

Junior Nursing Students' Attitude towards the Profession during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Background: Attitude is very important concept in nursing due to high ambiguities and role conflicts within that profession. The globally widespread outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic all over the world affected all races and socioeconomic classes with its unprecedented negative effect on the usual way of living. This survey study aimed to identify junior nursing students' attitude toward the profession during COVID-19 pandemic. **Methods:** Utilizing a quantitative cross-sectional design through an electronic survey form developed by the investigators in two parts on personal profile items and the attitude toward nursing profession scale was carried out for collecting data using total enumeration as sampling technique; all students enrolled in the 1st and 2nd academic levels at the Faculty of Nursing – Minia University during the Academic year 2020/2021 (n= 1406) were involved in the survey with voluntary and anonymous participation. **Results:** The study findings revealed that most of the students had a positive attitude toward nursing profession (97.3%) while only (2.7%) had a negative attitude with total mean score of the attitude level was 161.3 ± 19.2 . Significant differences in overall attitude of the participated students in relation to their personal profile were favored to females, rural resided and second academic level students. **Conclusion:** The attitude of the junior nursing students during COVID-19 pandemic appeared to be positive towards their future profession. Against the investigators' expectations, findings indicated that 2nd year students exhibited more positive attitude toward the nursing profession during COVID-19 pandemic than 1st year students.

Key words: Nursing profession - Junior Students - Attitudes - COVID-19 pandemic.

Introduction

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) has become a world-wide health problem. It started with the information from the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019, which mentioned a case of pneumonia cluster with an unclear etiology in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. This case continues to grow until there are reports of deaths and imports occur outside of China. On January 30, 2020, WHO established COVID-19 as the Public Health Emergency of International Concern/The World's Worst Public Health Emergency. On February 12, 2020, WHO officially designated this human novel coronavirus disease as Coronavirus Disease (COVID19). On March 11, 2020, WHO established COVID-19 as a pandemic (WHO, 2020).

Nursing is a field that is concerned with taking care of ill or injured persons and providing preventive health care to healthy persons. The basic perception is still remotely

the same. but, today, the nursing profession has changed drastically. There are extensive training programs, more diversified staff, and a level of prestige associated with this area of the medical field that was not there before. The knowledge required become to be greater with advancing sciences and technology. Although the drastic change occurred in the nursing profession, the perception of nursing students toward nursing profession remains the same (Čukljek et al., 2017).

Even though nursing is defined in a clear way but still today, there are different attitudes toward nursing profession. Most theoretical definitions consider attitude as an individual predisposition to evaluate a social element (fact, event, or person) considering it favorable or unfavorable, therefore showing a certain behavior to it. Also converging with this opinion others considers attitude as a mental and neurophysiological state determined by experience, and which exerts a dynamic influence on the individual, preparing him to act in a specific way (Andronache et al.,

2014).

Attitude defined in specialized literature as a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's degree of like or dislike for an item. It also could be defined as a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, event, activities, ideas, or just about anything in your environment, so there is debate about precise definitions for the attitude (Ali et al, 2014).

Most of the studies show that students or health professionals do not have a favorable attitude toward nursing as a profession. However, nursing students should have a positive attitude while taking care of the patients. Therefore, it is important to introduce an overall determination on that issue (Jothishanmugam et al., 2019). Attitude of nursing students could be either positive or negative. However, within the basic division of positive and negative, it can be argued that even the positive attitudes toward nursing profession may have negative connotations which could lead to stress and discomfort among the students during the study period due to a conflict between the ideal image of nursing as a profession and what it really is (Kathreena et al., 2015).

Additionally, attitude of junior nursing students toward their future profession was alarming. Besides if there are negative attitudes towards the nursing profession it might be possible to plan and apply educational items aiming to change such attitudes. By these means candidates of nursing profession might attain positive attitudes towards the profession during their educational period which in turn might contribute to the increase in the number of nurses who are devoted to their profession. Hence, the investigators decided to conduct survey study to identify junior nursing students' attitude about the profession during COVID-19 period.

Significance of the study:

The globally widespread outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic all over the world affected all races and socioeconomic classes with its unprecedented negative effect on the usual way of living. For instance, a global crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic pose devastating impacts on the students' academic

functioning and psychological wellbeing, specifically nursing students. Additionally, COVID-19 is a novel pandemic in the global scene and a few studies approached the event in relation to the nursing students and the various encounters experienced throughout the first few times after the discovery of the pandemic. However, the current study focused on identifying the attitude of junior nursing students towards the profession during covid-19 pandemic. This study is also considered to be important or beneficial in providing a contribution to the other studies on improving and enhancing nursing profession image.

