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#### Correspondence

Asst. Prof. Sulekha Shrestha  
Dhulikhel Hospital (KU),  
Dhulikhel Municipality, Ward  
No. 6, Kavre, Postal Code  
45200, Nepal  
Email: [sulekhastha@gmail.com](mailto:sulekhastha@gmail.com)

#### Peer Reviewers

Asst. Prof. Dr. Piyush  
Rajbhandari  
Patan Academy of Health  
Sciences, Nepal

Prof. Dr. Jay Shah  
Patan Academy of Health  
Sciences, Nepal

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## Intention of pursuing nursing as a career and its associated factors among male students in the schools of Banepa Municipality, Nepal

Sulekha Shrestha<sup>1</sup>  , Alisha Sharma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Asst. Prof. Dept. of Nursing, Dhulikhel Hospital, Kathmandu University, Dhulikhel, Kavre, Nepal; <sup>2</sup>Nursing Officer, Nepal Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, Harisiddhi, Lalitpur, Kathmandu, Nepal

### Abstract

**Introduction:** Nepal Nursing Council issued a notice regarding the inclusion of men in nursing in June 2018. Even with this mandate, only a handful of male students claimed the reservation for nursing education. This study aimed to determine the intention of pursuing nursing as a career and its associated factors among male students in the schools of Banepa Municipality, Kavre, Nepal.

**Method:** A quantitative analytical cross-sectional research design was adopted and data was collected via convenience sampling technique. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered among male students of grade 10 of the selected schools.

**Result:** Among 190 respondents, only 11.8% had an intention to pursue the nursing profession as a career. Global opportunities, challenging careers, and reasonable pay were apparent factors that influenced students. However, lack of social support, lack of role model, disrespect, and unpleasant work environment was the major inhibiting factors. Furthermore, the intention to pursue nursing as a career was significantly common among the male students who were acquainted with a nurse and had exposure to nursing care.

**Conclusion:** The majority of the participants had a positive perception of nursing but did not prefer to pursue nursing as a career due to lack of social support, lack of role models, disrespect, and an unpleasant work environment.

**Keywords:** men in nursing, perception of nursing, pursuing nursing as a career

## Introduction

Nursing is a science and art that requires a blend of knowledge, skills, and values.<sup>1</sup> It is an integral part of the healthcare system, and encompasses the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and care of disabled people of all ages.<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that there are less than three nurses and midwives per 1000 population globally.<sup>3</sup>

The global nursing shortage has become an issue of concern and will continue to worsen unless effective recruitment strategies are implemented.<sup>4</sup> An effective strategy to eliminate shortage is to recruit males in the profession.<sup>5-8</sup>

Men are not barred from entering nursing however face various obstacles in the predominantly female field.<sup>9</sup> In Nepal, Tribhuvan University trained almost 80 male nurses in past but was discontinued shortly.<sup>10</sup> In 2018, a notice was issued regarding the inclusion of male students in nursing (15% seats) by the Nursing Council.<sup>10-11</sup> However, Kathmandu University School of Medical Sciences did not get any male applicants. Thus, this study aimed to determine the intention of pursuing nursing as a career and its associated factors among male students in the schools of Banepa Municipality. Such studies provide a basis for the need and recommendations to find the areas of improvement.

## Method

This was a prospective, quantitative, cross sectional analytical study conducted in selected schools at Banepa, Nepal. Nepal is a small country of 29 million people situated on top of the world, between China and India. There are now 35,222 elementary and secondary schools and 10 universities with more than 1,400 colleges and campuses throughout Nepal (2016).<sup>12</sup> Banepa municipality is a historical town on the outskirts of Kathmandu valley with eight higher secondary schools. This study was conducted in all of those schools.

All students studying in grade 10 at eight different schools of Banepa municipality were the participants for the study. Students who were not willing to participate and were absent during the data collection period were excluded from the study.

A convenience sampling technique was chosen and a semi-structured questionnaire was developed after a thorough literature review to collect the data. The questionnaire comprised three sections; socio-demographic information, perception of nursing, and intention of pursuing nursing as a career. An appointment was obtained in each school at the suitable time of the students and written consent was taken from each participant before data collection. The questionnaire distributed at the beginning to all participants was filled individually and collected back at the end. Adequate time was provided to fill the questionnaire.

