

## Junior Undergraduates Nurse Students' Images of Nursing as a Career Choice

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**Abstract:** Despite the great advances in the nursing career, nurses still face considerable challenges related to its image that impact on status, power and the ability to affect changes in health care. The image of nursing is vital to the profession, necessary in today's changing workplace, and an important concept for future nurses to understand. **Aim:** This study aimed to determine the junior undergraduates nurse students' images of nursing as a career choice. **Design:** A cross-sectional descriptive design was utilized. **Settings:** The study was conducted at Nursing Faculty and Public Service Center of Medical Secretarial at Tanta University, as well as Health Technical Institute related to Ministry of Health. **Sample:** A convenient sample of 386 junior undergraduates nurse students selected randomly; 196 students from Public Service Center of Medical Secretarial, 149 students from Nursing Faculty and 41 from Health Technical Institute. **Tools:** The study used the Perceptions of Professional Nursing Image tool, which included 27 items; 13 items measuring self valuing image, 11 items measuring nursing practice value. The second tool called the Perceptions of Public Valuing of Nursing Image, which contained 11 items. The third tool called Sources of Influences over Perception of Nursing Image as a Career Choice, which involved three items. **Results:** The findings demonstrated that good salary was the most important reason for entering nursing career. The vast majority of female and male junior undergraduates nurse students perceived positive image toward nursing career and concerning respect from other health care professionals. **Conclusion:** Understanding the perception of nursing career through the eyes of future nurses regardless of their place of study will provide valuable information to assist faculty and nurse leaders in bridging the gap between nursing education and practice. **Recommendations:** The researcher recommended that curricular should emphasis on expanding and raising nursing students' awareness of their responsibilities toward patients, especially in challenging or difficult situations, and on improving their concept of nursing as a career.

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### 1. Introduction

Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the nursing profession still faces problems in showing its true image<sup>[1]</sup>. Despite the great advances in the nursing career, nurses still face considerable challenges related to its image that impact on status, power and the ability to affect changes in health care<sup>[2]</sup>. The image of nursing is vital to the profession, necessary in today's changing workplace, and an important concept for future nurses to understand. It is imperative to establish and maintain a proper image of nursing, particularly in current society, where the accomplishments of nurses are seldom given the recognition they deserve<sup>[3]</sup>.

An image is defined as a present perception or mental picture representative of something real<sup>[4]</sup>. It is part of career choice. It is the way a person appears to others, or in the case of a profession, the way that profession appears to other disciplines and to the general public—consumers of health care. Career choice is a huge decision and it can be daunting.

Image and the perception of the career impact recruitment of nurses' 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<sup>[5]</sup>.

In nursing, image refers to a person's professional qualities and conduct which represent the nurses' competence as perceived by patients and by one self<sup>[6]</sup>. Image refers to the tangible or visible representations and/or perceptions resulting from a person's conduct as a professional, linked to competence and ethical behavior. In other words, the impression we leave with others<sup>[7]</sup>. Yet, image is very much evident in our lives, as it influences our interaction with and expectation toward others, and conveys messages as to how we see them. Social, political, and economic systems continue to perpetuate the image of nursing as a female-dominated profession. Although increased numbers

of men are joining the ranks of professional nursing, disproportionate numbers of male nurses are leaving nursing, compared to female nurses<sup>[8]</sup>.

Literature suggests that self image is how nurses perceive themselves, whereas the public image reflects the impression the public has of the nurse<sup>[9]</sup>. Self students' career image are highly individualized, and are the product of contracted images of jobs they see for themselves, derived images from media, and delegated images from parents and friends<sup>[10]</sup>. The public image of nurses has been of great concern to the nursing profession<sup>[11]</sup>.