Aim of the study

The current study aims to identify junior nursing students' attitude towards the profession during covid-19 pandemic.

Subjects and methods

Research Design: A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was utilized to fulfill the aim of this study.

Setting: The study was carried out in Faculty of Nursing – Minia University, Egypt.

Participants: A non-probability convenience sample composed of all students enrolled in the 1st and 2nd academic levels at the Faculty of Nursing – Minia University during the Academic year 2020/2021 (n= 1406) were invited to participate in the survey. The participation was voluntary and anonymous. A total number of 1200 students participated and returned the questionnaires with (85 %) response rate.

Data collection tool and procedure:

The instrument used for surveying junior nursing students' attitude towards the profession during Covid-19 pandemic in this study was the Attitude toward Nursing Profession Scale developed by the investigators based on reviewing the related literature (Ali et al, 2014; Miligi & Selim, 2014; Tomlinson et al., 2020; Alatawi, 2020). It consisted of two parts; the first part included items related to personal profile of the students such as gender, residence, and academic year. The other part is composed of a 50 items scale subdivided on a four subdomain scales as (Self-satisfaction with

the profession, pride in nursing work and study, social aspects of the profession, & economic aspects of the profession).

Each item of the scale is rated on a four-point Likert scale as (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree). The negative statement rating was reversed for counting the total score of the scale. The total attitude scores ranged from 50 as the lowest to 200 as the highest score; further classified into positive and negative attitude levels on differential point for scores matched 50 % of the total attitude score.

Content and face validity of the tool were assessed by three experts in the field of nursing administration and education who examined and approved it.

Cronbach α was used to measure the scale reliability by evaluating the internal consistency of its 50 items and it was (0.856) this result was statistically accepted. In addition, correlations among the subscale as well as between total score of each subscale and the total score of the attitude scale were assessed and indicated statistically significant correlation... (Table 8).

Procedure: After obtaining the official permission from Dean of the faculty as well as from the faculty's Vice dean for graduates' studies and the scientific research and from the Vice dean for student affairs, The investigators meet the students during the regular classes periods during the academic year 2020/ 2021 for providing the oral instructions that specified the purpose of the study and explained the procedures to be followed in responding to the scale items; they were told that there was no right or wrong responses. The instrument was translated into Arabic language and converted into an on-line version by the investigators on the Google Modules in an anonymous form and it was uploaded in the period from October 20 to December 31, 2020 through the media groups formed for on-line educational purposes during COVID-19 pandemic.

Ethical issues: After obtaining the Official Approval from the Research Ethics Committee in the faculty, an informed oral consent was obtained from the students who agreed to participate in the study. It was clearly

stated that students' participation is voluntary and confidential, and students were assured about their right to withdraw from the study at any time and that the obtained data will be used for scientific research purpose only and will never be discussed with them individually.

Data analysis:

Data were downloaded in the Excel spreadsheet and tabulated and statistically analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 28 to computerize and verify them. Qualitative factors were defined using frequency and percentages. Several statistical tests were used to analyze the information gathered. An independent t-test, Chi-square test and correlation were performed between different groups.

Results:

Considering students personal profile shown in **Table 1**, more than half of the students were females (60.2%); about two thirds of them were enrolled in the first academic level (65.8%); and near to three quarters were resided in rural areas (73.3%). By looking on the total attitude level it was noted that majority of the students had a positive attitude toward nursing profession (97.3%) while only (2.7%) had a negative attitude level... **Fig. 1**.

When looking at the total mean scores of the attitude toward nursing profession subdomain scales in **Fig. 2** and **Tables (2: 5)** results indicated that, the pride in nursing work and study subdomain have the highest scores (64.8 ± 8.1) among the students followed by the social aspects of the profession subdomain (44.1 ± 5.1) followed by the self-satisfaction with the profession subdomain (38.8 ± 6.2) and the last subdomain was the economic aspects of the profession (13.7 ± 1.8).

