



AWARENESS, PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE REGARDING NURSE PRACTITIONER PROGRAMME AMONG HEALTH CARE STAKE HOLDERS-AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Introduction The Nurse Practitioner (NP) program, a critical aspect of healthcare, has gained attention for its potential to address healthcare shortages and improve clinical care. This study aims to assess the awareness, perceptions, and attitudes towards the Nurse Practitioner Program (NPCC) among healthcare stakeholders in India, exploring the role of demographic variables such as gender, age, academic qualifications, and professional experience. **Methods-** A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 300 healthcare stakeholders, including BSc final year students, staff nurses, and doctors from intensive care units (ICUs). Demographic data were collected alongside measures of general awareness, program understanding, perception, and attitude towards NPCC. Chi-square tests were performed to assess associations between demographic variables and stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes towards the program. **Results-** The study found that the majority (67%) of respondents were female, with 40.66% under 25 years old. Awareness about the NPCC program was generally high, with 78.7% recognizing the program, while understanding varied by aspect-70.8% were aware of eligibility criteria, and 85.7% recognized the regulatory body. Perceptions regarding the NPCC program were positive, with 84.6% of participants demonstrating high awareness of NP roles and 76.3% acknowledging the program's potential to improve clinical competence. Age and academic qualifications were found to have no significant impact on perceptions, while a significant association was observed between age and attitude towards the NPCC program ($p < 0.05$). **Discussion-** Overall, healthcare stakeholders displayed substantial awareness and positive perceptions of the NPCC program. However, despite the positive attitude towards NP roles, there was no significant impact of gender, academic qualifications, or professional experience on participants' perceptions and attitudes. Age emerged as the only demographic factor significantly influencing attitudes towards the program, highlighting the importance of age-related factors in shaping professional outlook

Keywords-Nurse Practitioner Program (NPCC), Healthcare Stakeholders, Awareness, Perception, Attitude.



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INTRODUCTION

Nursing is a dynamic and evolving profession that integrates scientific knowledge with compassionate, patient-centred care. Nurses play a vital role in promoting health, preventing disease, managing acute and chronic conditions, and advocating for individuals, families, and communities¹. Their responsibilities extend from bedside care to research, education, leadership, and policy-making, emphasizing holistic and evidence-based approaches to health².

Advanced practice roles, such as Nurse Practitioners (NPs), have emerged globally to address physician shortages and improve access to healthcare, especially in underserved and rural areas³. NPs are trained to diagnose, prescribe, manage treatment plans, and provide continuous care across the lifespan. In India, the Nurse Practitioner in Critical Care program, introduced by the Indian Nursing Council in 2017, equips nurses with advanced clinical skills to manage complex patient care². Despite its potential, challenges such as limited institutional capacity, unclear scope of practice, low public awareness, and resistance from some medical professionals hinder the full integration of NPs into the healthcare system³.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Healthcare systems worldwide face increasing demand due to physician shortages, rising chronic disease prevalence, and escalating healthcare costs¹. Nurse Practitioners, with advanced clinical training and patient-centred approaches, have been shown to improve patient outcomes, enhance satisfaction, reduce hospital readmissions, and optimize healthcare delivery².

In India, although NP programs have been established to address these challenges, research on their actual impact, effectiveness, and integration into health systems remains limited³. Barriers such as unclear regulatory frameworks, variability in professional autonomy, interprofessional collaboration challenges, and lack of public understanding affect the utilization of NPs^{2,3}. Evaluating these aspects is crucial for guiding policy development, optimizing education and training programs, and strategically deploying NPs to improve healthcare access, particularly in underserved regions. Understanding these dynamics will support the growth of NP programs and enhance their contribution to a sustainable and efficient healthcare system.

AIM OF THE STUDY

To explore the development, integration, and impact of Nurse Practitioner programs in India, with a focus on factors influencing their practice, professional autonomy, and contribution to healthcare delivery in diverse and underserved settings.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the awareness regarding Nurse Practitioner program among health care stakeholders.
2. To determine the perception regarding Nurse Practitioner program among health care stakeholders.
3. To find the attitude regarding Nurse Practitioner program among health care stakeholders.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study included 300 participants: 100 undergraduate nursing students, 100 ICU doctors, and 100 graduate nurses. A non-probability, convenient sampling technique was used to select

participants. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire via Google Forms, divided into four sections: Section A – demographic variables; Section B – awareness of the Nurse Practitioner program; Section C – perception using a 5-point Likert scale; and Section D – attitude using a 5-point Likert scale. This approach allowed systematic assessment of awareness, perception, and attitude towards the Nurse Practitioner program among healthcare professionals and nursing students.