Images of nursing abound in the media. Unfortunately, these images often do not portray an accurate or complete picture of the role of a professional nurse<sup>[2]</sup>. Nurses should be aware of the fact that when consulting clients or caring for someone, patients are observing nurses and form impressions about the appearance, competence, character, and commitment of the nurse. Whether good or bad, these impressions usually (very fast) spread around the health facility and community<sup>[12]</sup>.

Accordingly, the image of nursing as a profession is affected by numerous factors, which decide the choice of nursing as a career. These factors include: media, public image, social prestige, nurses themselves, having a family member, relative or a friend who is a nurse, role models, physician nurse interaction, nursing educators, nurse preceptors, risk of violence, exposure to health hazards and nursing education programs<sup>[2,13]</sup>.

Image of junior undergraduates' nurse students are important because they offer strategic clues towards successful recruitment of the next generation of nurses. While there have been many studies on the public image of nurses, there is a lack of research on how junior students' nurses actually perceive and interpret their public image based on their self-image and nursing practice, as well as how this interpretation affects their work behavior<sup>[14,15]</sup>. A poor public image of nursing may affect not only nursing recruitment, but also nurses' attitudes towards work<sup>[9,15]</sup>.

Furthermore, little is known about how students perceive the nursing career upon entry into a nursing education program<sup>[14]</sup>. It may appear that the image of nursing as a career choice in the Egyptian community was not improved properly even after the nurse has been qualified in a university level<sup>[2]</sup>. To date, no identified publications have addressed students' perceptions about the value of nursing as a career, the importance of nursing roles, or the public's valuing of nursing. This research was undertaken to fill this gap. Therefore, this research was designed to investigate the students' perceptions about self-value and practice of nursing, as well as how the public values the

profession through the first year of education for junior undergraduates nurse students after experiencing the nursing courses.

### **Aim of the Study**

This study aimed to determine the junior undergraduates nurse students' images of nursing as a career choice.

### **Research Questions**

Three research's questions were asked about:

- What are the reasons of junior undergraduate nurse students selecting nursing as a career choice?
- What are junior undergraduate nurse students' perceptions about nursing as a career choice during second semester in their first year?
- What are the factors may influence the formation of these perceptions?

## **2. Material and Methods**

### **Research design**

The study utilized a cross-sectional descriptive design.

### **Setting**

This study was executed in three settings; Faculty of Nursing and Public Service Center of Medical Secretarial Program at Tanta University, as well as Health Technical Institute related to Ministry of Health.

### **Sample**

A convenient sample of 386 junior undergraduates nurse students from each setting was selected randomly; 196 students from Public Service Center of Medical Secretarial Program, 149 students from Nursing Faculty and 41 from Health Technical Institute. All students who consented to participate in writing filled in a self administered questionnaire in the presence of the researcher. The inclusion criteria for selection of sampling were juniorundergraduatesnurse students in first year after pass the 1<sup>st</sup> semester. Students were assured that no penalty would arise from withdrawal or non-participation in the study.

### **Tools**

This research used three tools to collect data about nursing image as a career choice.

### **First tool: Perceptions of Professional Nursing Image (PPNI)**

This tool consisted of three sections; the first and second sections were developed by the researchers. The first section involved sociodemographic data of the study subjects about their age, sex, pre-university qualification and location of current study, as well as the second section included the reasons for entering nursing career. The third section was developed by **Sand-Jecklin and Schaffer**<sup>[14]</sup> to measure the perceptions

of nursing among nurses, health care professionals, and health care consumers. This tool was modified by the researchers for using with nurse students by removing items that did not apply to the students' population and rewording several questions to improve clarity to measures the perceptions of nursing image as a career choice among junior undergraduates nurse students. The original PPNT instrument included 32 items measuring perception of nursing practice and valuing of nursing on a five-point agreement scale. The modified tool consisted of 24 items; 13 items for self-valuing and 11 items for nursing practice image.

### **Second tool: Perceptions of Public Valuing of Nursing Image**

This tool consisted of two sections; which was developed by **Sand-Jecklin and Schaffer**<sup>[14]</sup>. The first section contained 11 items about the public valuing nursing as a career and the second section included one item asked about the respect for the nursing career by other health care professionals.

