

NURSING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON IMAGE OF NURSING A LITERATURE REVIEW.

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Abstract

This paper highlights findings from a literature search to examine the nursing students' perceptions of nursing and the review further focused on whether these views change during their nursing studies and impact workplace preferences. Unless attitudes are changed during their nursing studies, they may affect initial job selection. Implications for nursing education include provision of educational experiences that foster an optimistic career outlook in areas where there is a growing need for nursing services. More research is needed to determine how to enable appropriate learning experiences when there are limited resources and practice placements. The public image of a profession is an important barometer of the group's status in society. Media images play a key role in this respect, projecting the ideas in public perception of their identity.

Introduction

The word nursing is derived from the Latin word "nutrire" which means "to nourish." From its earliest beginnings, the nursing profession has evolved in response to human need. There have been many images of nurses purported in the media, in movies and books, and in the news. Common images include: "ministering angel," "physician's handmaiden," "oppressive battle ax a la Nurse Ratched," and sexually related stereotypes

ranging from rigid prude to sex kitten. Even though these multiple misconceived images abound, nurses continue to be quite invisible in the media, compared to other cultural groups. The stereotypical public image of nursing is a major concern to nurses.

Before 1980s

Joan R. Bloom et al (1972), in their study explored the factors that might account for the growing support of unions among nurses. They found that most of the older nurses were less likely to participate in the collective bargaining since they viewed nursing as a calling and participating in strike will change their image of professionalism.

1980-1990

Beatrice J. Kalisch, Philip A. Kalisch and Mary L. McHugh(1981) carried out a content analysis of 191 motion pictures featuring 211 nurses as significant characters was conducted to determine the nature and extent of the motion picture industry's depiction of the nurse as a sex object and to identify changes in that portrayal from 1930 to 1980. Seventy-three percent of the nurse roles characterized nurses as sex objects. It was concluded that the image of the nurse as a professional care giver was incompatible with that of the nurse as sex object, and that the motion picture industry has opted primarily to present the latter image. The extremely negative sexual stereotype of nursing

promulgated during the past 20 years is cause for concern. Actions that the nursing profession can employ to counter the unfavorable portrayal of nurses in 1980s motion pictures are suggested.

Dee Birnbaum and Mark John Somers (1986) explored the influence of occupational image subculture on job attitudes, job performance, and the job attitude - job performance relationship. They found that the occupational image subcultures associated with the nursing role (professional, traditional, bureaucratic, and utilitarian) affected job attitudes and the job attitude-performance relationship, but did not seem to have a direct effect on job performance. Later the same authors explored the meaning and measurement of occupational image for the nursing role. The measurement models used to operationalize nurses' occupational image (role conception), a task-based and value-based model, were examined. Results tended to support the task-based but not the value-based model.

1990-2000

Porter R.T. & Porter M.J. (1991) attempted to describe the self-image of nurses working in a hospital setting and to determine whether there are differences in self-image between beginning and expert nurses, between caregivers and non caregivers, between nurses with different levels of education, and between full-time and part-time nurses. A sample of 363 nurses perceived themselves positively on the three factors: Interpersonal Power, Interpersonal Relations, and Intrapersonal Ability. Significant differences were found between beginning and expert nurses, between caregivers and non caregivers, between those with BSN and MSN education, and between full-time and part-time nurses. The data suggest the importance of graduate-level education for

nurses and the need for career advancement and career counseling.

"The Woodhull Study on Nursing and the Media, conducted by Sigma Theta Tau International (1997), found that nurses were severely under-represented in print media, including in comprehensive coverage of health care. Of 1,153 health care stories in 16 major newspapers, only 11 carried references to nurses, the study found" (Sussman, 2000). Nurses are in the background, seen only by the people who have first hand experiences with them - the patients they provide care for. Operating in the media shadow, nurses function as a very real but transparent infrastructure that keeps the health care system from literally falling apart. Rarely do people hear about their fine intellects, their on-the-spot critical, "life or death" thinking, or their heroic efforts to provide accountable, complex, quality health interventions in a time of chaos and crisis.

