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## NURSING AS A PROFESSION: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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**Abstract:**-The role of sociology in the field of nursing profession continues to cast new light on many aspects of health and illness in society. Nursing is one of the most exciting and in-demand jobs today. Nurses work to promote health, prevent disease and help patients cope with illness. They are advocates and health educators for patients, families and communities. By the late 1800s, the professionalization of nursing was well under way. In 1873, New York City's Bellevue Hospital became the first in the country to establish a program of nursing education based on the Nightingale model. Nursing is the process of recognizing, understanding and meeting the health needs of any person or society and is based on a constantly changing body of scientific knowledge. It is a deliberate intellectual activity whereby the practice of nursing is approached in an orderly, systematic manner to patient care, in a dynamic, continuous method to assist the patient to achieve and maintain health. The nursing process is an orderly systematic manner of determining the patient's problems, making plans to solve them, initiating the plan or assigning others to implement it and evaluating the extent to which the plan was effective in resolving the problems identified. Nurses can and will build upon a rich legacy of innovations and commitment to promoting the health of individuals, families, and communities. At this opportune time in reforming the health care system.

Nursing careers offer a wide variety of roles and a broad scope of responsibility. Nurses work in an environment that is constantly changing to provide the best possible care for patients. They are continuously learning about the latest technology and medication as well as considering the evidence that their nursing practice is based upon. Because they will actually spend more face-to-face time with a patient than doctors, nurses must be particularly skilled at interacting with patients, putting them at ease, and assisting them in their recovery. It is often said that physicians cure, and nurses care. Hence, nursing is a Nobel profession recognized internationally.

**Key word:** Role, Sociology, Nursing, health care, Hospital, Disease and career.

### INTRODUCTION

The history of nursing spans from the history of human kind. For as long as there has been life, there has been the need to provide care and comfort to those suffering from illness and injury. Nursing has been called the oldest of the arts and the youngest of the profession. The word **nurse** evolved from the **Latin** word **nutritious**, which means nourishing. The roots of medicine and nursing are intertwining and found in mythology, ancient eastern and western cultures and religion. Nursing, besides being a honorable profession, is one of the oldest arts and an essential modern occupation. Nursing is one of the greatest of humanitarian services and all people whether ill or well, rich or poor, literate or illiterate, young or old, at work or at play, in or out of hospital, are in some way or other, directly or indirectly closely associated with it. Nursing has its own body of knowledge scientifically based and humanitarianism that promises expanded benefits to people and society. It assists the individual or family to achieve their potential for self-direction for health. Nursing is not only an applied science; it is also an art, which provides skillful care for the sick in appropriate relationship with the patient, family, physician and with others who have related responsibilities. A study of the development of nursing will throw light on some of the problems of the past, how they have been solved and how nursing has progressed rapidly despite various hindrances.

**Nursing is gaining recognition as a profession based on the Criteria that a profession must have**

Genevieve and Roy Bixler first wrote about the status of nursing as a profession in 1945. (Harrysingh, R. Premalatha Viswanathane and others 2004) These criteria include the following.

1. The services provided are vital to humanity and the welfare of the society. Nursing is the service that is essential to the wellbeing of the people and to the society. Nursing promotes, maintains and restores the health of individuals, groups and communities. Assisting others to attain the highest level of wellness is the goal of nursing. Caring, meaning nurturing and helping others are the basic components of professional nursing.
2. There is a special body of knowledge that is continually enlarged through research. In the past, nursing was based on principles borrowed from the physical and social sciences and other disciplines. Today there is a unique body of knowledge to nursing
3. The services involve intellectual activities. Individual responsibilities (accountability) are a strong feature. Nursing has developed and refined its own unique approach to practice. Nursing process is a cognitive activity that requires both critical and creative thinking and serves as the basis of providing nursing care. Individual accountability in nursing has become the hallmark of practice. Accountability is 'is being answerable to someone for something one has done' Through legal opinion and court cases, society has demonstrated that nurses are individually responsible for their actions as well as for those of personnel under their supervision.
4. Practitioners are educated in institution of higher learning. There are basic nursing program, baccalaureate program, master's and Doctoral program in nursing
5. Practitioners are relatively independent and control their own policies and activities. (Autonomy). Autonomy or control over one's practice is another controversial area for nursing. Although many nursing actions are independent, most nurses are employed in hospitals where authority resides in one's position.
6. Practitioners are motivated by service (altruism) and considered their work an important component of their lives. Nurses are dedicated to the ideal of service to others, which is known as altruism
7. There is a Code of Ethics to guide the decisions and conduct of practitioners. The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has established Code of Nursing Ethics through which standards of practice are established, promoted and refined.
8. There is an organisation (Association) that encourages and supports high standards of practice. Nursing has a number of professional associations that were formed to promote the improvement of the profession. Foremost among these, is the TNAI (The Trained Nurses Association of India). The purposes of TNAI are to foster high standards of nursing practice, promote professional and educational advancement of nurses and promote the welfare of the nurses.  
Hence, nursing is a Nobel profession recognized internationally

