

Perception Of Adults Towards Men In Nursing In Calabar Municipality Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Globally Nursing is perceived as a “female profession”. This perception has made recruitment and retention of men into the profession a worldwide challenge. Nigeria is no exception. Understanding the perception of adults about men in nursing will help in identifying misconceptions that could be helpful in planning public enlightenment. **Objective:** To explore the perception of adults towards men in nursing in Calabar municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria. **Methods:** A self-structured questionnaire was administered to 196 adult men and women selected through purposive sampling. **Results:** Of the 196 respondents, 169(83.3%) were between the ages of 20-29 years, only 27 (13.8%) were aged 30 and above. Male and female were 98(50%) each. Majority 175 (89.5%) were single. 146 (74.5%) had tertiary education, whereas 34(17.4%), 2(1%) and 14 (7.1%) had secondary, primary and no education respectively. The result further showed that adults in Calabar municipality have a negative perception of men in nursing: men in nursing are not as skilful in giving care as women 172(87.4%), men become nurses because they are under achievers 132(67.3%), men in nursing are less compassionate 115 (58.7%) Societies’ perception: of a man’s touch to be sexual 152(77.6%), that nursing is feminine 109 (55.6%) and Negative adverts 104(53.0%), were factors that contributed to the negative perception. **Conclusions:** Adults in Calabar Municipality seems to have a negative perception about men in nursing. There is need to for public enlightenment about men in nursing. Future research is indeed warranted to investigate other key factors and their impact on profession

Key Words: Perception, Adults, Men in Nursing, Calabar

INTRODUCTION

The public perception of nursing as a sex-role occupation exclusive to females is a well-entrenched societal belief based upon the traditional image of a nurse as being female. These beliefs influence societal perceptions of nursing and feed the cycle of bias that limits the role of

men in nursing. These perceptions supported by the mass media, that men are not compassionate and skilful in caring etc are reinforced through images of nursing solely based upon female attributes. Perception can be influenced positively or negatively depending on the attitude, mood, cognitive structure and expectation of the perceiver or the appearance of a situation to the perceiver. Society's positive perception of men in nursing is a significant issue, because it can attract male membership into the profession. For instance touch in nursing is a primary intervention used in the care of patients. Touch portrays intimate contact with patients because it conveys caring, compassion and comfort. However, the expression of feelings and empathy through touch are considered a female "privilege" [16]. A male nurse use of touch has social stigma attached as sexual [12, 38]. Even the provision of intimate care to other males through touch is also problematic. Touch from a male "opens space for misinterpretation, suspicion, and accusations of inappropriate behaviour" [17]. To avoid potential accusations, a male nurse often will seek a female colleague to accompany him when performing a procedure. Some male nurses often work to eliminate any accusation by showing their wedding rings or mentioning their wives and children to colleagues and patients. Could the fear of touching be a barrier for men when considering nursing as a career? Caring is gender neutral and eternal. Men want to care for people and help them to meet their basic needs; if ambivalence toward touch prevents males from pursuing nursing as a career, not only is it necessary therefore to address the situation openly, but nursing programs should also re-think ways to implement the politics or policies of gender and touch into curriculum [22].

It appears the society has well established gender roles imprinted in the mind of every individual/profession. Based on these established roles one would expect a pilot to be a man, an engineer/mechanic to be a man and likewise a nurse to be a woman. Thus, when an individual takes up certain roles other than that perceived by the society, as expected of his or her gender the individual suffers discrimination and difficulty to fit in. Society's perception of nurses is that of quiet and caring women. This perception is thought to keep men from wanting to become nurses. For those who pursue a nursing career, ridicule, criticism and speculation must be endured for violating gender-based rules of society. The feminine nature of nursing has been so prevailing, that the caring image of the profession has been used to symbolize the epitome of femininity [19]. Florence Nightingale was not different, a strong advocates for both women and nursing, and considered traits such as nurturance, gentleness, empathy, compassion, tenderness and unselfishness to be essentially feminine and essentially nurse-like. Nightingale believed that men's 'hard and horny' hands were not fitted to touch, bathe and dress wounded limbs however gentle their hearts may be, and her views led to the exclusion of men in nursing [6].