Around the world, from the Americas to India, nurses have struggled with a poor image in the general social context. Australian nurses have shared in this misconceived identity: "The public image of Australian nursing has been subject to a plethora of influencing factors since health-care services were first established in this country over two centuries ago. Since its colonial origins, when considered an occupation suitable only for the socially outcast, nursing has evolved through decades of changes and reform. From a position of significant oppression and medical subservience, generations of Australian nurses have fought for public recognition in terms of identity, respect and role acknowledgement"(Bloomfield,1999)

Foskett and Hemsley-Brown(1998) found that young people held vague and fragmented views of what nurses were and did in their practice. Misconceptions included:

- Could not visualize where nurses work
- Not aware of career advancement
- Viewed nurse as supportive role
- Most knew at least one nurse
- Idea of "wearing a uniform" was unappealing
- Students of all ages felt nursing "is a girl's job"

Kiger AM. (1993) discussed the findings from a qualitative study of student nurses' images of nursing from entry to training through early clinical experiences. Three rounds of interviews were conducted with 24 Scottish students. Analysis revealed five major themes in students' initial images: pictures of nursing, the good nurse, what nursing entails, occupational labels for nursing, and being a student/becoming a nurse. These were pursued in later interviews and characteristics of students' experience-mediated images were identified. "Working with people" and "helping" appeared as central characteristics of nursing. Notions of good and bad underlay many features of the image. The paradoxical nature of "involvement" was noticeable. Staff attitudes figured prominently in determining the quality of students' experience and in development of image. Commitment and belonging were integral to students' images and made nursing more than just a job. There was clear evidence of the importance of support to enable students to adapt to image disparities.

Bengt Sivberg and Kerstin Petersson in their longitudinal study (1994-1996) used the Gordon Personality Inventory to measure nursing students' self-image (Gordon A), self-values (Gordon B) and interpersonal values (Gordon C). The null hypothesis of the study was that the new academic three-year programme did not have the power to change significantly the students' self-image and

professional values. The hypothesis was tested by paired sample Student's t-test. The result was that, at Jönköping, self-image changed and increased significantly in the dimensions of 'cautiousness' and 'personal relations', and decreased in 'sociability', and increased in the self-value 'order'. At Växjö the self-image dimensions of 'original thinking' and 'personal relations' increased, and, at Kristianstad, the students increased their self-image scores in 'responsibility'.

Gwen Hartrick and Rita Schreiber (1998) attempted exploring nursing metaphors can provide opportunities to develop new understandings of nursing and challenge metaphorical images that may be constraining and/or obscuring significant elements of holistic nursing practice. A research study that examined the metaphorical images of practicing nurses uncovered a wide variety of images. The thematic analysis of the metaphorical descriptions illuminated four major themes: (a) the character of nursing work, (b) power and empowerment, (c) nursing as a growth process, and (d) the relational nature of nursing. Nurses' metaphorical images provide a window into the complexities and ambiguities within nursing practice. The images highlight the significance of social and organizational constraints that influence how nurses take up their practice, the ways in which nurses feel unable to practice holistically, and the struggles nurses encounter when they try.

Mohammadreza Hojat, Sylvia K. Fields et al (1999) examined the psychometric properties of an assessment tool for measuring attitudes toward physician-nurse collaboration. Factor analysis of the survey indicated that the survey measured four underlying constructs of shared education and collaborative relationships, caring as opposed to curing, nurse's autonomy, and physician's authority.

The mean of the scale was significantly higher for nursing than medical students. Results supported the construct validity and reliability of the scale. This scale can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of programs developed to foster physician-nurse collaboration, and to study group differences on attitudes toward interpersonal collaboration.

2000-2010

Julia Hallam, (2002) studied the changing images of nursing in Britain and the paper focuses on two periods in Britain when shifts in managerial culture resulted in changes in the core values of the group; the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948 and the introduction of the internal market within the NHS in the late 1980s. In both periods, nursing leaders sought to change the public image of the profession through altering their relationship with their patients/clients and reconceptualising notions of service. The focus of analysis is the role of popular film and television images in negotiating these shifts in professional values.

