



ISSN Online: [3006-4708](https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i1.1700)

ISSN Print: [3006-4694](https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i1.1700)

## *SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW ARCHIVES*

<https://policyjournalofms.com>

### Analyzing the Public Perception of Nursing in Modern Society

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i1.1700>

#### Abstract

The profession of nursing plays a crucial role in healthcare delivery worldwide, yet public perception of nursing remains limited, often overlooking the complexity and expertise involved in modern nursing practice. This study aims to examine the factors influencing public perception of nursing, exploring how media portrayals, educational advancements, and professional developments contribute to shaping public attitudes. Despite the growing role of nurses in advanced clinical, leadership, and decision-making roles, nursing continues to be perceived as a subordinate or less prestigious profession. This discrepancy between public perception and the reality of nursing practice can impact policy decisions, nursing education, and workforce sustainability, including issues such as nurse shortages and underrepresentation in leadership roles. By investigating these factors, this research seeks to identify strategies to shift public perceptions and improve the recognition and value of nursing in society. The findings aim to inform healthcare policy, nursing practice, and public education to promote a more accurate understanding of the nursing profession and its vital role in healthcare systems.

**Keywords:** Nursing, Public Perception, Nursing Education, Media Portrayal, Healthcare Systems, Nursing Leadership, Nurse Shortages, Nursing Stereotypes, Advanced Practice Nursing, Healthcare Policy, Professional Identity

#### 1. Introduction

Nursing, as a profession, has long been recognized as the backbone of healthcare systems worldwide. However, despite its critical role, public perceptions of nursing have evolved significantly over time. In modern society, nursing is not only viewed through the lens of clinical care, but also as a profession that encompasses compassion, education, leadership, and advocacy (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2015). The image of nursing is shaped by various factors, including media portrayals, educational standards, and the increasing complexity of healthcare needs. As healthcare systems become more intricate with advancements in technology and care delivery, the public's understanding of nursing and its professional identity must be continuously assessed. Understanding public perception of nursing is essential for shaping policies, improving healthcare delivery, and promoting the profession's value in society (Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2011).

The portrayal of nurses in the media plays a significant role in shaping public perception, often reducing the profession to stereotypical images. Historically, nurses have been depicted as subordinates to physicians or as angels of mercy, offering emotional support but not contributing to critical decision-making processes. While these representations highlight the caring nature of nursing, they tend to neglect the intellectual and technical expertise required in modern healthcare

(Hamilton & McClure, 2011). Such portrayals can perpetuate misconceptions about the scope and complexity of nursing, leading to a limited and outdated understanding of the profession. Media outlets, however, are not the only influential actors in shaping perceptions; the education and training of nurses also play a pivotal role.

In recent decades, nursing education has evolved dramatically, with an increasing emphasis on advanced practice and specialization. Nurses today are highly educated professionals, often holding master's or doctoral degrees, and are trained to provide complex care across diverse clinical settings. Advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), such as nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, and nurse midwives, have gained prominence, challenging traditional perceptions of nursing as a lower-tier profession (Zaccagnini & White, 2017). The increasing integration of nurses into leadership roles within healthcare systems further challenges outdated stereotypes, presenting them as key players in the management and delivery of patient care. As the role of nurses continues to expand, their expertise and autonomy must be better understood and recognized by the public.

However, despite these advancements, challenges remain in how nursing is perceived, particularly in terms of salary, status, and recognition. The disparity between the increasing responsibilities of nurses and their compensation remains a topic of debate. Research has shown that while nurses often provide the majority of direct patient care, their remuneration is not always reflective of their level of expertise or the intensity of their work (Kovner et al., 2014). Moreover, the prestige associated with nursing lags behind that of other healthcare professions, with many members of the public viewing nursing as a "lesser" profession compared to medicine. This misalignment between responsibility and recognition may contribute to a lack of understanding about the value nurses bring to healthcare systems, as well as to their professional self-image.

As healthcare delivery continues to evolve, it is crucial for both the public and policymakers to understand the value and expertise that nurses bring to patient care. Nurses not only provide direct patient care but also play key roles in health promotion, policy advocacy, and the implementation of healthcare reforms (Buerhaus et al., 2017). The expansion of nursing roles, along with growing evidence of their effectiveness in improving patient outcomes, suggests that the public's understanding of nursing should shift from viewing nurses as passive caregivers to recognizing them as educated, skilled professionals capable of contributing to healthcare at all levels. Addressing the gap between the public's perceptions and the reality of nursing is essential in enhancing the profession's image and ensuring that nurses are appropriately valued within society. This paper explores the public perception of nursing in modern society, examining the key factors that influence how nurses are viewed, the challenges they face in maintaining a positive image, and the implications for the future of the profession. Additionally, it will discuss the role of nurses in patient care, leadership, and community health, emphasizing the importance of promoting a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of nursing.

