

Perceptions of nursing as a future profession among high school students' females in AL-RASS city, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Background: Saudi Arabia has a huge shortage of Saudi nurses. Therefore, the students' perception of nursing affect their future choice of nursing career. Despite nursing is an honorable profession the majority of Saudi's families still do not think like that about nursing.

Aim: This study aimed to explore the Perceptions of nursing as a future profession among Secondary school students' females in Al Rass city KSA.

Design: A cross-sectional descriptive design was utilized.

Sample: A convenient sample of female's secondary school was included.

Tools: Professional nursing perception questionnaires were used and provided to 225 females aged 16 and above who are attending the largest 4 high governmental schools in Al-Rass city in the Qassim region of KSA.

Result: the result revealed that almost all had an idea about the functional aspect of nursing career, and 37% of them have got this information from media. However, only 29% of participants will choose nursing as a future career. Additionally, 55.1% of participants indicated that nursing requires science background that was their primary reason to avoid nursing career.

Conclusion: this study concluded that the majority of respondents do not prefer nursing as future career. Therefore, there is a critical need to enhance the image of nursing and attract more high school students into this profession.

Keywords: Nursing's Perceptions; Nursing Profession; Nursing in Saudi Arabia; Female High School; Career Choice.

1. Introduction

Positive image and perception are very critical in nursing as nurses are the frontline of the health care. In the past, nursing was provided by criminals, prostitutes. Poor family women who have led to a bad and low reputation of nursing among the society, until the time of the lamp's lady (nightingale) came over, and she improved the profession (Patidar, et al 2011).

Islamic nursing begun with Rufeida Al-Asalmiya, she learned her skills from her father who was an important healer. She was also supported by the prophet Mohammed, additionally she was the first one who conducted the code of ethics prior to its development in Western area, unfortunately her role was ignored. (Jan, 1996) (Alhetheli 2012)

At present, nursing still facing almost the same obstacles and stereotype, despite the great changes that had happened over the time, which has a powerful impact on the profession's choices among high school students.

On the other hand, there is an increasing demand because of the worldwide shortage of nurses, which affects the quality of care provided to the individuals, families, and communities and on the consumers' satisfaction (Stanton, 2004; Kim, et al 2009; Keshk, et al 2016).

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the ministry of health put a plan to attract more Saudis to nursing field by enhancing and improving the work environment after the vision of 2030. The Saudi Ministry of Health has developed a measure of improve-

ment by increasing the number of registered Saudi nurses from 209 to 236 for 100,000 of population by 2030.(MOH, 2017)

These shortages effect on the patient/nurse ratio, and accordingly to the quality of care provided.

Student perceptions of the field of nursing may have the largest impact on their decisions to seek opportunities in order to learn more about the profession. Therefore, Saudi health decision-makers need to increase the positive attitude on the nature of nursing and encourage the characteristics of modern nursing and its increasing respect as a skillful career for high-school students (Keshk et al, 2016).

Nursing in Saudi Arabia, like many other countries, is not a highly-regarded choice of career for high school students. Although several positive perceptions and few negative perceptions were held by the respondents, only 40% reported interest in nursing as a career. (Al-olyan, 2009)

The more positive perception among students, the more the nursing profession will develop and improve. These concerns motivated this study to understand the image of nursing by exploring the perceptions of high-school students and the factors affecting their career choices.

2. Methodology

The aim of the study:

The aims of this study are to evaluate Saudi high school female students' perceptions of the nursing profession as a future career.

Research questions:

What are the female high-school students' perceptions of the nursing profession?
 What are the female high-school students' perceptions of the attributes or characteristics of nurses?
 What are the factors affecting choice of students to consider nursing as a career?

3. Research design

A descriptive survey design was utilized to accomplish this study. Settings:

The study was conducted at the largest 4 female high governmental schools in Al-Rrass city in the Qassim region of KSA. These schools were identified with the help of the Directorate of Education in the city.

Sample and sampling techniques:

A convenience sample used for this study whereas the participants were 225 females aged 16 and above, willing to participate in the study and studying in the second and third-year science stream, because to study nursing and health science's only students in the science stream is eligible to. They needed to be attending the government public high schools in the Al-Rrass city (private schools excluded).

