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Public Perceptions of Nurses in Argentina. A Cross-Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Aim: To describe public perceptions of nurses in Argentina.

Background: Nurses comprise more than 50% of the health workforce. Although the coronavirus 2019 pandemic has improved the visibility of nurses, stereotypes and misinformation persist, affecting professional valuations and public perceptions of nurses.

Methods: A cross-sectional, analytical study of the Argentinean population aged over 18 years was conducted using snowball sampling. Questionnaires were distributed digitally and anonymously through social networks; participation was voluntary. The STROBE guidelines were followed.

Results: A total of 959 responses were obtained. In all, 75.5% of the participants had negative perceptions of nurses; 44.3% were not able to identify the expanded roles of nurses. Further, 80.8% of the respondents who knew a nurse would recommend a nursing career to a family member or a friend. Gender ($p = 0.01$), age ($p = 0.01$), and advised to pursue nursing ($p = 0.005$) were associated with a positive perception of the profession, whereas having a family member or acquaintance who was a nurse ($p = 0.08$) and history of hospitalization were not associated with a positive image ($p = 0.20$).

Conclusion: Perceptions of the nurses image in Argentina are predominantly negative. More than one-third of the population had difficulty identifying the roles of nurses. The perceptions of nurses are more favorable among older adults, women, and individuals who have been advised to pursue nursing as a career.

Implications for nursing and nursing policies: This study highlights the public's negative perceptions of nurses in Argentina. There is an urgent need for nursing organizations, academic institutions, politicians, and healthcare providers to develop strategies to improve the public image of nurses.

1 | Introduction

Nurses constitute more than 50% of the global health workforce (2020) and form the backbone of the healthcare system (International Council of Nurses 2024). However, a global shortage of

nurses has been reported for several decades (Buchan and Catton 2023; International Council of Nurses 2021). Factors contributing to the shortage of nurses are diverse, including inadequate human resource planning in healthcare, poor working conditions, lack of opportunities for continuing education and professional devel-

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opment (Tamata and Mohammadnezhad 2023), and inconsistent public perceptions of the brand image of nurses (Godsey and Hayes 2023).

Godsey et al. (2020) identified various factors contributing to inconsistent perceptions of nursing, including the diversity of education, insufficient leadership development, lack of professionalism, inaccurate media portrayals, patients' experiences, treatment by colleagues, and gender role assumptions (Godsey et al. 2020).

Additionally, the image of the nursing profession is closely related to the visibility of its functions, which may be distorted. Therefore, the image of the profession prevalent among the public does not accurately reflect nurses' professional identity and role in society (Godsey and Hayes 2023; López-Verdugo et al. 2021). Misconceptions about nursing persist, and myths and stereotypes negatively impact the image of the profession. Additionally, while nursing highlights care and compassion, communication regarding the advanced roles of modern nurse leaders is lacking (Godsey and Hayes 2023; López-Verdugo et al. 2021). These discrepancies may also negatively influence young people's professional choices and affect the retention of nurses in the workplace (López-Verdugo et al. 2021). For example, in Italy, Rubbi et al. (2017) demonstrated that perceptions of nursing care correlate with the propensity to recommend children and/or relatives to take on nursing as a career. Similarly, Apaydin Cirik et al. (2022) stated that a positive public image leads to an increase in recommendations to consider a career in nursing.

2 | Background

Previous research identified several aspects that contribute to public perceptions of nursing professionals (Rezaei-Adaryani et al. 2012), such as identity, role, and media portrayal (Gündüz Hoşgör and Coşkun 2024). Media often portray a predominantly negative and inaccurate image of the profession. In this regard, the nursing profession has historically faced difficulties that challenge their professional efforts and performance and, consequently, their public image (González et al. 2023). Additionally, incorrect information regarding nurses' roles is widespread (López-Verdugo et al. 2021). Several studies have suggested that nurses are perceived by the public as caring and trusted, although they lack influence and autonomy because they work as subordinates to physicians (Godsey and Hayes 2023; Godsey et al. 2020; Rubbi et al. 2023; Teresa-Morales et al. 2022). A lack of awareness of these roles is sometimes experienced within the healthcare team (Kämmer and Ewers 2022). Moreover, nursing has historically been associated with gender issues as it is viewed as an inherently female profession (López-Verdugo et al. 2021; Teresa-Morales et al. 2022). The male nursing collective continues to constitute a minority, which may have a negative impact on the overall image of the profession (Bernalte Martí 2015). Finally, nursing is associated with low salaries, high workloads, and poor working conditions (International Council of Nurses 2024; Rubbi et al. 2023; Teresa-Morales et al. 2022).

