

# Perception and Acceptance of Nursing Profession among Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Original Research Article

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** This descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out to assess the perception and acceptance of nursing profession among secondary school students in Port Harcourt.

**Methodology:** The study involved 200 senior secondary school students in public secondary schools in Port Harcourt. Structured questionnaires were distributed to the respondents after informed consent was obtained and responses collated and analyzed descriptively and also using SPSS version 23.

**Results:** The results indicated that out of the 200 questionnaires, 192(96%) were returned properly filled. Out of the 192 respondents, 90(46.9%) were male while 102(53.1%) were female. The respondents were within the age bracket of 16-18 years. The results indicate that the students were knowledgeable about the nursing profession, admires the profession but do not want to become nurses. This shows that the level of their acceptance of the profession is low. Their knowledge, acceptance and perception are influenced by job security, remuneration, the society they live in and their personal experiences. There was poor acceptance of the Nursing profession among the respondents. The factors that contributed to this observation included not having mentors and role models who are nurses, lack of passion and desire for the profession and the view that nurses work to support doctors in the hospital. The findings also indicated that parents/guardians have no influence on the perception and acceptance of Nursing among the respondents.

**Conclusion:** The findings from this study show that there was high perception but poor acceptance of the Nursing profession among secondary school students in the study area. The study recommends that efforts should be made by relevant bodies and authorities in the Nursing profession to make it an acceptable career choice among the students of secondary schools.

*Keywords: Nursing; perception; acceptance; Port Harcourt; Nigeria.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nursing as a profession can be defined as the protection, promotion and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, facilitation of healing, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human diseases and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, groups, communities and populations [1]. Nurses play a very vital role in the provision and coordination of healthcare as well as the prevention of adverse events and the optimization of health service and outcomes [2]. Nursing is a professional health discipline composed of science and art, grounded upon philosophy, theory, practice and research. It is concerned about giving care to people of all ages, individuals, families and communities [3].

Nurses are expected to engage in research and as well apply the evidence gathered to improve the quality of healthcare [4]. Nurses render their professional services at all the levels of healthcare – primary secondary and tertiary levels [5]. The work of the nurses has direct impact on the health and life of patients, and also significantly impacts the experience patients have in health facilities and their rate of recovery [6].

The earliest form of organized training for nurses was in 1836 when a German pastor, named Fried established a training institute in the city of Ceasars [7]. Attracted by the desire to become a nurse, Florence Nightingale enrolled to study Nursing at Kaiserswerth. She started her Nursing career in 1853 and by 1854 she had her team of

38 nurses to attend to wounded British soldiers in the Crimean war of 1853 – 1856 [8]. In 1860, Florence Nightingale established the first school of Nursing in England which she used to promote the development of Nursing [7].

There is no information on Nursing practice in Nigeria in the pre-colonial period [9]. Nursing was introduced in Nigeria through the missionaries who came during colonial period [10]. The training of nurses had a similar pathway as other health professionals, with the establishment of training schools at the University College, Ibadan, Kano and Aba [11].

The development of nursing in Nigeria generally followed the same pattern as other parts of the world [10]. The practice advanced from the humble state of gallipot nurses, (those trained to recognize equipment) then advanced to those trained to obey the physician's instructions then to those who are trained to carry out routine tasks based on learnt procedures without thinking it through (the technical nurses). Now, nurses have organized trainings in schools of nursing to practice general nursing with prospects of advancing to post basic trainings and University education [12].