### Concept of Nursing

❖ International Council of Nursing : Nursing encompasses autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings. Nursing includes the promotion of health, prevention of illness and the care of ill, disabled and dying people. Advocacy, promotion of a safe environment, research, participation in shaping health policy and in patient and health systems management, and education are also key nursing roles. (International Council of Nursing, n.d.)

❖ American Nurses Association :Nursing is the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, communities, and populations. (ANA, 2004, p. 4)

The current definition of nursing, as defined by the ANA (2010c), is "the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, communities, and populations" definitions of nursing that demonstrate an historical perspective. in-depth discussion of the nature of nursing, but a definition is needed in this discussion to gain a further understanding about nursing as a profession. Is nursing a profession? What is a profession? Why is it important that nursing be recognized as a profession? Some nurses may not think that nursing is a profession, but this is not the position taken by recognized nursing organizations, nursing education, and boards of nursing that are involved in licensure of nurses. Each state has its own definition of nursing that is found in the state's nurse practice act, but the ANA definition noted here encompasses the common characteristics of nursing practice. In general, a profession—whether nursing or another profession, such as medicine, teaching, or law—has certain characteristics (Bixler & Bixler, 1959; Huber, 2000; Lindberg, Hunter, & Kruszewski, 1998; Quinn & Smith, 1987; Schein & Komers, 1972):

- ❖ A systematic body of knowledge that provides the framework for the profession's practice
- ❖ Standardized, formal higher education
- ❖ Commitment to providing a service that benefits individuals and the community
- ❖ Maintenance of a unique role that recognizes autonomy, responsibility, and accountability
- ❖ Control of practice responsibility of the profession through standards and a code of ethics
- ❖ Commitment to members of the profession through professional organizations and activities

Does nursing meet these professional characteristics? Nursing has a standardized content, although schools of nursing may configure the content in different ways; there is consistency in content areas such as adult health, maternal-child health, behavioral or mental health, pharmacology, assessment, and so on. The National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) covers standardized content areas. This content is based on systematic, recognized knowledge as the profession's knowledge base for practice (ANA, 2010c) and is expected to be offered in higher education programs. The focus of nursing is practice—care provided to assist individuals, families, communities, and populations.

Nursing as a profession has a social contract with society, as described in Nursing's Social Policy Statement (ANA, 2010c): "The authority for the practice of professional nursing is based on a social contract that acknowledges professional rights and responsibilities as well as mechanisms for accountability". Nurses make contributions to society (the community in which nurses practice), and because of this, nurses have a relationship to the society and its culture and institutions. Nurses do not operate in a vacuum, without concern for what the individuals in a community and the community need. Understanding needs and providing care to meet those needs are directly connected to the social context of nursing. There are critical value assumptions related to the contract between nursing and society that provide an explanation of the importance of this contractual relationship

### **The Development of Modern Nursing**

Three images influenced the development of modern nursing. Ursuline Sisters of Quebec organized the first training for nurses. Theodore Flender revived the deaconess movement and opened a School in Kaiserwerth, Germany, which was training nurses. Elizabeth Fry established the institute of Nursing Sisters. But in the latter half of eighteenth century Florence Nightingale the founder of modern nursing changed the form and direction of nursing and succeeded in establishing it as a respected profession. She was born to wealthy and intellectual family in 1820. In spite of opposition from her family and restrictive societal code for affluent young English woman to be a nurse Nightingale believed she was "called" by God to help others and to improve the wellbeing of mankind. In 1847 she received three month's training at Kaiserwerth. In 1853 she studied in Paris with sister of charity, after which she returned to England to assume the position of super intendent of a charity hospital. Nightingale worked to free nursing from the bonds of the church. She saw nursing as a separate profession from the church, yet she began her career as the result of the mystic experience.

### **Development of modern Nursing in India**

When stating about nursing as a profession, one always gets the picture of Florence Nightingale, the pioneer of nursing profession. In 1857 the India Mutiny turned Miss Nightingales interest to the health of the Army in India. It was for this purpose the Royal Commission was appointed in 1859. In 1868, a sanitary department was established. In March 1888, ten qualified British nurses arrived in India to look after the British Army in India. In 1905, during the British rule in India, missionary nurses arrived as members of Missionary Medical Association. This was the very start of formalized nursing service in India.

