

The influence of perceived prejudice on willingness to be a nurse via the mediating effect of satisfaction with major: A cross-sectional study among chinese male nursing students



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ABSTRACT

Background: The gender-based stereotype of nursing as a female profession has been a large obstacle to men entering the nursing profession. However, there is little quantitative research on the influence of prejudice induced by this stereotype on male nursing students' willingness to be nurses.

Objectives: To examine the effect of perceived prejudice on willingness to be a nurse via the mediating effect of satisfaction with major among Chinese male nursing students.

Design: A cross-sectional survey was used.

Methods: Four hundred and sixty male nursing students who were enrolled either in bachelor's programs in universities or advanced diploma programs in colleges in Jinan, China, were surveyed using questionnaires measuring perceived prejudice, satisfaction with major, and willingness to be a nurse. Structural equation modeling with bias-corrected bootstrapping was employed to determine the influence of perceived prejudice on willingness to be a nurse with major satisfaction as a mediator.

Results: Male students who were in an advanced diploma nursing program and those for whom nursing was the first-choice major reported significantly less perceived prejudice, greater satisfaction with major, and greater willingness to be nurses than did those in a bachelor's nursing program and those for whom nursing was not the first-choice major, respectively. Moreover, although perceived prejudice had no significant direct effect on willingness to be a nurse ($\beta = 0.07, p > 0.05$), it did have a strong indirect effect (full mediation) via satisfaction with major ($\beta = -0.59, p < 0.001$).

Conclusions: Perceived prejudice strongly influenced male nursing students' willingness to be nurses via the full mediating effect of satisfaction with major. Because this obsolete stereotype of nursing as a female occupation gives birth to prejudice against male nursing students, effective measures should be taken to change this stereotype to recruit more men as nursing staff.

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1. Introduction

The shortage of nursing staff has become a worldwide concern. For example, there were at least 1.4 million job vacancies for registered nurses (RNs) that needed to be filled in China in 2008 (Yun et al., 2010), and the projected shortage of RNs in the United States (US) in 2025 is over 260,000 (Buerhaus et al., 2009).

Recruitment of more male nurses not only is a potential solution to the worldwide nursing shortage but also can perhaps better meet the diverse needs of patients. However, despite the greater movement of women into previously male-dominated professions, such as medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy, the movement of men into nursing remains

slow (Meadus and Twomey, 2011). In the US (Adeyemi-Adelanwa et al., 2016) and in the United Kingdom (UK; McKinlay et al., 2010), men comprise less than 10% and 10.7% of RNs, respectively. In Canada, only 5.8% of nurses were male (Rajacich et al., 2013). In Eastern countries, men make up an even lower ratio of nursing staff: For example, in Japan, only 4.9% of the nurses were male in 2006 (Asakura and Watanabe, 2011). China has a far lower rate than Japan, at less than 1% (Lou et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2011).

The high attrition rates of both male nurses and male nursing students undoubtedly constitute a major reason for the deficiency of male nurses worldwide. Indeed, male nurses have twice the turnover rate of female nurses (Valizadeh et al., 2014). As for male nurse students, a study in Australia found that between 40% and 50% of male nursing students drop out, fail, or transfer to other courses (Stott, 2007). Another study from the UK reported that 28.1% of male nursing students dropped out of their major, while the female dropout rate

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was only 10.7% (McLaughlin et al., 2010). Therefore, it would be important to explore why so many male nursing students are unwilling to be nurses.

2. Background

One of the major obstacles men face when entering into nursing is the gender-based stereotype that nursing is a “woman’s occupation” (Lou et al., 2007; Harding et al., 2008). Contrary to popular belief, nursing was an exclusively male profession throughout a large portion of human history (Limñana-Gras et al., 2013). Indeed, at the end of the 1920s, the majority of nursing students in Portugal were male. However, in Florence Nightingale’s era, men began to be purposefully excluded from entering the profession because of Nightingale’s belief that nursing is a natural extension of women and motherhood (Eswi and El Sayed, 2011). This period in the history of nursing has had a powerful effect on the current social context. Nowadays, there is a pervasive view that men are less suited to nursing than are women, and men who have entered into this career are normally stereotyped as troublemakers, effeminate, or gay (Adeyemi-Adelanwa et al., 2016). This is likely why few male students in China chose nursing as their first-choice major in the application form after the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) (Wang et al., 2011). Nevertheless, many male students remain afraid of being rejected for their first-choice major, so they allow their majors to be arranged by the university. Male students who are given nursing majors by the university may find it difficult to enjoy this major.