The training of nurses in Nigeria started after the Nursing Council was established. Three schools were established in Ibadan, Kano and Aba, for the training of nurses. There were also schools for training of midwives in Kaduna, Aba, Calabar, Lagos and Ibadan [11]. The initial training of nurses started in 1949, by the regional governments, although as an informal apprenticeship training. The need for more nurses soon became evident, prompting state governments to also establish schools of Nursing along with the schools established by missionary organizations. These programmes were generally basic and post basic programmes in general nursing, midwifery, psychiatry; this system produced nurses with general nurse certificate (single qualification) who can go on to obtain additional qualification (double qualification) [13]. Nursing education in Nigeria witnessed a major leap in the positive direction with the establishment of Departments of Nursing in various Universities, the first being the University of Ibadan in 1965 [9]. There was no information on nursing education and practice in Nigeria during the pre-colonial period [9]. The mission posts established by the missionaries in Nigeria to take care of the sick and wounded metamorphosed into the hospital based schools for the training of nurses and midwives, which awarded Diploma certificates in Nursing and Midwifery. Today there are University degree

programmes in Nigeria offering the Bachelor of Nursing Science (BNSc) degree [10].

The Midwifery Council of Nigeria was established in 1930 to regulate midwifery practice in Nigeria [10], while the Nursing Council of Nigeria was established in 1947 to regulate the practice and training of nurses [13], among other functions. Thus Nursing and Midwifery were regulated by separate government agencies.

In 1979, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN) through Decree 89 of 1979. This Decree was further amended by Decrees 54 of 1988, Decree 18 of 1989 and Decree 83 of 1992, now known as Act Cap N143 Laws of Federation of Nigeria 2004 [9]. This body thus became a product of the merger of the Nurses Council and the Midwifery Council.

Career choice is an individual's inclination to a profession which is best for his/her personality, features and abilities and is believed to be the most satisfying one among professions [14]. According to another study [15], career choice is one of the critical decisions adolescents are expected to make as the effective choice will have positive impact on their self-concept development and fulfillments of one's life purpose. Every individual desires good quality life and appreciable social status. The only determinant of these is a good choice of career [16].

The secondary school level of education is the best level at which choice of career is made [17]. Making a choice of career is one of the most important factors for individual's development and happiness [18]. The decision of a career choice is a very important one because career determines one's income, standard of living, social status and sense of self-worth [19].

Traditionally, the choice of career in nursing is based on the perception of nursing as a noble and virtuous profession [20]. This noble status notwithstanding, Nursing has not been popular among students compared to other healthcare disciplines [21]. Nursing, therefore, may have the challenge of attraction students of secondary school [22].

The aim of the study was to investigate the perception and acceptance of nursing profession among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

## 2.1 Research Design

The research design used for this study was descriptive survey, which studies the situations and conditions as they are. The study was organized in such a way that information was obtained from students using questionnaires, which will help in making the generalization and recommendations in the study.

## 2.2 Study Population

The study involved students in public senior secondary schools (SS 2 and SS3) in Port Harcourt City LGA, Rivers State.

## 2.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study involved 200 senior students of public secondary schools in Port Harcourt City LGA, Rivers State. Four (4) schools were randomly selected for this study, with fifty (50) Senior Secondary School students chosen from each school (25 from SS 2 and 25 from SS 3 students).

## 2.4 Instrument for Data Collection

The instrumentation was made of a self-designed questionnaire captioned "Perception and Acceptance of Nursing Profession among Senior Secondary Schools".

The questionnaire had 14 items made up of two (2) sections. Section A was the demographic data while section B contained the 20-item questions to which the respondents responded.

## 2.5 Validity of Instrument

The instrument was scrutinized by the experts in the research area. The corrections and

observations made were used to modify the instrument. Based on this, the instrument was considered valid for the study.

## 2.6 Reliability of Instrument

A test - retest method was used in this study to assess the reliability of the items. Briefly, ten (10) copies of the instrument were administered to students outside the study area. After two weeks, fresh copies of the same instrument were re-administered to the same students. The correlation co-efficient of the responses was determined to be 0.81, which indicates that the instrument was reliable for the study.

## 2.7 Administration of Instrument

The instrument was administered by hand delivery to the respondents in the selected schools.

## 2.8 Data Analysis

Data generated from the study were analyzed descriptively. Chi-square was for the hypotheses testing on SPSS version 23. P-values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Distribution and Retrieval of Questionnaire

The Table 1 outlines the breakdown of the distributed questionnaire and the return rate. 200 copies of the material were distributed to respondents, of which 192 (96%) were returned properly filled while 8 (4%) were returned but not properly filled or voided. 192 copies of the questionnaires were therefore used for the research analysis.