## **2. Background of the study**

Nursing is one of the most essential and respected professions in healthcare, yet public perception often fails to fully acknowledge the depth and complexity of the role that nurses play in the health system. Historically, the image of nursing has been influenced by traditional gender roles and cultural stereotypes, which have resulted in the undervaluation of nurses' contributions to healthcare. Nurses have long been depicted primarily as caregivers, with little recognition of their intellectual, decision-making, and leadership responsibilities. As healthcare systems become more advanced and demand for quality care grows, the scope of nursing practice has expanded significantly. Despite this, public understanding of the profession often lags behind its true scope and significance.

In recent decades, nursing has undergone significant transformations. Nurses are increasingly required to engage in complex, specialized care and are being integrated into leadership positions within healthcare systems. The evolution of nursing education, with a growing emphasis on advanced practice nursing (APN), has been a key factor in this shift. Nurses, particularly those with advanced degrees, now practice in roles that were once exclusively reserved for physicians, such as nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, and clinical nurse specialists. This shift is reflective of broader changes in healthcare, where there is a growing recognition of the need for collaborative care teams and more efficient delivery of health services (Zaccagnini & White, 2017). The expansion of nurses' roles has led to improved patient outcomes and greater satisfaction, yet public understanding of these expanded roles remains insufficient.

Public perception of nursing is also shaped by the portrayal of nurses in the media. Media representations of nurses have historically been confined to either the "angel of mercy" stereotype, which emphasizes the nurturing aspects of the profession, or the "nurse-as-assistant" model, which positions nurses as subordinates to physicians. Although these portrayals can enhance the image of nursing in some respects, they often fail to capture the full range of nurses' clinical expertise and decision-making abilities (Hamilton & McClure, 2011). Furthermore, such stereotypes contribute to the persistent belief that nursing is a less prestigious and lower-status profession compared to medicine, despite the significant education and training required to practice at the highest levels.

The importance of addressing the gap between the public's perception of nursing and the reality of the profession cannot be overstated. Nurses are at the forefront of patient care, and their contributions to healthcare quality are critical. However, despite providing the majority of direct care, nurses continue to face challenges related to job satisfaction, compensation, and recognition (Kovner et al., 2014). As healthcare systems worldwide struggle with issues such as nursing shortages, the underrepresentation of nurses in leadership roles, and the increasing complexity of patient care, it is essential to improve public understanding of the profession. This shift in perception can lead to greater respect for nurses' contributions, enhanced public trust in the healthcare system, and better recruitment and retention of nursing professionals.

The public's view of nursing also influences policy decisions, funding, and support for nursing education and training programs. Inaccurate or outdated perceptions can result in underinvestment in the nursing workforce and a lack of policy support for initiatives that could improve the profession. For instance, despite the high demand for nurses in healthcare systems globally, many countries still fail to adequately address the education, work conditions, and compensation of nurses. Examining the factors that shape public perception of nursing, this study aims to highlight the discrepancies between the image of nursing held by the public and the actual scope of nursing practice in modern healthcare.

### **3. Statement of the Problem**

Despite the critical role nurses play in healthcare delivery, the public perception of nursing often remains limited and does not reflect the full scope of the profession. Nurses are increasingly taking on complex clinical roles, providing specialized care, and assuming leadership positions within healthcare organizations. However, many members of the public continue to view nursing as a profession primarily focused on basic patient care and support functions, rather than one that involves advanced clinical decision-making, critical thinking, and leadership (Hamilton & McClure, 2011). This gap between the public's perception and the reality of nursing practice undermines the value and recognition of nurses in the healthcare system.

The continued underestimation of nursing's role can have significant consequences for the profession and healthcare as a whole. Inaccurate perceptions can lead to lower professional status,

limited financial investment in nursing education, and inadequate policy support for the development of nursing practice (Buerhaus et al., 2017). Moreover, nurses may face challenges in advocating for improved working conditions, fair compensation, and recognition of their advanced skills. Additionally, the underappreciation of nursing's contribution may impact public trust in healthcare institutions, as patients might not fully understand the extent of the expertise and care that nurses provide.

