

Student Nurses' Perceptions of the Nursing Profession at a Higher Institution of Learning

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Abstract: Nurses are at the forefront in the provision of primary health care services to the members of community. South Africa is regarded as one of the countries that experience high attrition rate of nurses. Some of the reasons behind the high attrition rate of nurses relate to the demanding nature of the occupation. It is however worth mentioning that regardless of the perceived demanding nature of the nursing profession, institutions continue to admit first year student nurses every year. The main objective of this study was to explore student nurses' perceptions of the nursing profession, which could share light to possible motives behind deciding to choose a career in nursing. A quantitative research design was adopted in this research and Microsoft Excel was used to analyse the results. A convenient sample of 65 student nurses enrolled at a selected higher education institution was drawn, and a questionnaire developed by Chauke, Van Der Wal and Botha (2015) was used to collect data from the sample. 22 items of the questionnaire were used to measure 4 sub-scales (the nature of nursing, perceptions about nurses, gender in nursing and working conditions) on a 4-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the collected data. The results of this study revealed that majority of the nursing students perceived the nursing profession in a positive way (e.g. nursing was perceived a prestigious career, which is based on helping others (75%). The student nurses also perceived nurses positively (e.g. nurses were perceived as caring people (70%). They also perceived no difference between job performance of male nurses and that of female nurses (e.g. males are as good nurses as females (60%). However, the nursing students perceived that nurses work under unfavourably conditions (e.g. nurses work in a safe place (5%).

Keywords: Nurses, Nursing profession, Primary health care, Perceptions, Professional identity

1. Introduction

There have been fundamental changes in the South African health care sector since the conception of democracy in 1994 (Department of Health, 1996). The introduction of primary health care (PHC) system in 1996, expected nurses to play an important role in the provision of health care service delivery at the local clinics (Department of Health, 1996). The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2008) defined the concept of "primary health care" as the important health care focussing on practical, scientifically sound, and socially acceptable approaches and technology made generally accessible to individuals and families in the community, through their full involvement and at an affordable cost. In line with The White Paper for the Transformation of the Health System in South Africa, the Department of Health in South Africa committed itself to the introduction of primary health care approach in an attempt of ensuring that all South African citizens access quality health care services at their neighbouring clinics (White Paper for the Transformation of the Health System in South Africa, 1997). Sooruth, Sibiya and

Sokhela (2015) as well as the Department of Health (2001) emphasised that the notion underlying primary health care is decentralisation of services, which includes the primary health management units playing active roles in management of the provision of health services.

The main objective behind the implementation of the primary health care approach in the twenty first century is to deviate from just rendering health care services to the members of community towards advancing the quality of health care by adapting and responding to the rapidly changing nature of the complex world (WHO, 2018). The most nearest and first place to be visited by the members of community in search of health care service delivery is their local clinics. In South Africa, the local clinics are largely managed by nurses, and this implies that nurses are at the forefront in the provision of primary health care services to the members of community (Department of Health, 1996). Therefore, South Africa relies more on nurses in order to render quality health care services to its population. In order for South Africa to have

sufficient number of nurses to provide primary health care services, it is important for the country to attract and train as many potential nurses as it is required as well as to retain them. However, there seems to be a challenge when it comes to the retention of nurses in the country (Stanz & Greyling, 2010). Pillay (2009) mentioned that the most disturbing experience is observing newer candidates in the nursing profession leave. These findings may point out disappointment with nursing as a career choice and profession.

Despite the progressive measures in the South African health sector to advance the quality of health care service delivery, South African health care system is experiencing challenges of managing ever-increasing cases of various forms of endemic and communicable diseases (Bailey, Blake, Schriver, Cubaka, Thomas & Hilber, 2016). Furthermore, the South African community is becoming more informed, which intensifies their expectations relating to the rendering of health care services to the members of the community. In order to address these challenges, more resources such as health care funds, facilities, equipment, medication, and human resources, especially nurses are needed (Bailey *et al.*, 2016). According to The White Paper on the Transformation of the Health Systems in South Africa (1997), the South African health care system focuses on the six comprehensive principles, namely;

- To combine disjointed health services at all levels in an inclusive and integrated National Health System.
- To promote equality, accessibility and utilisation of health services.
- To extend the accessibility and ensure the appropriateness of health services.
- To develop and make sure adequate personnel is available to the health sector.
- To encourage community participation across the health sector.
- To advance the health sector planning and the monitoring of health status and services.