4. Recruitment / procedure

After obtaining all ethical permission required to conduct the study, the 4 largest high schools for female in Al-Rrass city were identified with the help of the Directorate of Education. The researchers obtained the principals of the identified schools to obtain permission to conduct the research starting from February 2016. The researchers then handled the forms (questionnaire and explanatory statement) to the principles of each school. The researchers started with a pilot test, and afterward validated the tool through the opinions of experts in nursing. Clarification of study and its objectives was done. The students were given the opportunity to ask any questions about the study, and they were invited to participate in the study. Afterward the questionnaire was distributed among the students who accepted to participate in the study. The students were asked to return the completed questionnaire to a secure box provided in the classroom. As all the students fitted the criteria, no one was excluded.

Data Collection Instruments:

The data collection instrument used was a self-report questionnaire developed by Al-Kandari and Lew (2005) to explore Kuwaiti high-school students' perceptions of nursing as a profession. It consists of:

Firstly: statements concerning nurses and the nursing profession, which consists of 4 items with 3-point Likert scale responses (strongly agree, moderately agree, and do not agree).

Secondly: Open-ended items regarding:

Whether nursing is a career choice for them.

The factors that would motivate them to join the nursing profession.

The reasons for rejecting nursing as a future career option.

How much information do the students have regarding nursing profession?

Their sources of information about the nursing profession.

Validity and reliability:

The questionnaire was translated by professional translator from English to Arabic as it's the native language of the participants .

The researchers started with a pilot test, and afterward validated the tool through the opinions of experts in nursing.

The reliability of the original questionnaire was examined by Al-Kandari and Lew (2005) utilizing the test-retest coefficient and the result was $(r) = 0.9$.

Additionally it was examined by another researcher Al-Olayan (2009) by using the Cronbach's Alpha and the result was 0.82.

For that the researchers consider the tool valid and reliable.

5. Data analysis

The data were collected between February 2016 and April 2016, The 225 questionnaires completed by the students, the questionnaire was coded and entered by the researchers into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 16. The questions that were not answered were considered as missing data.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the students' perceptions of nursing, their perceptions of the attributes or characteristics of nurses and reasons for rejecting or accepting nursing as a future profession. In addition, descriptive statistics were also used to gather information about the level of students' knowledge about nursing and their main source of information about the profession.

6. The results

Regarding the Student's perceptions of the nursing profession, table 1 shows that majority of the students strongly agreed that the nursing profession is important for society (87%), (21%) of them strongly agreed that nursing requires a broad knowledge base (99.1%), Nursing work enquires advanced technology (97.3%), Nursing is a physically exhausting profession (91.1%), Nursing is a challenging profession (90.2%), as shown in Table .1

The table 2. Illustrates that nearly have quarters of students (73.8% and 78.7%) their image of nurses was responsible, clean and healthy. Additionally nearly two thirds (62.7%, 69.8%, 60.4%, 66.7%, 62.2%, 67.1%, 64.9%, 61.8%) their image of nurses was honest and decent, patient ,meticulous and vigilant ,helpful ,courageous ,self-confident ,cooperative ,diligent) while only one third (35.8%, 38.2%, 36.9%)their image was caring ,willing to make sacrifices ,good looking

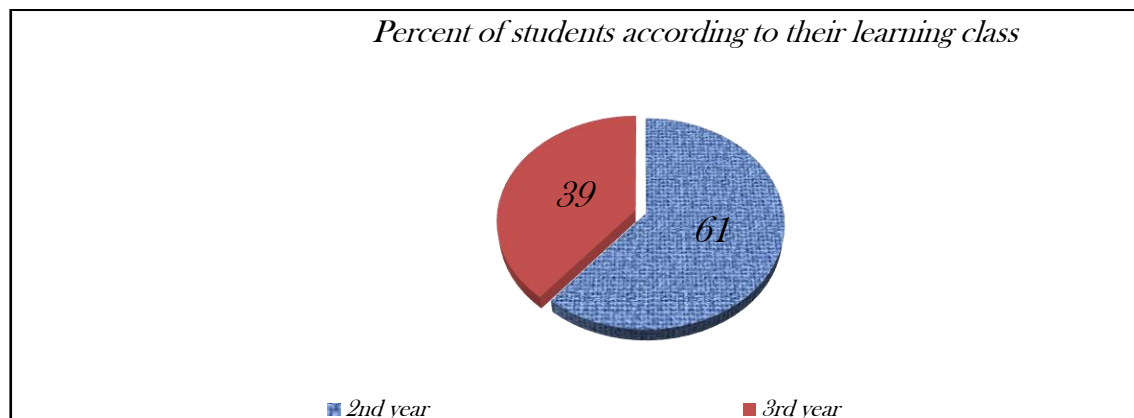


Fig. 1: Percent of Students According to Their Learning Class.

