A SYNOPTIC OF

"A STUDY OF OCCUPATIONAL AND CAREER PERCEPTIONS OF THE VARIOUS NURSING PERSONNEL WORKING IN THE TRAINING INSTITUTIONS OF NURSING IN THE CITY OF GREATER BOMBAY"

1. **Introduction**

All human beings right from the time of birth till death undergo physical, physiological, mental and social changes. Every stage in life needs special care.

In the history of mankind, nursing had its start for a branch of mother craft and was continued by the members of the house in caring for the sick and their services were demanded by needy neighbours. Nursing is an art in caring for the survival of the human race. Nursing has been essential for the preservation of life.

India is acclaimed as a leading developing country, and is the second largest as far as population is concerned. This poses a major cause for health problems in our country.

Keeping in view the goals of World Health Organization, the Government of India has specified the targets, for example reduction of infant mortality, raising the expectation of life, reducing the crude death rate and the birth rate.

It is universally accepted that the above target can be achieved through primary health care. It means to provide
preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative health care services from womb to tomb, to every individual residing in a defined geographical area. Hence it is necessary to increase the number of health personnel, prominent among them being the nurses.

The concept of nursing took a wider meaning in the year 1633, when St. Vincent de Paul established the visiting nursing services called, "The Sisters of Charity". Later during the nineteenth century, consolidated effort was made to improve the hospital services and the quality of nursing was improved. Through this it strove to achieve the meaning of the word, "Nurse", meaning - "to nourish, to conserve, to foster and to protect."

Nursing has been recognised as one of the noblest professions. Florence Nightingale called nursing, "the finest of fine arts". Nursing as an art implies a sympathetic heart and willing hands. The chief purpose of nursing today is to help the individual to attain or maintain health.

Nursing is based on scientific principles, and it is a service to individuals and to families, therefore to society, and community.

The occupation of nursing is becoming increasingly complex. There has been continuing expansion of knowledge in all disciplines and advancement of medical innovation. Besides this the nurses are no more confined to the hospitals. Community
nursing is developing well with the necessary improvisations. Nursing is carried to the people in their very homes, in their natural habitat.

This requires to change the role, the concepts of the occupation and the functions of nursing. This will affect the various nursing personnel, their knowledge and their image in the society.

Recently in India too, the trend of nursing profession is changing and is adapting to meet the changing health needs and expectations. If one states that nursing is an important aspect of the health programme, then why has it not been raised to the level to which it ought to have been? One thing is certainly clear that there has been a felt need to uplift the nursing profession as a whole and so give it its due recognition in the society.

Inspite of performing highly responsible duties, the image of the nurse is not held in good esteem by the people. Thus all these socio-psycho-economic problems of the nurses deserve a thorough multipronged probe. Under the circumstances it is essential to know how nurses themselves perceive their own job, the extent to which they have autonomy in the field of nursing and the extent to which they get job satisfaction.

2. Statement of the Problem

"A Study of Occupation and Career Perceptions of the
Various Nursing Personnel working in the Training Institutions of Nursing in the City of Greater Bombay.

3. Objectives of the Study

(1) To know the opinions of the nurses towards nursing as a career.
(2) To know their professional attitude.
(3) To determine autonomy of individuals working in the field of nursing.
(4) To study the existing patterns of job specifications of nurses in the hospitals.
(5) To find out the perceptions of nurses in relation to job satisfaction.
(6) To make suggestions to improve the prevailing conditions.

4. Need for Undertaking the Study

The profession of nursing and nurses as individuals are facing numerous problems and difficulties throughout their career in every part of our country. The problems are faced at different levels in the nursing profession such as nursing administrators, for example, matrons, assistant matrons, teaching personnel (sister tutors) and others like ward sisters and staff nurses.

Some of the common problems faced by the different personnel in the nursing profession are:
(1) Social status of nursing in the society is not yet upgraded.

(2) The general apathy of the public towards nurses and nursing profession.

(3) No autonomy is granted to the nursing profession. In India, nursing as a profession is still subservient to the medical profession.

(4) Job specification in different categories of nursing personnel is lacking.

(5) There is a general lack of job satisfaction.

(6) Pay scales are not satisfactory as compared to the workload.

(7) Working hours and other facilities are not satisfactory.

(8) Staffing pattern is not in proportion with the amount of work expected.

(9) Accommodation facilities, that is, hostel as well as family quarters, are not allotted to those in need. Thus in turn affects the health and efficiency of the nursing personnel concerned.

(10) No creche facilities are available for the children of working nurses.

(11) There are no regular staff development programmes which can help the nurses in upgrading their knowledge and keeping abreast with the changing times.
(12) Shortage of man-power which affects the quality of patients care.

(13) Shortage of equipment and supplies affect adversely the smooth functioning in the ward.

(14) Nurses perform more non-nursing functions instead of giving patient care and nursing functions.

So far no efforts have been made in this direction to study the occupation and career perceptions and the specific socio-economic problems faced by the nurses.