In line with the fourth principle of the White Paper on the Transformation of the Health Systems in South Africa about developing and ensuring the

health sector has suitable human resources, the Department of Health provided training for its health care workers in order to strengthen the primary health care service delivery to the community. However, Armstrong (2006:107) mentioned that in a health department that is reasonably and fully resourced, community members are disgruntled with the type of service rendered, whilst the health care workers are dissatisfied with their working conditions. Sooruth, Sibiyi and Sokhela (2015) asserted that health care workers reported shortages of skilled human resources as a challenge to the achievement of the objective of primary health care system and delivery of quality health care services to the citizens of South Africa.

South Africa is experiencing high attrition rate of nurses, with emigration cited as one of the main cause (Stanz & Greyling, 2010). Mhlambi (2002:63) observed that South Africa has a major challenge relating to "brain drain" in the health sector, and that "the flight of skills" from the public health services has now reached shocking magnitudes, which severely endanger service delivery. Kaplan and Höppli, (2017) indicated that some of the cited reasons behind this include uncompetitive low salaries, demanding nature of the occupation and poor working conditions. It is however, worth mentioning that regardless of the perceived demanding nature of the nursing profession, institutions continue to admit first year student nurses every year, and this makes it important to understand what attract nursing students to want to become part of professionals who take care of patients. Holland, Johnston and Asama (1993) suggested that understanding nursing students' perceptions of the nursing profession and what constitute a nurse is of paramount importance. The perceptions of the nursing profession serve as a foundation in the development of the "values and beliefs that guide how nurses or nurse students think, act and interact with patients" (Fagermoen, 1997 cited in Hao, Niu, Li, Yue & Liu, 2014:137). The main objective of this study was to explore nursing students' perceptions of the nursing profession, which could share light with regards to possible motives behind choosing a career in nursing.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Nursing Professional Identity

Professional identity, also referred to as occupational identity, is defined by Kielhofner (2002:126)

as "a composite sense of who one is and wishes to become as an occupational being, generated from one's history of occupational participation". Therefore, as suggested by Hao *et al.* (2014), nursing professional identity can be regarded as a professional self or the self-concept of nursing, which determines the manner in which nurses or nursing students perceive their profession. This means that nursing professional identity is largely influenced by the way in which nurses or nursing students perceive nursing profession. In support of this view, Ohlen and Segesten (1998) emphasised that the nursing professional identity consists of three dimensions, namely; personal, interpersonal, and socio-historical, while Jebiril (2008) identified four developmental stages of professional identity.

2.1.1 Dimensions of Professional Identity

2.1.1.1 Personal Dimension

Personal dimension includes the professional self-image, which is influenced by one's self-concept (Hao *et al.*, 2014). Coetzee, Roythorne-Jacobs and Mensele (2016:468) defined self-concept as "an individual's own views of his or her personal characteristics and abilities which change over time as social, economic and cultural factors, occupations and technology change". The individual self is regarded as a primary factor directing one's identity. Phelan and Kinsella (2009) suggested one's levels of efficacy and confidence, one's self-esteem, one's personal success and motivators, individual goals and personality characteristics play a very crucial role in shaping one's professional identity. The crystallisation of nurses' self-concept in such a way that they link their personal qualities, values, motives, interests and capabilities with their nursing profession results in positive self-image, self-knowledge and self-confidence (Coetzee *et al.*, 2016). This will definitely encourage nurses to commit to personal and professional development, which will ultimately contribute to their professional identity (Kilkus, 1993; Ohlen & Segesten, 1998).

2.1.1.2 Interpersonal Dimension

Interpersonal dimension involves the exploration behaviours of the balance between the expectations and experiences, as well as ideals and realities in the workplace (Hao *et al.*, 2014). New entrants in the nursing profession join the working environment with their own expectations, while senior experienced nurses, doctors and members of the public have their own expectations of these nurses (Hao

et al., 2014). Research showed that it is imperative to seek ways to reduce the gap between these expectations by encouraging new entrants' personal and professional growth through teamwork and mentoring programmes (Glass & Walter, 2000; MacIntosh, 2003).

