

REASONS FOR SELECTION OF NURSING PROFESSION IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT... Nursing is the backbone of health care delivery system. There are various factors which influence the choice of selecting nursing as profession. **Objectives:** (1) To find out the socio demographic profile of nurses working at Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital (GTTH) Lahore. (2) To explore the reasons for selection of this profession. **Study design:** A cross sectional descriptive study. **Duration of study:** From October 2009 to January 2010. **Setting:** GTTH, Lahore. **Subjects and Methods:** All the nurses working in Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital, Lahore are included in this study and their responses are obtained with a self administered questionnaire. **Results:** A total of 77 nurses participated in our study. The age distribution of these nurses has shown that a large number of nurses, 49 (63.6%) belonged to age group between 20 to 30 years. There were 26 (33.8%) nurses who had done B. Sc nursing. About 72 nurses (93.5%) have monthly income more than Rs. 10,000. Majority of them, 48 (62.3%) are unmarried. 41 (53.2%) of the nurses selected this profession due to their own personal interest, 15 nurses (19.5%) selected this profession due to their parental influence. 12 nurses (15.6%) selected this profession for serving humanity. 9(11.7%) selected this profession to support their family. Approximately 25 nurses (32.5%) said that there are other family members working in the same profession. It was noted that out of these 25 nurses, 10 (40%) had their sisters in the same profession. **Conclusions:** Nursing forms the backbone of health care delivery system of a country. Decision makers in health sector need to understand that human resource development. Particularly Nursing requires revolutionary changes. As Public health policy makers, it is imperative that we investigate the reasons for selection of nursing profession to attract and retain these important partners in health care provision.

Key words: Nursing, Career selection, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing is an important component of healthcare delivery system of a country; engaging the largest segment of healthcare workers¹. Nurses are not only the primary providers of hospital patient care but a nurse also performs a wide range of clinical and non clinical functions essential for smooth running of health system².

A nurse is responsible for treatment, safety & recovery of acute and chronically ill individuals, health promotion and health maintenance of the families, communities and populations³. It is widely accepted that nursing as a career is viewed favorably by society in that it offers job security, mobility and career⁴.

Nursing is the largest health care profession in United States of America, with more than 2.9 million registered nurses nationwide⁵. But according to the latest projections from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than one million new nurses will be needed by 2016 in order to meet the nation's requirements⁶. The current trends in number of nursing personnel in relation to population indicate an imbalances between industrialized and developing countries⁴. Pakistan is producing 13132 nurses per year in the four provinces. The ratio comes to one nurse per 3175 (1:3175) persons, which is extremely short of the required ratio⁷. This shortness is because of the fact that production of nursing human resource has remained a neglected area in Pakistan¹. The lack of proper infrastructure of teaching

and learning resources has resulted in nursing shortage⁸.

Healthcare delivery system of Pakistan faces difficulties in addressing the health problems of a large population due to mismatch between inadequate health personnel and the prevailing health needs. Statistics show that the need for nurses will increase in years to come and that the demand for nurses has become greater than ever before⁹. In order to help the health workforce shortage there is a need to encourage young pacific people into sciences and insure that they have the necessary qualifications to enter into the health workforce environment¹⁰. For selection of nursing profession the identified "pull" factors, include better pay and other financial benefits, career development opportunities, educational opportunities, personal security and stability, better educational opportunities for children and aggressive recruitment¹¹. Unfortunately nurses tend to lose their interest in their jobs early, and possible "push" factors which encourage nurses to drop this profession include poor working conditions, lack of career development and promotion opportunities, low pay, lack of professional development opportunities, lack of support from supervisors, lack of involvement in decision-making at different levels of the health care delivery system, and violence¹.

A study conducted in England showed that, Eighty per cent of the nurses reported having made the decision to pursue nursing by themselves. 'Professionalism' was the other predominant reason followed by Altruism¹². The objective of this study is to identify the reasons for selection of nursing profession in Pakistan so by targeting the interests, more women are encouraged to join nursing.

METHODOLOGY

Between October 2009 and January 2010, a cross sectional survey was conducted in female nurses working at Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital (GTTH), Lahore, Pakistan. A total of 77 female nurses participated in this study using a non-probability convenience sampling technique. Informed consent was taken and only female nurses were interviewed, excluding the rest of the paramedical staff. A pre tested self administered questionnaire was administered, which requested

information on age, education, serving grade, reason for choosing nursing as a career. After collection of data editing and coding of the data was done. The data was entered to SPSS version 16. Results were given in the form of descriptive statistics and charts.