Questionnaire responses for both first and second tools consisted of 1-5 Likert scale ranged from 5= strongly agree to 1= strongly disagree. The total score of nursing image as a career choice (except second section of second tool) ranged from 35 to 175; 35-87 indicated negative images and 88-175 indicated positive images. While total score of respect from other health care professionals ranged from 1 to 5; 1-2 indicated negative image and 3-5 indicated positive image.

### **Third tool: Sources of Influence over Perception of Nursing Image as a Career Choice**

This tool was developed by the researchers, which consisted of two questions to determine the factors influencing the junior undergraduates nurse students' perception for nursing image as a career choice. The first question asked about what has had the most influence over your perception of the nursing career? And the second question asked about where do you think the public gets its information to form opinions of nursing? Both questions consisted of four choices; different media, reading and see, personal experiences and experiences of others from relatives and neighbors. Two options were allowed for subjects' responses; yes or no.

### **Methods**

Based on revision of data from panel of 5 experts from nursing administration department of Nursing Faculty at Tanta University and pilot study of 20 students (excluded from study sampling), additional modifications were made to the instruments. The questionnaire sheets consumed about 10-15 minutes to be answered, and collection period was extended for a period of two months started at the mid of September 2012 and extended to

the last of December 2012. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to examine internal consistency, with resulting greater than or equal 0.79 for each subscale and the overall value of Content Validity Index (S-CVI) was 0.89.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Permission to access the subjects' study was sought and obtained from the executives' of different locations. The purpose of the study was explained to all participants and oral consent to participate in the study was obtained. Ethical issues concerning anonymity, confidentiality, data generation and handling were considered and upheld.

### **Statistical Analysis**

All Data were collected, coded, tabulated and subjected to statistical analysis. Statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS (version 11.5). A standard Cronbach alpha coefficient test was used to examine internal consistency. Quantitative variables were described by the Mean, Standard Deviation (SD) and the Range (Maximum - Minimum). Qualitative variables were described by proportions and Percentages. Analyzed data was done through the use of two tests; student t-test and ANOVA Spearman's rho is used to measure correlation. Significance level was stated at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

## **3. Results**

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the studied sample according to their demographic characteristics. It was observed that high percent of nursing students (85%) was in the age group 17-20 with mean age value  $19.382 \pm 1.985$  and 64.77% of them were female. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65.28%) had secondary school certificate as pre-university qualification and 50.78 % of them had still studying in Public Service Center of Medical Secretarial Program.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the study subjects according to reasons for entering nursing as a career choice. The result revealed that the participants perceived good salary (68.91%) as the most important reason for entering nursing profession, followed by the reason of helping people (65.28%) and then the advice or command from their family members (43.26%). Around one third of participants preferred to enter nursing for chancing of career opportunities of national work (29.02%) and accordingly to their secondary school grade (28.5%). Only considerable percent (15.03%) of participants chosen to enter nursing for chancing of career opportunities of work in other countries and 10.36% preferred nursing for job security.

Figure 2 depicts the total nursing career image among junior undergraduates' nurses' students. The vast majority of nursing career image total score

among nurses' students (89.39%) was perceived positive, while considerable percent (10.62%) of them was perceived it negative.

