ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

PERCEPTION TOWARDS NURSES' UNIFORM AMONG REGISTERED NURSES

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ABSTRACT

Wearing uniforms help in the formation of professional identity in healthcare service. Currently the color of nurses' uniform is being changed in different colors like white, sky blue, and dark blue. Similarly the style of nurses' uniform is also being transformed into top and pants. A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted to find out perception towards nurses' uniform among registered nurses working at Chitwan Medical College Teaching Hospital, Bharatpur, Chitwan. Total of 280 registered nurses were selected by enumerative sampling technique and the data were collected by using semi structured self-administered questionnaire including a Modified Nursing Image Scale, originally developed by Sandra Magnum. Among three colored nurses' uniform, majority of nurses perceived white colored nurses' uniform as caring, attentive, cooperative, empathetic, professional, and approachable while dark blue colored nurses' uniform was perceived as confident and competent by nurse of both age group (≤25 years and >25 years), both education level (PCL and Bachelor), both designation (staff nurse and senior nurse), and both working units (General and Critical care unit). Nurses with ≤25 years of age and having PCL education, and ≤3 years of working experiences perceived Sky blue colored nurses' uniform as efficient and reliable while senior nurses perceived it as approachable.

Key Words: Nurse Image Traits, Nurses' uniform, Perception

INTRODUCTION

Uniform is defined as typical attire worn by members of any institute or organization. Nurses' uniform may differentiate them from other professionals working in a same health institution[1]. The wearing of uniforms is the organization's effort of branding and acquiring a standard corporate image but also has beneficial effects on the wearer[2]. Uniforms are thought to hold personal significance for those who wear them and act as powerful symbols representing the profession's identity and image[3]. Nursing uniforms are a nonverbal and intended indicator that nurses have the skills and knowledge to care for others[4].

The traditional uniform of Florence Nightingale's era was developed to project an image of neatness and servitude[5]. Initial nursing uniforms were influenced by the nuns, who were the primary care takers of patients, essentially serving as the present day nurse before the 19th century. Nursing uniform were characterized by a blue color, as fairly standard and underwent minor changes till 1940s. After that, responsibility of designing the nursing uniform was given to the concerned hospitals[2].

Over the decades, the uniform style has changed significantly adapted as the requirements of the profession. Wearing uniform does not automatically mean that a nurse acts as a professional and is a good nurse[6]. However, still the color and style of nurses' uniforms have an impact on how professional nurses are perceivedto be, with white color uniforms expressing the strongest sense of professionalism[7]. Now, fitted white color uniform have been replaced by loose-fitting or scrub white, colored, or printed pant sets[8].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional study entitled with Perception towards Nurses' Uniform among

Registered Nurses, was conducted among purposively selected 280 nurses working in CMCTH. A semi structured self-administered questionnaire was used to find out the perception of nurses through Nurse Image Scale. The nurses' perceptions were obtained among three colors of uniform such as: white, sky blue, and dark blue pants and tops. Perception regarding uniform colors was based on Nurse Image Scale with 10 items like caring, confident, reliable, attentive, cooperative, empathetic, competitive, professional, efficient, and approachable. Based on the objectives of study, the descriptive analysis was used in terms of frequency and percentage.

RESULT

Socio-demographic characteristics are presented in table 1 while table 2 to 6 represent nurses' perception towards nurses' uniform according to different variables. Overall perception regarding nurses' uniform according to nurse image traits are presented in table 7.

Table 1 showed that the highest no. of nurses (82.85%) were of age 20-25 years while about 3% were of age 30-35 years. Most of the nurses (87.5%) had completed PCL Nursing and most of them (89.28%) were working as a staff nurse. Sixty five percent of nurses were involved in critical care units. About 85% of nurses had ≤3 years of working experiences.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

S.N.	Socio-demographic Characteristics	Number	Percent
1.	Age (completed years)		
	20-25	232	82.85
	25-30	40	14.28
	30-35	8	2.85
	Mean= 1.2, Min= 1, Max=3, SD= 0.46	280	100.00
2.	Educational Status		
	PCL Nursing	245	87.5
	B.Sc. Nursing	10	3.57
	BNS	25	8.92
	Mean= 1.21, Min= 1, Max=3, SD= 0.59	280	100.00
3.	Designation		
	Staff Nurse	250	89.28
	Senior Staff Nurse	18	6.42
	Nursing Officer	12	4.28
	Mean= 1.15, Min= 1, Max=3, SD= 0.46	280	100.00
4.	Working Unit		
	General	97	34.64
	Critical Care Unit	183	65.35
	Mean= 1.65, Min= 1, Max=2, SD= 0.47	280	100.00
5.	Working Experience (in years)		
	≤3 years	237	84.6
	>3years	43	15.4
	Mean= 1.23, Min= 1, Max=4, SD= 0.54	280	100.00