Nursing being seen as a feminine occupation is thus devalued in male dominated patriarchal society. It is stereotyped as having the traits of nurturing, caring, dependence and submission which is in contrasts with the perceived male traits of strength, dominance and aggression. When someone forms an identity that is incompatible with society's expectations, he or she becomes uncomfortable and unsure how to behave. In a society where a nurse is seen as a female, it is difficult for people to know how to relate to a male nurse. People find it hard to understand why anyone would choose a job dominated by the lower status sex, and make a choice that is likely to involve negative sanctions [30].

In England, 9 in 10 nurses are women [8]. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics (2010), men represent only 8.9% of the U.S. nursing workforce. Men accounted for 11.4% of students in baccalaureate programs, 9.9% of students in graduate programs, 6.8% of students in research doctorate programs, and 9.4% of practice doctorate programs [3]. In Nigeria, men in nursing are few; even the few leave (especially the clinical practice area) soon after

graduation to study in other fields like medicine or to specialize in other nursing fields (mostly management) resulting in consistent low male manpower in nursing.

It is critical that we recruit and retain more men into the nursing ranks to address the greater need for a more diverse nursing workforce. To this end Professor Adewale the current Nigerian Minister for Health, directed 'I want to charge the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria to intensify effort to ensure that more men are admitted to the various schools of nursing and midwifery. The ratio of one male nurse to three female nurses will be a significant achievement,' he said this through the Director of Hospital Services, Dr. Inuwa Balami who represented him at the occasion in 2017. This, according to him, is an effort towards changing the perception that nursing profession was an exclusive reserve for the women folk [35]. Exploring into and understanding the perceived misconceptions' could be helpful in planning public enlightenment about men in the profession which may in turn be a solution to the low male enrolment and also male nurse attrition (especially in bedside nursing) and to the nursing manpower shortage at the long run. Therefore, this study sought to explore the perception of adults towards men in nursing in Calabar Municipality

[37] Stated that the public perception of a profession plays an important role on an individual's decision to enter and remain in it. Researchers such as, [7 and 39] stated that female nursing dominance has had a large impact on how the members of the profession are perceived by society, they concluded that these perceptions are thought to keep men from wanting to become nurses. The study of [1] explored the views of secondary grade male students regarding men in the field of nursing in Egypt, interestingly; the result showed that there is a general positive perception toward men in nursing. Male students in secondary grade seem to have a positive perception toward men in the nursing field but do not prefer it as a future career. Also [21] study aimed to describe Preparatory Students' Perception about the Nursing Profession and Its Impact on Their Career Choice in Qassim University KSA. One aspect of the result showed that nearly two thirds of students did not consider nursing as their career choice. Various studies found that men in nursing are also perceived as lacking the intellect to be physicians, non-achievers, sexual deviants, underachievers who failed in their original first choice career, men who have limited career opportunities therefore choose nursing for security [18, 45]. Furthermore the studies of [43,4, 31, 23] of men in nursing revealed that the society perceives male nurses as effeminate, less compassionate in caring and not as skilful in giving care as their female counterpart. In a related study [14] asserted that male nurses lacked interest in compassionate nursing care and viewed nursing as a source of income and security. To this [4] recommended that greater efforts need to be taken to recruit more positive male role models in clinical practice and academia.