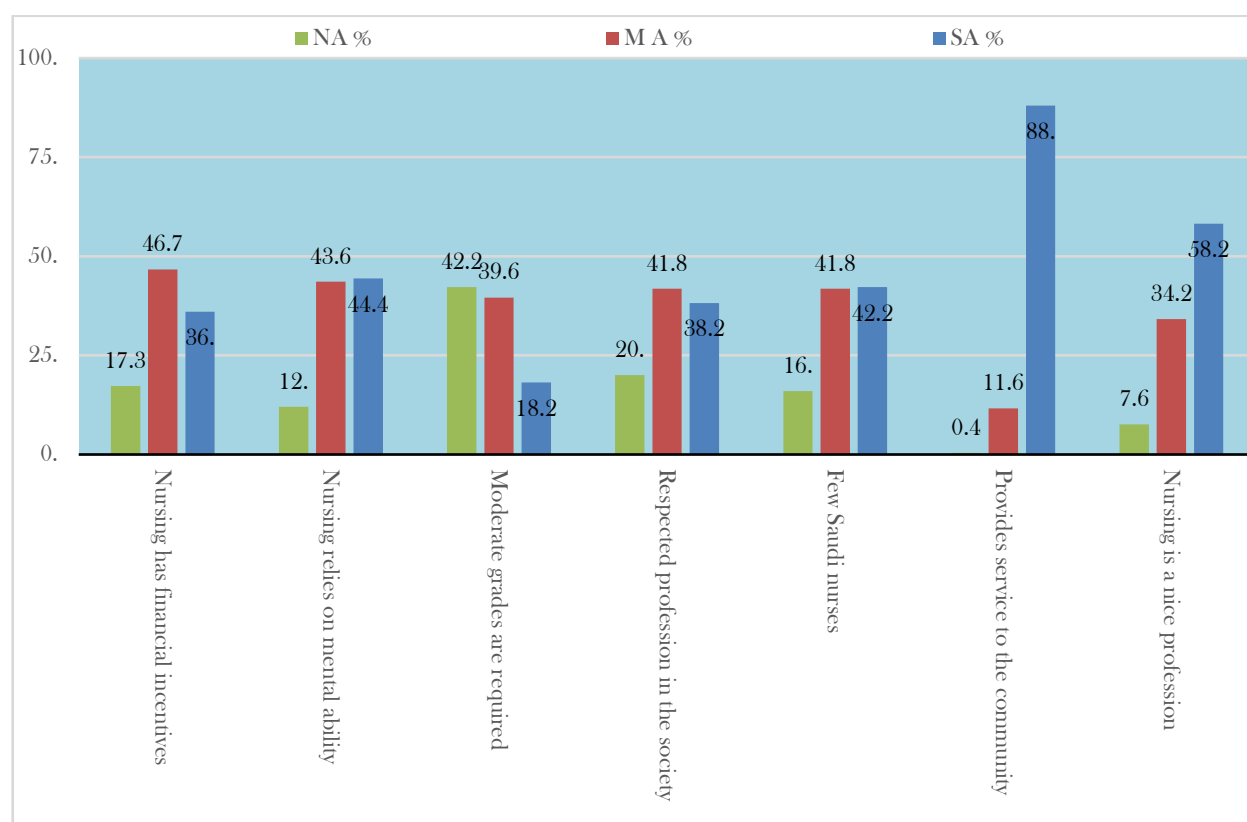
Figure 1 Shows that nearly two thirds (61%) of the respondents were in the 2nd year of their learning class, while (39%) of them were in 3rd year.