Table 2 showed that out of 10 Nurse image traits, white T shirt and pant was chosen most often for six traits such as 'caring', 'attentive', 'cooperative', 'empathetic', 'professional', and 'approachable', and Dark blue T shirt and pant was chosen for 'confident' and 'competent' by the nurse with both age group ≤25 years and >25 years. Sky blue T-shirt and pant was chosen most often for only two traits such as 'reliable' and 'efficient' by nurses aged ≤25 years.

TABLE 2: Respondents' Perception of Nurses' Uniform by Age n=280

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES	NURSE IMAGE TRAITS	COLOR OF UNIFORM					
		WHITE T SHIRT & PANT		SKY BLUE T SHIRT & PANT		DARK BLUE T SHIRT & PANT	
Age		NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
≤25 years	Caring	177	76.3	40	17.2	15	6.5
>25years		33	68.8	11	22.9	4	8.3
≤25 years	Confident	74	31.9	52	22.4	106	45.7
>25years		15	31.2	7	14.0	26	54.2
≤25 years	Reliable	78	33.6	83	35.8	71	30.6
>25years		26	54.2	14	29.2	8	16.7
≤25 years	Attentive	121	52.2	69	29.7	42	18.1
>25years		24	50.0	17	35.4	7	14.6
≤25 years	Cooperative	106	45.7	91	39.2	35	15.1
>25years		22	45.8	22	45.8	4	8.3
≤25 years	Empathetic	109	47.0	76	32.8	47	20.3
>25years		30	62.5	13	27.1	5	10.4
≤25 years	Competent	68	29.3	66	28.4	98	42.2
>25years		9	18.8	18	37.5	21	43.8
≤25 years	Professional	110	47.4	41	17.7	81	34.9
>25years		28	58.3	2	4.2	18	37.5
≤25 years	Efficient	64	27.6	93	40.1	75	32.3
>25years		16	33.3	13	27.1	19	39.6
≤25 years	Approachable	103	44.4	53	22.8	76	32.8
>25years		34	70.8	8	16.7	6	12.5

Table 3 showed that out of 10 Nurse Image Traits, White T-shirt and pant was perceived as 'caring', 'attentive', 'cooperative', 'empathetic', 'professional', and 'approachable' while Sky blue T-shirt and pant is perceived as 'efficient' and dark blue T-shirt and pant is perceived as 'confident' and 'competent' by both PCL and bachelor nurse .

TABLE 3 Respondents' Perception of Nurses' Uniform by Education   n=280

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES	NURSE IMAGE TRAITS	COLOR OF UNIFORM					
		WHITE T SHIRT & PANT		SKY BLUE T SHIRT & PANT		DARK BLUE T SHIRT & PANT	
EDUCATION		NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
PCL	**Caring**	**188**	76.7	43	17.6	14	5.7
Bachelor		22	62.9	8	22.9	5	14.3
PCL	**Confident**	78	31.8	54	22.0	**113**	46.1
Bachelor		11	31.4	5	14.3	**19**	54.3
PCL	**Reliable**	**83**	33.9	87	35.5	75	30.6
Bachelor		21	60.0	10	28.6	4	11.4
PCL	**Attentive**	**123**	50.2	78	31.8	44	18.0
Bachelor		22	62.9	8	22.9	5	14.3
PCL	**Cooperative**	**112**	45.7	98	40.0	35	14.3
Bachelor		16	45.7	15	42.9	4	11.4
PCL	**Empathetic**	**117**	47.8	80	32.7	48	19.6
Bachelor		22	62.9	9	25.7	4	11.4
PCL	**Competent**	66	26.9	75	30.6	**104**	42.4
Bachelor		11	31.4	9	25.7	**15**	42.9
PCL	**Professional**	**119**	48.6	39	15.9	87	35.9
Bachelor		19	54.3	4	11.4	12	34.3
PCL	**Efficient**	69	28.2	**92**	37.6	84	34.3
Bachelor		11	31.4	**14**	40.0	10	28.6
PCL	**Approachable**	**112**	45.7	57	23.3	76	31.0
Bachelor		25	71.4	4	11.4	6	17.1