**Table (1): Distribution of the Studied Sample According to their Demographic Characteristics**

Demographic Characteristics of Nursing Students	No	%
<b>Age/Years</b>		
17-	328	85
20-	50	13
25-32	8.0	2.0
<b>Total</b>	386	100
<b>Range</b>	17-32	
<b>Mean±SD</b>	19.382±1.985	
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	136	35.23
Female	250	64.77
<b>Total</b>	386	100
<b>Pre-University Qualification</b>		
Secondary School Certificate	252	65.28
Agriculture/Industry/Trade Diploma Cert.*	80	20.73
Technical Nursing Institute	7	1.81
Faculty (Not Nursing)	6	1.55
Nursing Diploma Certificate	41	10.62
<b>Total</b>	386	100
<b>Location of Current Study</b>		
Nursing Faculty	149	38.60
Technical Nursing Institute	41	10.62
Public Service Center of Medical Secretarial Program	196	50.78
<b>Total</b>	386	100

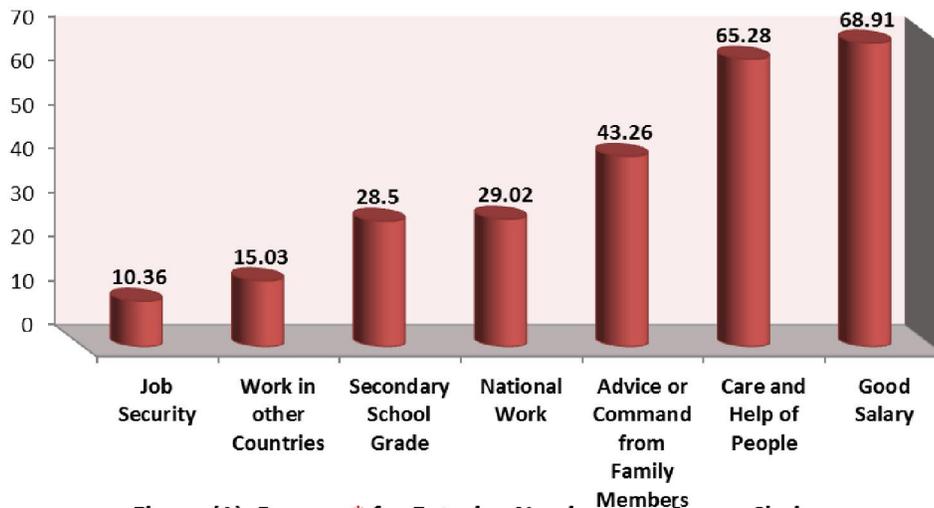
Cert.\* = Certificate

Table 2 shows the distribution of the study subjects according to their image of nursing career regarding respect from other health care professionals and information sources. The vast majority of female and male nurses' students (88.4% & 91.18)

respectively perceived positive image concerning respect from other health care professionals for nursing career. The table revealed that the main source of such information was personal experiences (53.11% & 45.34) for junior nurses' students and thinking about public respectively. Moreover, 38.08% and 39.12% of them got such information from experiences of others "relatives and neighbors". Around one third (33.94%) of nurses' students got such information from reading books, as well as 36.27% of them think that public got such information from different media.

Table 4 shows the nursing career image among junior undergraduates nurse students according to their location of current study. More than one thirds (43.21% & 36.47%) of nurses' students in Secretarial Institute had the highest mean score (28.087±4.387 & 20.056±4.113) regarding both self-valuing and nursing practice of nursing career image respectively. However, around half (53.61%) of nurses' students in Nursing Faculty had the highest mean score regarding public valuing of nursing profession's image. The table revealed statistical significance differences among nurses' students in Nursing Faculty, Health Technical Institute and Secretarial Institute at  $p < 0.001$ .

Table 5 represents the correlation between perceived items of nursing career image among junior undergraduates nurse students. It revealed highly statistical significant correlations between all items of perceived nursing profession's image (self-valuing and nursing practice at  $r = 0.361$  &  $p < 0.001$ , self-valuing and public valuing at  $r = 0.192$  &  $p < 0.001$ , as well as nursing practice and public valuing at  $r = 0.123$  &  $p < 0.01$ ).