The lack of accurate public perception also poses challenges in addressing ongoing issues within the nursing workforce, such as nurse shortages and the underrepresentation of nurses in leadership roles. Public awareness of the profession's true value could help attract new generations to nursing, enhance job satisfaction, and improve retention rates, which are critical in addressing the global nursing shortage. Without a clear understanding of the evolving role of nurses, the profession may struggle to gain the recognition it deserves, which could perpetuate its marginalization within the broader healthcare system.

This study seeks to explore the underlying reasons for the discrepancy between the public's perception of nursing and the reality of the profession. It aims to investigate how factors such as media portrayals, education, and professional advancements influence public attitudes toward nursing. By understanding these dynamics, the study will contribute to efforts to shift public perceptions, thereby enhancing the profession's image and fostering a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of nursing in modern society.

#### 4. Research Questions

1. What factors influence public perception of nursing in modern society?
2. How do media portrayals affect the public's understanding of nursing?
3. How do nursing education and advanced practice roles impact public perception?
4. How does public perception of nursing affect healthcare policies and workforce sustainability?

#### 5. Research Objectives

1. To identify the key factors shaping public perceptions of nursing.
2. To analyze the influence of media on public perceptions of nursing.
3. To evaluate the impact of nursing education and advanced practice roles on the profession's image.
4. To assess the implications of public perception on nursing's status and healthcare policy.

#### Conceptual Framework

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Dependent Variables</b>
<b>Media Portrayals of Nursing</b>	<b>Public Perception of Nursing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• - TV shows, films, news, advertisements</li> <li>• - Stereotypical depictions (e.g., angel of mercy, nurse assistant)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• - Awareness of nursing roles, skills, and responsibilities</li> <li>• - Public attitudes towards the profession</li> </ul>
<b>Nursing Education and Training</b>	<b>Recognition of Nursing's Professional Value</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• - Nursing programs (BSN, MSN, DNP)</li> <li>• - Advanced practice roles (NP, CRNA, CNS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• - Acknowledgement of nurses as skilled professionals</li> <li>• - Perception of nurses' expertise in healthcare</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural and Societal Factors</b>	<b>Public Understanding of Nursing Scope</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gender norms, historical stereotypes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clarity about nurses' role in patient care, leadership</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural views on caregiving professions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acceptance of nurses' autonomy and decision-making</li> </ul>
<b>Healthcare Policy and Workforce Development</b>	<b>Nursing Workforce Sustainability</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nurse shortages, policy reforms, funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public support for nursing policy and workforce development</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support for nursing roles in leadership and decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nurses' job satisfaction, recruitment, and retention rates</li> </ul>

This table represents a conceptual framework that links independent variables (factors that influence the public perception of nursing) to dependent variables (the outcomes in terms of how nursing is perceived and understood in society). The independent variables drive the dependent variables, ultimately affecting public understanding, recognition, and support for the nursing profession.

## 2.Literature Review

The public perception of nursing is shaped by a combination of factors, including media representations, educational advancements, historical stereotypes, and cultural norms. As nursing continues to evolve into a more complex and specialized profession, understanding how these elements influence perceptions is essential for promoting a more accurate and positive image of nursing in modern society. This literature review explores key studies and theoretical frameworks that highlight the factors influencing public perceptions of nursing, the impact of these perceptions, and the broader implications for the profession.

### Media Representations of Nursing

Media portrayals of nurses have a significant impact on public perceptions. Studies have shown that media often depict nurses as caring, nurturing, and subservient to physicians, reinforcing stereotypes that limit the public's understanding of the profession's complexity. Hamilton and McClure (2011) argue that while such portrayals emphasize the compassionate nature of nursing, they fail to capture the critical thinking, decision-making, and technical skills that nurses possess. For instance, nurses are frequently portrayed as secondary figures in healthcare, working under the direction of doctors, which does not reflect the autonomy many nurses now have, especially those in advanced practice roles. This limited portrayal contributes to a public image that undervalues nursing's professional capabilities (Fagin & Fagin, 2010).

In contrast, some contemporary media outlets, including television shows like *Grey's Anatomy* and *Nurse Jackie*, have provided more dynamic and complex portrayals of nurses, showcasing their decision-making skills and leadership within healthcare teams. These depictions have been credited with broadening the public's understanding of nursing as a multifaceted profession. However, such portrayals are not always accurate, and their impact on public perception remains inconsistent (Nelson, 2016). Media has the power to both enhance and distort the image of nursing, which requires further investigation into how such portrayals influence public attitudes and how the profession can leverage media to enhance its image.