The study of [5] on audition in television series revealed that Mass media stereotype, and stigmatization of male nurses touch, influenced society's perception of men in nursing. The researchers stated that considerable evidence exists in the media to suggest that nurses are consistently portrayed in novels, television, and in adverts as female, single and childless. In Meet the Parents, the main character is a male nurse who is laughed at for not being a doctor. On the popular show Glee, a female is criticized for taking a job as the high school football coach, a dominantly male job. The head coach of the cheerleading team, Sue, played by Jane Lynch, remarks, "female football coach, like a male nurse? Sin against nature" This ideas perpetuated by the media discriminates against the male nurse, and reinforce the perception that nursing is feminine. In another study conducted in Turkey by [9], the result showed that 35.92% of the news about nurses involved negative individual relations, suicide, medical errors and news which did not reflect the scientific aspect of nursing. This finding showed that the media reflected the negative aspects of nursing and high school students were influenced

by these reports. Furthermore, [29] findings, on the Impact of the nurse characters in the television and the movies on adolescent career choices at University of Kansas Medical Centre reported that students make decisions on the basis of the programs they watch. Also 65% of the students stated that movies/television helped them understand nursing. Similarly [32] studied, What high academic achieving school pupils really think about a career in nursing: Analysis of the narrative from paradigmatic case interviews showed that the media formed the main source of information for the majority of the students but that it did not however, have an important effect on their perceptions of nursing as a career and in their decision to become a nurse.

The study of [44] was undertaken to identify factors influencing men to enter the nursing profession, and also sought to understand the challenges they were confronted with within the profession. Engaging in a systematic search of the existing literature, 34 studies (written between 2000 and early 2013) were selected and surveyed. The results of the reviews identified challenging themes emerging from the literature to include, educational and societal barriers experienced by men in nursing, recruitment, career choice, and role strain in nursing. Furthermore [33] evaluated sixteen popular magazines directed at male, female, and gender-neutral audiences. The result showed that, in general, the illustrations about nursing reinforced gender and role stereotyping. She concluded that media images and public perception continue to shape the destiny of nursing.

Generally, there is a gender stereotype faced by male nurses [22, 26]. [2] Surveyed 259 individuals to investigate the stereotypical beliefs of gender-typed professions. Result showed that Nursing was listed most often, out of all 30 categories, as a stereotype female occupation which appears to discourage men from seeking a career outside of their gender. [13] Studied Gender Inequality and Role-Strained among Male Nursing Students in Selected Nursing Institutions in Lagos, Nigeria. The study also examined gender discrimination and stereotypes in relation to men in nursing, and further discussed role restraint among male student nurses in selected nursing institution in Lagos, Nigeria. The results showed that 68% of the respondents reported gender bias from the lecturers and the nursing staff, while 32% had not experienced gender bias during nursing school. Myths and misconceptions exist about the use of touch by men [35]. Touch is often perceived as a barrier for male nurses, especially due to fear of false accusations of deviant or predatory sexual behaviour [10, 20]. Results from the study conducted by [10 and 11], showed that even male nurses with five or more years of clinical experience still had difficulty with caring procedures that require intimate contact such as touch. [34] Argued that most female patients frown at a male nurse's touch and that female patients in Gynae and Obstetric wards tend to stigmatise male nurses. However, for the same procedure they will gladly allow male doctors attend to them'. [25] Defines the word, "nurse", as, "a woman who suckles an infant or who takes care of a young child", exclusively referring to the female gender. Some men are not bothered by being called a male nurse, but others could be. Could the word "nurse" and the traditional definition of the word contribute to the stereotype in our society?

This study focuses on the perception concept of Imogene King's theory of goal attainment which states that perception is each person's representation of reality. The elements of this theory imply that perception entails importing energy from environment and organizing it into information in the form of overt behaviours. The society need to be informed that: nursing is a profession suitable for men; men can provide nursing care just like their female counterparts and that there are some burdens in the nursing profession to be borne by men. Hence, the society will be able to organize this information and interpret the nursing profession as one

suitable for both genders. Thereafter, they can help in exporting the information to other generation.