For comparisons of attitude levels among nursing students **Fig. 3** and **Table 6** showed that the study results reported a high statistically significant difference between the positive and negative attitude levels among males and females students with p value equal (0.005) as well there was statistical significant difference between the positive and negative attitude levels among students from urban and rural areas p value equal (0.017) while, there

was no statistically significant difference between the positive and negative attitude levels among either students of the 1st or 2nd academic level.

Moreover, regarding differences in total mean scores of the attitude toward nursing profession in relation to students' personal profile **Fig. 4** and **Table 7** showed that there was a high statistically significant difference in

the total attitude toward the nursing profession score among the students according to their gender, academic level and residence with total mean and standard deviation scores among the females students, from 2nd year and those who live in rural areas (163.6 ± 17.3); (163.8 ± 19.0) & (162.3 ± 18.8) respectively) higher than that of other cross groups with p-value levels (0.001; 0.005 & 0.009) respectively.

Table (1): Students' Personal profile (n=1200).

Personal characteristics		No.	%
Gender	Male	477	39.8
	Female	723	60.2
Academic year	1 st	790	65.8
	2 nd	410	34.2
Residence	Urban	323	26.7
	Rural	877	73.3

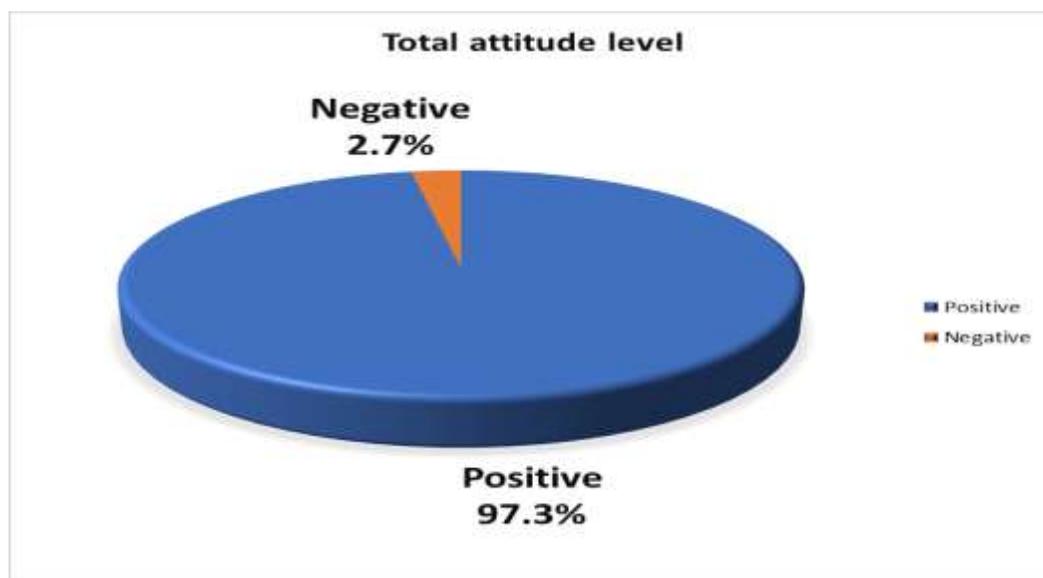


Fig. 1: Total level of students' attitude toward nursing profession (n= 1200).

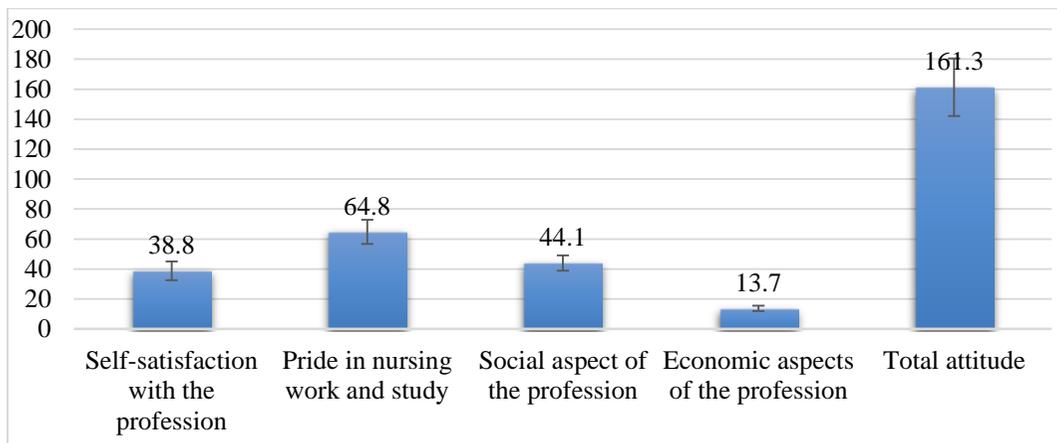


Fig. 2: Mean scores of subdomains and total attitude levels (n=1200).

