

# Bachelor Nursing Students' Perception Towards Oncology Nursing Education and Their Future Intention in Chitwan, Nepal

Laxmi Neupane<sup>1</sup>,<sup>2</sup> Hari Prasad Upadhyay<sup>2</sup>,<sup>2</sup> Manju Pokharel<sup>1</sup>,<sup>1</sup> Sarojini Sharma<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Nursing, B. P. Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital Nursing College, Bharatpur, Chitwan, Nepal,

<sup>2</sup>Department of Statistics, Birendra Multiple Campus, Bharatpur, Chitwan, Nepal.

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The rising cancer burden in low- and middle-income countries highlights the need for oncology nurses. Advancing oncology nursing education can reduce this burden, improve care, and foster student interest. The study aimed to assess nursing students' perceptions of oncology nursing education at BPKMCH, Nepal.

**Method:** A cross-sectional study was carried out among 137 BNS students at B.P. Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital, (BPKMCH) Nursing College, Chitwan. Data were collected using a questionnaire. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Committee (IRC), BPKMCH. The data collection was completed within two weeks. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 and interpreted through both descriptive and inferential statistics, including frequency, mean, standard deviation, and chi-square test.

**Result:** The results showed that 51.1% of the respondents belonged to the 24-27 years age group, with a mean  $\pm$  SD of  $24.91 \pm 2.975$ . The majority of the respondents were self-motivated to join the BNS program (86.1%). More than half of the respondents strongly agreed that the demand for oncology nursing is increasing (59.1%), and agreed that 66.4% were confident in assessing patients' needs, followed by 62.0% were comfortable providing care, and 61.3% were confident in supporting patients and families. An equal number of respondents (83.9%) planned to pursue higher education in oncology nursing and work in oncology settings after graduation. The majority (73.0%) of the respondents had a positive perception of oncology nursing and the association was found between the level of perception and age ( $p$ -value=0.008), academic year ( $p$ -value=0.049), and family member in nursing ( $p$ -value =0.017).

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that students had a positive perception of oncology nursing, recognizing its growing demand and planning higher education and careers in oncology. Nursing educators are recommended to further enhance these positive perceptions.

**Key words:** nursing; oncology; perception; students.

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## INTRODUCTION

Cancer is rising in low- and middle-income countries, increasing the need for oncology nurses, but specialized training remains limited, highlighting the need for stronger educational preparation.<sup>1,2</sup> Oncology education builds students' interest, reduces fear, and boosts knowledge, skills and confidence. Mandatory clinical and theoretical oncology nursing education is

essential for all nursing students.<sup>3</sup> Studies show nurses face hardship, uncertainty, fear, hope, and the stigma of cancer as death. Supportive strategies like experience-sharing and motivational activities can reduce fear and promote a positive image.<sup>4</sup> Nursing students caring for cancer patients often experienced fear, anxiety, sadness, low self-efficacy, emotional instability, helplessness, and a tendency to distance themselves from patients.<sup>5</sup> More experience and participation in

**Correspondence:** Mrs. Laxmi Neupane, Department of Nursing, B.P. Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital Nursing College, Bharatpur, Chitwan, Nepal. E-mail: laxmibpkmch2017@gmail.com, Phone: +977-9845050145.

cancer-related educational activities demonstrated more positive attitudes toward cancer patients.<sup>6</sup> Effective classroom and clinical experiences supported by orientation, mentorship, elective oncology courses, and faculty guidance are essential to develop students' knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes in caring for cancer patients.<sup>7,8</sup> So, the demand for oncology nurses is growing worldwide.<sup>9</sup> In Nepal, Pokhara University introduced a 3-year BNS program with an oncology specialty in 2018, marking a significant advancement in oncology nursing education.<sup>10</sup> Personal and family factors, along with effective career counseling, can significantly influence how nurses perceive their profession. When nurses develop positive perceptions of nursing, they are less likely to quit their jobs, migrate abroad, or choose work only in specific areas such as cities, helping maintain a more stable and equitable healthcare workforce.<sup>11,12</sup>

## METHODS

A cross-sectional study was conducted to identify the nursing students' perception towards oncology nursing education. The study was conducted in B.P. Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital, Nursing College, Bharatpur, Chitwan, Nepal. It is the only nursing college in Nepal where all Bachelor of Nursing Science (BNS) students study oncology nursing as a specialty subject. Currently, a total of 137 students are studying in the college. An enumerative sampling technique was used among Bachelor-level nursing students. A self-administered structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Ethical approval was obtained from the IRC, BPKMCH, Ref. No. 71/081/082. Written informed consent was taken from each and every respondent prior to the data collection by explaining the objective of the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained during and after data collection. Data were collected in two-week periods. All the collected data were checked and organized daily for completeness and consistency. The data were coded, classified, entered, and analyzed in Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. All the collected data were analyzed and interpreted in

terms of descriptive and inferential statistics.

