

Perception on nursing profession and academic and work related stress among nursing students in Bhutan

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ABSTRACT

Introduction:

Quality of healthcare is a concern for every government, service providers and the consumers of the healthcare services. Attitude of healthcare professionals towards their profession and the prevalence of academic and work related stress during training greatly influence the delivery of quality health care. However, there is paucity in the scientific study to assess perceptions towards the nursing profession, academic and work related stress among nursing students in Bhutan.

Methods:

A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted to assess the perception of nursing students towards the nursing profession, academic and work related stress. Purposive sampling method was used. Two hundred nursing students participated in the survey with a return rate of 98.04%. Data were obtained through a self-administered structured questionnaire. Descriptive and bivariate analysis was performed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0.

Results:

The mean score for the perception towards the nursing profession was 71.59 (SD=5.37; Range: 55-

84). Almost all (99%) perceived nursing profession is an opportunity to serve humanity. Level of nursing training ($p<0.001$) and the experience of admission to hospital ($p<0.05$) influenced perception towards nursing profession. The mean academic stress was 48.29 (SD=8.82; Range:22-75). Workload and preparation for examination (92%) and assignments (90.5%) contributed to high academic-stress. The mean work related stress was 19.69 (SD=4.83; Range:7-30). Lack of professional knowledge and skills (81%), uncertainty of patient treatment (80%), conflict in the workplace (79%), death and dying (78%) added to high work related stress. Ethnicity ($p<0.05$), parent's education level ($p<0.05$), and the experience of hospitalization ($p<0.01$) were associated with stress.

Conclusion:

Perception towards nursing profession was positive. However, nursing students confronted high level of academic and work-related stress during training. Nursing educators and clinical facilitators need to be sensitive about the prevalence of stressors and facilitate effective coping strategies.

Keywords: perception, nursing profession, academic related stress, work related stress

Introduction

Quality healthcare is a concern for every government, service provider and the consumer of the health care services. High quality healthcare demand and its delivery are greatly influenced by the professional values [1] and attitudes of the healthcare professionals [2]. Personal goals, professional values, clinical experiences, systemic hierarchy, support from experienced staff, and experience of illnesses and hospitalization greatly influence perception towards the nursing profession [3].

Nursing is held as the most trusted profession for decades in the US [4] and is predominantly a female profession due to the idea of caring linked to the history of women [5]. Nursing is an opportunity to serve humanity, have secure job, growth and development, and achieve economic stability [6-8].

However, studies have also revealed the perception of nursing as a low-status and doctor dependent profession [9, 10].

Literature review from different countries showed nursing students experience stress [11], affecting productivity [12] and quality healthcare [13], poor academic outcomes and reduced cognitive ability [14]. Although the experience of stress differed by the level of training [15-17], assignments, workload, fear of failure, lack of confidence, fear of unknown situations, mistakes in handling patients and equipment, criticism from healthcare staff, including physicians were common cited sources of stress for the nursing students [12, 16, 18].

Until date, there is scarcity of evidence on how Bhutanese nursing students' perceive their profession

and the experience of academic and work related stress. This study aims to assess perception towards nursing profession, presence of academic and work related stress. Findings from this study will assist in

strengthening nursing curriculum, addressing stress, and promote students pursue nursing profession in Bhutan.

Materials and Methods

This study adopted cross-sectional survey design and used purposive sampling technique. Two hundred nursing students enrolled at different levels of training from the colleges of FNPH, Thimphu, and RAHS, Phuntsholing, participated in this study.

The survey questionnaire was pilot tested among 49 nursing students. Items used to assess perception towards nursing profession (Cronbach alpha =0.70) and academic and work-related stress (Cronbach alpha

=0.93) achieved sufficient internal consistency score (19). Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. Count and percentage, mean and standard deviation, were estimated to describe data. Chi-square, independent t-test, and one-way ANOVA assessed relationships between the variables. Research Ethics Board of Health (No. REBH/PO/2018/059) approved the conduct of this study.

Findings

The socio-demographic characteristics

The study participants consisted of 65% females and 35 % males with majority (97%) in the age range 18 to 24 years. Most participants (90%) reported no family members involved in nursing profession. The

influence of the father and mother to take up nursing as their profession was 24.5% and 15.5%, respectively. While 13% suffered from chronic health conditions, and 30.1% experienced hospitalization (Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of the socio-demographic characteristics