Data was sorted, coded, and entered into Microsoft access and then to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 25 for management and analysis. Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, standard deviation, and percentage) were calculated for categorical variables. Inferential statistics (Chi square test) was used to test the association of perception and attitude with intention of pursuing nursing as a career.  $p < 0.05$  was considered significant.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Committee of Kathmandu University School of Medical Sciences (IRC 83/19) and written permission was obtained from all principals of the selected schools of Banepa municipality to conduct the study.

## Result

During the study period, a total number of 190 students were included in the study. Among them, 178 questionnaires were correctly filled and were entered for analysis. The majority of the participants (92%) belonged to the age group 14-16 years and 8% belonged to 17-19

years. Likewise, 87% were from Hinduism, 11% Buddhism, and only 2% from Christianity. Approximately one-third of the participants were Brahmin and another one-third were Newar and 6% belonged to minor ethnic groups, such as Rai, Jaiswal, Magar, and Dalit.

About 90% of the students were from private schools and 10% from a government school. More than 3/5<sup>th</sup> of the respondents (62.4%) had acquaintance with a nurse. Out of those, 48.6% reported having a sister who is a nurse/nursing student and 41.5% had a relative in this profession. Furthermore, 69.7% of participants confirmed being cared for by a nurse and 84.6% of them were satisfied with the care provided.

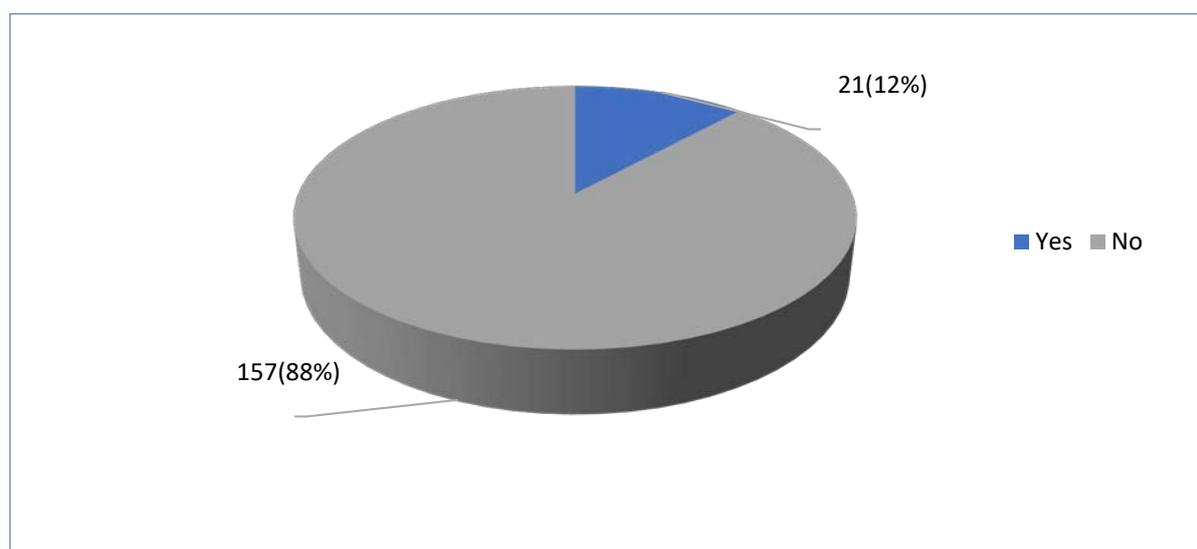
The majority of the participants agreed nursing is a profession (90%). While 94% believed nurses should be kind and compassionate, 93% agreed nurses provide a comfortable environment for patients, 94% believed nursing involves caring for patients, 84% believed nurses can develop health care policies, and 86% believed nurses have a positive public image.

However, only 66% of the participants believed that nurses advocate for patients and their rights and 66% believed that nurses provide patients with emotional support. Similarly,

68% believed that nurses are in high demand anywhere in the world. Similarly, 63% agreed that nurses incorporate research findings into clinical practice and 66% believed that men could also become nurses. While 56% of the participants disagreed that nurse is not capable of independent practice, 45% denied nursing only deals with maintaining the hygiene of the patients. In addition, around 34% of the respondents disagreed nurses only follow doctor's orders without questioning whereas 37% of them agreed and 29% remained neutral. The mean score on positive perception of nursing was 77.07±6.87.