RESULTS

For tabulation and statistical analysis, the data was first obtained using a Google form sheet. The data analysis is arranged and displayed under the subsequent parts-

Section A: Distribution of nursing students and faculty based on demographic data

201 (67%) of 300 healthcare stakeholders took part in the study were female with the remaining 99 (33%) being male of the total number of stakeholders, more than 25 years of age are 143 (47.6%) and less than 25 years of age is 158 (52.5%). Data gathered according to their academic qualification Final year B.Sc Nursing students were 92 (30.6%), B.Sc Graduate nurses were 126(41.8%) and the doctors working in Intensive care Unit encompassed of 83 (27.6) with the experience of less than 5 years are 184 (61.1%) and more than 5years are 117 (38.9%)

SECTION B- Analysis of Awareness About Nurse Practitioner Program Among Health Care Stake Holders

Table 1: Healthcare stakeholder's awareness about Nurse Practitioner program

	Questions	f	%
1	Full form of NPCC	237	78.7
2	What is the eligibility to take in Nurse Practitioner's programmes?	213	70.8
3	What is the duration of the NPCC programme?	237	78.7
4	What are the areas of scope in Nurse Practitioner programmes?	225	74.8
5	What degree will you attain after the completion of Nurse Practitioner program?	207	69.0
6	What is the scope of NPs?	166	55.1
7	What is the benefit of Nurse Practitioners in healthcare team?	224	74.4
8	What certification is typically required for a Nurse Practitioner to practise?	226	75.1
9	Which of the following is NOT typically a role of Nurse Practitioner?	188	62.5

	Questions	f	%
10	Which year was the Nurse Practitioner course first introduced in India?	182	60.5
11	Which of the following is currently NOT offered under Nurse Practitioner programs in India?	144	47.8
12	Which is the first state in India to launch Nurse Practitioner Program?	178	59.1
13	What kind of curriculum does the Nurse Practitioner in Critical Care program follow?	226	75.1
14	Which regulatory body is the Nurse Practitioner Programme governed by in India?	258	85.7
15	Which international model influenced the development of the NP program in India?	161	53.5

n=300

Table 1 depicts about the awareness towards the Nurse Practitioner program which stated 78 % healthcare stakeholders are aware about the full-form of NPCC, 78.7% know about the duration, 74.8% are aware about the area of scope in Nurse Practitioner. 69 % know about the degree will attain after the completion of the course, 55.1 % know about the scope of NP program, 74.4% know the benefits of NP being in healthcare team, 75.1 % know certification typically required to practise NP. 62.5 % typically not the role of NP. 60.5% are aware about the state where the program was introduced first. 47.8 % know about which subject is currently offered under Nurse Practitioner in India. 59.1% are aware about the first state to launch Nurse Practitioner program, 75.1% knows about the curriculum followed in critical care nurse practitioner program, 85.7 % are aware about the regulatory body that governs the Nurse Practitioner Course in India. 53.5% are aware about the International Model influenced development of Nurse Practitioner program.