**Figure (1): Reasons\* for Entering Nursing as a Career Choice**

\* More than one answer

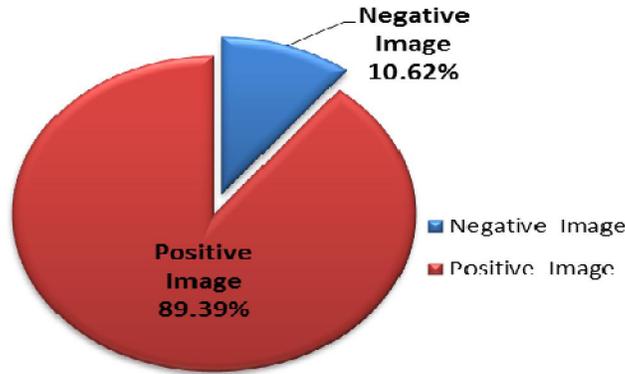


Figure (2): Total Nursing Career Image among Junior Undergraduates Nurse Students

Table (2): Distribution of the Study Subjects According to their Image of Nursing Career regarding Respect from Other Health Care Professionals and Information Sources

Information Sources Influenced the Formation of Perceptions	No	%
<b>Other health care professionals have respect for the nursing profession</b>		
<b>Female</b>		
Positive	221	<b>88.4</b>
Negative	29	11.6
<b>Male</b>		
Positive	124	<b>91.18</b>
Negative	12	8.82
<b>What is the most influence source over your perception of nursing profession?</b>		
Different media	89	23.06
Reading books	131	33.94
Personal experiences	205	<b>53.11</b>
Experiences of others (relatives and neighbors)	147	38.08
Other things	73	18.91
<b>Where do you think the public gets information to form their opinions of nursing?</b>		
Different media		
Reading books	140	36.27
Personal experiences	96	24.87
Experiences of others (relatives and neighbors)	175	<b>45.34</b>
Other things	151	39.12
	65	16.84

Table (3): Relationship between Nursing Profession's Images among Nurses' Students and their Demographic Characteristics

Demographic items		Items of Nursing Career Image							
		Self-Valuing	Nursing Practice	Public Valuing					
Age	17-	r*	0.024	0.020	-0.194				
	20-								
	25-32					P value	0.644	0.699	0.001***
Sex	Male	t*	0.381	1.137	-2.602				
	Female					P value	0.704	0.256	0.010**
Pre-University Qualification	Secondary School	f*	3.641	2.584	2.899				
	Agriculture / Industry / Trade Diploma								
	Technical Nursing Institute								
	Faculty (Not Nursing)								
	Nursing Diploma					P value	0.006**	0.037*	0.022*
	Technical Nursing Institute								
Secretarial Institute									

Significant  $P < 0.05^*$ ,  $P < 0.01^{**}$ ,  $P < 0.001^{***}$   
 r\* = Correlation Coefficient

t\* = Statistical t-test  
 f\* = Analysis of Variables ANOVA f-test

**Table (4): Nursing Career Image among Junior Undergraduates Nurse Students According to their Location of Current Study**

Items of Nursing Profession 's Image	Nursing Faculty (n=149)	Health Technical Institute (n=41)	Secretarial Institute (n=196)	ANOVA	
	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	F	P-value
Self-Valuing Max.(65)	26.946±4.416 (41.46%)	25.122±4.523 (38.65%)	<b>28.087±4.387</b> (43.21%)	8.579	<0.001***
Nursing Practice Max.(55)	18.228±4.171 (33.14%)	17.927±2.987 (32.60%)	<b>20.056±4.113</b> (36.47%)	10.717	<0.001***
Public Valuing Max.(55)	<b>32.168±7.493</b> (53.61%)	29.341±5.374 (48.90%)	27.469±5.727 (54.78%)	22.572	<0.001***

\*\*Statistically Significant ( $P<0.05$ )

Max. Maximum Scores

**Table (5): Correlation between Perceived items of Nursing Career Image among Junior Undergraduates Nurse Students**

Items of Nursing Profession's Image		Self-Valuing	Nursing Practice
Nursing Practice	r	0.361	
	P-value	<0.001***	
Public Valuing	r	0.192	0.123
	P-value	<0.001***	0.016**