Table 2: Students’ responses as pride in nursing work and study (n=1200).

Items	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Feeling happy to become a nurse after covid-19 pandemic.	37	3.0	159	13.3	561	46.8	443	36.9
Unembarrassed when practice nursing work.	24	2.0	55	4.6	526	43.8	595	49.6
Not shamed of studying nursing.	74	6.2	142	11.8	490	40.8	494	41.2
Feeling pleasure when helping patients.	10	0.8	35	2.9	414	34.5	741	61.8
Prefer working in any career except nursing	262	21.9	557	46.4	226	18.8	155	12.9
Mean ± SD	64.8 ± 8.1							

Table 3: Students’ responses as social aspects of the profession (n=1200).

Items	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Not accept marriage from a family unvalued nursing profession.	37	3.0	101	8.4	472	39.4	590	49.2
The society respect and appreciation to nursing after covid-19 pandemic	55	4.6	138	11.5	487	40.6	520	43.3
Interest in reading articles about nursing	43	3.6	180	15.0	604	50.3	373	31.1
Value of nursing education after covid-19 pandemic	65	5.4	138	11.5	563	46.9	434	36.2
Professional contribution to society progress	595	49.6	458	38.1	78	6.5	69	5.8
Mean ± SD	44.1 ± 5.1							

Table 4: Students’ responses as self-satisfaction with the profession (n=1200).

Items	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Nursing is a varied, honorable profession.	19	1.6	65	5.4	510	42.5	606	50.5
Respect to nursing profession.	16	1.3	34	2.8	518	43.2	632	52.7
Unlucky for join nursing profession	452	37.7	551	45.9	103	8.6	94	7.8
Joined nursing profession against desire	452	37.7	551	45.9	103	8.6	94	7.8
Self-prove as a professional in the future	23	1.9	67	5.6	512	42.7	598	49.8
Mean ± SD	38.8 ± 6.2							

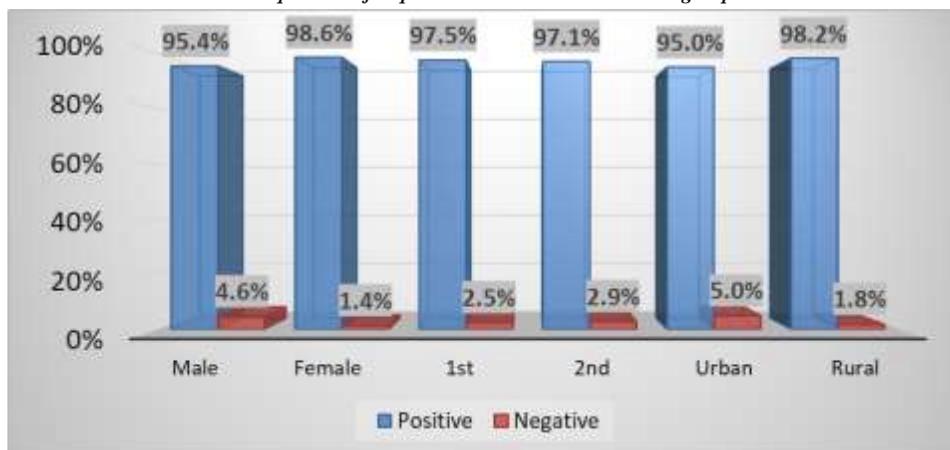
Table 5: Students' responses as economic aspects of the profession(n=1200).

Items	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Nursing study ensures future work opportunity.	25	2.1	118	9.8	592	49.3	465	38.8
The nursing profession has an ensured future.	38	3.2	83	6.9	438	36.5	641	53.4
Th income of nursing better than other professions.	13	1.0	30	2.5	452	37.7	705	58.8
Nursing provides many opportunities of jobs	8	0.7	34	2.8	512	42.7	646	53.8
Nursing graduates have a well expected future.	20	1.7	41	3.4	583	48.6	556	46.3
Mean ± SD	13.7 ± 1.8							

Table 6: Comparison between the attitude levels in relation to students' personal profile (n= 1200).