## RESULTS

Table 1 showed that, out of 137 respondents, 70 (51.1%) respondents belong to the age group 24-27 years. The mean $\pm$ SD was 24.91 $\pm$ 2.975. Regarding academic year, 40 (29.2%) respondents belong to 3<sup>rd</sup> year and 94 (68.6%) respondents were single. Likewise, the majority 123 (89.8%) of the respondents were Hindu, and 85 (62.0%) were Brahman Chhetri. Most of the respondents' 62 (45.3%) duration of being a registered nurse was 1 to 4 years (Table 1).

<b>Table 1. Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. (n=137)</b>	
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency (%)</b>
<b>Age</b>	
20-23	45(32.8)
24-27	70(51.1)
28-31	18(13.1)
32-35	4(2.9)
<b>Mean<math>\pm</math>SD =24.91<math>\pm</math>2.975 and Min(Max) = 20(35)</b>	
<b>Academic Year</b>	
1st year	34(24.8)
2nd Year (new)	29(21.2)
2nd Year (old)	34(24.8)
3rd Year	40(29.2)
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Single	94(68.6)
Married	43(31.4)
<b>Religion</b>	
Hindu	123(89.6)
Buddhist	11(8)
Christian	1(0.7)
Muslim	2(1.5)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Brahmin/Chettri	85(62)
Madhesi	13(9.5)
Dalit	5(3.6)
Janajati	32(23.4)
Muslim	2(1.5)
<b>Duration of being a registered nurse</b>	
1-4 years	62(45.3)
5-8 years	57(41.6)
9-12 years	18(13.1)
Mean $\pm$ SD (Min/Max)	5.20 $\pm$ 2.799 (1/12)

Table 2 shows that, out of 137 respondents, the majority of the respondents' father's education was higher secondary 43 (31.4%) and occupation was service 48(35.0%). While, mothers' education level was secondary 47(43.3%) and occupation was housemaker 89 (65.0%). Likewise, 85(62.0%) of the respondents had no family members in nursing and 118(86.1%) were self-motivated to join the BNS program (Table 2).

<b>Table 2. Respondent's family-related information. (n=137)</b>	
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency (%)</b>
<b>Father education</b>	
General literate	5(3.6)
Basic Level	27(19.7)
Secondary Level	41(29.9)
Higher Secondary	43(31.4)
Bachelor and Above	21(15.3)
<b>Father occupation</b>	
Service	48(35.0)
Agriculture	32(23.4)
Business	44(32.1)
Foreign Employee	13(9.5)
<b>Mother education</b>	
General Literate	24(17.5)
Basic Level	31(22.6)
Secondary Level	47(34.3)
Higher Secondary	26(19.0)
Bachelor and above	9(6.6)
<b>Mother occupation</b>	
Service	20(14.6)
Agriculture	12(8.8)
Business	16(11.7)
House Maker	89(65.0)
<b>Family member Nursing</b>	
Yes	52(38.0)
No	85(62.0)
<b>Motivation to Join BNS</b>	
Self-motivated	118(86.1)
Forced by Parents	19(13.9)

Table 3 shows the respondents' perception towards Oncology Nursing. More than 50% of the respondents strongly agree that, demand for oncology nursing is increasing 81(59.1), and feel comfortable saying

that I am an oncology nurse 76(55.5). Likewise, respondents agree that they had got the fundamental skills necessary to deliver care in the specialty area of oncology 83(60.6%) followed by confident in assessing the needs of patients living with cancer 91(66.4%), comfortable while providing nursing care for cancer patients 85(62.0%) and confident in providing care and support for the cancer patient and family members by 84(61.3%) (Table 3).

Table 4 shows that out of 137 respondents, more than 90% of the respondents plan for higher education in nursing, 131(95.6%) and working in the clinical setting 127(92.7%). Likewise, equal number of respondents 115(83.9%), plan for higher education in oncology nursing as a specialty and work in an oncology setting after completion of the study (Table 4).