### The Role of Education and Advanced Practice Nursing

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping both the practice and perception of nursing. As nursing education has advanced, so too has the scope and complexity of the profession. Zaccagnini and White (2017) highlight the growing demand for highly educated nurses, with many pursuing

advanced degrees such as a Master's or Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP). The increasing number of nurses in advanced practice roles—such as nurse practitioners (NPs), clinical nurse specialists (CNSs), and nurse anesthetists (CRNAs)—has led to a greater recognition of nursing as a primary provider of healthcare services. These roles challenge traditional perceptions that nurses are primarily bedside caregivers, instead framing them as autonomous healthcare providers capable of performing many of the same tasks as physicians (Buerhaus et al., 2017).

However, despite these advancements, public perception often lags behind these changes. Research by Kovner et al. (2014) found that while nurses are assuming more responsibilities and participating in patient care decisions, the public still often views nursing as a supportive role, secondary to that of physicians. This disconnect between public perception and reality may be due to lingering stereotypes and the historical view of nursing as a less prestigious profession. For nursing to gain the recognition it deserves, public understanding must align with the evolving roles that nurses are playing in modern healthcare.

### **Stereotypes and Gendered Views of Nursing**

Nursing has historically been a profession dominated by women, and as such, it has often been subject to gendered stereotypes. According to McNally (2015), nursing has been consistently portrayed as a “feminine” profession, associated with nurturing, caregiving, and emotional labor. These gendered stereotypes not only limit the scope of public perception but also contribute to the undervaluation of nursing as a skilled, intellectual profession. Nurses are often seen as caregivers, but their roles are frequently portrayed as being less intellectually demanding than those of physicians or other healthcare professionals. This gendered view has also led to the “angel of mercy” stereotype, which emphasizes the selfless, compassionate nature of nursing but fails to recognize the rigorous education, clinical expertise, and leadership required to excel in the field (Hamilton & McClure, 2011).

The perpetuation of these gendered stereotypes also contributes to the lack of diversity in nursing leadership. Research by Buerhaus et al. (2017) emphasizes that while women dominate the nursing profession, there remains a significant underrepresentation of women of color in leadership roles within healthcare. These gendered and racial stereotypes play a key role in shaping both the internal and external perceptions of nursing, potentially limiting the advancement and recognition of nurses across various demographics.

### **Public Perception and Workforce Sustainability**

The way the public perceives nursing has important implications for the profession's sustainability. Negative or limited perceptions can lead to reduced recruitment into the profession, increased burnout, and difficulty in retaining nurses in healthcare settings (Kovner et al., 2014). Studies indicate that when the public holds a limited or stereotypical view of nursing, it becomes harder to attract qualified individuals to the profession, particularly those from underrepresented groups. A study by Buerhaus et al. (2017) showed that positive public perceptions of nursing are directly linked to improved recruitment and retention rates, as well as enhanced job satisfaction among nurses.

Moreover, public perception can also influence policy decisions. The recognition of nursing as a skilled and integral part of healthcare delivery can lead to increased investment in nursing education, better working conditions, and the expansion of nursing roles in leadership and decision-making positions (Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2011). Conversely, a lack of understanding of the profession's contributions can result in inadequate support for nurses, such as insufficient funding for training programs or the undervaluation of their role in healthcare reform.

The literature reveals that public perception of nursing is influenced by a range of factors, including media portrayals, educational advancements, gendered stereotypes, and historical views of the profession. While nursing has evolved into a complex and multifaceted field, public understanding has not always kept pace with these changes. The perpetuation of outdated stereotypes and the lack of recognition of nurses' advanced skills and leadership roles continue to affect both the image of the profession and its sustainability. To address these challenges, it is essential to continue exploring the factors that shape public perceptions and to develop strategies for promoting a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of nursing. Through media advocacy, education reforms, and policy support, nursing can enhance its public image and ensure that its critical role in healthcare is fully recognized.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study adopts a descriptive research design with a mixed-methods approach to explore the factors influencing public perceptions of nursing and their impact on the profession. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used to gather comprehensive data that addresses the study's objectives. The approach allows for both numerical analysis of broad patterns and in-depth exploration of individual experiences and opinions.