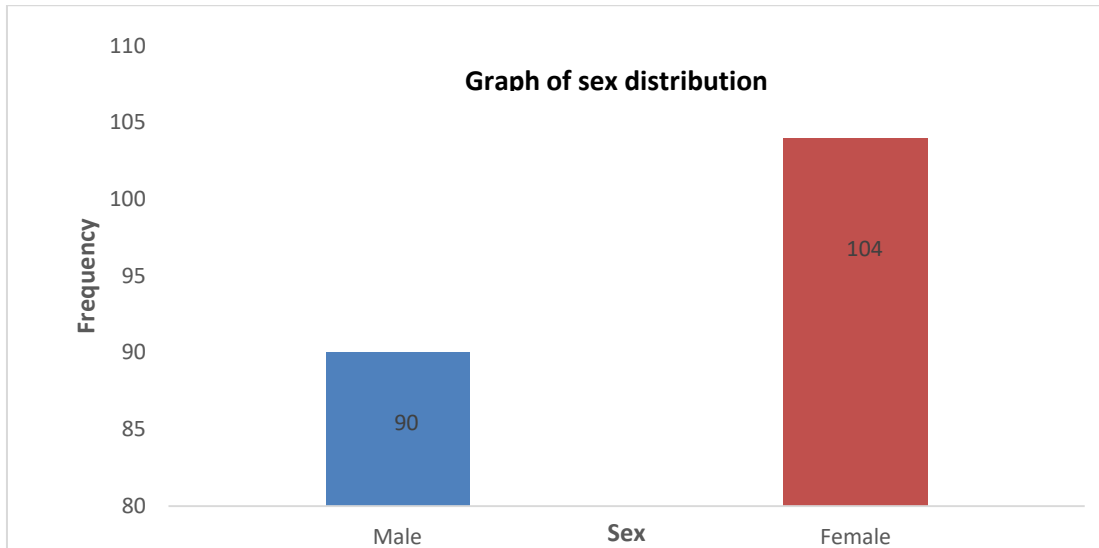
Table 1. Distribution and retrieval of questionnaire

Item	Number distributed	Number filled properly	Number returned not filled properly
Respondents	200	192 (96%)	(4%)

### 3.2 Demographic Analysis

#### (a) Gender Distribution

Fig. 1 shows the distribution of the respondents according to sex. The results indicate that 90 (46.9%) of the respondents were male while 102 (53.1%) of the respondents were female. These figures showed that most of the respondents sampled were females.



**Fig. 1. The distribution of the respondents according to sex**

**(b) Age distribution**

The Fig. 2 shows that 60(31.3%) of the respondents were aged between 13 – 15 years, 102(53.1%) were aged 16-18 years while 30(15.6%) were 19 years and above. It implies that majority of the respondents were between the age bracket of 16-18 years.

**3.3 Educational Qualification**

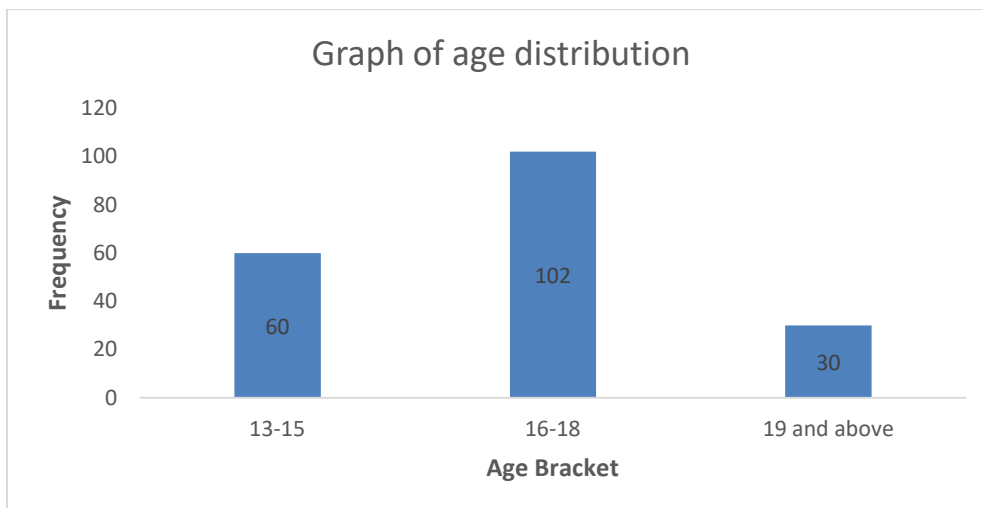
The educational qualifications of the parents of the respondents were analyzed in order to determine the influence of their parents' qualification on their decision making (Fig. 3).