2.1.1.3 Socio-Historical Dimension

The socio-historical dimension involves the autonomy of career choice and career persistence (Hao *et al.*, 2014). Research revealed that there is difference between those who choose nursing as their first career choice and those who choose a career in nursing based on circumstances. For example, those who chose nursing as their first career choice might have perceived nursing in a positive way (Breirer, Wildschut & Mgqolozana, 2009). However, there are instances whereby nursing students are influenced by teachers, parents or other members of the community in making decisions to choose nursing as a career or profession (Hao *et al.*, 2014). Research shows that in South Africa, student nurses chose to follow a career in nursing because they are offered with the opportunity to earn while studying, and not because of their passion for the nursing profession (Mkhize & Nzimande, 2007:22). The consequences of such instances in the long run could be disillusionment with nursing as a career choice (Pillay, 2009). This may have impact on nurses' professional identity, how nursing is viewed as a career and future persistence for nurses to remain in the nursing profession (Zhang & Petrini, 2008).

2.1.2 Developmental Stages of Professional Identity

2.1.2.1 Level of Preoccupation

This stage involves the preparatory and exploratory stages, which take place during childhood and adolescence (Cardoso, Batista & Graça, 2014). It is during a period when one observes, admires and mimics those who are in particular profession. This implies that children and adolescents at this stage tend to be curious and therefore interact with adults to collect and learn as much as they can about various occupations in order to develop interest and attempt to frame their self-concept (Coetzee *et al.*, 2016).

2.1.2.2 The Learning Stage

This stage involves the construction of professional identity, by taking necessary steps to become a member of a particular profession. This means

that people choose to identify themselves with a particular profession and acquire necessary qualifications, training and skills relating to the chosen profession (Cardoso *et al.*, 2014). It means that a student nurse who is at this stage will try to connect his or her self-concept to the world of work, as they become exposed partially to nursing practices, which eventually results in crystallisation of a nursing profession self-concept (Coetzee *et al.*, 2016).

2.1.2.3 Professional Stage

This stage involves closing the gap between theory and practice as it comes after acquiring necessary qualifications and skills. It includes the process of gaining experience in the field, which eventually strengthens of one's professional identity (Cardoso *et al.*, 2014). A nurse who is at the professional stage will work hard to make a place for him/herself and maintains high level of achievement in the nursing profession (Coetzee *et al.*, 2016).

2.1.2.4 Post Professional Stage

At this stage, a person feels that he or she belongs to a particular profession and shares the realities and expectations, perceive mutual emotions and have a sense of common destiny with others in the same profession (Cardoso *et al.*, 2014). A nurse who is at this stage feels established in his or her career, and therefore prefers sharing his or her professional expertise and skills with others through informal and formal mentorship (Coetzee *et al.*, 2016).

2.2 Nurses Attrition and Retention

South Africa has been experiencing challenges relating to nurses' attrition. Pillay (2009) found out that what is mostly disheartening is the fact even the newly employed nurses seemed to leave the nursing profession. Research identified job dissatisfaction with regards to several aspects of the job as one of the most reported variable influencing nurses' attrition (Stanz & Greyling, 2010). In South Africa, this notion is supported by Ijumba (2001), who mentioned that nurses reported dissatisfaction with regards the poor working conditions, remuneration, human resources shortages, inadequate facilities and work overload. A four-year study by Rispel and Bruce (2015:117) revealed that nursing profession is in peril because nurses practice their profession without adequate resources, "which in turn contribute to poor staying power, low energy levels, abuse of leave, sub-optimal nursing care, split loyalties and accountability, and erosion of professionalism".