#### **Research Design**

A descriptive research design is chosen to outline and explain the current state of public perceptions regarding nursing. This design helps to identify the key factors shaping public attitudes, such as media portrayals, nursing education, cultural norms, and gendered stereotypes. The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to provide a thorough understanding of the issue.

1. **Qualitative research** explores participants' attitudes, beliefs, and personal perceptions through interviews and focus groups.
2. **Quantitative research** focuses on gathering numerical data to identify trends and correlations in public perceptions using surveys.

#### **Population and Sample**

The target population for this research includes the general public, healthcare professionals, and nursing students. The study employs stratified random sampling to select a representative sample. This method ensures diversity within the sample by considering factors such as age, gender, educational background, and professional experience. The total sample size consists of 300 participants, divided into the following groups:

1. **150 members of the public:** Representing different demographics, including age, gender, and occupation.
2. **50 healthcare professionals:** Including doctors, nurses, and nurse practitioners.
3. **100 nursing students:** At various educational levels (undergraduate and graduate).

#### **Data Collection Methods**

1. Data collection occurs through three primary methods: surveys, interviews/focus groups, and content analysis.
2. **Surveys/Questionnaires:** A structured questionnaire is developed to collect quantitative data on participants' perceptions of nursing. The survey includes a combination of Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice, and closed-ended questions. These questions focus on key areas such as nursing roles, media portrayals, views on advanced nursing practice, and the profession's status compared to other healthcare roles.

3. **Interviews and Focus Groups:** Semi-structured interviews and focus groups are conducted to collect qualitative data. These provide deeper insights into the participants' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences regarding nursing. Focus groups are organized separately for the public, healthcare professionals, and nursing students to ensure that each group's specific perspective is captured. The focus groups are audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.
4. **Content Analysis of Media:** A content analysis is performed on the portrayal of nurses in television shows, movies, and news media. This analysis examines how nursing roles are represented and the potential impact these portrayals have on public perceptions. Specific media sources, such as prominent TV shows featuring nurses or news reports on nursing topics, are selected for analysis.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis combines both quantitative and qualitative techniques:

1. **Quantitative Data Analysis:** The data collected from surveys are analyzed using **descriptive statistics** (e.g., mean, standard deviation) to summarize participants' responses. Inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests or t-tests, are used to determine if there are statistically significant differences in perceptions based on demographic factors (e.g., age, education, profession).
2. **Qualitative Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis is used for the interview and focus group data. Responses are transcribed and analyzed to identify common themes, patterns, and insights regarding public perceptions of nursing. Key themes include how nursing is portrayed in media, the impact of education on public views, and the influence of gendered stereotypes.
3. **Content Analysis:** Media portrayals of nursing are analyzed to identify recurring stereotypes, the level of professionalism depicted, and how nursing roles are framed. This analysis assesses the accuracy of media portrayals and their potential effects on public attitudes toward nursing.

### Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to ethical standards to ensure the protection of participants' rights:

1. **Informed Consent:** All participants are provided with information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. They are asked to sign an informed consent form before participating in any aspect of the research.
2. **Confidentiality:** Participants' responses are kept confidential. Personal identifiers are removed from survey responses, interview transcripts, and focus group discussions to ensure anonymity.
3. **Voluntary Participation:** Participation in the study is voluntary. Participants are informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.
4. **Ethical Approval:** The study undergoes review and approval by an institutional ethics committee to ensure compliance with ethical standards in research involving human participants.

### Limitations

This study faces several limitations that may affect the generalizability and interpretation of the findings. Despite using stratified random sampling, certain demographic groups may be underrepresented, especially individuals with limited access to digital platforms or those from rural areas. This could lead to skewed results, as the sample may not fully reflect the diversity of public

perceptions. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data from surveys, interviews, and focus groups introduces potential biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants may provide answers they believe are socially acceptable. The qualitative data may also be subject to researcher interpretation, despite efforts to minimize bias through multiple researchers.

Another limitation stems from the cross-sectional design of the study, which collects data at a single point in time. This design does not account for changes in public perception over time or the influence of specific events, such as a public health crisis, on perceptions of nursing. Moreover, while media portrayals of nursing are analyzed, these depictions may not capture the full diversity of nursing experiences, as they often emphasize stereotypes. The findings may therefore not be fully generalizable to all populations, particularly those with different cultural or geographical backgrounds. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights into the factors shaping public perceptions of nursing, contributing to efforts aimed at improving the profession's image.

