

**PERCEPTION OF MALE UPPER
SECONDARY STUDENTS' ON NURSING
AS A CAREER CHOICE**

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ABSTRACT

Nursing, despite its advancement, is still widely perceived to be a "female profession". Globally, this perception has often deterred the entry of qualified young men into the profession. Malaysia is no exception. Nursing has made significant progress in the last decade but the number of males choosing nursing as a career remains very low despite the Malaysian government's call for more male nurses. Nursing administrators, recruiters and policy makers need to understand the perception of nursing as a career and the interplay of the numerous factors involved in making career decisions.

The purpose of this study is to understand the perception of male upper secondary students on nursing as a career choice and to identify the factors that influence career decisions. It is aimed to determine: (1) the perception of an ideal career based on career choice motivators (2) the perception of Nurses and Nursing (3) the perception of an ideal career versus perception of nursing as a career (4) perception of men as nurses and (5) the factors that affect a career choice in nursing.

A descriptive design was employed with a survey methodology. The instrument comprised of a four section questionnaire: Demographic Details, Career Choice Motivators, Perception of Nursing and Personal and External Factors. A total of 84 responses were analyzed. The findings indicate that good salary, stability and low stress were considered to be important career choice motivators. However, nursing was not seen to fulfill these important career choice motivators. Nursing received low mean scores in all areas when compared to an

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ideal career except for “doing something useful/meaningful” “power/leadership” and “challenges”.

On a positive note, nurses were perceived to react quickly to situations in a fast-paced environment, have a solid understanding of medical technology and provide a valuable and important service. All gender-related negative statements received low mean scores suggesting that respondents of this study did not perceive nursing to be a profession meant only for females. Parents and teachers and media were found to influence career decisions in nursing. Majority of the respondents felt that teachers did not provide sufficient information about nursing. Furthermore, the portrayal of nurses on television was not perceived to encourage students' into joining the profession.

It is highly recommended that further national studies to understand the students' and the public perception of nursing be undertaken with a larger sample. Attempts should be made to work closely with career counselors and parents to defy the myths and misconceptions about nursing and to promote the vast array of opportunities available in nursing.