Socio-demographic variables	n(%)
Level of nursing training	
First year	66 (33.0)
Second year	62 (31.0)
Third year	72 (36.0)
Age (in years)	
<18	3 (1.5)
18-24	194 (97.0)
≥25	3 (1.5)
Sex	
Male	70 (35.0)
Female	130 (65.0)
Religion	
Buddhist	158(79.0)
Hindu	34(17.0)
Christian	7(3.5)
Others	1(0.5)
Ethnicity	
Tshangla	73(36.5)
Ngalop	35(17.5)
Kheng-Bumthab	18(9.0)
Lhotshampa	53(26.5)
Others	21(10.5)
Education of father	
No education	92(46.0)
Some form of education	108 (54.0)
Education of mother	
No education	144(72.0)
Some form of education	56 (28.0)
Occupation of father	
Farmer	116(58.0)
Others	84 (42.0)
Occupation of mother	
Farmer	178(89.0)
Others	22(11.0)
Family members in nursing	

Yes	20(10.0)
No	180(90.0)
Most influential person to take up nursing course	
Father	49(24.5)
Mother	31(15.5)
Others	120 (60.0)
Have you ever suffered from chronic health condition	
Yes	26(13.0)
No	174(87.0)
Have you ever been admitted to hospital (n=133)	
Yes	40 (30.1)
No	93 (69.9)
Have anyone of your family members suffered from chronic health conditions	
Yes	100(50.0)
No	100(50.0)
Have you ever stayed in the hospital as patient attendant	
Yes	102(51.0)
No	98(49.0)

Perception towards the nursing profession

The average score for perception towards the nursing profession in this study was 71.59. Almost all (99%) the participants agreed-strongly agreed nursing profession is an opportunity to serve humanity, caring profession (92%) and earn merits and virtues (93%).

Approximately, 78% and 31% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed, nursing profession is doctor dependent and is a women's profession, respectively (Table 2).

Table 2: Feelings and perception towards nursing profession among the participants

S/ No.	Perceptions towards nursing profession.	Strongly agree n(%)	Agree n(%)	Not sure n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Strongly disagree n(%)
Nursing (profession) is/has:						
1	An opportunity to serve humanity	182 (91.0)	16 (8.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(1.0)
2	An opportunity for personal growth	85 (42.5)	99 (49.5)	12 (6.0)	4 (2.0)	0(0.0)
3	A Caring profession	85(42.5)	99(49.5)	12(6.0)	4(2.0)	0(0.0)
4	A way to get recognition in the society	24(12.0)	87(43.5)	63(31.5)	19(9.5)	7(3.5)
5	A dignified and respectful profession	70(35.0)	83(41.5)	35(17.5)	10(5.0)	2(1.0)
6	A means to earn merit	127(63.5)	59(29.5)	13(6.5)	1(0.5)	0(0.0)
7	Equal recognition with other health care professions	19(9.5)	85(42.5)	53(26.5)	33(16.5)	10(5.0)
8	Women's profession	20(10.0)	42(21.0)	18(9.0)	82(41.0)	38(19.0)
9	Similar to a cleaner's job	9(4.5)	30(15.0)	45(22.5)	78(39.0)	38(19.0)
10	To assists medical doctors	46(23.0)	110(55.0)	17(8.5)	22(11.0)	5(2.5)
11	No appreciation from people including patients/clients	9(4.5)	60(39.0)	66(33.0)	54(27.0)	11(5.5)
12	Not an independent profession because nurses don't make their own decision	47(23.5)	89(44.5)	30(10.5)	21(10.5)	13(6.5)
13	Not an important profession in patient care	5(2.5)	4(2.0)	7(3.5)	79(39.5)	105(52.5)
14	One of the profession I will not encourage my children to join it	15(7.5)	22(11.0)	42(21.0)	60(30.0)	61(30.5)
15	Profession I regret having joined it	5(2.5)	14(7.0)	28(14.0)	81(40.5)	72(36.0)
16	Profession I am satisfied and happy about it	60(30.0)	90(45.0)	34(17.0)	11(5.5)	5(2.5)
17	A tiring and a risky job	78(39.0)	93(46.5)	10(5.0)	16(8.0)	3(1.5)

18	After joining into nursing course, I had negative image for nursing profession	4(2.0)	27(13.5)	22(11.0)	89(44.5)	58(29.0)
19	Has a good career ladder/advancement	52(26.0)	92(46.0)	47(23.5)	8(4.0)	1(0.5)
Total perception score (n=200)		Mean±Standard Deviation: 71.59±5.37; Min-max: 55-84				

Academic and work related stress

The average academic and work related stress score was 48.29 and 19.69, respectively. Academically, about 92.0% perceived, course workload stressful as is the exam preparation. Death and dying (77%), uncertainty patient treatment (80.5%), and lack of

professional knowledge and skills (81%) were perceived moderate to severely stressful work related stress (Table 3).