RESULTS

Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital has a total strength of 80 nurses out of which 77 nurses have participated in this study with a response rate of 99%. This survey was based on a self administered questionnaire which was filled anonymously. The results of this study showed the socio demographic profile of nurses along with the reasons of selection of this profession by them. The age distribution of these nurses has shown that maximum nurses, 49 (63.6%) belonged to age group between 20 to 30 years, followed by 40-50 years of age group which has 16 nurses constituting (20.8%) of the total as shown in table-I.

Table-I. Age distribution of the participant nurses

Age	Frequency	%age
20-30	49	63.6
30-40	11	14.3
40-50	16	20.8
>50	01	1.3
Total	77	100.0

When these participant nurses were inquired about their educational status, it was observed that there were only 26 (33.8%) nurses who had done B. Sc nursing and only 1(1.3%) had done Masters in nursing as shown in Table-II.

Table-II. Educational status of the participant nurses

Education	Frequency	%age
Matric	21	27.3
F.A / F.Sc	10	13.0
B.A / B.Sc	19	24.7
B.Sc Nursing	26	33.8
M.Sc Nursing	01	1.3
Total	77	100.0

Out of 77 participants, 59 (76.6%) nurses were working in grade 16 and 18 (23.4%) in grade 17. Table III shows monthly income of the participant nurses and it was found that 72 nurses (93.5%) have monthly income greater than Rs. 10,000.

Income in Rs	Frequency	%age
5000 - 7000	03	3.9
7000 - 9000	02	2.6
>10000	72	93.5
Total	77	100.0

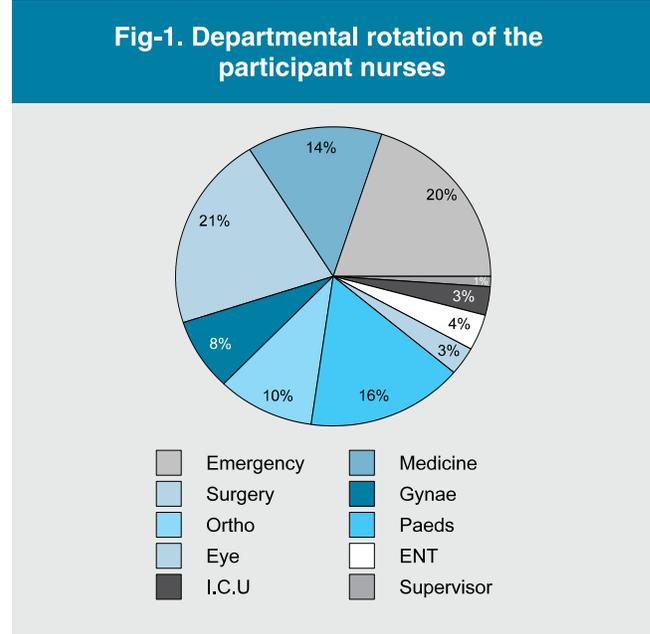
Regarding work experience of each participant in different departments of the hospital, it was noticed that the preferred work place was emergency department and surgery department as shown in figure 1.

It was observed that 29 nurses (37.7%) of the participants were married and majority of them which constitute, 48 out of 77 (62.3%) are unmarried. When the participants were asked about the reason of selection of this profession, it was observed that 41 (53.2%) of the nurses selected this profession due to their own personal interest, 15 nurses (19.5%) selected this profession due to their parental influence. Serving humanity is the reason for selection of this profession for 12 nurses (15.6%) whereas 9 (11.7%) selected this profession to support their family. (Figure 2)

The participant nurses were asked a question that is any other family member working in the same profession, 25 nurses (32.5%) said yes and 52 nurses (67.5%) denied it. It was noted that out of these 25 nurses 10 (40%) had their sisters in the same profession. Figure 3 shows the distribution of relatives in the same profession. Out of these 77 nurses who participated in our study, only 33 nurses (42.9 %) were aware of the nursing hazards before joining this profession and 44 (57.1%) were not aware of the hazardous nature of this profession.

DISCUSSION

The theme of 2006 World Health day, marked the beginning of a decade 2006-2015 devoted to addressing



human resource development¹³. WHO and member states made commitment to make human resources for health and its nursing backbone a strategic priority across the globe¹⁴. Efficient nursing supports and