Items		No.	Total attitude levels				Test of significant	
			Negative (n = 32)		Positive (n=1168)			
			No.	%	No.	%	χ^2	P value
Gender	Male	477	22	4.6	455	95.4	7.984	0.005**
	Female	723	10	1.4	713	98.6		
Academic year	1 st	790	20	2.5	770	97.5	0.335	0.563
	2 nd	410	12	2.9	398	97.1		
Residence	Urban	323	16	5.0	307	95.0	5.725	0.017*
	Rural	877	16	1.8	861	98.2		

Chi-square test for qualitative data between the two groups

**Fig. 3:** Positive and negative attitude levels among nursing students (n= 1200).**Table 7:** Differences in total attitude level in relation to students' personal profile (n= 1200).

Items		No.	Total Attitude Scores Mean ± SD	t-test (P- value)
Personal characteristics				
Gender	Male	477	157.8 ± 21.4	4.071 (0.001**)
	Female	723	163.6 ± 17.3	
Academic year	1 st	790	160.0 ± 19.2	2.568 (0.005**)
	2 nd	410	163.8 ± 19.0	
Residence	Urban	323	158.6 ± 20.1	2.390 (0.009**)
	Rural	877	162.3 ± 18.8	
Total attitude			161.3 ± 19.2	

*Independent T-test for quantitative data between the two groups -**Significant level at P value < 0.01*

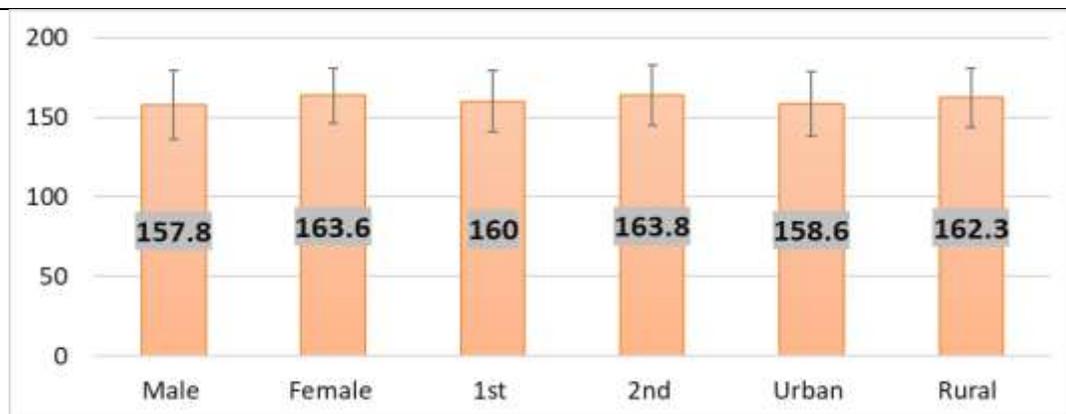


Fig. 4: Total Mean scores of students' attitude toward nursing profession in relation to personal profile (n= 1200).

Table (8): Statistical correlation among the four subscales as well as between total score of each subscale and the total score of the attitude scale.

		Academic year	Self-satisfaction with the profession	Pride in nursing work and study	Social aspects of the profession	Economic aspects of the profession
Academic year	R	1				
	P- value					
Self-satisfaction with the profession	R	-.130**	1			
	P- value	<.001				
Pride in nursing work and study	R	-.057-	.802**	1		
	P- value	.119	<.001			
Social aspect of the profession	R	-.090*	.774**	.781**	1	
	P- value	.014	<.001	<.001		
Economic aspects of the profession	R	-.037-	.487**	.647**	.572**	1
	P- value	.306	<.001	<.001	<.001	
Total attitude	R	-.093*	.914**	.950**	.900**	.677**
	P- value	.010	<.001	.000	<.001	<.001

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Discussion:

Attitude is very important concept in nursing due to high ambiguities and role conflicts within that profession. The unfavorable attitude toward nursing profession remaining the global issue across various health care sectors. To date there are several studies on COVID-19 event that concern health care professionals across the globe. The aim of the current study was to identify junior nursing students' attitude towards the nursing profession during covid-19 pandemic period.