\*Statistically Significant ( $p<0.05$ )

#### 4. Discussion

Understanding how junior undergraduates' nurse students come to choose nursing as a career choice is of critical importance to the profession, with implications for both recruitment and retention. Determining students' image about nursing would provide educators with a basis for curriculum development, as well as provide with academic standards and healthcare experiences that could prove crucial to meeting students' individual career development needs both now and in the future[16]. Therefore, the purpose of the current study aimed to determine the junior undergraduates nurse students' images of nursing as a career choice.

The result of present study revealed that the junior nurses' students (females or males) perceived good salary as the most important reason for entering nursing career. It is likely that either men or females chosen nursing as a career because nursing offers stable employment with reasonable wages especially in these times of economic instability. Similarly, **Abdel El-Halem and her colleagues**[2] explained this finding may be due to the low economic status in developing countries, which drives students to work outside the country. In addition, it may be due to cultural values in Arab countries where males and females assume great responsibilities and it was expected to be the main reason for entering the nursing profession since the graduates are

automatically hired and have the opportunities to work abroad whether in Arab or western countries. This finding in the same line with studies conducted by **Alexander**[12] and **Law and Arthur**[13] who identified good salary as an attractive attribute for nurses' students.

Yet, this same result was dissimilar to the results of **Gamel**[17]. Her study was conducted in Egypt to determine the image of nursing as a profession among undergraduate nursing students and interns. The results revealed that the availability of work and financial reward were the least mentioned reasons among her subjects.

Moreover, the second mentioned reason by study subjects for entering nursing career in this research was helping people. Consistently, **Dyckand her colleagues**[18] study revealed that most male and female students' primary interest in nursing was not linked to cognitive understanding of nursing, but on emotional desires, such as helping people and the desire to nurture by the study subjects for the participants in this study perceived.

The study subjects perceived the advice or command from their family members for entering nursing career as the third reason and ranked the reason for providing them with ample career opportunities of national work as fourth reason. This may be attributed to the fact that a considerable number of family members, friends or acquaintances who were actually nurses. These results were supported by **ElSharkawy and El Hadad**[19] who studied "factors affecting students' choice of nursing as a career in Egypt and Syria". They found that the family members had the significant impact on the choice of nursing as a career and demonstrated that family members were the most encouraging forces to their entering nursing, as well as was the main source of moral support during the years of schooling.

Nursing students' reasons for choosing an education in nursing have been studied earlier and the results of the different studies seem to be related to each other, independent of culture. In Egypt, nursing was considered as a chance to work in other

countries[2], in Japan, nursing was been a good occupational choice[20]; in Italy, job availability was given as a reason[21]; in Norway, nursing was seen as a safe job[22]; and in England, nursing students were found to be attracted by an interest in professional rewards[23]. More altruistic reasons for choosing a nursing education have also been found. Nursing is seen as a worthwhile job, providing the opportunity to serve people[20] as well as helping others, doing something useful[21] and providing human contact[24]. Furthermore, extrinsic reasons have been found, such as being influenced by parents and friends[25].

The vast majority of total score for nursing career image among junior undergraduates nurse students (males and females) was perceived a very positive view of nursing career. Moreover, the majority of female and male junior nurses' students perceived positive image concerning respect from other health care professionals for nursing career. This may be due to classroom education and clinical environment increase interactions between the students and their educators, as well as among students themselves. Consistent with this view is the fact that junior undergraduates nurse students tended to view nursing as a respectable and stable career with much job security and rewarding, as it provides them with job satisfaction.

This finding was consistent with **Al-Omar**[25] study which indicated that the more likely the student would be attracted to the nursing profession due to more knowledge and positive attitude on nursing. Accordingly, **Mkhize and Nzimande**[26] suggested that positive perceptions include that nursing offers good job security, and that the shortage of nurses will lead to pay rises and wider choice of jobs.