Table 4 showed that among 10 nurse image traits, both staff nurse and senior nurses perceived White T-shirt and pant as 'caring', 'attentive', 'cooperative', 'empathetic', 'professional', and 'approachable' and only staff nurse perceived Sky blue T-shirt and pant as 'reliable' and 'efficient' whereas senior nurse perceived it as 'approachable' while Dark blue T-shirt and pant is perceived as 'confident' and 'competent'.

Table 4: Respondents' Perception of Nurses' Uniform by Designation   n=280

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES	NURSE IMAGE TRAITS	COLOR OF UNIFORM					
		WHITE T SHIRT & PANT		SKY BLUE T SHIRT & PANT		DARK BLUE T SHIRT & PANT	
DESIGNATION		NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
Staff Nurse	**Caring**	**193**	77.2	43	17.2	14	5.6
Senior Nurse		**17**	56.7	8	26.7	5	16.7
Staff Nurse	**Confident**	79	31.6	55	22.0	**116**	46.4
Senior Nurse		10	33.3	4	13.3	**16**	53.3
Staff Nurse	**Reliable**	87	34.8	**88**	35.2	75	30.0
Senior Nurse		**17**	56.7	9	30.0	4	13.3
Staff Nurse	**Attentive**	**126**	50.4	80	32.0	44	17.6
Senior Nurse		**19**	63.3	6	20.0	5	16.7
Staff Nurse	**Cooperative**	**113**	45.2	10	40.4	36	14.4
Senior Nurse		**15**	50.0	12	40.0	3	10.0
Staff Nurse	**Empathetic**	**119**	47.6	83	33.2	48	19.2
Senior Nurse		**20**	66.7	6	20.0	4	13.3
Staff Nurse	**Competent**	66	36.4	76	30.4	**108**	43.2
Senior Nurse		11	36.7	8	26.7	**11**	36.7
Staff Nurse	**Professional**	**119**	47.6	41	16.4	90	36.0
Senior Nurse		**19**	63.3	2	6.7	9	30.0
Staff Nurse	**Efficient**	70	28.0	**97**	38.8	83	33.2
Senior Nurse		10	33.3	9	30.0	11	36.7
Staff Nurse	**Approachable**	**116**	46.4	57	22.8	77	30.8
Senior Nurse		21	70.0	**54**	13.3	5	16.7

Table 5 showed that among 10 nurse image traits, nurses with working experience of ≤3 years and >3 years perceived White T-shirt and pant as 'caring', 'attentive', 'cooperative,' 'empathetic', 'professional', and 'approachable'. Nurses with ≤3 years working experience perceived Sky blue T-shirt and pant as 'reliable' and 'efficient', whereas nurses with >3 years working experience perceived it as 'competent'. Dark blue T-shirt and pant is perceived as 'confident' by nurses with working experience of ≤3 years and >3 years,

whereas nurses with working experience of ≤3 years perceived it as 'competent' and nurses with working experience of >3 years as 'efficient'.

Table 5: Respondents' Perceptionof Nurses' Uniform by working Experiences

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES	NURSE IMAGE TRAITS	COLOR OF UNIFORM					
		WHITE T SHIRT & PANT		SKY BLUE T SHIRT & PANT		DARK BLUE T SHIRT & PANT	
WORKING EXPERIENCES		NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
≤3 years	Caring	180	75.9	42	17.7	15	6.3
>3years		30	69.8	9	20.9	4	9.3
≤3 years	Confident	73	30.8	50	21.1	114	48.1
>3years		16	37.2	9	20.9	18	41.9
≤3 years	Reliable	85	35.9.	87	36.7	65	27.4
>3years		19	44.2	10	23.3	14	32.6
≤3 years	Attentive	118	49.8	77	32.5	42	17.7
>3years		27	62.8	9	20.9	7	16.3
≤3 years	Cooperative	103	43.5	98	41.4	36	15.2
>3years		25	58.1	15	34.9	3	7.0
≤3 years	Empathetic	112	47.3	80	33.8	45	19.0
>3years		27	62.8	9	20.9	7	16.3
≤3 years	Competent	62	26.2	68	28.7	107	45.1
>3years		15	34.9	16	37.2	12	27.9
≤3 years	Professional	111	46.8	39	16.5	87	36.7
>3years		27	62.8	4	9.3	12	27.9
≤3 years	Efficient	66	27.8	97	40.9	74	31.2
>3years		14	32.6	9	20.9	20	46.5
≤3 years	Approachable	107	45.1	55	23.2	75	31.6
>3years		30	69.8	6	14.0	7	16.3