There are a few factors responsible for this social apathy. Under the prevailing circumstances it is essential to study how nurses themselves perceive their own role in their jobs. What is their professional attitude towards nursing? To what extent do they have autonomy in the field of nursing? Do they know the specific nursing jobs to be performed? To what extent do they experience job satisfaction?

This study will enlighten various authorities in the field of nursing to have an awareness of the prevailing conditions of services and thereby perhaps it may help in improving the conditions and the image of nursing profession in our country.

5. Definitions of the Terms Used

(1) **Occupation**: What occupies one's means of filling one's time, temporary or regular employment, business, calling pursuit.
(2) **Career**: Course of progress through life. What one intends mainly, one's professional advancement and success in life.

(3) **Perceptions**: A view of performance of self or others, past or present, relative to an idealized norm.

6. **Scope of the Study**

This study will bring out the views and opinions of various levels of nursing personnel regarding nursing as a career, professional attitude, nurses' perceptions of autonomy in the field of nursing, existing patterns of job specifications of nurses in the hospitals and the perceptions of nurses in relation to job satisfaction.

The findings of the study would make the authorities aware of the prevailing problems in nursing profession and may suggest solutions to overcome the problems.

7. **Limitations of the Study**

(1) The study is limited to only 16 training hospitals in the city of Greater Bombay.

(2) The conclusions drawn are based only on the written and the verbal responses of the various nursing personnel working in Bombay.

(3) The study is limited to the nurses who are currently employed in various categories in the different institutions. Those who are retired and those who have
changed the profession are not considered in the present study.

8. Related literature and Studies

An attempt was made to study the literature related to nursing as a career, professional attitude, autonomy of job, job specification and job satisfaction in general and also in the field of nursing.

Many of the studies were done abroad. A few studies in relation to occupation and career perceptions from non-nursing fields are also included.

9. Design and Conduct of the Study

This is a descriptive study. The selection of population for the study was based on the objectives of the study. The field for the study was the training institutions of nursing in the city of Bombay. There are 16 schools of nursing offering diploma courses in nursing. For this study all 16 institutions are included.

9.1 Population for the study

The sample was collected from the following categories of the individuals working in the 16 training institutions of hospitals in Bombay.

(1) Matrons  
(2) Assistant matrons  
(3) Sister tutors  
(4) Ward sisters  
(5) Staff nurses
The sample was collected proportionately from each category. The size of the sample ranged from 10 to 15 per cent of the population. Altogether 521 nursing personnel of various categories were included for this study.

9.2 Selection of the tool and technique

For preparing the tool, the necessary items were taken into consideration. A five point rating scale was used for the four aspects of the data, that is, 1, 2, 3, 5 and for the fourth aspect a three point rating scale was used. The number of items considered for each of the aspects is shown as under.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nursing as a career</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Professional attitude</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Autonomy of job</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Job specification</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>20</td>
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In each of the sections, the statements included were of two types. Some were positive and some negative, in order to avoid the monotony in the tool. With regard to the positive statements, scoring was done in descending order and for the negative statements, it was done in ascending order. For the positive statements, the alternatives varied from strongly agreeing to strongly disagreeing. The scoring marks were 5, 4,
3, 2 and 1 respectively. It was the reverse for statements 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The fourth aspect of the study was job specification. The alternatives given were "Yes" or "No" and "Sometimes". The scores assigned were 2, 0 and 1 respectively.

After the tool was constructed, to know its validity, it was given to four different persons connected with training in the field of nursing. It was given to a Reader and a Senior Lecturer in the College of Nursing, one Matron and one Sister Tutor of renowned hospitals. No suggestions for changing any of the items was received from them. The tools were approved by all of them.

9.3 Pilot study

Pilot study is a preliminary trial of research which is essential to the development of a proper research plan. It was conducted to try out and modify the tools. A pilot study was carried out in the months of March and April 1984. A structured questionnaire was administered to the eleven nursing personnel of different categories. They were one Matron, one Assistant Matron, two Sister Tutors, two Ward Sisters and five Staff Nurses of different training institutions. Their reactions were analysed and it was felt that the tool required slight alterations.

9.4 Procedure for data collection

The period of data collection was from June 1984 to
December 1984. A structured questionnaire was administered to nursing personnel from 16 training institutions of nursing in the city of Bombay.

Prior to the study, a letter of recommendation was obtained from the Principal of the College of Nursing, Bombay. The investigator personally visited all the hospitals. Required permission from the selected institutions were obtained for data collection. All the matrons were contacted and the purpose of the study was explained. Thereafter, various nursing personnel were contacted and the questionnaire was administered in the classrooms or in the nurses' hostel according to the convenience of the respondents.

The questionnaire was administered to 521 nursing personnel and the respondents considered for the study were as follows:

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<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Matrons</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Assistant Matrons</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Sister tutors</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Ward sisters</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Staff nurses</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 521

From these figures, it can be said that the sample was proportionately stratified.

10. **Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

The data was obtained from the 16 training institutions.
of Bombay. The statistical measures were used to treat data in relation to occupation and career perceptions, professional attitude, autonomy of job, job specification and job satisfaction.