<b>Table 4. Respondents' future intention. (n=137)</b>	
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency (%)</b>
<b>Plan for higher education in nursing</b>	
Yes	131(95.6)
No	6(4.4)
<b>Plan for higher education in oncology nursing as a specialty</b>	
Yes	115(83.9)
No	22(16.1)
<b>Plan to work in an oncology setting after completing the study</b>	
Yes	115(83.9)
No	22(16.1)
<b>Plan for working in the clinical setting</b>	
Yes	127(92.7)
No	10(7.3)
<b>Plan for working in teaching institutions</b>	
Yes	55(40.1)
No	82(59.9)
<b>Plan to go abroad</b>	
Yes	93(67.9)
No	44(32.1)

Table 5 shows that out of 137 respondents, more than half 100(73.0%) of the respondents had a positive perception, and 37(27.0%) had a negative perception towards oncology nursing. The level of perception was categorized based on the median (Table 5).

<b>Table 3. Perception towards oncology nursing. (n=137)</b>					
<b>Statement</b>	<b>SA n(%)</b>	<b>A n(%)</b>	<b>U n(%)</b>	<b>D n(%)</b>	<b>SD n(%)</b>
<b>Professional growth</b>					
Demand for oncology nursing is increasing.	81(59.1)	53(38.7)	2(1.5)	-	1(0.7)
Job can be available everywhere for oncology nurse.	9(6.6)	39(28.5)	57(41.6)	30(21.9)	2(1.5)
There is a socio-economic benefit for the oncology nurses.	11(8.0)	73(53.3)	43(31.4)	7(5.1)	3(2.2)
There is an opportunity for personal growth.	48(35)	81(59.1)	7(5.1)	1(0.7)	-
There is an opportunity for professional growth.	54(39.4)	76(55.5)	6(4.4)	1(0.7)	-
An oncology nurse has bright prospects abroad.	52(38.0)	66(58.2)	15(10.90)	4(2.9)	-
There is due recognition in society about oncology nursing.	21(15.3)	76(55.5)	31(22.6)	9(6.6)	-
I feel comfortable saying that I am an oncology nursing students.	76(55.5)	54(39.4)	5(3.6)	2(1.5)	-
<b>Knowledge gained during the course</b>					
There is proper academic preparation for practicing in oncology setting.	44(32.1)	66(48.2)	17(12.4)	7(5.1)	3(2.2)
I got proper knowledge regarding oncology.	44(32.1)	72(52.6)	17(12.4)	4(2.9)	-
Providing care for cancer patient is emotionally challenging.*	1(0.7)	6(4.4)	4(2.90)	67(48.9)	59(43.1)
Routine nursing care alone cannot address the emotional impact of cancer.*	11(8.0)	61(44.5)	36(26.3)	25(18.2)	4(2.9)
I have the fundamental skills necessary to deliver oncology care.	22(16.1)	83(60.6)	13(9.5)	18(13.1)	1(0.7)
I feel comfortable while providing nursing care for cancer patients.	26(19.0)	85(62.0)	21(15.3)	5(3.6)	-
I feel fear while practicing in the oncology setting.*	7(5.1)	51(37.2)	40(29.2)	34(24.8)	5(3.6)
I feel a sense of hopelessness while practicing in the oncology setting.*	14(10.20)	72(52.6)	36(26.3)	12(8.8)	3(2.2)
I am confident in assessing the needs of patients living with cancer.	23(16.8)	91(66.4)	13(9.5)	10(7.3)	-
I am confident in providing care and support.	29(21.2)	84(61.3)	20(14.6)	4(2.9)	-
I feel uncertain while providing care to cancer patients.*	4(2.9)	68(49.60)	34(24.8)	29(21.2)	2(1.5)
Best cannot be assumed while providing nursing care.*	8(5.8)	62(45.3)	34(24.8)	24(17.5)	9(6.6)
I can effectively communicate with cancer patients and visitors.	35(25.5)	68(49.6)	21(15.3)	12(8.8)	1(0.7)
All aspects of cancer cannot be addressed while providing care.*	6(4.4)	35(25.5)	37(27.0)	51(37.2)	8(5.8)

Note: \*=negative statement, SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U=Uncertain, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree.

<b>Table 5. Level of perception towards oncology nursing. (n=137)</b>	
<b>Level of Perception</b>	<b>Frequency (%)</b>
Positive	100(73.0)
Negative	37(27.0)

Table 6 showed that there is an association between the level of perception and age (p-value=0.008), academic year (p-value=0.049), and family member in nursing (p-value =0.017).