In a study conducted by Tshitangano (2013) among nurses in Limpopo Province, it was discovered that the majority of the nurses were not satisfied with their jobs. The various aspects in their profession that contributed to their job dissatisfaction include amongst others; poor staffing practices, lack of resources needed to perform their jobs effectively, unappealing salary packages, poor working conditions, unsafe workplace, limited career development opportunities and the long hours of work (Tshitangano, 2013). A study conducted by Mmamma, Mothiba and Nancy (2015) in Limpopo added shortage of professional nurses and work overload to the list of factors contributing to nurses' job dissatisfaction. The challenges cited above seemed not to be a challenge unique to South Africa only. For example, in China Hao *et al.* (2014) mentioned that that one third of nurses with nursing professional qualifications quit their jobs or immigrate to more developed nations for good salaries and better working conditions in order to improve their social and economic status. In South Korea, Lee, Song, Cho, Lee and Daly (2003) discovered that cause of nurses' attrition included work overload and poor interpersonal relationships at work. It is however remarkable to note that not all nurses choose to leave the profession. There are many nurses who seemed to be satisfied with certain aspects of their jobs, such as the kind of relationships they have their patients/clients or communities (Ijumba, 2001:198). Furthermore, Ijumba (2001) discovered that there are nurses who are dedicated employees to such an extent that they want to remain in their profession and continue to do their best in their current working environment. A study conducted by Havens, Wood and Leeman (2006) aimed at establishing some of the reasons behind nurses' decisions to choose and remain in their profession and working environment in New Mexico. They discovered that some of the reasons included nurses' love of their work and their own satisfaction with their personal and professional responsibilities. Dewar and Nolan (2013) emphasised the importance of improving nurses' job performance and creation of safe and healthy working conditions, which are conducive for nursing practices. Sidebotham, Fenwick, Rath and Gamble (2015) conducted a study on Australian midwives and discovered that employment conditions and workplace relationships within the organisation such as good relationships between co-workers, the quality support received from each other, the support from their supervisors and employment

Table 1: Demographics Profile of Participants

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	25	38.5%
	Female	49	61.5%
Age	below 21	3	4.7%
	21-30	61	93.8%
	31-40	1	1.5%
Year of study	Level 1	28	43%
	Level 2	25	38.5%
	Level 3	12	18.5%
	Total	65	100.0%

Source: Authors

security they enjoy made them to be committed to their profession. Furthermore, Paşaoğlu and Tonus (2014:401) emphasised the importance of providing nurses with extensive training and development program, establish healthy employment relations and provide good working environments.

Meiring and van Wyk (2013) indicated that reports on nurses tend to focus on the negatives and the nursing profession seemed to be largely influenced by media reports. They indicated that media tend to focus on the negative unforeseen incidents in the nursing workplace such as patients' negligence, while the positive side of it, is usually not reported. Meiring and van Wyk (2013) further emphasised that the perceptions of nurses and nursing profession play an important role in attracting future nurses as well as retention of current and future nurses. It is considered the responsibility of nurses to modify the negative perceptions that the members of the public have on nurses and the nursing profession (Meiring & van Wyk, 2013). The first step into realising this is for nurses to create positive perceptions of themselves and their nursing profession. Therefore, the objective of the current study was to examine nursing students' perceptions of nurses and the nursing profession. It is believed that this could be in line with the student nurses' expectations and beliefs with regards to what a nursing career should be like.

3. Method and Materials

A quantitative research design, which is non-experimental and descriptive, was adopted in this study. The main objective of quantitative approach is to develop and employ mathematical models in order to analyse the collected data concerning a phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2017). This

study is quantitative in nature as numbers were assigned to code the student nurses' responses relating to their perceptions of the nursing profession. The Microsoft Excel's descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data collected. Furthermore, a cross sectional survey, aimed at collecting primary data from a sample at a specific point in time was used (Creswell, 2008).

3.1 Population and Sampling

Bryman and Bell (2015:536) regard "population as the universe of units from which a sample is drawn". The study's population included student nurses who were enrolled at a selected higher education institution. All students registered for a nursing degree at a selected institution of higher learning were targeted, irrespective of their age, gender or level of study. Convenience sampling method, as one of non-probability sampling methods was used to get a convenient sample. A total number of 65 nursing students participated in this study. Majority of 61.5% of the participants were females while 38.5% were males. Majority of the participants fall under the age group of between 21-30 years (93.8%, N=61), followed by 4%, (N=3) of those who were below the age of 21, and 1.5% (N=1), between 31-40 years. Majority of the student nurses who participated were in their first level (43%, N=28), followed by those in their second level (38.5%, N=25) and only 18.5% (N=12) (See Table 1).