**3.4 Research Questions**

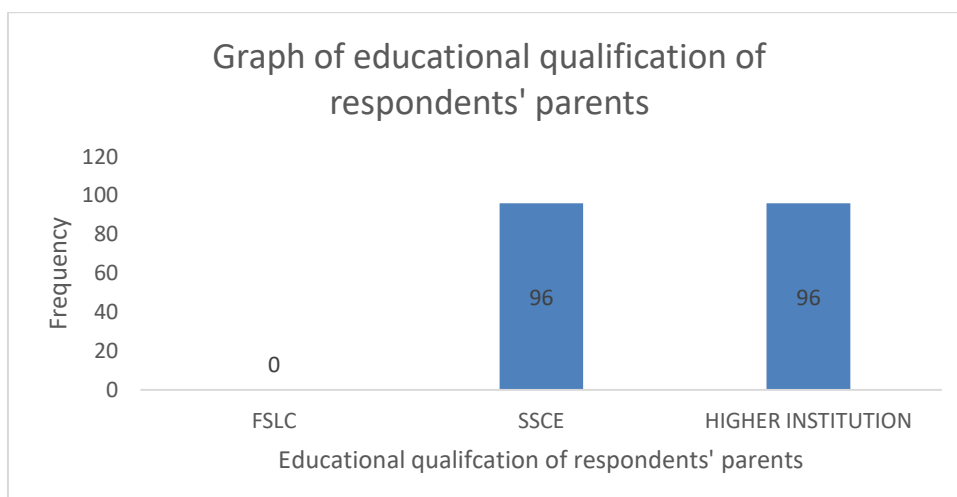
**Research Question One:** To what extent is the perception and knowledge of nursing profession

among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area?

Table 2 displays the result of the perception and knowledge of nursing profession among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area have heard about the nursing profession, they agreed that nurses are healthcare professionals, that it takes intelligence and hard work to be a nurse, that nursing practice requires license to practice, nurses are paid well, that nursing practice is stressful and demands special skill, that professional nurses compulsorily/ specifically need university education to practice, and that only those had gone through nursing and university training can be called professional nurse.



**Fig. 2. Graph of Age Distribution**



**Fig. 3. Graph of respondents' parents' educational qualification distribution**

**Table 2. Perception and knowledge of nursing profession among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area**

Item	Yes	No	p-value	$\chi^2$ -value	Remark
It takes intelligence and hardwork to be a nurse	126	70	<0.001	9.121	S
Have you heard of nursing a profession?	196	0	<0.001	21.122	S
Nurses are healthcare professionals	130	66	0.02	11.760	S
Nurses do not compulsorily/specifically need university education to practice	100	96	0.121	8.821	NS
Nursing practice requires license to practice	135	61	0.031	8.891	S
Nurses are well paid workers	181	15	<0.001	21.122	S
Nursing practice is stressful and demanding with special skills	129	67	0.009	11.678	S
Professional Nurses only go through schools of Nursing and university training	113	83	0.012	23.465	S

**Research Question Two: To what extent is the level of acceptance of nursing profession among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area?**