Table 6 showed that among 10 nurse image traits, nurses working in both general and critical care unit perceived White T-shirt and pant as 'caring', 'reliable', 'attentive', 'cooperative', 'empathetic', 'professional',

and 'approachable'. Similarly, Dark blue T-shirt and pant is perceived as 'confident', 'competent', and 'efficient'.

Table 6: Respondents' Perception of Nurses' Uniform by Working Units   n=280

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES	NURSE IMAGE TRAITS	COLOR OF UNIFORM					
		WHITE T SHIRT & PANT		SKY BLUE T SHIRT & PANT		DARK BLUE T SHIRT & PANT	
WORKING UNIT		NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
General	**Caring**	**88**	72.1	29	23.8	5	4.1
Critical		**122**	77.2	22	13.1	14	8.9
General	**Confident**	32	26.2	27	22.1	**63**	51.6
Critical		57	36.1	32	20.3	**69**	43.7
General	**Reliable**	**47**	38.5	41	33.6	34	27.9
Critical		**57**	36.1	56	35.4	45	28.5
General	**Attentive**	**69**	56.6	40	32.8	13	10.7
Critical		**76**	48.1	46	29.1	36	22.8
General	**Cooperative**	**60**	49.2	46	37.7	16	13.1
Critical		**68**	43.0	67	42.4	23	14.6
General	**Empathetic**	**60**	49.2	43	35.2	19	15.6
Critical		**79**	50.0	46	29.1	33	20.9
General	**Competent**	42	34.4	31	25.4	**49**	40.2
Critical		35	22.2	53	33.5	**70**	44.3
General	**Professional**	**62**	50.8	18	14.8	42	34.4
Critical		**76**	48.1	25	15.8	57	36.1
General	**Efficient**	36	29.5	41	33.6	**45**	36.9
Critical		44	27.8	65	31.1	**49**	31.0
General	**Approachable**	65	33.3	31	25.4	26	21.3
Critical		72	45.6	30	19.0	56	35.4

Table 7 showed that out of three different colored uniforms (V-Necked top and pant), white uniform scored high in six different nurse image traits like caring, attentive, cooperative, empathetic, professional, and approachable. Similarly, sky blue uniform scored high in only two traits i.e. efficient and reliable. In addition,

dark blue scored high in only two traits i.e. confident and competent.

Table 7: Overall Perception of Nurses' towards Uniform Color

White Uniform   Sky Blue Uniform   Dark Blue Uniform

S.N.	NURSE IMAGE TRAITS	COLOR OF UNIFORM					
		WHITE T SHIRT & PANT		SKY BLUE T SHIRT & PANT		DARK BLUE T SHIRT & PANT	
		NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
1.	CARING	177	76.3				
2.	ATTENTIVE	121	52.2				
3.	CO-OPERATIVE	106	45.7				
4.	EMPATHETIC	109	47.0				
5.	PROFESSIONAL	110	47.4				
6.	APPROACHABLE	103	44.4				
7.	RELIABLE			83	35.8		
8.	EFFICIENT			93	40.1		
9.	CONFIDENT					106	45.7
10.	COMPETENT					98	42.2

DISCUSSION

This study revealed that white colored (V-Necked top and pant) uniform was perceived as more caring, attentive, cooperative, empathetic, professional, and approachable than other two (sky blue and dark blue) colored nurses' uniform. Another study conducted also found that white uniforms' score is very high in all 10 traits of confidence, competence, attentiveness, efficiency, approachability, caring, professionalism, reliability, cooperativeness and empathy9.

CONCLUSION

Wearing uniforms enhances the formation of professional identity in healthcare. It fosters a strong self-image and professional identity which can lead to good confidence and better performance in nursing practice. Hence, the study concluded that the nurses' uniform color and style are to be adapted in the work place as preferred by the nurses.

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