In Nigeria there is shortage of nursing staff and other burdens of nursing activities, which can be alleviated professionally by encouraging males to join the nursing career. However most men who venture into the profession particularly in Cross River State leave soon after graduation in search for greener pastures or divert to study in other nursing (management) fields. It is critical that more men be recruited into the nursing ranks to address the greater need for a more diverse nursing workforce. Exploring into the perceived misconceptions' may be a solution to the low male enrolment into nursing and to the nursing manpower shortage at the long run. Society's positive perception towards men in nursing practice will attract more men into this noble profession. This study will address the paucity of literature, provide empirical evidence on society's perception of men in nursing in Cross River State and if negative, awareness creation and secondary school education will be carried out to build positive perception and thereby increase the male manpower in the profession in Nigeria and Cross River State in particular. Studies have been conducted within and outside Nigeria to explore society's perception of men in nursing, [39, 42, 1, 13], but there is no study in Cross River State exploring the perception of adults towards men in nursing.

Therefore this study sought to:

- Determine the perception of adults towards men in nursing practice in Calabar Municipality.
- Explore the factors influencing their perception.

METHODS

Design and Setting

A descriptive survey study was carried out to ascertain perception of adults towards men in nursing. The setting was Calabar Municipality which is one of the local government areas (LGAs) of the 18 LGAs in Cross River State. The Local Government is made up of ten (10) wards, which include Akim Big Qua, Diamond, Edim Otop, Ediba, Ikot Ansa, Ikot Effanga, Ikot Ishie, Ikot Omin and kasuk wards. Two ethnic groups form the indigenous population: the Quas, and the Efiks. However, because of its cosmopolitan status, there abound people from all parts of the State and Nigeria in the city. By virtue of its location along the waterfront, the Efiks embraced western culture; they carried on successful trade with early Europeans. Fishing is a predominant occupation. The Quas, on the other hand, occupy the bulk of the hinterland of Calabar where farmers, hunters, traders and blacksmiths are found. This LGA was selected because it houses most of the nursing and midwifery institutions in the state; it is the most populated LGA with highest number of literate population

Study Population

The study population consisted of the general population of adults aged 20 years and above in Calabar Municipality. The sample size was determined using Topman's formulae used for infinite population to obtain a sample size of 196. Purposive sampling was used to select the 196 participants (98 females and 98 males). Two research assistants were trained to assist in administration of the questionnaire. Twenty (20) adults (ten males and 10 females) were purposely selected from (9) wards whereas only sixteen (16) respondents (8 males and 8 females) were selected in one (1) ward. All the wards were sampled to allow for more representativeness. Only respondents who were willing and also agreed to have attained twenty years of age selected.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data was collected using a self-structured close ended questionnaire. The instrument was divided into three major sections; Section A contained socio-demographic characteristics which included age, sex, marital status, religion and educational level, Section B contained questions on the perception of adults towards men in nursing, and Section C contained questions on factors influencing the adults' perception. The instrument had a content validity index of 0.89 and a test- retest reliability of the instrument revealed a correlation coefficient (r) 0.81.

Data Collection

Data collection was carried out on face to face by the researchers and two research assistants. The data was collected for one week, (covering 5 working days from Monday to Friday). On the spot retrieval of all the administered copies ensured that all completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. Two wards were covered per day for the 5 days.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Results were presented using frequency tables, percentages, uni-variable analysis, bar charts and pie charts

Ethical Consideration

Permission was obtained from the Local Government Chairman to carry out the study using the populace. The study proposal was forwarded to The Ethics and Research Committee of the LGA who also gave approval; the purpose of the study was made explicit to all concerned. Each copy of the questionnaire was assigned a number and there was no provision for names of the participants to ensure anonymity. Further explanations were made to any respondents who so requested. All information from the respondents were kept confidential and only used for research purposes. The study did not pose any threats to the respondents. Used copies of the questionnaire were stored in a locked cupboard for confidential purposes.