**Table 3. Level of acceptance of nursing profession among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area**

Item	Yes	No	p-value	$\chi^2$ -value	Remark
I wish to become a Nurse	91	105	0.032	24.431	S
I admire the neatness and uniform of Nurses	176	20	<0.001	12.123	S
I wish to have a Nurse in my family	149	47	<0.001	20.901	S
I wish to be a Nurse to work with the doctor in the hospital	16	180	<0.001	45.001	S
Do you have the desire and passion for nursing profession?	32	164	<0.001	33.128	S
Is your role model/mentor is a nurse?	128	68	0.033	15.906	S

Table 3 displays the result of level of acceptance of nursing profession among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area don't want to become nurses, don't want to work with doctors in the hospital, don't have a nurse as role model/mentor, and do not have

desire and passion for nursing profession. However, they wish to have a nurse in their family and admires the neatness and uniform of nurses.

**Research Question Three: To what extent are the factors influencing the perception, knowledge and acceptance of nursing**

**profession among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area?**

**Table 4. Factors influencing the perception, knowledge and acceptance of nursing profession among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area**

Item	Yes	No	p-value	X <sup>2</sup> -value	Remark
I like the nursing profession because they are well paid	139	57	0.001	19.982	S
I like the nursing profession because nurses are respected in the family/society	151	45	<0.001	29.023	S
Do your parents/guardians want you to become a nurse?	67	129	0.042	22.523	S
I love nursing because my friends want to become nurses	97	99	0.177	23.345	NS
I like the nursing profession because nurses have job security	144	52	0.011	13.622	S

Table 4 displays the result of factors influencing the perception, knowledge and acceptance of nursing profession among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area. The senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Local Government Area like the nursing profession because they are well paid, respected in the family/society, and because of the job security. They said their parents/guardians and friends have no influence on their perception, knowledge and acceptance of the nursing profession.

On the question of the level of acceptance of nursing profession this study found that the students do not want to practice nursing as an occupation, and do not want to work as nurses supporting doctors in the hospital. They affirmed that none of their role models/ mentor is a nurse, and that they lack the passion and desire for the nursing profession, although they admire the neatness and uniform of nurses and wish that a member of their family should practice the profession.

This study also found that the parents/guardians and friends have no influence whatsoever on their perception, knowledge and acceptance of the profession, among the respondents. This contradicts the findings of another study [25], which said most individuals' choices of career are heavily influenced by their parents or home environment. Our findings here may be attributed to the fact that nursing is seen as female dominated profession [26].

The results also indicate that nursing enjoys societal respect, job security and remuneration, and these factors affect the respondents' perception, knowledge and acceptance of the profession. This finding agrees with that of another study [19] which listed financial resources, and job characteristics as some major determinants of career choice.

**4. DISCUSSION**

This study highlighted the perception and acceptance of nursing profession among Senior Secondary School Students in Port Harcourt Nigeria. In analyzing the perception and knowledge of nursing profession among the respondents, the results show that the students have heard about the nursing profession, and identified it as a healthcare professional. They affirmed that the nursing profession is stressful and demands special skill therefore only intelligent and hardworking individuals can become nurses. This agrees with the findings of another study [23] which reported nursing work is technological driven. Furthermore, they agreed that for a nurse to be called a professional he/she must have attended the university. This agrees with the report of another study [24] which stated that most people lack the qualification requirements of nursing. The respondents also agreed that nurses are well paid. Generally, then, there was a positive perception of the nursing profession among the respondents.

**5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results of this study indicate that there is a positive perception of nursing profession among senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt. However, there is poor acceptance of the profession among the respondents. Also, Parents/guardians and

friends have no influence on their perception, knowledge and acceptance of the nursing profession.

It is recommended that the relevant authorities in the Nursing profession should make efforts to improve the image of the profession so as to make it acceptable among secondary school students. Also, there should be proper career guidance for students of public secondary schools, especially with regards to the Nursing profession.

## 6. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted among senior secondary students in Port Harcourt City.

## CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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