Percieved Public Image of Student Nurses

S. Sridevy*, Prassanna Baby**

Author Affilation: *Assistant Professor, Mother Teresa Post Graduate & Research Institute of Health Sciences, Pondicherry **Principal, Sri Ramachandra College of Nursing, Chennai.

Abstract

Nursing is a profession that has long been troubled with its public image. A poor public image of nursing may affect not only nursing recruitment, but also nurses' attitudes towards work (Takase et al. 2002).There have been many images of nurses purported in the media, in movies and books, and in the news. 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. Public images are the basic bond of any society and are produced by sharing messages. Since prior studies on this subject are insufficient, the researcher as a nursing educator tried to find out the public perceptions of nursing students about their profession.

Introduction

Nursing is a profession that has long been troubled with its public image. A poor public image of nursing may affect not only nursing recruitment, but also nurses' attitudes towards work (Takase et al. 2002).There have been many images of nurses purported in the media, in movies and books, and in the news. 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. Public images are the basic bond of any society and are produced by sharing prior studies on this subject are insufficient, the researcher as a nursing educator tried to find out the public perceptions of nursing students about their profession.

Statement of the Problem

A study to explore the perceived public image of nursing among the senior student nurses, studying in colleges in and around Pondicherry.

The objectives of this study are:

1. to assess the senior student nurses' perceptions of their public image.

2. to develop various strategies to promote a positive public image of nursing students .

Methodology

Mixed Methods Design was applied for this study. In the quantitative approach, questionnaires were

used and the responses were collected. In a qualitative approach, focus group discussions and an open ended questionnaire were used to explore views about the perceptions of the student nurses on their public image of nursing. The study was conducted in the selected nursing colleges (both Government and Private) located in and around the union territory of Pondicherry.

Population

The population composed of all nursing students who are studying B.Sc (N) final year in the selected nursing colleges located in and around the union territory of Pondicherry.

Sample

A sample of 357 nursing students, out of which 283 girls and 74 boys studying B.Sc (N) final year in the selected nursing colleges located in and around the union territory of Pondicherry were selected for the study. Non–probability convenience sampling technique was used for selecting sample for this study.

Tool

Section- A: Demographic data

Section- B: Modified Porter Nursing Image Scale - to explore the perceived public image

Tool II consisting of: A structured open ended questionnaire and focus group discussion guidelines.

Modified Porter Nursing Image Scale

This scale was developed by Porter and Porter (1991) to measure the public image of nursing. Nurses were told to use this scale to rate the items according to the image as they are perceived by the public.

Scoring and interpretation

The researcher adapted another widely used technique in exploratory research that is the focus group. In a focus group, a small number of individuals are brought together to study and talk about some topic of interest. The discussion is co-ordinated by a moderator. The group usually is of 8-12 persons. While selecting these persons, care has to be taken to see that they should have a common background and have similar experiences. This is required because there should not be a conflict among the group members on the common issues that are being discussed. Frequency and Percentage, Mean and SD were used to tabulate the perceived public image scores. Pearson Chi-Square test was used to find out the association between demographic variables and level of public image. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data of the open ended questionnaire and the focus group discussion.

The above table shows each questionwise student nurses public image score. They scored the maximum score for the statement that the public sees them as being "In control" (73.2%) and minimum score for the aspect of being "Professional" (52.4%). Overall they were having 67.8% of the score which is considered as a good perception.

Table 1: Maximum marks- 100, Minimum score- 20

S no.	Grade	Percentage	Score
1.	Excellent *image*	75 – 100%	76-100
2.	Good *image*	50 – 74%	51-75
3.	Average *image*	25 – 49 %	26-50
4.	Poor *image*	Below 25%	0-25

Overall Level of Perception of Students Nurses' Public Image

In general none of the student nurses had perceived a poor public image, 10.9% of them were having a perception of an average public image , while 79.6% of them had perceived a good public image and 9.5% of them were having the perception of an excellent public image.