Darlene R. Simmons, RN, MS (2002) studied the perceptions of school nurses regarding the autonomy of their practices. Results identified sharp contrasts in the areas of role perception, comfort, and confidence between the two groups of 6 new and 6 experienced school nurses. It is imperative that the specialty initiate changes to nurture and support the novice during this transitional period.

Kaminski, (2003), found that even the pictures that portrayed nurses as friendly, caring, professional included some of the visible "myths" associated with nursing. Nursing's identity is still being shaped and shifted - this process is fully visible on the internet, movies, television, books, stories and other media if one looks for it.

Karaoz S. (2004) investigate the changes in students' perceptions of nursing during their education and to evaluate the role of an Introduction to Nursing course in this change. They were asked to examine these definitions and write a new one in line with their criticisms, along with their opinions about the education methods used and the instructor of the course. According to the results of this study the Introduction to Nursing course had a positive effect on students' understanding of nursing as a profession. In addition, they expressed positive opinions about the education methods used and the instructor.

Jean Ann Seago, Joanne Spetz, Dennis Keane and Kevin Grumbach(2006) explored the perceptions of college students of nursing. Results indicate that the more favourable rating of nursing as an occupation. Students who are not nursing majors do not appear to hold a more favourable attitude towards nurses.

Miyuki Takase et al (2006) in their effort to analyse the impact of the perceived public image of nursing on nurses' work behavior, compared nurses' perceptions of their public image with their self-image, and examining how the relationship between their perceived public image and self-image was associated with their job performance and turnover intentions. Nurses rated their aptitude for leadership more positively than they thought the public viewed them. In contrast, nurses rated their image as being caring less negatively than their perceived public image. Job performance was predicted by self-image relating to leadership aptitude. They concluded that to enhance nurses' job performance and reduce their turnover intentions, it is important to improve both the public image and self-image of nurses.

H. T. Dave (2007), in his study determined the

knowledge and attitude towards the nursing profession among male and female students in selected higher secondary schools. The conclusion was that the knowledge about nursing among students was low. Female students showed slightly better knowledge than male. There was positive attitude towards nursing among students. The students from monthly high income group showed less positive attitude towards nursing compared to medium and low income group students. Thus the findings indicate that a career enhancement guide for nursing should be developed to improve the level of knowledge about nursing. This will help to improve the image of nursing.

Ligia Fahl Kemmerlet al (2007) conducted a qualitative study of the social representations of nurses and the nursing profession by communication professionals, since they are intermediates in the decoding of imaging and written representations about society. Five communication professionals working on radio, television, written press, advertising and events were interviewed. Results suggest 1) ignorance about the nurse's field of work, job market and nursing profession categorization. 2) Nurses' invisibility before the media and society and 3) nurse's own responsibility to obtain professional recognition and visibility. Participants in this study pointed two essential processes for building a more coherent image of nursing and nurses: 1) exposing the profession primarily before the media, which ignores its potentialities, and 2) through the media in order to reach the population in general.

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the social representation theory of Moscovici. Five communication professionals working on radio, television, written press, advertising and events were interviewed. Results suggest 1) ignorance about the nurse's field of work, job market and nursing profession categorization. 2) nurses' invisibility before the media and society and 3) nurse's own responsibility to obtain professional recognition and visibility. Participants in this study pointed two essential processes for building a more coherent image of nursing and nurses: 1) exposing the profession primarily before the media, which ignores its potentialities, and 2) through the media in order to reach the population in general.

Lyckhage, Elisabeth Dahlborg (ED); Pilhammar, Ewa (E) (2008) described The importance of awareness of nursing students' denotative images of nursing and how these images can be used to highlight nurses' authority and autonomy in comparison with the medical profession. Three themes emerged from the categories of answers. The Nurse as an Idealistic Helper, the Nurse as a Realistic Developer, and the Nurse as a Young Seeker. The essence of nursing could be traced in these themes even if a solid ground of nursing shows itself in changing forms. According to this study and previous research, nursing can be considered as a mummified occupation in its essence, given that the old values and stereotypes largely remain. The main motives for becoming a nurse are altruism, a desire for autonomy, and flexibility. To strengthen the profession, both teachers and clinical supervisors should use the students' images of nursing as a starting point in nursing education and develop them in different contexts.