Table 3: Academic and work-related stress among the participants

S/No.	Potential stressors	Severe stress n(%)	Stressful n(%)	Moderate stress n(%)	A little stress n(%)	Never stress n(%)
Stress related to academic includes:						
1	The course work load	19(9.5)	118(59.0)	47(23.5)	15(7.5)	1(0.5)
2	The demand of writing assignment to the expected standard	14(7.0)	11(38.5)	81(40.5)	27(13.5)	1(0.5)
3	Preparing for the course examination	49(24.5)	97(48.5)	38(19.0)	14(7.0)	2(1.0)
4	Meeting personal need while studying	16(8.0)	55(27.5)	77(38.5)	39(19.5)	13(6.5)
5	Meeting the academic demands of the program	28(14.0)	85(42.5)	59(29.5)	20(10.0)	8(4.0)
6	The theoretical level of content of the course	24(12.0)	85(42.5)	68(34.0)	18(9.0)	5(2.5)
7	My own standards of achievement	21(10.5)	54(27.0)	85(42.5)	35(17.5)	5(2.5)
8	Personal time management	19(9.5)	57(28.5)	66(33.0)	49(24.5)	9(4.5)
9	Academic writing required on the course	16(8.0)	73(36.5)	72(36.0)	32(16.0)	7(3.5)
10	Assignment and work load	36(18.0)	87(43.5)	58(29.0)	17(8.5)	2(1.0)
11	Perceived pressure to keep up with other students	12(6.0)	55(27.5)	72(36.0)	40(20.0)	21(10.5)
12	The teaching methodologies	14(7.0)	46(23.0)	78(39.0)	49(24.5)	13(6.5)
13	Lectures lasting more than one hour	37(18.5)	68(34.0)	50(25.0)	33(16.5)	12(6.0)
14	Attendance at classes	8(4.0)	20(10.0)	36(18.0)	40(20.0)	96(48.0)
15	Relationship with lecturer	21(10.5)	22(11.0)	28(14.0)	66(33.0)	63(31.5)
Total academic stress score		Mean±Standard Deviation: 48.29±8.82; Min-max: 22-75				
Stress related to work includes:						
1	Stress with death and dying of patient	51(25.5)	67(33.5)	36(18.0)	31(15.5)	15(7.5)
2	Stress from uncertainty regarding patient treatment	30(15.0)	82(41.0)	49(24.5)	31(15.5)	8(4.0)
3	Stress from conflict	25(12.5)	81(40.5)	52(26.0)	34(17.0)	8(4.0)
4	Stress from lack of professional knowledge and skills	40(20.0)	67(33.5)	55(27.5)	32(16.0)	6(3.0)
5	Stress from taking care of patients	6(3.0)	41(20.5)	71(35.5)	56(28.0)	26(13.0)
6	Stress from clinical environment	15(7.5)	65(32.5)	51(25.5)	48(24.0)	21(10.5)
Total work-related stress score		Mean±Standard Deviation: 19.69±4.83; Min-max: 7-30				

Relationship between socio-demographic, perception towards nursing profession, academic and work related stress

Perception towards the nursing profession was significantly related to the level of nursing training ($p<0.001$). While the age of the participants was significantly related to work stress ($p<0.05$), ethnicity ($p<0.05$), parents with some form of education background ($p<0.01$), father's non-farming

background ($p<0.05$) were significantly associated with academic related stress. The experience of hospitalization was significant with perception towards nursing, academic and work related stress ($p<0.05$) (Table 4).

Table 4: Bivariate relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and perception towards nursing profession, academic and work related stress among the study participants

Socio-demographic variables	Total	Perception towards NP M±SD	p-value	AS M±SD	p-value	WS M±SD	p-value
Levels of nursing training			0.000***		0.127		0.053
First year							
Second year	66	74.15±4.08		47.80±7.92		20.73±4.41	
Third year	62	69.37±5.36		50.13±9.21		19.68±5.07	
	72	71.15±5.49		47.14±9.14		18.74±4.87	
Age (in years)			0.673		0.358		0.014*
<18	3	68.67±7.64		51.67±9.50		20.00±3.00	
18-24 ^a	194	71.57±5.29		48.13±8.83		19.80±4.78 ^b	
≥25 ^b	3	75.67±8.39		54.67±7.77		11.67±4.16 ^a	
Ethnicity			0.757		0.023*		0.063
^a Tshangla	73	71.75±5.01		47.18±8.36 ^{be}		20.55±5.02	
^b Ngalop	35	70.63±5.77		52.26±9.52 ^{ae}		20.77±3.93	
^c Kheng-Bumthab	18	71.00±6.33		48.11±6.90		18.39±4.22	
^d Lhotshampa	53	72.00±5.37		48.55±9.04		18.64±4.82	
^e Others	21	72.10±5.28		45.00±8.52 ^{ab}		18.62±5.44	
Education of father			0.232		0.028*		0.334
No formal education	92	71.10±5.48		46.80±8.75		19.33±4.94	
Some form of formal education	108	72.01±5.26		49.55±8.73		19.99±4.74	
Education of mother			0.711		0.007**		0.113
No formal education	144	71.51±5.56		47.24±9.13		19.35±4.92	
Some form of formal education	56	71.80±4.86		50.98±7.41		20.55±4.54	
Occupation of father			0.119		0.039*		0.469
Farmer	116	71.09±5.49		47.20±8.95		19.47±4.86	
Others	84	72.29±5.13		49.79±8.47		19.98±4.81	
Occupation of mother			0.223		0.463		0.303
Farmer	178	71.43±5.22		48.12±8.72		19.81±4.81	
Others	22	72.91±6.44		49.59±9.73		18.68±5.05	
Have you ever suffered from chronic health condition			0.621		0.467		0.493
Yes	26	72.08±6.67		49.46±10.07		19.08±5.34	
No	174	71.52±5.16		48.11±8.64		19.78±4.76	