Table 1: Percent Distribution of Students According to Their Perception of Nursing Profession

Statement	SA %	M A %	NA %
The nursing profession is important for society	87	12.9	0
The nursing profession is respected by Saudi society	21.6	59	20.4
Nursing work enquires advanced technology	69.2	28.1	4.5
Nursing is a physically exhausting profession	37.2	53.8	9.8
Nursing stimulates mental work	53.6	37.4	10.2
Nursing requires a broad knowledge base	83.1	16	0.9
Nursing is a challenging profession	62.1	28.6	9.7
Nurses' salaries are adequate	24.4	58.9	22.7
Nurses work in a safe environment	32	47.7	21.3
Nurses choose their working hours & vacations	25.6	31.1	44.9
Nurses perform un pleasant duties	9.4	39	52
Good high school grades are important to study nursing	54.1	35.5	12.4
4 years is long for studying Bachelor of Nursing	18.4	37.7	44.5
Nursing students receive subsidies for their study	45.8	43.4	16

Table 2: Percent Distribution of Students According to Their Perception of the Attributes or Characteristics of Nurses

Statement	SA %	M A %	NA %
Honest and decent	62.7	33.8	3.6
Caring	35.8	42.2	4
Altruistic (good heart)	54.2	40	5.8
Patient	69.8	25.3	4.9
Responsible	73.8	24	2.2
Meticulous and vigilant	60.4	33.3	6.2
Smiling	41.3	40.9	17.8
Helpful	66.7	30.6	2.7
Well educated	59.6	38.2	2.2
Courageous	62.2	32.9	4.9
Clean and healthy	78.7	19.6	1.8
Self-confident	67.1	30.7	2.2
Cooperative	64.9	31.1	4
Diligent	61.8	32	6.2
Willing to make sacrifices	38.2	42.7	19.1
Good looking	36.9	51.1	12

**Fig. 2:** Percent Distribution of Students According to Their Perception of the Reason for Considering Nursing as A Career

The major reasons for considering nursing as a career were provides service to the community (88%), followed by nursing is a nice profession (58.2%). While (44.4%) considered that nursing relies on mental ability, while (42.2%) will choose nursing as a career because there are only few Saudi nurses. as shown in figure.2

Requires science background (55.1%) was the primary reason to avoid nursing career, Exhausting job that requires patience (45.3%). (40%) of the students reported that High risk of infection, Night shifts, and Too many expatriate nurses were their main reasons as shown in table. 3

Table 3: Percent Distribution of Students According to Their Perception of the Reason for Not Considering Nursing as A Career

Statement	SA %	M A %	NA %
Do not like nursing	25.8	32.9	41.3
High risk of infection	40	40.4	19.6
Contact with opposite sex	28.9	32	39.1
Night shifts	40	39.6	20.4
Undervalued profession	9.8	12.4	77.8
Exhausting job that requires patience	45.3	43.6	11.1
Requires science background	55.1	33.8	11.1
Poor salary	24.4	33.8	41.8
Sensitive to blood	27.6	36.4	36
Too many expatriate nurses	40	27.1	32.9
Tedious profession	12.4	23.1	64.4