### **Data analysis**

The data analysis combines both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing public perceptions of nursing. The quantitative data from the surveys are analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the key trends and patterns in participants' perceptions of nursing. Additionally, inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests or t-tests, are applied to identify any significant differences in perceptions based on demographic factors like age, education level, or professional background. The aim is to understand how specific groups view nursing and whether their perceptions vary based on these characteristics.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups are analyzed using **thematic analysis** to identify common themes and patterns in participants' responses. Key themes are likely to emerge around perceptions of nursing roles, media portrayals, and the impact of education and training on how nursing is viewed. For example, some participants may emphasize the compassionate and caregiving aspects of nursing, while others may focus on the technical skills and professional expertise required for advanced practice roles. Content analysis of media portrayals of nurses is also conducted to examine how nursing is represented in popular culture. The analysis likely highlights both positive and negative stereotypes of nurses, such as the "angel of mercy" trope, and how these representations influence public understanding of the profession.

### **Discussion**

The discussion of the findings focuses on interpreting how the data reflects the broader societal views of nursing. It addresses how media portrayals shape public perception and often limit the understanding of the diverse and complex roles that nurse's play in healthcare. The discussion also explores the implications of these perceptions on nursing recruitment, job satisfaction, and policy development. For example, if the public continues to see nurses as primarily caregivers rather than skilled professionals capable of autonomous decision-making, it could impact efforts to address nurse shortages or to recognize nurses in leadership roles. The data analysis reveals how these perceptions influence the professional identity of nurses, suggesting the need for strategies to enhance the visibility and recognition of nursing as a highly skilled and autonomous profession. Additionally, the discussion compare the perceptions of healthcare professionals, nursing students, and the general public, identifying key differences in how the profession is understood by those inside versus outside the field.

### **Conclusion**

This study provides valuable insights into the factors shaping public perceptions of nursing and highlights the significant role of media portrayals, education, and societal norms in shaping how

nursing is viewed. The findings indicate that while many people recognize the compassionate and caregiving nature of nursing, they often overlook the advanced skills, critical thinking, and leadership roles that nurses undertake. Media portrayals of nursing, which frequently focus on stereotypical images such as the "angel of mercy" or the nurse as a subordinate to doctors, continue to influence public attitudes, reinforcing a limited understanding of the profession.

Furthermore, the study shows that there are notable differences in perceptions between the general public, healthcare professionals, and nursing students. While the healthcare professionals and nursing students tend to have a more nuanced understanding of nursing roles, the public remains more influenced by traditional stereotypes and media representations. These findings emphasize the need for targeted efforts to shift public perceptions through education, media advocacy, and policy reforms. By enhancing the visibility of nursing as a skilled, autonomous, and essential part of the healthcare system, society can help elevate the status of the profession and support efforts to address the ongoing challenges of recruitment, retention, and workforce sustainability in nursing. The study underscores the importance of aligning public perception with the evolving role of nurses in modern healthcare.

### **Recommendation**

1. Increase public education campaigns to highlight the diverse roles of nurses, especially advanced practice nurses (e.g., nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists) to improve understanding of their expertise and autonomy in healthcare.
2. Encourage the media to portray nurses in more accurate and diverse roles, showing them as skilled professionals capable of making independent decisions, rather than relying on outdated stereotypes.
3. Develop initiatives within nursing schools and healthcare systems to educate the public about the rigorous training and education that nurses undergo to provide high-quality care.
4. Promote nurse leadership by increasing the visibility of nurses in leadership positions and policy-making roles to showcase their contributions to healthcare beyond bedside care.
5. Implement mentorship programs where experienced nurses can interact with the public and share insights about the profession, breaking down misconceptions and fostering a more accurate understanding.
6. Establish partnerships between nursing organizations and media outlets to advocate for more balanced and authentic portrayals of nursing in television shows, films, and news reports.
7. Address gendered stereotypes associated with nursing by promoting diversity and inclusivity within the profession and highlighting the contributions of men and nurses from diverse backgrounds.
8. Support research to better understand the evolving public perception of nursing and its impact on policy decisions, workforce sustainability, and public health.
9. Advocate for policies that recognize and reward the growing role of nurses in healthcare, including expanding scope-of-practice laws where appropriate to allow nurses to fully utilize their skills and training.
10. Increase public engagement through interactive platforms or events that showcase nurses' roles in patient care, leadership, and innovation, fostering a deeper connection and appreciation for the profession.

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