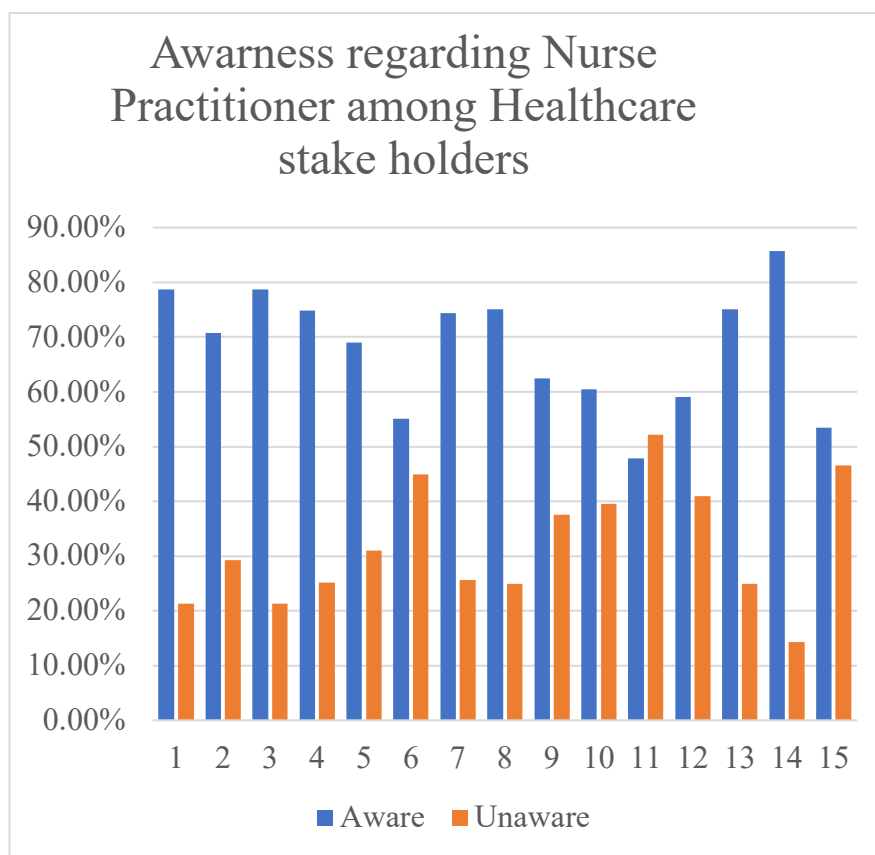


Figure 1: Awareness regarding Nurse Practitioner Program

Figure 1 depicts that A knowledge assessment on the NPCC program showed generally good awareness, with highest scores on the regulatory body (85.7%), program duration, and full form (78.7%). Moderate knowledge was seen in areas like eligibility (70.8%) and certification (75.1%). The lowest awareness was on current NP offerings (47.8%) and international influences (53.5%). Findings highlight a positive overall awareness but reveal gaps needing targeted education.

Section C - Analysis Of Perception Towards Nurse Practitioner Program Among Health Care Stake Holders.

Table 2: Healthcare stakeholder's perception about Nurse Practitioner program
n=300

Sr. No	Questions	Agree (f)	%	Neutral (f)	%	Disagree (f)	%
1	I have a clear understanding of Nurse Practitioner programmes and their role in healthcare.	254	84.6	36	12.0	10	3.33

Sr. No	Questions	Agree (f)	%	Neutral (f)	%	Disagree (f)	%
2	Nurse Practitioner programmes improve clinical competencies among nursing professionals.	229	76.3	66	22.0	5	1.66
3	Nurse Practitioners should be given more responsibilities in clinical decision-making and management.	240	80.0	40	13.3	20	6.66
4	Nurse Practitioner programmes enhance the quality and accessibility of healthcare services.	225	75.0	59	19.6	16	5.3
5	I am aware that Nurse Practitioners can provide specialized care in fields such as critical care, anaesthesia.	220	73.3	71	23.6	9	3.0
6	The programme can help the rural community people where medical professionals cannot reach.	238	79.3	62	20.6	0	0.0
7	The programme develops hands-on skills which help in health promotion and disease prevention.	240	80.0	40	13.3	10	3.3
8	The program motivates commitment to ongoing education and professional development.	243	81.0	47	15.5	0	0.0
9	The programme enhances the perception of NPs as leaders in healthcare.	238	79.3	62	20.6	0	0.0
10	Advancements in the NP courses have improved the job opportunities in healthcare sector.	246	82.0	0	0.0	54	18.6

Table 2 depicts the data reveals a strong overall agreement among respondents regarding the benefits and importance of Nurse Practitioner (NP) programmes. A large majority (over 75%) agreed that NP programmes enhance clinical competencies, healthcare quality, and accessibility. Most also acknowledged the value of NP roles in patient management and decision-making, and their ability to serve rural communities effectively. Over 80% believe these programmes foster professional development and leadership perception. Awareness of NP's specialized roles is also relatively high. Furthermore, 82% agreed that advancements in NP courses improve job opportunities. Only a small percentage expressed disagreement, showing overall positive perceptions of NP programmes.

Section D - Analysis Of Attitude Towards About Nurse Practitioner Program Among Health Care Stake Holders

Table 3: Attitude towards about nurse practitioner program among health care stake holders.

n=300

No.	Statement	Agree (f)	(%)	Neutral (f)	(%)	Disagree (f)	(%)
1	I would recommend Nurse Practitioner programmes to others.	270	90	28	9.8	2	0.6
2	I am confident that Nurse Practitioners can effectively collaborate with physicians and other healthcare providers.	242	80	47	15.6	11	3.6
3	NP programmes should be recognised by all state governments.	240	80	55	18.3	5	1.6
4	Public awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate about the NP role.	240	80	20	6.6	40	13.3
5	I believe NP programmes are beneficial to healthcare.	243	81	47	15.6	10	3.3
6	Nurse Practitioners should have more autonomy in their specialized practice.	217	72.3	57	19	26	8.6
7	NPs are essential part of multidisciplinary team.	240	80	32	10.6	28	9.3

No.	Statement	Agree (f)	(%)	Neutral (f)	(%)	Disagree (f)	(%)
8	Nurse Practitioners work effectively in collaborative healthcare teams.	250	83.3	50	16.6	0	0
9	Nurse Practitioners are trained to conduct comprehensive health assessments.	230	76.6	50	16.6	20	6.6
10	NP programmes improve the status of the nursing profession.	226	75.3	44	14.6	30	10

The table 3 reflects a highly positive perception of Nurse Practitioner (NP) programmes among respondents. A strong majority (90%) would recommend NP programmes to others, and 83.3% believe NPs work effectively in collaborative healthcare teams. Confidence in NP's ability to collaborate with other providers is high (80%), and many agree these programmes should be recognized by all state governments (80%). Public awareness campaigns and the overall healthcare benefits of NP programmes are also supported by 80% and 81% respectively. While 72.3% support more autonomy for NPs, 76.6% recognize their training in comprehensive assessments. Overall, NP programmes are seen as essential and beneficial.