Among the participants, 157(88%) did not intend to pursue nursing as a career, Figure 1. The motivating factors to pursue nursing as a career were global opportunities 12(57%), challenging career 10(47.6%), and reasonable pay 8(38.0%), Table 1. Lack of social support 92(58.5%), no role model 74(47%), lack of respect 62(39.4%) were the demotivating factors to pursue nursing as a career, Table 2.

Exposure to nursing care was significantly associated to pursue nursing as a career (p=0.010). Out of 21 who were interested to pursue nursing as a career, 20 had exposure to nursing care and 18 had acquaintance with a nurse (p=0.029), Table 3.



**Figure 1. The intention of pursuing nursing as a career among the participants (N=178)**

**Table 1. Motivating factors affecting the intention of pursuing nursing as a career (N=157)**

| Motivating factors (Multiple responses) | N  | %    |
|---|----|------|
| Global opportunities                    | 12 | 57.1 |
| Challenging career                      | 10 | 47.6 |
| Reasonable pay                          | 8  | 38.0 |
| Family support                          | 7  | 33.3 |
| Advancement opportunities               | 6  | 28.5 |
| Personal interest                       | 6  | 28.5 |
| Secure profession                       | 4  | 19.0 |
| Autonomy                                | 4  | 19.0 |
| Media portrayal of nurses               | 3  | 14.2 |

**Table 2. Demotivating factors for the intention of pursuing nursing as a career (N=157)**

| *Demotivating factors           | N  | %    |
|---------------------------------|----|------|
| Lack of social support          | 92 | 58.5 |
| No role model                   | 74 | 47.1 |
| Lack of respect                 | 62 | 39.4 |
| Unpleasant working environment  | 58 | 36.9 |
| Long working hours              | 41 | 26.1 |
| Fear of blood/syringes          | 36 | 22.9 |
| High workload                   | 33 | 21.0 |
| Afraid of diseases transmission | 31 | 19.4 |

\*Multiple responses

**Table 3. Association between the intention of pursuing nursing as a career and selected variables (N=178)**

|                                     | The intention of pursuing nursing as a career |            | p-value |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------|---------|
|                                     | Yes, N(%)                                     | No, N(%)   |         |
| <b>Exposure to the nursing care</b> |   |            |         |
| Yes                                 | 20 (16.1)                                     | 104 (83.8) | 0.010   |
| No                                  | 1 (1.9)                                       | 53 (98.1)  |         |
| <b>Acquaintance with a nurse</b>    |   |            |         |
| Yes                                 | 18 (16.2)                                     | 93 (83.8)  | 0.029   |
| No                                  | 3 (4.5)                                       | 64 (95.5)  |         |

### Discussion

Our study showed one-tenth (N=21, 12%) of male secondary school students intended to pursue nursing as a career. A similar finding is reported in studies from the USA and Nigeria had.<sup>4,7,13</sup> However, the nursing profession has long suffered from public stereotyping and is closely associated with femininity and powerlessness.<sup>14</sup> It is considered as a caring profession associated with knowledge, technical skills, and safety.<sup>5</sup>

Almost all participants believed that nurses should be kind and compassionate in this study which was also supported in the study conducted in the USA.<sup>13</sup> In another study, only

16% of the preparatory premedical students agreed that nurses should be kind and compassionate.<sup>14</sup> In our study, the majority of the participants agreed that nurse provides a comfortable environment for patients, similar to other studies.<sup>5,15</sup>

The majority of the participants in this study agreed that nursing involves caring for patients. This statement was also supported by studies<sup>5,13,16</sup> and was higher than findings reported in the study from South Nigeria.<sup>17</sup>

The majority of the participants in the present study agreed that 'nurses can develop health care policies, also supported by a study

conducted in Tanzania.<sup>18</sup> Only two-thirds of the participants in the present study responded positively to 'nurse advocates for patients and their rights'. Other studies had a more positive response to this statement.<sup>17,18</sup> Similarly, 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the participants in this study agreed that 'nurse provides patients with emotional support. This finding was similar to the study conducted in Hong Kong<sup>5</sup> but less than from Saudi Arabian<sup>15</sup> findings.