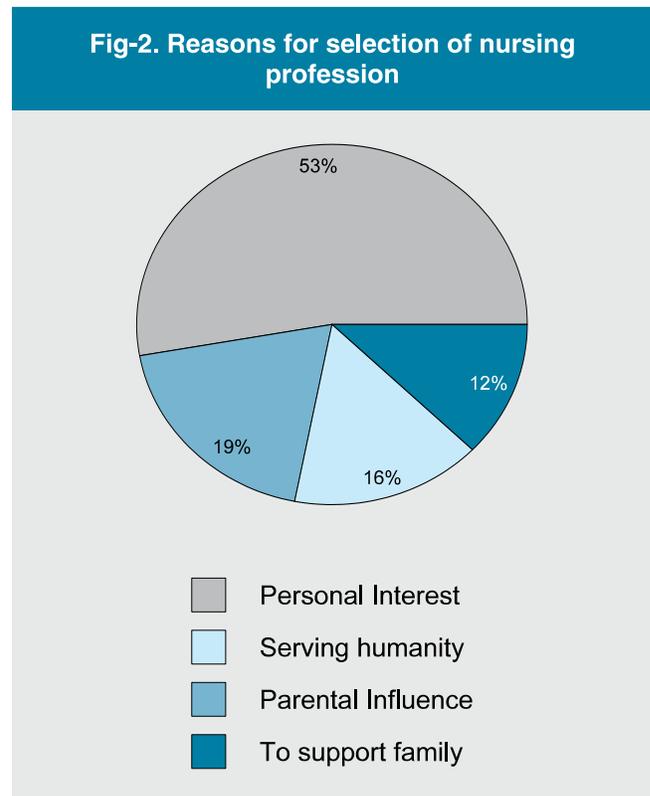
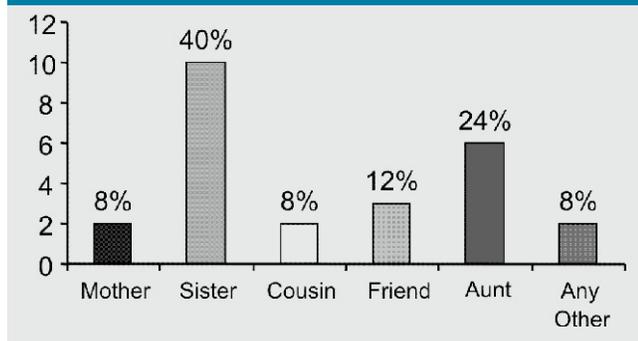


Fig-3. Distribution of relatives in the same profession

hastens the recovery of sick and wounded. It provides confidence and awareness to healthcare consumers regarding health services available to them¹. Nursing is a noble profession, but there is severe shortage of nurses in Pakistan. Shortage of nurses is not only a local issue but is a global. Nursing recruitment and retention are recognized priorities internationally¹⁵. In Pakistan the nurse patient ratio is extremely lower than the required ratio¹. According to Economic survey of Pakistan, there are only 65,387 nurses registered in Pakistan in 2008¹⁶. The United States is also in the midst of a nursing shortage that is expected to intensify. The Health Resources and Services Administration ([HRSA], 2007) in USA has projected that the nation's nursing shortage will grow to more than one million nurses by the year 2020, and all 50 states will experience a shortage of nurses to varying degrees by the year 2015¹⁷. According to a report released by the American Health Care Association in July 2008, their national Registered Nurses vacancy rate is only 8.1%¹⁸.

This study was conducted with following objectives: (1) The aim of having socio demographic profile of nurses working in a private teaching hospital. (2) To explore the reasons for joining this profession. The results of our study have showed that majority of nurses, 49 (63.6%) were between the age group of 20 to 30 years. The number of nurses decreased as the age increased.

According to The National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses (NSSRN), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, the average age of the Registered Nurse population was estimated to be 46.8 years of age, more

than a year older than the average age of 45.2 years estimated in 2000; and more than 4 years greater than in 1996 when the average age was 42.3 years¹⁹. Older nurses are a rich human resource pool. When they retire, their knowledge, wisdom and clinical expertise are lost, as is their contribution to training and mentoring the next generation of nurses. Tailoring employment strategies to this group is important to their retention²⁰. (Increasing retirement age; awarding contracts after retirement).

Only 33% of the nurses had acquired a B.Sc Nursing degree and only 1.3% had a master's degree in Nursing in Pakistan. USA statistics showed that in the 1980 survey, 63.2 percent of licensed RNs had received their initial nursing education in a diploma program; while in 2004, only 25.2 percent had received their initial RN nursing education in a diploma program¹⁹. Only 13.0 percent of the USA registered nurses held either a master's or doctoral degree as their highest educational preparation²¹. The current demand for master's- and doctoral prepared nurses for advanced practice, clinical specialties, teaching, and research roles far outstrips the supply. The goal of nursing education is to equip the present day nurse for the requirement of the future, to have appropriate knowledge and skills, competence and attitude. Pakistan Nursing Council, should redesign the curricula, standards, modes of implementation and monitoring²².