Recently, the coronavirus 2019 pandemic significantly increased the visibility of the nursing profession, highlighting nurses as an

essential part of the frontline workforce and underlining their crucial role in global emergency management. These aspects appear to have positively boosted the image of the nursing profession during the pandemic (Gündüz Hoşgör and Coşkun 2024).

On International Nurses Day (International Council of Nurses 2024), the ICN proposed several actions, including promoting the role of nurses in society through public awareness campaigns (International Council of Nurses 2024). Therefore, the perceptions of nurses must be understood in the cultural context of each country so that effective campaigns can be designed (Zhou et al. 2024).

Several authors have studied public perceptions of the nursing profession. In Iran, nurses are viewed as competent but lacking warmth and leadership qualities (Maliheh et al. 2020). Sanz Vega et al. (2020) conducted a survey of 335 Spanish respondents and found that respondents believed nurses were highly educated (80.8%) and had their own independent functions (60.9%), with the most recognized activities being technical activities (91.5%), wound care (82.4%), and assisting the physicians (62.3%). However, only a minority of respondents recognized management (13.4%), teaching (14.9%), and research functions (4%) (Sanz Vega et al. 2020). Subsequently, in Italy, only 42.8% of respondents believed nurses influence public policy, while gender stereotypes persisted, indicating the perception of nurses lacking autonomy and authority in healthcare (Rubbi et al. 2023). The public perception of the profession is more positive in the United States than in China where, in one study, lower-educated respondents tended to value caring behaviors traits over leadership traits (Zhou et al. 2024). Regarding Europe, the level of social and professional recognition varies significantly among countries. A recent study examining citizens' perceptions of nurses across nine European countries confirms that Portugal achieved the highest score in terms of nurses' socioeconomic prestige, whereas Norway recorded the lowest (De Baetselier et al. 2025).

In Latin America, evidence regarding public perceptions of nursing has been limited to qualitative approaches (Pierrotti et al. 2020). Some studies have addressed perceptions held by nursing students (Bastias et al. 2020) and health professionals (Samaniego and Cárcamo 2013). Graduates develop a more specialized and autonomous perception of nursing, emphasizing care, humanization, and diverse roles beyond the hospital (Bastias et al. 2020). Nurses are generally regarded as accessible caregivers with hierarchical relationships with physicians and collaborative interactions with other health professionals (Samaniego and Cárcamo 2013). Considering that the sociocultural context influences public perceptions of a given profession (Sacgaca et al. 2024), this study sought to understand public perceptions of nurses in Argentina because, of the lack of studies on this topic known to exist in Argentina.

3 | Aim

This study aimed to describe the public perceptions of nurses in Argentina.

4 | Methods

4.1 | Design and Instrument

This was a cross-sectional study. In a previous study, an ad hoc instrument was developed and validated according to the guidelines of Streiner et al. (2015). First, a literature search was conducted to identify public perceptions of various aspects of nursing. A novel scale was designed relevant to perceptions identified in the literature. Some studies highlighted key themes in the perceptions of nursing: (1) addressing nurses' roles, tasks, and training (Rubbi et al. 2017; Zhou et al. 2022); (2) social perceptions, namely, career development, social prestige, and economic status (Blau et al. 2023; López-Verdugo et al. 2021; Zhou et al. 2024); (3) work conditions, including working hours, salaries, job security, and workplace well-being (Blau et al. 2023; López-Verdugo et al. 2021; Zhou et al. 2024); (4) attitudinal aspects included qualities essential for professional practice (Blau et al. 2023; Zhou et al. 2024); and (5) some studies identified stereotypes linked to nursing professionals, such as nurses being subordinate to physicians and uninvolved in decision-making and the profession being associated with gendered roles, implying that formal education is unnecessary (Blau et al. 2023; Maliheh et al. 2020; Rubbi et al. 2017; Zhou et al. 2024).