The qualitative analysis led to the emergence of the five themes from the open ended questionnaire and focus group data. The following themes had been categorized out of the various responses to this
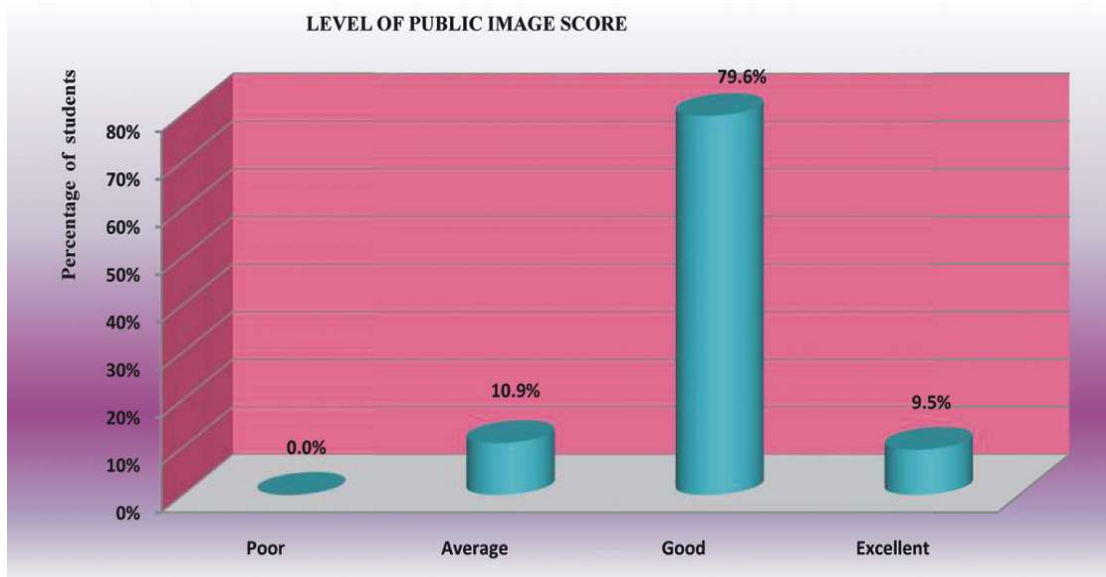
question: Table 3 and figure 2 shows that one of the most frequently mentioned responses was that the public perceive nursing as a job with good salary, top response by 37.5% in FGD and 22.1% in OEQ, some students had mentioned that the public perceives nursing as a prestigious and respectful job (29.2% in FGD and 19.9 % in OEQ), some of the students replied that the public perceives nursing as caring for patients and a calling given by god (16.7% in FGD and 23% in OEQ), few others (8.3% in FGD and 19.3% in OEQ), responded that the public also perceives nursing as a challenging field, while few people see nursing as just following the doctors'

Table 2: Each Questionwise Percentage of Modified Porter Nursing Public Image Scale Score

S.no	I think the public sees nurses as being	Mean Score	SD	Percentage of mean score
1	A leader	3.44	1.50	68.8%
2	Compassionate	3.18	1.50	63.6%
3	Logical	2.69	1.27	53.8%
4	Confident	2.66	1.23	53.2%
5	Professional	2.62	1.17	52.4%
6	In control	3.66	1.22	73.2%
7	Compromising	3.02	1.08	60.4%
8	Respectful	3.1	1.07	62.0%
9	Intelligent	2.9	1.20	58.0%
10	Patient	3.03	1.44	60.6%
11	Organised	2.9	1.38	58.0%
12	Responsible	3.32	1.15	66.4%
13	Powerful	2.7	1.17	54.0%
14	A follower	3.2	1.21	64.0%
15	Competent	2.7	1.11	54.0%
16	Rational	3.32	1.19	66.4%
17	Nurturing	3.44	1.23	68.8%
18	Independent	2.94	1.20	58.8%
19	Warm	3.04	1.16	60.8%
20	A Guide	3.14	1.16	62.8%
	TOTAL	61.00	9.08	61.0%