The data in relation to the demographic data, for example present post, native place, age, sex, religion, marital status, academic and professional qualifications and experience in nursing profession were analysed in terms of frequency distribution and percentage.

To know the views about the occupation and career perceptions of nursing personnel, data collected in the form of scores was organised as follows:

In order to analyse the data, mean and standard deviation of values for nursing personnel of each category were computed for each of the five aspects namely -

1. Nursing as a career
2. Professional attitude
3. Autonomy of job
4. Job specification
5. Job satisfaction.

Further to decide the significance of difference in the means of various categories, the critical ratio were computed.

Mean and standard deviation values for the sister tutors and ward sisters were computed on the basis of their age and experience. Also mean and standard deviation values for staff nurses were compared on the basis of their marital status.

The rating index for nursing personnel of each category in each of the five areas were also compared.
11. **Conclusion**

The study revealed that in the area of nursing as a career, though the respondents had a positive attitude towards nursing as a career, it was not to a very high degree, with the matrons having the lowest values among all the personnel.

Regarding the professional attitude of nurses towards their job, sister tutors had the lowest values. This is probably because of their heavy workload and pressure of teaching many subjects and due to shortage of teaching personnel, whereas the assistant matrons had the highest values followed by ward sisters.

In the aspect of job autonomy, all categories of nursing personnel had low scores, with the matrons having scored the least. This may be because most of them are answerable to the medical superintendent/Dean and are unable to take many independent decisions.

In the area of job specification also the mean value is low indicating that nurses' attitude towards job specification is not very encouraging. Even in this area the matrons have scored the least. This means that the matrons do not have clear job specifications and authority due to administrative set up in teaching institutions.

Coming to the job satisfaction aspect, the scores were not high for all the categories. Again the matrons had the least score indicating that they get the less job satisfaction. However, sister tutors and assistant matrons seem to have more job satisfaction.
Next a study was done to compare the effect of age and experience of sister tutors and ward sisters on the work performance.

**Sister Tutors:**

*Age*: The study revealed that the professional attitude is more positive with higher age group of sister tutors and job autonomy is also felt to a greater extent.

*Experience*: Regarding sister tutors' experience, the study revealed that there is no difference between the years of experience and job satisfaction.

**Ward Sisters:**

*Age*: The study done to find out the relationship between age and each of the five areas, has shown that with advance of age the professional attitude and job satisfaction decreases, whereas job autonomy and job specification have been felt to a greater extent.

*Experience*: The relationship between the years of experience and each of the five areas was also studied and it revealed that there is no difference between the years of experience (having less than 10 years or more than 10 years in the area of nursing as a career), professional attitude and autonomy of job. The areas of job specification and job satisfaction indicate that personnel having higher experience have less job satisfaction and they also have a greater need for job specification.
Staff Nurses:
In staff nurses, marital status does not influence the differences in their performance. This reveals that even when the staff nurses get married there is no difference in their output.

12. **Recommendations**

(1) A similar study with a larger sample may bring out more interesting findings.

(2) Proper orientation for new employees and of special units should be organised to help the individual to adjust to the new situations and to function safely, intelligently and with confidence.

(3) A 3 months course should be started at all levels to update the professional knowledge and improve the quality of nursing care.

(4) Regular workshops, inservice education programmes and conferences should be organised on National/State/Institutional levels in discussing the problems and suggesting measures to improve the nursing profession as a whole.

(5) Public awareness must be created of nursing profession as an esteemed profession.

(6) Setting up of standards in the nursing profession in State/Nationwaise should be developed.
(7) To wind up the general Nursing Midwifery programme and increase seats in the Basic B.Sc. Nursing programme to have uniform basic level preparation in India and avoid professional disparity among the nurses.

(8) Job descriptions of various nursing personnel should be well defined with adequate understanding of division of labour.

(9) A proforma of detailed policies and autonomy of job should be given to all nursing personnel at the time of appointment.

(10) Nurses' opinions may be considered while changing their duties or transferring them to other departments.

(11) Nurses should be given the choice of working in their preferable areas.

(12) There should be improvement in the staff patient ratio to ensure quality care.

(13) In the light of increasing demands and expectations, pay scales of the nurses need reconsideration.

(14) Working conditions should be improved in terms of number of hours, duration and resting facilities.

(15) Proper communication pattern should be established in all levels of nurses to enhance relationships and efficiency in the work areas.

(16) Special allowances to nurses, working in stress areas of intensive care units, coronary care units, operation
theatres and emergency departments should be paid more because of the special nature of work involved.

13. **Suggestions for Further Study**

(1) A study may be done on matron's job satisfaction which will provide valid suggestions.

(2) All the categories of nursing personnel's role performance needs in depth study, so that valid suggestions can be made in relation to job autonomy and job specification.

(3) There is a need to study the reasons and factors influencing the professional attitudes of the sister tutors since they have scored least in this area.

(4) There is a need to study perceptions of nurses and nursing profession from the public.

(5) Survey may be undertaken and suggestions may be asked from different nursing personnel to improve the image and profession of the nurses.

(6) A comparative study may be undertaken to find out occupation and career perceptions of various nursing personnel and other professionals.

References ...