The form and contents of the questionnaire were validated. The scale was sent to three experts for the initial selection of the proposed items, considering the relevance of each item to the concept of public perceptions of nursing. In addition, 21 people external to the research team participated in content validation. Each item required the participants to indicate aspects of clarity and relevance related to their perceptions of nursing. Construct validity was assessed via exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses of a sample of 1004 individuals (502 were used for exploratory analysis and 502 respondents were used for confirmatory factor analysis). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin value was 0.81, and Bartlett's test value was 0.000. Further, 56.5% of the variance was explained in five dimensions, with the first four dimensions accounting for more than 10% of the variance. All items grouped in the dimensions had values between 0.81 and 0.56. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed good reliability indices (≥ 0.90). The Cronbach's α was 0.80, indicating good reliability of the instrument (Strainer et al., 2015).

The final scale included 21 closed-ended items scored on a Likert-type scale, with four options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The items were grouped under five dimensions: roles, positions, work perceptions, aptitudes, and stereotypes. Five sociodemographic variables were added (Supplementary Appendix 1): age, gender, province, and history of hospital admission. Additionally, respondents were asked whether they were advised to pursue nursing as a career. They were also asked whether they had acquaintances who were nurses. Following the validation of the instrument, it was utilized in the present study.

4.2 | Sample

The study population consisted of native Argentines and foreigners with permanent residency. Individuals over 18 years of age who were residents of the country were included. Nurses,

non-residents, illiterate individuals, and those who did not wish to participate were excluded. Nonprobability snowball sampling was used. The estimated sample size was 967. The calculation considered the total adult population (34,723,030) from the last National Census, with a confidence interval of 95% and event probability of 0.2, based on the results of the validation process.

4.3 | Context

Argentina is characterized by its vast territory. It is a federal republic politically divided into 23 provinces and a federal district, the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, which is the federal capital. The provinces were grouped into seven geographical regions: Pampa, Northwest, Litoral, Cuyo, Patagonia, Sierras, and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.

4.4 | Data Collection

Data were collected between September and December 2023. The questionnaire was developed in a digital format and distributed via social media (WhatsApp and Instagram). The form header indicated that the questionnaire should not be answered by nursing professionals. In-person data collection was conducted at the local airport on two occasions to ensure the representativeness of different provinces. The participants who were contacted face-to-face were offered a QR code to access the online questionnaire.

4.5 | Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB number: 23-033). The surveys were anonymous and voluntary. To ensure the anonymity of participants in the electronic survey, the questionnaire was designed without collecting any personally identifiable information, such as names, email addresses, or other identifying data. The e-form commenced with a detailed presentation of the study purposes and objectives. Subsequently, participants were duly informed that results would be utilized for research purposes and were asked if they wished to proceed with the survey. Only those who indicated a desire to answer the survey were granted access to the complete questionnaire.

4.6 | Data Analysis

Data analyses were performed using the SPSS (version 29.0) software. The absolute and relative frequencies were calculated for categorical variables. For the quantitative variables, mean and central tendency analyses were performed. For each item, the percentage of agreement was calculated by considering those who agreed or strongly agreed (3–4), and the level of disagreement was calculated by considering those who disagreed or strongly disagreed (1–2). A χ^2 test was employed to facilitate the comparison between two distinct groups: those who have a nurse as a relative/acquaintance and those who do not. To illustrate the behavior of each group (have a nurse as a relative/acquaintance or not have), the frequency and percentage of each group were calculated.

Public perceptions of nurses were considered positive when the response was “agree” or “strongly agree” (3–4) to the following 7 items “perform research,” “participate in the management of hospitals,” “detect health problems,” “are capable of postgraduate or doctoral studies,” “make decisions about care,” “need to specialize,” and “have the possibility of professional growth” and when the response was “disagree” or “strongly disagree” (1–2) to the item “perform simple tasks most of the time.” Conversely, perceptions were considered negative if respondents answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree” (1–2) to the first 7 items or if they answered “agree” or “strongly agree” (3–4) to the statement “perform simple tasks most of the time.” In addition, the level of agreement on the role dimensions was calculated to define the concept of roles that nurses can perform. Logistic regression was used to establish an association between those who had a nurse as a relative/acquaintance and those who did not, with adjustments for age, gender, history of hospital admission, and whether the respondents were advised to pursue nursing.