RESULTS

Characteristics	Frequency N=196	Percentage (%)
Age		
20 -24	103	52.6
25-29	66	33.7
30-34	5	2.6
35 and above	22	11.2
Sex		
Male	98	50
Female	98	50
Religion		
Christianity	191	97.5
Islam	4	2
African Traditional Religion	1	0.5
Others	-	-
Marital status		
Single	175	89.3
Married	19	9.7
Separated	-	-
Divorced	2	1
Educational level		
Primary	2	1
Secondary	34	17.4
Tertiary	146	74.5
Nil	14	7.1

Total Respondents for each variable 196(100%)

In Table 1. Socio demographic result showed that most respondents, 169 (86%) were within the ages of 20-29 years, (this is the age where most young adults make career choices as they enter into tertiary institutions) whereas 27 (13.8%) were within the ages of 30 and above. 50% of the respondents were female and 50% were male. Majority (97.5%) were Christians. 175(89.3 %) respondents were single. Also, majority of the respondents 180 (91.9%) had tertiary and secondary education, an indication that nearly all understood what the research about and most faced with one form of perception or another in respect to nursing. Only 1% had primary level of education and 7.1% had nil.

Table 2- Response of adults Perception towards men in nursing in Calabar Municipality

Perception of adults towards men in nursing	Frequency N=196	Percentage (%)
Men in nursing are gay		
Strongly agree	5	2.6
Agree	6	3.1
Strongly disagree	78	39.8
Disagree	92	46.9
Undecided	15	7.7
Men become nurses because they are under achievers who failed in their original 1st choice career		
Strongly agree	80	40.8
Agree	52	26.5
Strongly disagree	15	7.7
Disagree	33	16.8
Undecided	16	8.1
Men in nursing are less compassionate than female nurses		
Strongly agree	75	38.8
Agree	40	20.4
Strongly disagree	18	9.2
Disagree	50	25.5
Undecided	13	6.6
Men in nursing are skilful in giving care as women		
Strongly agree	7	3.6
Agree	8	4.1
Strongly disagree	87	44.4
Disagree	85	43.4
Undecided	9	4.6

Results in Table 2 shows that 172 (87.8%) respondents disagreed (perceive) that men in nursing are skilful in giving care as women in nursing. Also, 132(77.3%) of the respondents agreed (perceive) that men become nurses because they are underachievers who failed in their original 1st choice career. Whereas 115 (59.2%) respondents strongly agreed (perceive) that male nurses are less compassionate than female nurses.

Table3-Factors that influenced the adult's perception of men in nursing

	Frequency N=196	Percentage (%)
Mass media		
Strongly agreed	34	17.3
Agreed	70	35.7
Disagreed	53	27
Strongly disagreed	25	12.8
Undecided	14	7.1
The fact that society considers nursing to be feminine		
Strongly agreed	38	19.4
Agreed	71	36.2
Disagreed	50	25.5
Strongly disagreed	27	13.8
Undecided	10	5.1
My believe that a man's touch is always sexual		
Strongly agreed	68	34.7
Agreed	84	42.9
Disagreed	10	5.1
Strongly disagreed	24	12.2
Undecided	10	5.1

Table 3 shows that majority of the respondents 152(77.6%) agreed (perceive) that a man's touch is always sexual. 109 (55.6 %) agreed that society's consideration of nursing to be feminine influenced is a factor that influenced their perception of nursing. The consideration that a man's touch was sexual was the highest factor in influencing negative perception, followed by society's consideration that nursing is feminine.104 (53.0%) of the respondents agreed that the mass media influenced their perception.

DISCUSSION

The study focussed on how adults in Calabar Municipality perceived men in nursing. The results showed that adults in Calabar municipality have a negative perception of male nurses. Male nurses were perceived: as: not skilful in giving care as their female counterparts 172(87.8%), underachievers who failed in their original first choice career 132 (77.3%), being less compassionate than their female counterparts 115(59.2%). These findings are supported by studies of [43, 45, 23, 14 and 31]. The findings of [14] specifically revealed that Iranian male nurses lacked interest in compassionate Nursing care and only viewed nursing as a source of income. This result is further supported by [21] who students perception about nursing profession. They observed that nearly two thirds of students did not consider nursing as their career choice. However, these findings contrasted with that of [1] that revealed positive perception of secondary school students on men in the nursing profession. The contrast could be attributed to differences in the type of respondents and setting, whereas this study's respondents were adults from 20 years and above (out of secondary schools against secondary school students) and in Nigeria (setting), respondents in [1] were secondary school students in Egypt. Again it could be speculated that the students of the secondary school in Egypt, might have been exposed to career counselling (as is being done in most secondary

schools of recent) which might have given them a positive picture of Nursing, whereas respondents in this study might not have been exposed to such counselling.