Have you ever been admitted to hospital (n=133)			0.041*	0.031*	0.025*
Yes	40	72.65±6.03	46.20±9.27	18.15±5.48	
No	93	70.53±5.19	49.81±8.48	20.40±4.33	
Have you ever stayed in the hospital as patient attendant			0.736	0.292	0.319
Yes	102	71.72±5.24	48.93±8.52	20.02±4.97	
No	98	71.46±5.52	47.61±9.13	19.34±4.69	

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; ^{abcde} Multiple comparisons between the groups;

NP: Nursing profession; AS: Academic stress; WS: Work related stress; M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation

Discussion

This study assessed the perception of pre-service nursing students towards the nursing profession. Similarly in other studies [6, 20, 21], the study sample consisted mostly of females. The government of Bhutan also gives more preference to females than males while recruiting for the nursing courses [22].

The relationship between the level of nursing training and perception towards the nursing profession was significant. Contrasting to a Korean study finding [9], first year nursing students showed more favourable perception towards the nursing profession compared to higher level of nursing trainees. Bang, Kang [9] argued that the better perception maybe due to a change in the perception of nursing service roles after the clinical posting.

Academic stress

The participants consistently rated high academic stress in most items, as reported in other studies [14, 24]. Brown, Anderson-Johnson [14] agrees that a high demand course workload and program structure would contribute to higher stress. This may be true in the Bhutanese context as the nursing curriculum is loaded modules in a semester, consisting of theory classes, clinical posting and practical requirements, course test and end semester examination.

Work related stress

Consistent with studies elsewhere [15, 17], younger participants significantly reported higher work-related stress. Perceived inadequate knowledge and skills for practice could have attributed to higher work-related stress. Some studies revealed a gradual increase in the stress level as students become senior in the nursing training [5].

Compared to participants with experience of hospitalization, those having no experience showed significantly greater work related stress. This was consistent with the finding of Hoeve and Castelein [25], where nursing students with past work experience in healthcare more motivated to choose nursing as their career.

Work related stress was associated with death and dying, uncertainty of patient treatment, conflict in the

Agreeing with the findings from other studies [7, 8, 23], almost all the participants perceived the nursing profession as a dignified, respectful and recognized profession, opportunity to serve humanity, earn merits and virtues. Nursing students may have chosen a nursing course due to job security or because of easy entry as reported in other studies [10, 21].

The relationship between the father's educational background and better perception towards the nursing profession was significant. Similar finding was reported in a Turkish study [10]. In the Bhutanese context, parents often wish their children to join a secure profession and help family members at the time of illness.

Higher academic stress was associated with participants coming from parents with education and non-farming background. Most educated parents in Bhutan demand higher academic performance and excellence from their children, which could be a source of stress for the children. However, a study by Aslan and Akturk [15] showed stress scores of the nursing students decreased with the increase in the parental educational level.

workplace, lack of professional knowledge and skills concurrent with an Ethiopian study [13]. According to Aslan and Akturk [15], clinical practice is necessary for students to develop professional knowledge and skills, however, it may be the important source of anxiety and stress. Nursing students in Bhutan are required to work and practice in the clinical areas until they graduate. During clinical placement, Bhutanese nursing students are required to fulfil a number of clinical procedures. As recommended by Brown, Anderson-Johnson [14] and Pulido- Martos, Augusto- Landa [12], it is crucial to consider avoid work overload for the nursing students, remain sensitive to stressors and provide effective coping strategies to students during the nursing training.

Conclusion

Bhutanese nursing students perceive nursing profession as dignified, respectable and an important profession for patient care. It is a profession with an opportunity to serve humanity and earn merits and virtues. However, nursing students experience various academic and work related stresses during their

nursing training. The nursing program may require revisits to reduce academic and work related stress. Nurse educators should remain sensitive to stress and provide effective coping strategies to promote nursing studies in Bhutan.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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