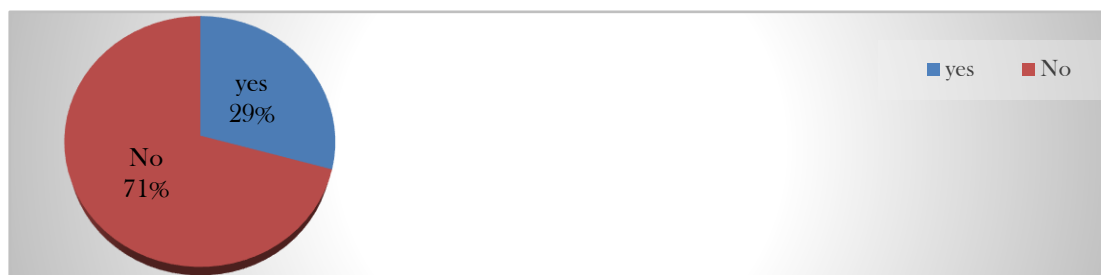
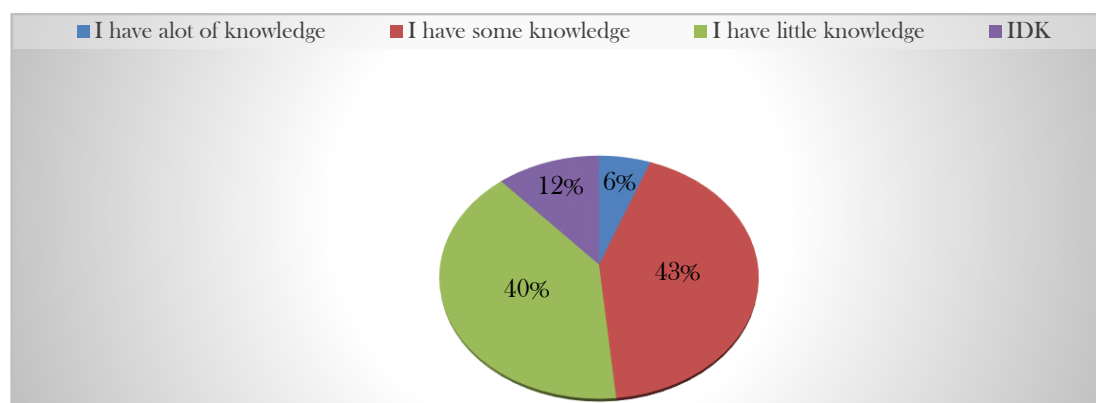
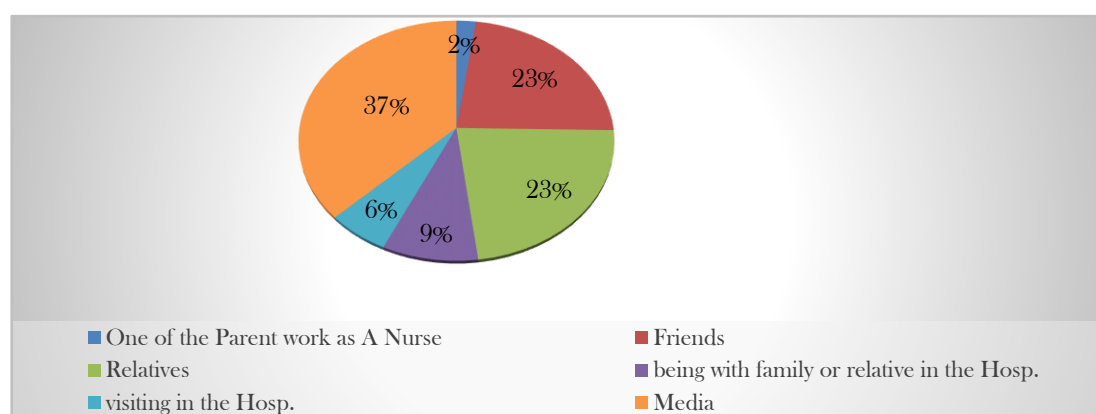
**Fig. 3:** Percent Distribution of Students who will choose to Study Nursing.**Fig. 4:** Percent Distribution of Students According to Their Information of Nursing Profession.**Fig. 5:** Percent Distribution of Students According to Their Source of Information of Nursing Profession.

Figure.3 shows that Most of the students reported that they will not choose nursing as a career (71%), whereas only (29%) of students will choose to study nursing.

The majority of the students reported that they have some information regarding nursing profession (43%), on the contrary of students who have a lot of information (6%) only. (40%) have a little information, (11%) have no information. As shown in figure. 4.

Regarding the Sources of information, Figure .5 shows that the primary source of students information about nursing is media (37%), followed by friends and relatives equally (23%). Only (2%) reported that one of the parents is a nurse.

7. The discussion

There are so many different positive and negative aspects regarding student's perception about nursing profession.

The major positive one is that nursing profession is important to the society as it has been agreed by the majority of the participants, which mean that they are conscious about the responsibilities and the critical role of nurses for the society, this is consistent to the finding of Al-kandari et al (2005), eman eman et al(2012), and Al-olyan (2009), this positive image needs to be emphasized and focused on to get the attention of high-school students into nursing. In contrary to Essie dee Scott cockrell(2002) who re-

vealed that pre-nursing students were unclear about nursing profession.

An interesting finding showed that around thirty eight of the participants strongly agreed that nursing profession is respected by Saudi society. In the same context, Al-kandari et al (2005) reflected that nursing profession respected by Kuwaiti society, and the same finding were reported by Al-olyan (2009), and and keshek (2016), while Al-sa'd (2007) mentions that society do not respect nurses, and many Saudi girls quoted and gave up their jobs either to get married or that their families don't accept nursing as a profession.