**Abdel El-Halem and her colleagues**[2] showed that positive changes in the image of nursing as a career among more than half of the study subjects due to working conditions, clinical training, relationship with faculty members and relationship with friends. Consequently, **O'lynn and Tranbarger**[27] suggested that in order to attract more individuals to the profession, a positive image of nursing needs to be engendered by nurse education and general community.

Conversely, **Kotzabassakiet al.**[28] mentioned that young students seem to hold equivocal attitudes towards nursing as a career. Nursing is described as low status, not well educated and not well paid occupation. It is also characterized as "technical", "high stress", "tough" and "demanding", "dirty", "unpleasant", "dealing with death", "mainly feminine work", with "shift long working hours" and "repetitive tasks". Nurses are seen as "doctors' helpers" or "subordinates", and subjects reported

difficulties in finding a job after graduation. Additionally, **Cockrell**[29] reported that students' perceptions about nursing career have been shown to be influenced by several factors including negative parental viewpoints, a lack of time spent by students in healthcare settings, absence of nurse mentors, and unrealistic television media portrayals of nurses. In addition, there may be poor or inadequate information on academic and career planning for potential nursing students.

From junior undergraduates nurse students' point of view in this current research, the main source of information of perceptions for nursing career was personal experiences followed by relatives and neighbors for the students themselves, as well as for the public. Regardless of age and gender, all junior undergraduates nursing students decided that their personal experiences (e.g. clinical experiences, personal situations and interactions with their educators, physicians, nursing staff or public) and perceptions from relatives and neighbors were important sources which influenced the formation of perceptions of nursing career.

In agreement with the findings of this study, **Dante et al.**[30] explored Italian nursing students' and leavers' perspectives about nursing image for leaving nursing education. He mentioned that personal reasons were the most common followed by difficult relationships with teaching staff, learning difficulties, and wrong career choice, as well as difficulties with practical training. In this sense, **Cockrell**[29] Stated that students' perceptions of nursing are based on visual images that are often limited to bedside care and drug administration instead of that of a highly skilled and well educated nursing professional with an important role to play in healthcare.

Currently, the nurse students in the present study suggested that reading books was the third source for their information, while the media was the third source of information about nursing career for the public. These findings are similar to the study of **Gazzaz**[31] which depicted that students establish their ideas of nursing from books, television programs, and/or movies that feature nurses, friends and family members, and nurses encountered in the healthcare settings. Sometimes this preconceived idea of nursing is not realistic. The reality of practice may alter the nursing student's perception of the profession during his or her course of study or it may change after graduation, when the student assumes the role of the registered nurse.

Moreover, **Takase**[32] emphasized that the media plays an influential role in reinforcing negative image of nurses. Images of nurses as being subservient, powerless, unaffectionate, selflessness,

unintelligent and as a romantic partner of a physician are often projected by the media. In fact, nurse characters rarely display any independence in television series depicting medical scenes. On the contrary, **Christman**[33] argues that a poor educational preparation in nursing induces a negative public image of nurses. The educational difference between nurses and doctors also produces a hierarchical structure wherein nurses are placed under the supervision of physicians as members of a high status group.

The findings of this study revealed positive statistical significance differences between pre-university qualification of nurses' students and all items of nursing image. This means that nursing was viewed as by junior undergraduates' nurse students as an attractive and desirable career. However, there were negative statistical significance differences between public valuing item of nursing image and nurses' students' age and sex. This means that despite the positive outlook on nursing, there were certain beliefs held by the public about gender barrier which not congruent with the realities of professional nursing today, as well as nursing was a suitable career for both men and women.