Aneilde Maria Ribeiro de Brito (2008),analyze the structures about being a nurse of nursing students' social representations. Data were obtained by the

use of two questionnaires. The first wanted to know the socio-demographic profile of these students, while the second, based on the free evocation technique, wanted to learn the social representation due to the induction term being a nurse. The building of the structures starting from the students' evocations leads us to possible central nucleus toward the elements caring and responsibility which were found strongly connected by elements that translate affectionate values and attitudes, as for the integrality of the rendered assistance, anchored in the historical, cultural and formative contingencies of the studied individuals. Besides that, the evocations management, professionalism, work, realization, attention and respect, were found, providing them a peripheral role. In face of these images verify that the students' perceptions related to being a nurse has been modified through time, even though it has been done slowly and gradually. Through this perspective it's necessary to review concepts, update values and make choices to a critical-reflective professionals formation, socially committed with group and individual works in the health area.

Donelan, Karen (2008) explored the Public perceptions of nursing careers due to the influence of the media and nursing shortages. Some have challenged the images of nursing portrayed in the popular media as well as in recruitment campaigns, suggesting that these images are detrimental to the image of the profession (Gordon, 2005; Summers, 2006). The public's long-standing esteem for registered nurses (RNs) is well documented in public opinion polls. Nurses and physicians both rate highly with the public in trended national survey questions about trusted professions, prestigious occupations, and "honesty and ethical standards" of the professions (Gallup Organization, 2007; Harris Interactive 2006, 2007). The high

public regard for nurses, however, has not necessarily translated into an adequate supply of individuals who are willing to be nurses.

The National Survey of the Public about Nursing is a survey of the public about the value of nurses in the lives of Americans. This survey investigates how nursing careers are viewed by the public and what nurses mean to the public. The data in this study lead to the conclusion that while people are exposed to nurses in a variety of media, this exposure is more helpful than harmful. News stories about nurses helping during disasters, about the importance of nurses to patient safety, and about nurse shortages are seen by the public to have a positive impact. People who watch television shows about nurses are more aware of nurse shortages and hold nurses in high esteem. Television advertisements about nursing careers are most likely to reach the young and minorities, and have stimulated discussions about careers, but are not associated with negative images of nursing in our analyses (Donelan, Buerhaus, Ulrich, Norman, & Dittus, 2005). While personal experience is the largest factor stimulating discussions of nursing careers, media and advertising both play a role for a substantial share of those who consider the career.

Mary E. Dunnion, Gerry Dunnion and Majella McBride (2009) conducted a preliminary study aimed to examine key aspects of the factors influencing students to undertake a career in nursing and to also examine attitudes that affected their decision to apply to study for a degree in nursing. The data obtained identified that the processes used in recruitment campaigns examined in this study were well utilized and valued by respondents. The main reasons cited for applying for a career in nursing included wanting to help and care for people. The findings of this study identified that there is a need for management to exploit incentives

such as financial and job security, the opportunity to help others and travel opportunities in any future recruitment processes.

Suzana Mlinar (2010) investigated first and third year student nurses' perceptions of caring behaviors using the caring behaviors inventory. The results showed that the students in group B (third year) often agreed more significantly with Caring Behaviors Inventory items than the students in group A (first year). Principles of right action indicate how nurses must behave in order to provide good nursing care. Nursing educators can prepare students through demonstrations of their own behavior in practice

Conclusion

During the past two decades, there has been a plethora of research and discussion regarding nursing's image and the portrayals of nursing. We are now much more aware of the forces that shape and maintain many of popular culture's images of nurses and nursing. Perhaps the next two decades will see nurses moving from a position of greater awareness to one of more positive action. By this we mean that nurses will move beyond their outrage at the negative stereotypes that they encounter. We now know a great deal about representations of nurses and nursing in the various media and popular culture. As nurses, our task now is not simply to adapt to, or merely observe and comment on, future changes, but to get out there and make the changes happen.

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