Gradually, the increasing need of adequately trained nurses led to creation of South India Examining Board in 1911 and the North India Examining Board in 1912. It was the mission hospital Nursing leaders who laid the foundation of systematic Nursing education in India. However, the mid India Board of Examination was started in 1934. But this was not regulated for registration. State-wise councils started developing from 1935 onwards. Indian Nursing Council (INC) Act was passed by the Parliament in 1947. The Nursing Council upgraded the educational requirements which permitted only matriculated candidates to seek admission to the schools. Now, India has State-wise registration councils in 19 states. ( TNAI yearbook 2000-2001).

The Central Government granted an approval to the Bhoire Committee's (1946) recommendations by starting two colleges of Nursing in Delhi (1946) and Vellore (1947). This provided university degree level courses. With the efforts of Professor S. Radhakrishnan (the then Chairman of University Education Commission), Nursing education in the country was integrated into the system of higher education. Over decades, there has been an improvement in the availability of nursing education in India.

### **21st Century**

In 1908, the trained nurses association of India was formed to uphold the dignity and honour of the nursing profession. In 1918, training schools were started for health visitors and dais, at Delhi and Karachi. Two English nurses Griffin and Graham

were appointed to give training to and to supervise the nurses. In 1926, Madras State formed the first registration council to provide basic standards in education and training. The first four year bachelor's degree programme was established in 1946 at the college of nursing in Delhi and Vellore. With the assistance from the Rockefeller Foundations, seven health centres were set up between 1931 - 1939 in the cities of Delhi, Madras, Bangalore, Lucknow, Trivandrum, Pune and Calcutta. In 1947, after Indian independence, the community development programme and the expansion of hospital service created a large demand for nurses, auxiliary nurse midwives, health visitors, midwives, nursing tutors and nursing administrators. The Indian Nursing Council was passed by ordinance on December 31, 1947. The council was constituted in 1949.

In 1956, Adrenwala was appointed as the Nursing Advisor to Government of India. The development of Nursing in India was greatly influenced by the Christian missionaries, WorldWar, British rule and by the International agencies such as the World Health Organization UNICEF, the Red Cross, UNSAID etc. The first master's degree course, a two-year postgraduate programme was begun in 1960 at the Rajkumari Amrit Kaur College of Nursing, Delhi. In 1963, the School of Nursing in Trivandrum, instituted the first two year post certificate Bachelor Degree programme. Associations such as the International Council of Nurses, the nurses auxiliary of the CMA of India, T.N.A.I. Indian Nursing council and State level Registration Council promote and support the nursing profession.

### Role of the Professional Nurse

1. Care provider: caring /comforting involve knowledge and sensitivity to what matter and what is important to the client.
2. Communicator / Helper: Effective communication is an essential element of all helping profession, including nursing. It helps the client to explain the internal feeling.
3. Teacher/educator: teacher refers to activities by which the teacher helps the student to learn. The client also need education based on the case.
4. Counselor: counseling is a process of helping a client to recognize and copes with stressful psychological or social problem, to develop improved interpersonal relationships and promote personal growth.
5. Client advocate: An advocate pleads the cause of others or argues or pleads for a cause or proposal
6. Change agent: a change agent is a person or group who initiates changes or who assists others in making modification in themselves or in the system.
7. Leader: leader ship is defined as mutual process of inter personal influence through which the nurse helps a client make decision in establishing and achieving goals to improve the client well being.
8. Manager: management defines manager as who plans, gives direction, developing staff, monitoring operations, giving rewards fairly and representing both staff member and administration as needed.
9. Researcher: majority of researchers in nursing are prepared at doctoral and post doctoral level. Although an increasing number of clinicians and nurses with masters degree are beginning to practice it.

### Conclusion

Nursing is a major component of the health care delivery system and nurses make up the largest employment group within the system. Nursing services are necessary for every patient seeking care of various types including primary, secondary, tertiary and restorative. As nursing is an important part of health care delivery system, the nurses need to understand the system to effectively deliver quality care within it. Nurses can and will build upon a rich legacy of innovations and commitment to promoting the health of individuals, families, and communities. At this opportune time in reforming the health care system.

Nursing careers offer a wide variety of roles and a broad scope of responsibility. Nurses work in an environment that is constantly changing to provide the best possible care for patients. They are continuously learning about the latest technology and medication as well as considering the evidence that their nursing practice is based upon. Because they will actually spend more face-to-face time with a patient than doctors, nurses must be particularly skilled at interacting with patients, putting them at ease, and assisting them in their recovery. It is often said that physicians cure, and nurses care. Hence, nursing is a Nobel profession recognized internationally.

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