N=357

Fig.1:

orders, few people state that nursing is a profession of long working hours. Least responses (8.3% in FGD and15.7% in OEQ) stated that the public perceives nursing as a profession with a great demand everywhere.
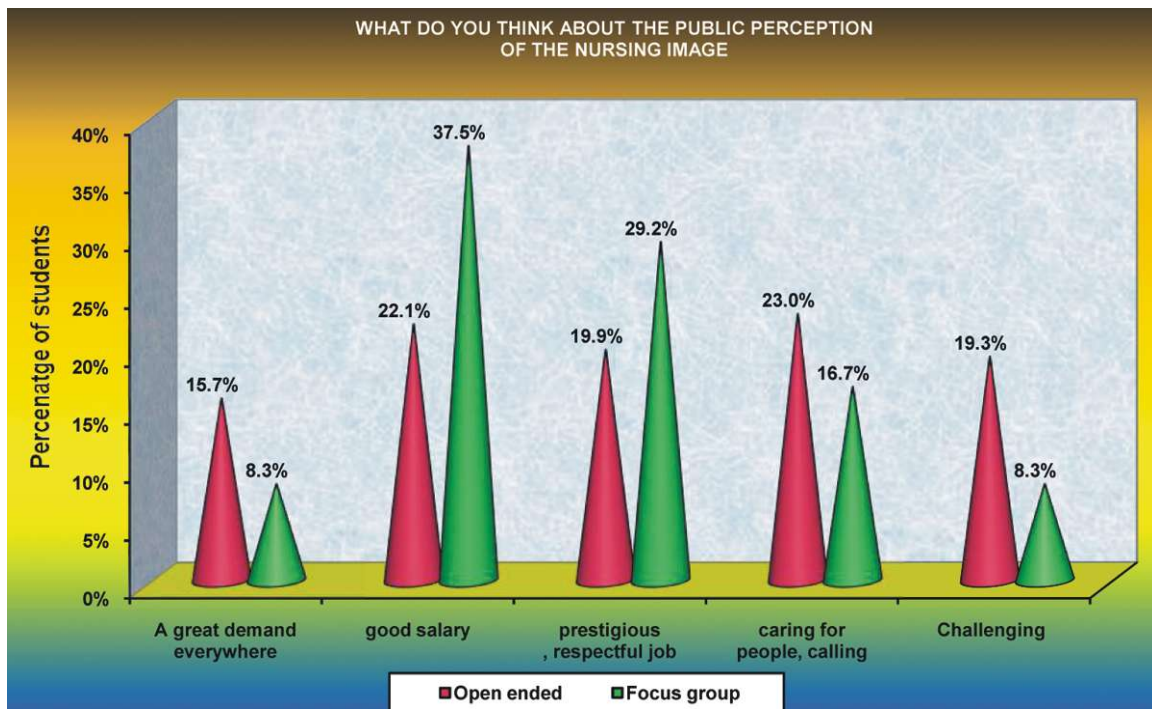
To assess the senior student nurses' perceptions of their public image.

The students scored the maximum score for the statement that the public sees them as being "In control" (73.2%) and minimum score for the aspect

Table 3: Public Perception of Nursing Image

S.no	Questions	Themes	Open ended(N=357)		Focus group(N=24)		Chisquare test
			n	%	n	%	
		A great demand everywhere	56	15.7%	2	8.3%	χ2=5.89p=0.20
	What do you think about the public perception of the nursing image?	good salary	79	22.1%	9	37.5%	
		prestigious , respectful job	71	19.9%	7	29.2%	
		caring for people, calling	82	23.0%	4	16.7%	
		Challenging / work for long hrs/just following doctors	69	19.3%	2	8.3%	

Fig. 2:

of being "Professional" (52.4%). student nurses public image score. They were having a maximum score in "In control" (73.2%) and minimum score in "Professional" (52.4%). Fewer score was also seen for the aspects of nurses being logical, confident, intelligent and organized.

This finding is supported by that of Miyuki Takase (2006) [5]. The results of his study showed that nurses perceived that the public viewed them more negatively than they saw themselves as professionals.

Conclusion

Image and the perception of the profession impact recruitment of students, the view of the public, funding for nursing education and research, relationships with healthcare administrators and other healthcare professionals, government agencies and legislators at all levels of government, and ultimately, the profession's self-identity.

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