Because men are regarded as an “anomaly” in the nursing profession, they can experience greater social stigma for having chosen a lower-status, female-dominated profession (Battice, 2010). Indeed, these stereotypes can lead male nursing students to face considerable prejudice, which leads to stigma, ridicule, isolation, and loneliness (Kelly et al., 1996; Clow et al., 2015) and can prevent them from staying in the nursing profession (Meadus and Twomey, 2011).

There is also a high possibility that this prejudice, as a kind of stressor, may further decrease their satisfaction with the nursing major. Moreover, some researchers have noted that satisfaction with one’s major has a positive impact on student retention (Soria and Stebleton, 2013), which suggests that high satisfaction with major may increase male nursing students’ willingness to be nurses.

Male nursing students may vary in their perceptions of the level of prejudice, even if they in fact confront the same level of objective prejudice, given that each has a unique personality, life experience, and social relationships. Considering the potential close relationship among prejudice, satisfaction with major, and the willingness to stay in the nursing profession mentioned above, we hypothesized that the perceived prejudice of male nursing students not only has a direct effect on willingness to be a nurse but also has an indirect effect via the mediating effect of satisfaction with major (Fig. 1).

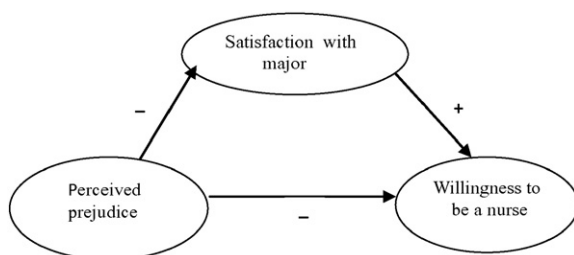


Fig. 1. Hypothesized model relating perceived prejudice, satisfaction with major, and willingness to be a nurse. “-” the causal variable is negatively related with the outcome variable; “+” the causal variable is positively related with the outcome variable.

3. Methods

3.1. Design

Across-sectional survey was used in this study. This study was approved by our institution’s committee for ethics in research.

3.2. Sample

Participating students were enrolled in either a bachelor’s program in one of four universities or an advanced diploma program in one of two colleges in Jinan, a city in Shandong Province, China, in 2014. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and each was given a gift as a token of appreciation for participating in this study. A total of 460 valid responses were obtained out of the 500 questionnaires distributed (response rate 92%). The demographic characteristics of participants are presented in Table 1.

3.3. Instruments

To assess the perceived prejudice of male nursing students, a six-item scale was specifically developed for the current study. Each item (e.g., “According to the public, only women are suitable to be nurses”) was scored on a four-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (4). In the current study, the internal consistency was high ($\alpha = 0.83$). The construct validity was examined via testing of the measurement model with structural equation modeling (SEM; see Fig. 2). Specifically, the factor loadings of the corresponding indicator variables on perceived prejudice were all above 0.57, indicating acceptable construct validity.

A three-item scale was used to measure participants’ general satisfaction with their majors. Each item (e.g., “Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my major”) was scored on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). In this study, the internal consistency was acceptable ($\alpha = 0.70$). As with the perceived prejudice scale, we also examined the construct validity of this scale via SEM (see Fig. 2); the factor loadings of the three items on satisfaction with major were all above 0.52, indicating acceptable construct validity.

We used another three-item scale to measure the willingness of male nursing students to become nurses. An example item is “I plan to be a nurse after I graduate.” All three items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). In the current study, the internal consistency was acceptable ($\alpha = 0.69$).

Table 1

Perceived prejudice, satisfaction with major, and willingness to be a nurse according to participant characteristics.

Characteristic	N (%)	Mean (SD)		
		Perceived prejudice	Satisfaction with major	Willingness to be a nurse
Study program				
Advanced diploma	145 (31.5)	2.24 (0.51)	3.61 (0.82)	3.33 (0.85)
BScN	315 (68.5)	2.62 (0.56)	2.97 (0.77)	2.81 (0.88)
P		0.000	0.000	0.000
Home town				
Urban area	154 (33.5)	2.51 (0.58)	3.13 (0.75)	2.98 (0.91)
Rural area	306 (66.5)	2.50 (0.57)	3.19 (0.89)	2.97 (0.90)
P		0.860	0.428	0.901
First-choice major				
Nursing	230 (50)	2.36 (0.56)	3.44 (0.92)	3.21 (0.95)
Other	230 (50)	2.64 (0.55)	2.90 (0.65)	2.73 (0.77)
P		0.000	0.000	0.000
Year				
1	215 (46.7)	2.47 (0.55)	3.34 (0.86)	3.07 (0.90)
2	189 (41.1)	2.51 (0.58)	3.06 (0.80)	2.96 (0.90)
3	56 (12.2)	2.56 (0.65)	2.89 (0.79)	2.63 (0.82)
P		0.528	0.000	0.005

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