The results of our study has shown clearly that 76.6% of the nurses served in grade 16 and the rest served grade 17. More than 90% of the nurses were paid monthly more than Rs.10,000 which is sufficient to support a middle class family. In USA, nursing is considered as the most well paid profession¹⁹. Our results showed that an equal percentage of nurses worked in the emergency and surgery department but more number of nurses is required in the other departments. According to the Criteria of Pakistan Nursing Council of Units of Nursing staff: one nurse is required for 3 beds and 3 Nurses for 10 beds (8 hourly shift with one relief nurse for 10 beds each)¹.

The results of our study has shown that more percentage of nurses are unmarried in Pakistan. The 2004 NSSRN estimated that 70.5 percent of RNs are married; 18.1

percent are widowed, divorced, or separated; and 9.2 percent have never married¹⁹.

The reason of selection of this profession showed that 41 (53.2%) of the nurses selected this profession due to their own personal interest, 15 nurses (19.5%) selected this profession due to their parental influence. 12 nurses (15.6%) selected this profession for serving & carrying humanity whereas 9(11.7%) selected this profession to support their family. Nurses have the desire to be of service as reported in another study conducted in 1998²³. 53.2% nurses admitted that they had a personal interest in the profession and eighty per cent of them reported having made the decision to pursue nursing by themselves²⁴.

The primary motive was the need for a practical satisfying, flexible, accessible carrier in terms of cost of schooling, which should always be in demand, and respectable²³. The main reason for choosing nursing in the 21st century remains the desire to help and care for others.

In Nigeria for most basic students, first job expectation was bedside nursing after graduation; it was administrative and/or teaching duties for those in the post-basic programme²⁴.

In Israel the study also identified a positive correlation between both the image of nursing as a profession and the availability of nursing jobs – and the decision to choose a nursing career²⁵.

Another influencing factor was that family members had been nurses or had worked in allied health or caring occupations, or that the nurses had the opportunity to observe nursing practice²⁶. This was often due to a period of hospitalization of either themselves or a close family member²⁷. The encouragement of older family members, particularly female members, strongly influenced a number of nurses as seen in our research results. According to the research 19.5% of the nurses had some sort of parental influence. 32.5% of the nurses had other family members in the nursing profession mostly sisters which also influenced their decision. Family or friends in

the profession played a role in influencing participants' career selection⁴.

It has been observed that over 90% of Registered nurses reported receiving support from at least one friend or relative for their decision to join nursing²⁸. In future recruitment and retention strategies, to address the critical nursing shortage, it is important to consider the role of mentors, peers and role models in the formulation of career expectations, and career choice decisions¹⁵.

15.6% of the nurses choose to be nurses because they want to serve humanity. A study conducted in North Cyprus has shown that nurses chose this profession because they wanted to help people and provide them with maintenance, and because of the value attached to the nursing by the society²⁷. It emerged that although nursing was not everybody's first career choice, all participants had sought a career which involved caring²⁷.

Career choice is a critical component of recruitment and retention strategies and has significant organizational implications in regards to person–environment fit, career satisfaction and commitment¹⁸.

Our results demonstrated that 11.7% of the nurses undertook this profession to support their families as the monthly incomes are quite satisfactory in majority of the cases. In another study conducted in Nigeria, caring for the health of others was the main reason for pursuing nursing career and the 50.6% of the nurses were influenced in their choice of the career with parent being a strong force²⁹.

A survey was conducted in Israel to assess the factors affecting choice nursing career as an ideal career among general population and research findings indicated that only 8% of the respondents expressed interest in nursing. Nursing career was perceived as lacking interest, challenges, creativity, responsibility, varied wages, high status and comfortable environment²⁸.

Another study conducted in Korea showed that for nursing students, employability (55%) followed by aptitude (20%) were the most influencing factors in choosing a nursing profession³⁰.

77 nurses who participated in our study. Only 33 nurses (42.9 %) were aware of the nursing hazards before joining this profession and 44 (57.1%) were not aware of the hazardous nature side of this profession. An Iranian study also reported that 77% of the nursing students lacked information about nursing³¹.

CONCLUSIONS

Nursing forms the backbone of health care delivery system of a country. Decision makers in health sector need to understand that human resource development particularly, nursing is asking for revolutionary changes. As Public health policy makers it is imperative that we investigate the reasons for selection of nursing profession to attract and retain these important partners in health care provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The scope of present nursing education should be broadened and production of B.Sc and M.Sc nursing professionals may be focused on priority.
2. Training of nurses should be made more objective to achieve higher standards of nursing.
3. Continued nursing education, short study tours, courses, workshops and seminars for nurses should be adequately funded for effective implementation. Public Health policy makers should be aware of the importance of development of Nurses human resource.

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*"Forgive your enemies,
but never forget their
names."*

John F. Kennedy (1917-1963)