In this aspect, **Ozdemir**[34] reported that both genders consider nursing as a profession which has negative image in the public. Furthermore, **Ellis et al.**[35] mentioned that although numbers of men are increasing, they still comprise a minority in the nursing profession, and may be deterred from entering it by the perception that nursing is "women's work". The image of nursing as a traditional female career continues to prevail along with negative stereotypes that adversely impact efforts to recruit more men to nursing. The challenge of recruiting more men to nursing falls on the recent male graduates and currently practicing male nurses[34].

The results of this study showed that junior nurses' students in Public Service Center of Medical Secretarial Program perceived the highest mean score regarding both self-valuing and nursing practice of nursing career image. This means, those students perceived that the public viewed them less positively than they saw themselves as professionals. This may be explained by high perception of self-image which may be considered by them as more important than public image. This finding confirmed by **Mohamed** study[36] who discussed the implications of stereotypical self and public nursing image on performance of nurses and nursing students..

Hence, the choice of nursing as a career does not depend only on the public image, social prestige, media, role models, nursing educators, nurse preceptors and nursing education programs[2], but also on self-perception of the image.

On the other hand, junior nurses' students in Nursing Faculty had the highest mean score regarding public valuing of nursing career image. In fact, the reason for this finding is those students find it difficult and highly competitive to gain admission to a nursing program. Often admission procedures for Nursing Faculty require prospective students to maintain a high grade point average in Secondary School, interview with faculty members, and take a preadmission English test before admission. Additionally, once starting nursing program, most of courses with English language and include credit hours, detailed preparatory clinical assignments, and clinical requirements of more than 6 hours daily with patients in the healthcare setting. All of these reasons increase the perception of nurses' students for public valuing of nursing career image. Therefore, Moreover, there are statistical significance differences among students in Nursing Faculty, Health Technical Institute and Secretarial Institute at  $p < 0.001$ .

Based upon current study findings, there were highly statistical significant correlations between subscales of perceived nursing career image at Nursing Faculty, Health Technical Institute and Public Service Center of Medical Secretarial Program. Really, both females and males in three settings perceived self-valuing, nursing practice and public valuing as a significant image for nursing career.

## Conclusion

Understanding the perception of nursing career through the eyes of future nurses regardless of their place of study will provide valuable information to assist faculty and nurse leaders in bridging the gap between nursing education and practice. The nursing profession must find effective methods to improve the image of nursing and recruit students to combat the nursing shortage.

In conclusion, findings demonstrated that good salary was the most important reason for entering nursing career. The vast majority of female and male junior undergraduates nurse students perceived strong positive images toward nursing career and concerning respect from other health care professionals. The nurse students in Public Service Center of Medical Secretarial Program perceived the highest mean score regarding both self-valuing and nursing practice of nursing career image than public image. However, nurses' students in Nursing Faculty had the highest mean score regarding image of public valuing of nursing career. There were highly statistical significant correlations between subscales of perceived nursing career image at Nursing Faculty,

Health Technical Institute and Public Service Center of Medical Secretarial Program.

### Recommendations

Based on findings of the current study, the researchers recommended the following:

- Curricular should emphasis on expanding and raising nursing students' awareness of their responsibilities toward patients, especially in challenging or difficult situations, and on improving their concept of nursing as a career.
- Conducting conference for junior undergraduates' nurse students to orient them about the nursing career, history of nursing, nursing education programs and different clinical experiences.
- Regular visits to secondary schools and all places which provide any related nursing programs for provision talks to strengthen the good image by acting as role-models and seek to dispel the myths and misconceptions through seminars, brochures and advertisements for portraying the realistic image of nursing.
- Nursing schools and faculties, media and professional journals should emphasize nursing roles and portray positive image of nursing career as well as males in nursing.

### Recommendation for further research

The researchers recommended further research to examine the public's opinion of nursing careers and how personal experiences, media messages, and socio-demographic factors shape these perceptions.

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**Operational Definition: Junior undergraduates nurse students** are those students accepted into a nursing education program of Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) or Bachelor Science of Nursing (BSN) and enrolled in the first fundamental nursing or related nursing course.

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