## DISCUSSION

This study is the first study conducted in Nepal and the purpose of this study is to describe the bachelor's nursing students' perception towards the oncology nursing education. The study was conducted among 137 students of bachelor of nursing science, studying oncology as a specialty subject. Out of 137 respondents, 51.1% belong to the age group 24-27 years and the mean  $\pm$  SD was  $24.91 \pm 2.975$ . The majority (89.8%) of the respondents were Hindu, 62.0% were from Brahman Chhetri and 45.3% of the

Table 6. Association between level of perception and selected socio-demographic variables. (n=137)				
Variables	Level of perception		Chi Square	p-value
	Negative n(%)	Positive n(%)		
Age				
20-23	13 (28.9)	32(71.1)	11.9008*	0.008
24-27	17 (24.3)	53 (75.5)		
28-31	3 (16.7)	15 (83.3)		
32-35	4 (100.0)	0 (0.0)		
Marital status				
Single	25 (26.6)	69 (73.4)	0.026 <sup>a</sup>	0.873
Married	12 (27.9)	31 (72.1)		
Duration of being an RN				
1-4 years	18 (29.0)	44 (71.0)	0.309*	0.857
5-8 years	14 (24.6)	43 (75.4)		
9-12 years	5 (27.8)	13 (72.2)		
Academic year				
First year	10 (29.4)	24 (70.6)		
Second year (New)	8 (27.6)	21 (72.4)	7.838 <sup>a</sup>	0.049
Second year (Old)	14 (41.2)	20 (58.8)		
Third year	5 (12.5)	35 (87.5)		
Family member in nursing				
Yes	8 (15.4)	44 (84.6)	5.743 <sup>a</sup>	0.017
No	29 (34.1)	56 (65.9)		
Motivation to join BNS Oncology.				
Self-motivated	32 (27.1)	86 (72.2)	0.005 <sup>a</sup>	0.942
Forced by parents	5 (26.3)	14 (73.3)		

respondents' duration of being a registered nurse was 1 to 4 years. Regarding parents' education only, 31.4% fathers' education level was higher secondary and mothers,' secondary (43.3%). The finding is nearly similar to another study where 34.4% of respondents' fathers and 34.4% of mothers had completed higher secondary level <sup>13</sup>

The study showed that, 62.0% of the respondents have family members in nursing and the majority (86.1%) were self-motivated to join the BNS program. While another study showed nearly similar findings that, 56.5% had their family members or relatives in the nursing profession and 89.3% were self-motivated to choose nursing as a career.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, the finding is almost similar to another study by Motakpalli et al. where 80.2 % respondents were self-motivated to choose nursing as a career.<sup>14</sup>

Regarding the perception towards oncology nursing,

more than half of the respondents (59.1%) strongly agree that, demand for oncology nursing is increasing, and feel comfortable saying that I am an oncology nursing student (55.5%). Likewise, respondents agreed that, had got the fundamental skills necessary to deliver care in the specialty area of oncology by 60.6%, followed by confident in assessing the needs of patients living with cancer (66.4%), comfortable while providing nursing care for cancer patients (62.0%) and confident in providing care and support for the cancer patient and family members by (61.3%). While another study showed 87% perceive nursing profession has bright prospects in abroad and 84.7% of the respondents answered it is a way to get due recognition in society. Similarly, 87.8% of the respondents answered that it as a dignified and respectful profession.<sup>13</sup> More than 90% of the respondents plan for higher education in nursing (95.6%) and working in the clinical setting (92.7%). Likewise, an equal number of the respondents (83.9%) plan for higher education in oncology nursing as a specialty and work in an oncology setting after completion of the study. While one study showed that, 50.4% of the respondents want to move abroad for their job after study and 95.4% have plan for higher education. Only 21.4% of the respondents want to join bedside nursing after completion of their study.<sup>13</sup> and other study showed only 26.5% preferred bedside nursing and 17.6%) plan for higher education.<sup>15</sup>

The majority (73.0%) of the respondents had a positive perception, and 27.0% had a negative perception of oncology nursing. There is an association between the level of perception and age (p-value=0.008), academic year (p-value=0.049), and family member in nursing (p-value =0.017). Another study showed that 58.9 % of the respondents were proud of being nursing students and possessed positive attitudes towards the nursing profession.<sup>16</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Study concludes that there was a positive perception towards oncology nursing education. More than half of the respondents strongly agreed demand for oncology nursing is increasing, and feel comfortable

saying that I am an oncology nursing student. The majority of the respondents plan for higher education in oncology nursing as a specialty and work in an oncology setting after completion of the study. There is an association between the level of perception and academic year, and having a family member in nursing.

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opinions in the study.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that nursing educators can play an important role in enhancing positive perception towards oncology nursing education among nursing students. Comparative study can be conducted to identify the perception of oncology nursing education among students.

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