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

A structured questionnaire on nurses' perceived image was used to data collection instrument used to gather from the participants. The questionnaire consisted of three demographic questions and 22

Table 2: Nursing Students' Perceptions of the Nature of Nursing Profession

Item	Negative Perceptions			Positive Perceptions		
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %
Nursing is a respected profession	(4) 6%	(22) 34%	(26) 40%	(26) 40%	(13) 20%	(39) 60%
Nursing is based on helping others	(5) 8%	(11) 17%	(16) 25%	(10) 15%	(39) 60%	(49) 75%
Nursing is an appreciated profession	(17) 26%	(2) 3%	(19) 29%	(33) 51%	(3) 20%	(46) 71%
Nursing is an independent profession	(6) 9%	(18) 28%	(24) 37%	(32) 49%	(9) 14%	(41) 63%
Nursing is a prestigious profession	(17) 26%	(15) 23%	(16) 25%	(13) 20%	(36) 55%	(49) 75%
Nursing is an indispensable profession in any society	(22) 34%	(4) 6%	(26) 40%	(15) 23%	(24) 37%	(39) 60%
Nursing should continue to be a university programme	(11) 17%	(6) 9%	(17) 26%	(9) 14 %	(39) 60%	(48) 74%
Nursing is a good career choice for students with good grades	(15) 23%	(17) 26%	(32) 49%	(21) 32%	(12) 18%	(33) 51%

Source: Authors

items of the questionnaire developed by Chauke, Van Der Wal and Botha (2015) were used to measure 4 sub-scales, namely; the nature of nursing (8 items), perceptions about nurses (6 items), gender in nursing (4 items) and working conditions (4 items) on a 4-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The acceptable Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.77, for the whole questionnaire was reported (Chauke *et al.*, 2015). The researchers obtained ethical clearance was from the institution of higher learning and questionnaire were distributed to the participants in their respective classes. The appeal to participate included a short description of the purpose of the study, a declaration of confidentiality and explained to the participant that they may decline or opt to discontinue at any time. Participants were requested to fill out the survey privately, and submit the completed to their class representatives, and the researchers made arrangements to collect the completed questionnaire from the class representatives two weeks later after submission. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse and make meaning of the collected data in the form of tables, and percentages.

4. Results and Discussion

The discussion that follows presents the findings on nursing student' perceptions of nurses and nursing profession by focussing on the following four dimensions separately; nursing students' perceptions about the nature of nursing, perceptions about nurses, gender perceptions in nursing, and their perceptions of the nursing working conditions. For

discussion purposes, "strongly agree" and "agree" responses were joint to characterise positive perceptions while "strongly disagree" and "disagree" responses were combined to represent negative perceptions.

4.1 Perceptions About the Nature of Nursing

Eight (8) items were used to measure the nursing student' perceptions of the nature of nursing profession, and majority of student nurses perceived all eight statements in a positive manner. The results revealed that the nursing students favourably perceived nursing as a profession based on helping others (75%), a prestigious profession (75%), and universities should continue to offer nursing programme (74%). Table 2 provides a summary of their responses.

4.2 Perceptions about Nurses

Six (6) items were used to measure the student nurses' perceptions of nurses, and majority of student nurses positively perceived three aspects about nurses negatively perceived the other three aspects. The nursing students' responses are summarised in Table 3 on the next page. Majority of the student nurses were of the view that nurses are caring people (60%), who need good grades (63%) and will always have a job (68%). However, majority of the student nurses do not perceive that nurses are appreciated (55%) and respected (51%) for what they are doing. Furthermore, 71% of them think that nurses are not receiving enough recognition for their contribution.

Table 3: Nursing Students' Perceptions about Nurses

Item	Negative Perceptions			Positive Perceptions		
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %
Nurses will always have a job	(8) 12%	(13) 20%	(21) 32%	18 (28%)	26 (40%)	(44) 68%
Nurses need good grades	(18) 28%	(6) 9%	(24) 37%	(32) 49%	(9) 14%	(41) 63%
Nurses are appreciated	(17) 26%	(19) 29%	(36) 55%	(11) 17%	(18) 28%	(29) 45%
Nurses are respected	(21) 32 %	(12) 19%	(33) 51%	(15) 23%	(17) 26 %	(32) 49%
Nurses are recognised enough for their contribution	(33) 51%	(3) 20%	(46) 71%	(17) 26%	(2) 3%	(19) 29%
Nurses are caring people	(4) 6%	(22) 34%	(26) 40%	(15) 23%	(24) 37%	(39) 60%