Section E – Association Between Demographic Variable and The Perception Regarding

The study assessed the association between demographic variables and both perception and attitude regarding the Nurse Practitioner Critical Care (NPCC) program among 300 healthcare stakeholders, including undergraduate nursing students, graduate nurses, and ICU doctors. Chi-square analysis revealed no statistically significant association between gender and perception ($\chi^2 = 0.27$, $p > 0.05$) or attitude ($\chi^2 = 0.77$, $p > 0.05$) toward the NPCC program. Similarly, age showed no significant association with perception ($\chi^2 = 1.232$, $p > 0.05$), though a significant association was observed with attitude ($\chi^2 = 6.65$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that age may influence participants' attitudes toward the program. Academic qualification did not demonstrate a significant association with either perception ($\chi^2 = 0.738$, $p > 0.05$) or attitude ($\chi^2 = 4.22$, $p > 0.05$), and years of experience also showed no significant relationship with perception ($\chi^2 = 0.53$, $p > 0.05$) or attitude ($\chi^2 = 0.38$, $p > 0.05$). Overall, the findings suggest that while demographic factors such as gender, academic qualification, and experience do not significantly influence healthcare stakeholders' perceptions or attitudes toward the NPCC program, age may play a role in shaping attitudes.

DISCUSSION

This exploratory study assessed the awareness, perceptions, and attitudes of healthcare stakeholders regarding the Nurse Practitioner (NP) program-an emerging global strategy to address medical workforce shortages and enhance healthcare quality.

Findings revealed that 84.6% of respondents were aware of the NP program and its roles, indicating effective dissemination of knowledge. This aligns with Sharma and Thomas (2020), who found 82% awareness among professionals in a Delhi tertiary hospital, emphasizing growing institutional recognition of advanced nursing roles.⁴

In terms of perception, 75% of participants believed the NP program improves healthcare quality and accessibility, especially in rural areas. This supports Ramesh et al. (2021), who reported that 78% of rural healthcare workers viewed NPs as a key solution to service gaps in remote regions.⁵ Regarding attitudes, 80% of stakeholders favoured expanding NP roles and autonomy, reflecting confidence in their clinical competence. Similarly, Joseph and Binu (2019) found 81% of Kerala healthcare professionals endorsed granting NPs greater authority and integration into advanced clinical roles.⁶

Overall, consistent findings across studies highlight growing acceptance of the Nurse Practitioner model as a transformative element in India's healthcare system.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the significance of understanding the awareness, perceptions, and attitudes of healthcare stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation and sustainability of the Nurse Practitioner (NP) program. The NP role has emerged as a crucial innovation in modern healthcare, aimed at bridging workforce shortages, strengthening primary care, and enhancing patient outcomes through advanced nursing practice. Findings most definitely indicate that while most stakeholders acknowledge the potential value and necessity of the NP role, there remain areas requiring attention-particularly in terms of knowledge dissemination, role clarity, and acceptance within multidisciplinary teams. Misconceptions about scope of practice and overlapping responsibilities with physicians can create barriers to integration. Therefore, it is essential to promote interprofessional collaboration, establish clear policies, and provide continuous education and mentorship for nurses transitioning into the NP role. Institutional support, legal recognition, and standardized frameworks will further strengthen the credibility and functionality of the program. By fostering an environment of mutual respect, awareness, and structured professional development, healthcare systems can fully harness the capabilities of Nurse Practitioners to enhance healthcare access, improve quality of care, and effectively respond to the growing and complex demands of the healthcare sector and meet with the ongoing demand of nurse's scarcity worldwide.

LIMITATIONS

- The use of convenient sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings.
- Only undergraduate nursing students, graduate nurses, and ICU doctors were included, excluding other healthcare professionals.
- Self-administered questionnaires may have introduced response bias.
- The study was conducted in selected institutions, limiting geographic representation.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings have implications for nursing practice, education, administration, and research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conduct workshops and seminars to increase awareness of the Nurse Practitioner role among healthcare stakeholders.
- Strengthen policy and regulatory frameworks to define the scope of practice and professional autonomy for nurse practitioners.
- Incorporate information about NP programs in undergraduate and graduate nursing curricula.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors certify that they are not involved in any organization or entity with any financial or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this paper.

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