) felt shy respectively when the participants were asked to express their feelings about being nurses. [14,15].

Nursing profession, as any other job, has different factors contributing in either positive or negative image of the profession, the current study showed that the majority of students 247 (67.3%) think that the public view about nursing is the most affective factor that change the perception of nursing among students, while 234 (63.8%) and 223 (60.8%) of the participating students attributed those factors to the relationship with medical staff and clinical training respectively.

However, the factor of working conditions was selected by 217 (59.1%) of the students as the most contributing one to change the nursing to the worst, followed by the factor of public view about nursing as it was selected by 200 (54.5%) of the participated students. These findings agree with that of a study conducted in Iran by Valizadeh et. al. (2016), which was on experiences of Iranian nurses that intent to leave the Clinical Nursing, and concluded that the low social views and working in unsatisfied conditions are the main reasons behind the

intentions of Iranian nurses to leave the nursing career [16]. However, they contradict with many similar studies, which addressed the factors that play a role to change the perception of nursing profession among nursing students including public view about nursing, clinical training, working conditions etc., such as the study of Aljedaani (2016), which showed that even with the public view factor that seems to have a tremendous influence on the nursing perception which stated that working environment (24.5%) and low salary and incentives (22.2%) are the most predominant factors that impact negatively the nursing staff perceptions and enhance intention to leave the profession while the factors that promote and influence positively were registered for improving working environment (40.9%) and increasing salary and incentives (19.1%) among the studied respondents [14]. Also, they are inconsistent with the study of Al-jarrah (2013), which conducted in Jordan on the same issue and indicated that (69.1%) of the participants believed that the public view about nursing plays a role in improving the nursing perception and encourage students to choose the nursing as a career while (29.4%) of the participants stated that the working conditions of nursing staff in the hospitals may impact and worsen the perception of nursing students toward the profession [2].

Regarding the future prospects of the participated students after graduation, it was found out that majority of students 299 (81.5) intend to go for further education after graduation, though it is surprising that about half 208 (56.7) of the students plan to change their profession after graduation this agrees with the finding of a study conducted in Iraq by Mukhlif H. (2014) where (54%) of the nurses are intended to leave the nursing profession that reflect the nursing job dissatisfaction [17]. On contrary to this finding is the finding of the study of Patidar A et al. which was conducted in Punjab, and revealed that (71%) of the participants were not interested to pursue higher education, moreover (81.3%) were not plan to change the nursing profession after graduation [18] and the finding of Abugri A (2018) in Ghana that the majority of the participants (63.8%) intended to stay in nursing after graduation [19]. However, the study of Gunawan et al. (2018) in Indonesia concluded that more than half of the respondents intend to continue higher education after they complete their current nursing program which agrees with the present study [20].

## 8. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that most of the students have high positive perception toward the profession of nursing as well as they have proud feeling toward this profession. Also, undergraduate nursing students realize that the public viewpoints of nursing profession are a crucial factor among different factors contributing in changing the nursing image among nursing students. Moreover, the majority of nursing students plan to pursue higher education after graduation though a remarkable proportion of them intend to change nursing profession which may explained by the mentioned factors that influence the nursing as a profession.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS & SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of the present study, the following Recommendations are suggested:

- Extending the scope of the present study's issue to explore the perception toward nursing profession among undergraduate nursing students of all levels in different Yemeni universities including pre-clinical nursing students to get a wide and thorough picture about their perception toward the nursing profession and the potential factors influencing it to ensure generalizability of the findings.
- Conducting further studies to identify the nursing image at the society level and adopting a program to improve the public views toward nursing as a profession.
- Integrating the image of nursing profession within the nursing curricula to enhance nursing values and ethics for promoting positive nursing perception among students.
- Improving the working conditions of nurses, focusing on psychological and physical environment as well as increase the wages and salaries of the nurses in order to improve the financial aspect of the nursing career that ensure the nurses' devotion and prevent turnover.

## CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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