Around half of our participants agreed that nurses are capable of independent practice in this study which was higher than in a study conducted in Tanzania<sup>18</sup> but less than in a study from the USA.<sup>13</sup> Only 45% of the participants in this study denied that 'nursing only deals with maintaining the hygiene of the patients' which is lesser than in a study conducted in Malaysia.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, only one-third of the participants in the present study disagreed that 'nurse only follows doctor's orders without question. Similar findings were reported in other studies.<sup>4,13,17</sup>

Despite the positive perception of nursing, only a tenth (N=21, 12%) of the school students in the present study intended to pursue nursing as a career. Many studies conducted in Egypt<sup>8</sup>, Saudi Arabia<sup>19</sup>, Malaysia<sup>4</sup>, South Nigeria<sup>17</sup>, and South Africa<sup>16</sup> were 4.4%, 5.2%, 8.3%, 25%, and 43% of the male participants reported an intention in pursuing nursing as a career respectively. Florence Nightingale's perception and feminization of nursing into a female-only profession have resulted in fewer men pursuing nursing as a career.<sup>20</sup> Several studies indicated that male students are not willing to step into the field of nursing as readily as their female counterparts.<sup>17,21-23</sup>

Global opportunities, challenging careers, and reasonable pay were found to be the major motivating factors to pursue the nursing profession in this study. Reasonable pay and traveling abroad were perceived as the encouraging factors in another study.<sup>8</sup> Similarly many studies supported that nurses were well paid as compared to other health professionals.<sup>4,16,17,22</sup> Similarly, lack of social support, lack of role model, lack of respect, and

unpleasant working environment were the major demotivating in our study. Similar findings were reported in other studies too.<sup>8,15,17</sup> Likewise, other studies reported that the feminization of nursing discouraged male students to join the nursing profession.<sup>17,21,23</sup> Other studies reported that long and inflexible working hours, high workload, unpleasant working environment as the demotivating factors.<sup>4,15,21</sup> Along with these factors the recruitment and retention of men in nursing has a lot of challenges due to a variety of educational and social barriers.<sup>24</sup> Even with the mandate, the quota will be difficult to fill due to a lack of awareness among prospective students of the scope for male nurses and the stereotypes.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, male nurses may not be accepted by female patients as "there is a lot of physical contact in this profession, even in sensitive areas of the body."<sup>20</sup>

We found that exposure to nursing care was significantly associated to pursue a nursing career. This finding was similar to that of the studies done in Saudi Arabia<sup>15</sup> and USA<sup>13</sup> where the participants who have been cared for by a nurse significantly demonstrated the intention to become nurses. Similarly, acquaintance with a nurse was significantly associated to pursue nursing as a career in our study. Having a nurse friend has been found to positively influence the students towards nursing in several studies.<sup>4,8,13,19,22</sup>

For increased participation by males in the nursing profession, more awareness, for example, TV shows, documentaries, and even commercials must positively portray male nurses, consistent with the realities of the nursing profession.

Some of the strengths of our finding include, for example, 1<sup>st</sup>- data from among the male students who are at the time to choose their career. This is likely to reflect the operational reality on the ground.

Some of the limitations include- 1. Lack of data on the economic status of the male students could indirectly influence their intention of pursuing nursing as a career, and 2. We could

not further elaborate on the reasons for the high percentage of non-intention for pursuing nursing as a career. The further qualitative study may be helpful.

### Conclusion

The majority of the respondents had a positive perception of nursing but did not prefer to pursue nursing as a career due to lack of social support, lack of role models, disrespect, and an unpleasant work environment. Moreover, societal perceptions and stereotypes towards male nurses prevail which may harm the recruitment and retention of men in nursing programs.

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### Conflict of Interest

None

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None

### Author Contribution

Concept, design, planning- SS; Literature review- SS, AS; Data collection/analysis- SS, AS; Draft manuscript- SS; Revision of draft- SS; Final manuscript- SS; Accountability of the work- SS, AS.