Source: Authors

Table 4: Nursing Students' Perceptions About Gender in Nursing

Item	Negative Perceptions			Positive Perceptions		
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %
Males are as good nurses as females	(22) 34%	(4) 6%	(26) 40%	(15) 23%	(24) 37%	(39) 60%
Male nurses are more accepted by patients than female nurses	28 (43) %	(32) 49%	(60) 92%	(3) 5%	(2) 3%	(5) 8%
Doctors prefer male nurses more than female nurses	(17) 26%	(39) 60%	(56) 86%	(5) 8%	(4) 6%	(9) 14%
Male nurses are not respected by others	(52) 86%	(11) 17%	(63) 97%	(2) 3%	(0) 0%	(2) 3%

Source: Authors

4.3 Gender Perceptions in Nursing

Four (4) items were used to measure the student nurses' perceptions of gender in nursing, and majority of the student nurses perceived gender as not being influential to nursing practices in all four items. Although nursing is traditionally perceived as a feminine career, 97% of the student nurses do not think male nurses are not respected, 92% of them do not think male nurses are more acceptable than female nurses, and 86% do not think doctors prefer male nurses than female nurses. Furthermore, 60% of the student nurses perceive male nurses as being as good as female nurses. Table 4 provides a summary of their responses.

a. Perceptions of the Nursing Working Conditions

Four (4) items were used to measure the nursing students' perceptions of nursing working conditions, and majority of the student nurses perceived the nursing working conditions unfavourably in all four items. The student nurses do not perceive the nursing practice environment as a safe place

to work (95%) and the nurses' earnings are perceived as being adequate (88%). This is in line with what extensive research conducted in South Africa revealed about nurses' working conditions (Ijumba, 2001; Stanz & Greyling, 2010; Tshitangano, 2013; Mmamma *et al.*, 2015; Rispel & Bruce, 2015). Furthermore, 97% of student nurses do not perceive that nursing environment allows nurses to work with high technology in the high tech medical world. This is not surprising as majority of the students are millennials or Generation Y, and this generation is known to prefer working with high technologies (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016). Table 5 on the next page provides a summary of student nurses' responses relating nurses' working conditions.

5. Significance and Limitations of the Study

This study assisted in examining nursing students' perceptions of nurses and the nursing profession at a selected institution of higher learning. It is quite interesting to discover that there are numerous aspects in the nursing profession that student

Table 5: Student Nurses' Perceptions About Nursing Working Conditions

Item	Negative Perception			Positive Perception		
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %	(N) %
Nurses work in a safe place	(10) 15%	(52) 86%	(62) 95%	(3) 5%	(0) 0%	(3) 5%
Nurses work with high technology	(52) 86%	(11) 17%	(63) 97%	(2) 3%	0%	(2) 3%
Nurses make/earn a lot of money	33 (51)%	(24) 37%	(57) 88%	(2) 3%	(3) 5%	(8) 12%
Nurses are major players within the high tech medical world	(52) 86%	(11) 17%	(63) 97%	(2) 3%	0%	(2) 3%

Source: Authors

nurses perceive in a positive way. These aspects are the ones that the policy makers should take into consideration in an attempt to make the nursing profession more appealing to potential nurses, nurses and the members of the public. The study also highlighted aspects which were perceived negatively by student nurses. These negative aspects have been identified by several researchers in South Africa. Rispel and Bruce (2015) emphasised that as South Africa is facing a challenge of nurses' attrition, it is recommended that government and key stakeholders should address the negative aspects identified in an attempt to revitalise nursing profession, advance and remodel resources for a positive nursing environment. Furthermore, student nurses reported discontent with nurses' lack of exposure to working in a high technology world. As the world is in the fourth industrial revolution, new developments in nursing practice may include "tele-nursing, triple-care, by remotely connecting with clients via camera, digital and Bluetooth stethoscope, chip monitor, and other methods" (Aunguroch & Gunawan, 2019). All these require government to create a new nursing environment.

This study was limited to a convenient sample of 65 student nurses who were enrolled in a selected higher learning institution. The results of this study cannot be generalised to the entire similar population group. Therefore, it is recommended for future studies to focus on larger sample and also include nurses working in both public and private health sectors. In addition, a mixed approach could help to get a richer data set.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Nurses are the first people to interact with the members of public who need health care services, and the government relies more on them in order to ensure

that the public receives quality health care service delivery. It is therefore important to assess nurses and student nurses' perceptions of the profession on a continuous basis in order to seek methods to improve on what is perceived positively and address what is perceived negatively. This could assist in rejuvenating the image of nurses and the nursing profession.

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