For factors that influenced adults perception the result affirmed that the use of touch by a male nurse had a negative influence on the society 152(77.6%). This is supported by [10], that revealed society's perception of touch by a male nurse is always sexual and that touch from a male nurse "opens space for misinterpretation, suspicion, and accusations of inappropriate behaviour". This finding supports the argument of [34] that most female patients in Gynae and Obstetric wards tend to stigmatise male nurses, they feel shy and make faces when a male nurse comes around for a procedure. But for the same procedure they will gladly allow male doctors attend to them. If this argument is to be reckoned with, the question now is why do the female patients accept the touch of a male doctor and frown at the touch of a male nurse? If the society perceives a man's touch to be sexual, then whether from a male nurse or a male doctor touch should convey same meaning. Could the problem be that of touch or lack of confidence in the male nurse? Could it be argued that a touch from a male nurse or male doctor conveys different meanings based on their roles; whereas the male doctors touch is for diagnosis and treatment (which most patients are aware), that from the male nurse is for the purpose of caring (done in love, tenderness and compassion) therefore bound to be misinterpreted.

Furthermore this study revealed that the society perceives nursing and most nursing duties of caring as feminine 109 (55.6%). These findings are supported by the findings of [2, 44, 10, and 35] that listed nursing as a stereotypical female occupation. Therefore male nurses were confronted with role strain because they do not want to be seen as performing duties that the society has assigned as women. Male nurses become gravitated toward positions suitable to their masculine nature such as teaching, management, emergency and intensive care areas to gain physician's trust and community's respect; the male tendency to such technical areas may be due to the fact that these roles appear more congruent with the masculine role. This helps men reduce the role conflict they may experience, and disperse any stereotypical labels. No wonder then are they few in the clinical bed side nursing area. However this result disagrees with the findings of [41 and 45] in which male nurses did not perceive caring as an inherently feminine trait.

The result of this study further revealed that the mass media was a major factor that influenced society's negative perception of men in nursing 104(53.0%). The findings of [5, 35, 9, and 29] all support these findings, that mass media is one factor that influences the society's perception of men in nursing negatively. On the contrary, [32] showed that although the media forms the main source of information for the majority of the students, it did not however, have an important effect on their perceptions of nursing as a career and in their decision to become a nurse. However, the overall findings of this study agree with [37] that the public perception of a profession plays an important role on an individual's decision to enter and remain in it.

NURSING IMPLICATION

The findings in this study showed that a greater proportion of adults in Calabar Municipality had negative perception of men in nursing. This perception is further influenced by society's perception that nursing is feminine through mostly the mass media. This calls for the need to continually create awareness about nursing profession and the roles of men in nursing. Efforts should be intensified in educating the masses and secondary school students in particular about nursing to dismiss the assertion that nursing is feminine thereby creating a positive perception that will attract men into nursing.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As revealed by this study, adults men in Calabar Municipality have negative perception of men in nursing, therefore the number of men in nursing is inadequate. This shows that public perception of a profession plays an important role on an individual's decision to enter and remain in it. It is needful therefore for nurses to educate the masses about the nursing profession through mass media to change the negative perception.

The following recommendations were therefore proffered:

- A study on the impact of the adult's perception of nursing on the population of nurses. This will reveal the need to inform people that nursing is not feminine.
- Further emphasis on creating a positive perception of male nurses. This will increase the nursing workforce
- Public enlightenment on the nature of nursing as profession like any other profession that both males and females can function well. This can be done through public lectures and the use of mass media

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