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## Supplements

### QUESTIONNAIRE

**Date of collection:** ...../.../...

**Serial number:** ..... (For researcher use only)

#### PART I

#### SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

(Please tick (v) the response that best describes your own personal opinion related to the following questions.)

1. Age (in completed years): .....
2. Religion
  - a. Hinduism
  - b. Buddhism
  - c. Christianity
  - d. Muslim
  - e. Others
3. Ethnicity
  - a. Brahmin
  - b. Chettri
  - c. Newar
  - d. Tamang
  - e. Others
4. Do you know personally know someone who is a nurse/ studying nursing?
  - a. Mother is a nurse
  - b. Father is a nurse
  - c. Sister is a nurse/studying nursing
  - d. Brother is a nurse/ studying nursing

- e. Friend is a nurse/ studying nursing
- f. Relative is a nurse/studying nursing
- 5. Have you been cared for by a nurse in a hospital, clinic or home?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 6. If yes, how was your experience with the nurse during the caring process?
  - a. a) Good
  - b. b) Bad

**PART II  
PERCEPTION OF NURSING**

(Please tick (✓) the response that best describes your own personal opinion)

| SCALE ITEMS  | Strongly<br>Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly<br>Agree |
|--|-------------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| a. Provides comfortable environment for patients                       |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| b. Involves caring for patients  |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| c. Nurses only do minor tasks such as bathing and cleaning the patient |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| d. Nurses only follow doctor's orders without questioning              |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| e. Includes promoting and maintaining health by educating people       |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| f. Nursing care is based on scientific knowledge and skills            |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| g. Nurses educate patients about their illness                         |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| h. Nurses are in high demand anywhere in the world                     |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| i. Nursing has many specialties and career advancement opportunities   |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| j. Nurses provide patients with emotional support                      |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| k. Nurses are paid very well   |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| l. Nurses have a positive public image                                 |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| m. Able to use their own initiative in their work                      |                   |       |         |          |                   |
| n. Plan individual care in collaboration with patients                 |                   |       |         |          |                   |

**PART II  
ATTITUDE TOWARDS MEN IN NURSING**

(Please tick (✓) the response that best describes your own personal opinion.)

| SCALE ITEMS  | Strongly<br>Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly<br>Agree |
|--|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|
| a. Nursing is not perceived as a very masculine or a "macho-type" of career for males to pursue in our society.  |                      |          |         |       |                   |
| b. There is a general perception by society that female nurses are more caring and nurturing than male nurses.   |                      |          |         |       |                   |
| c. The current portrayal of nursing by the mass media (e.g. television, films, magazines) as being more suited for women discourages men from choosing nursing as a career.                |                      |          |         |       |                   |
| d. The current portrayal of male nurses as being "gay" of effeminate in nature by the mass media (e.g. television, films and magazines) discourages men from choosing nursing as a career. |                      |          |         |       |                   |
| e. Nursing is more appropriate for females because they tend to be more caring and compassionate by their inborn nature.   |                      |          |         |       |                   |

- f. I would encourage a male family member (e.g. brother, son, partner) to pursue nursing as a challenging and rewarding career choice

**PART III**

**INTENTION OF PURSUING NURSING AS A CAREER**

Do you have any intention of studying nursing courses or pursuing nursing as a career?

- (a) YES (b) NO

If YES, what encourages you to join nursing? (Encircle all the choices that apply to you.)

- (a) Personal interest
- (b) Social support
- (c) Reasonable pay
- (d) Secure profession
- (e) Media portrayal of nurses
- (f) Advancement opportunities
- (g) Autonomy
- (h) Challenging career
- (i) Travel opportunities

If others, please specify.....

If NO, what discourages you to join nursing? (Encircle all the choices that apply to you.)

- (a) Community doesn't appreciate
- (b) Night shifts
- (c) Requires working with the majority of opposite gender
- (d) Afraid of getting diseases
- (e) Unpleasant working environment
- (f) Long working hours
- (g) High workload
- (h) Feminine image of nursing
- (i) Medial portrayal of male nurses as gay
- (j) No role model
- (k) Bad experience with nursing staff in the hospital

If others, please specify.....