On the other hand, the major negative aspects were, nursing work enquires advanced technology(ninety seven percent), Nursing is a physically exhausting profession(ninety percent), one percent), Nursing is a challenging profession(ninety percent). Almost the same results were reported by Al-olyan(2009), these results reflected that there are the same obstacles for male and female Saudi nurses, So there is a critical need to change these negativities to attract more high-school students to nursing.

Additionally, it found that more than the half of participants didn't agree that nurses perform an unpleasant duty, in contrary to Al-Omar's (2004), who mentioned that more than two-thirds of the students agreed that nurses perform such duties, these findings put the light on the importance to the nurses' roles and responsibilities and enhance the community understanding of it.

Clean and healthy was the most commonly among the attributes and characteristics of nurses (ninety-eight percent eight percent) the same result was found by Al-Olyan (2009) stated that ninety-five percent of participants thought that nurses are healthy and seen as a role model for the community.

On the other hand, willing to make sacrifices was the least important attributes and characteristics of nurses as shown in the current study and by Al-olyan (2009).

The major reason for considering nursing as a future career provides services and help to the community as stated by almost all the participants, this result supported by the previous studies of (Al-olyan, 2009), (Baskale, 2015), (Elizabeth Whitehead, 2007), as participants want to be reliable on a profession with a sufficient income, the majority of them will consider nursing for financial motivation these findings come in contrary to (Alolyan 2009)(Keshk et al, 2016)(Demiray,2013)(Kulakac, 2013)(Kulakac, 2009)

However, (Al-Omar, 2004) showed that less than thirty seven of the Saudi respondents thought that nursing was financially rewarding.

On the other hand, many students will not consider nursing because it requires science background, which is consisted to the Previous Studies of (Law et al 2003) (Alolyan 2009)

Physically exhausted was the reason for almost the half of the participants. Additionally to the different studies (Alkandari et al 2005) (Alomer 2004) (Alolyan 2009) which showed the similar results.

The majority of participants agreed that the night shift is a barrier for not considering nursing, this may be due to the sociocultural factors in the gulf area that is not acceptable for women to work at night This finding is supported by old studies of (Miller-Rosser et al., 2006) (Al-Kandari et al, 2005) (Alolyan 2009) (Alomer 2004) Additionally, Lack of autonomy, powerlessness, and having no decision-making power, even in matters such as their working hours and vacations, (Rossiter et al., 1999; Stevens et al, 1993). Low status profession (Elizabeth Whitehead 2007), general perception of nursing as being more secondary care giver role and less professionally independent (Porter, 2009),), Kuwaiti nursing students equated nursing to a servant's job (Al-Kandari et al, 1998).

These are factors documented in previous studies that negating the choice of nursing as a career. However, more studies must be done on the area to investigate about these negative factors, and use strategies to eliminate them to attract more students into nursing.

The majority of the participants mentioned that they have some, little, and no information about nursing, media was the main

source of more than the third of the participants on contrary to (Alolyan 2009) while Kuwaiti students reported knowledge gained from visits to hospitals was their main source of information(Alkandari et al, 2005). Noteworthy findings that only 2% of the participants has a parents work as a nurse, this indeed, manifests the current situation as until this moment, a few Saudi have chosen nursing as a profession.

Surprisingly that less than the third of the participants will consider nursing as their future career.

8. The recommendation

- 1) Nurses need to act as a role model and present themselves in professional way and show positive attributes and characteristics to the public in order to promote the good image of the profession by stressing professional values, attitudes and characteristics.
- 2) Government & authorities must pay an attention to nursing & provide more autonomy and independence to nurse's and must consider having nurses on decision making position would also be beneficial to attract more students into nursing profession.
- 3) Nursing schools should implement pre-nursing counseling & nurse's shadowing programs to enhance the positive attitude toward nursing. Increase the awareness of the different job pathway of nursing and educational growth of it.
- 4) Nurse educators should examine student's perception continuously, the more positive perception among students. The more develop and improve for the nursing profession, and then they can use it to change the public perception
- 5) Further research should be implemented to obtain more detailed and extensive data about the barriers to this profession.

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