It was apparent from the findings that majority of the junior nursing students exhibit a positive attitude toward the profession with the subdomain of pride in nursing work and study being the most highly rated by the students. This finding is consistent with investigator'

expectation that new students admitted to the faculty during covid-19 pandemic period, will exhibit more positive image and opinions about nursing profession due to public signifying the nursing staff role among the front-line fighters against covid-19 pandemic.

This finding is also similar to the study conducted by **Jothishanmugam et al. (2019)** among nursing student to find out the change occur in nursing perception over all the four years period. The result of the study revealed that presence of a positive attitude among the majority of the students at the beginning and also during the study. In addition, the current study finding was in line with **Ali et al. (2014)** whose study found positive attitude toward nursing profession among most of the undergraduate students while the minority had a negative attitude. Moreover, this finding consistent with **Miligi and Selim**

(2014), who reported that the mean attitude score among nursing students in Saudi Arabia (KSA) display a positive attitude toward the nursing profession.

Moreover, the current results demonstrated a significant effect of the academic level on the student's attitude toward nursing profession as the 1st year students selected to join the faculty of nursing during covid-19 pandemic period while 2nd year students were already enrolled in the faculty when covid-19 pandemic started. In such regard, findings indicated a high statistically significant difference in the total mean score of the attitude toward the nursing profession in favor to 2nd year students. This result reverse to the investigator's expectation as 1st year students were expected to have more positive attitude due to the role of nurses in fighting covid-19 event which changing the negative attitude held by the whole community towards the nursing profession.

Also, this result wasn't in line with **Ali et al. (2014)** results which demonstrated mean scores of all attitude domains higher in the first-year students than other academic levels. Also, this was contradicted with **Miligi and Selim (2014)** finding in their study as they found no significant relation between the academic year and the students attitude toward nursing profession; which was against the author's expectation that the young students and who are in the first year were expected to have negative attitude compared to the students who are enrolled in the third and fifth year as such group of the students were expected to have more positive attitude as they progress from year to year during the undergraduate study.

The current study finding was analogous to results exhibited by respondents participated in the study of **Jothishanmugam et al. (2019)** who were randomly selected from the four educational cohorts studying of the baccalaureate nursing program in Jazan University as well as to results of (**James and Hooda, 2017**) study, as the authors of the two studies concluded that the students perception toward nursing changed through the educational programs and clinical experience because they acquire the necessary competence for independent safe and quality nursing care and also they develop a professional identity.

Another note in the current study findings about the differences in students' attitude toward the nursing profession relating to their gender and place of residence, it was noticed that female students exhibited more positive attitude toward the profession than male students. As well, rural resided students also reported more positive attitude than students resided in urbanized regions.

The aforementioned findings may be attributed to that despite male nursing students being enrolled to baccalaureate nursing programs in Egypt since about twenty years ago, they have been still a minority group within the nursing profession as reported in many previous studies which also stressed that men in nursing face many barriers and obstacles not only from the general public but also from their patients and colleagues in other professions due to predominantly gender stereotyping of nursing as a feminine profession with a potential to limit the professional development of males within the nursing profession

These findings do not support with the findings of **Ali et al. (2014)** as they reported no statistical significant relations were found between neither students' gender nor their place of residence and their attitude toward nursing profession when comparing the total score of the attitude among students in relation to their demographic characteristics.

On the other hands, these findings were supported by **Miligi and Selim (2014)** whose findings showed that students resided in rural regions exhibited more positive attitude toward the profession when compared to the students resided in urban regions who displayed significant negative attitude.

From the investigators' point of view the reason behind this finding would be attributed to the fact that students who come from more conservative restrictive rural areas were interested to join nursing profession because they belonged to poor families and they must satisfy their families economic needs as priority basis and jobs in nursing are easily available accordingly, they view nursing profession as an attractive profession because of the availability of job opportunities. while other urban resided students were reluctant to join nursing and they view nursing carrier as undesirable due to availability

of several career opportunities at the more modern urbanized regions.

Conclusion:

A positive attitude towards the nursing profession during covid-19 pandemic exhibited by most of junior nursing students. Significant differences in overall attitude of the participated students were favored to females, rural resided and second academic level students.

Recommendations:

Replication of similar studies hoped to be conducted after resolving of that pandemic and of other studies involving senior and intern students to explore their attitudes toward the nursing profession as well to verify and compare its findings with those of the current study.

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