5 | Results

A total of 983 responses were obtained. Twenty-four were eliminated because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. The mean respondent age was 37.2 years (± 14.8 years), and 79.0% were female. A total of 68.3% of respondents had been admitted to the hospital at some time (Table 1). Of the total population, 660 participants (68.8%) had a nurse among their relatives/acquaintances while 299 (31.2%) did not. See Table 1 for the group analysis (had a nurse among their relatives/acquaintances or did not). Further, 76.4% were advised to pursue nursing by a family member or friend. However, significant differences were observed between those who knew a nurse and those who did not ($p = 0.000$) (Table 2).

The perception of nurses was negative for 75.5% ($n = 724$) of the surveyed population (Table 2). The proportions of negative perceptions varied across the different areas of the country, ranging from 38.4% in the Pampa region to 5.7% in the Sierras region. The participants had similar perceptions, although predominantly negative in the group that did know a nurse versus the group that did not (73.6% vs. 79.6%, respectively; $p = 0.004$) (Table 2). However, after adjusting for all the variables in the model, having a nurse as a relative/acquaintance did not increase the positive perception ($p = 0.085$) (Table 4).

Regarding the roles of a nurse, 44.3% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with all the items in the role dimension; 34.2% disagreed that nurses can manage hospitals and 32.1% disagreed that they carry out research in their work. Nevertheless, despite the overall consistency in the observed trend, notable discrepancies emerged between those who knew a nurse and those who did not regarding some items of the role dimension: 48.8% of those who knew a nurse disagreed with the role dimensions versus 34.4% of those who did not know a nurse ($p = 0.00$) (Table 2), e.g., belief about nurses carrying out research (71.2% vs. 60.5%; $p = 0.001$) and that nurses can engage in hospital management (72.0% vs. 52.2%; $p = 0.000$) (Table 3). Regarding the position dimension, 91.2% of the respondents recognized that nurses have the potential to grow professionally, and 82.3% believed that nursing is a profession respected by society. No

differences were observed between those who did and did not know a nurse (Table 3).

In the work perception dimension, 68.2% agreed that it was a sacrificial job, and 68.6% reported that they encountered unpleasant situations. Most individuals who knew a nurse (65.0%) concurred that the profession entailed the performance of unpleasant tasks; for the group that did not know a nurse, the figure increased to 76.6% ($p = 0.000$) (Table 3).

Regarding the skills dimension, 97.6% believed that nurses were kind, and 99.5% believed that they were committed to their tasks. No differences were reported in the skills that nurses should possess between those who did and did not know a nurse (Table 3).

For the stereotype dimension, only 6.1% of the surveyed population reported that nursing was a female job, and 57.7% agreed that it was a secure job opportunity (Table 3). Further, 27.7% of those who did know a nurse agreed that they followed their medical advice without questioning, compared with 40.1% of those who did not know a nurse ($p = 0.000$) (Table 3).

In the logistic regression analysis, the variables age, gender, and whether the respondent was advised to study nursing were found to be significant. The odds of having a positive perception of nursing increased by 12% for every 10-year increase in the age of the respondents (odds ratio [OR]: 1.012; 95% CI, [1.001–1.022], $p = 0.017$). Regarding gender, male respondents were 51% less likely than female respondents to have a positive perception of the nursing profession (OR: 0.49; 95% CI: [0.31–0.74], $p = 0.001$). Finally, respondents who were advised to pursue nursing had 75.2% greater odds for having positive perceptions than those who were not (OR: 1.752; 95% CI, [1.187–2.585], $p = 0.005$) (Table 4).

6 | Discussion

The perceptions of nurses are predominantly negative in Argentina's population. Older people, women, and those who were advised nursing as a career had fairly positive perceptions. However, having a nurse, as a relative/acquaintance did not change the negative perceptions. Although some aspects of nursing roles have been partially identified, most of the general population is not fully aware of the academic and management healthcare leadership profiles inherent in the nursing profession. Similarly, Godsey and Hayes (2023) and De Baetselier et al. (2025) observed that the role of nurses is often to care for helpers rather than that of decision-makers. The public perceives the job as being sacrificial work including unpleasant tasks and simple and routine activities. These job features coincide with the perceptions of the nursing profession portrayed in the Argentinean media (Mezzadra and Mora Augier 2023).

In contrast, the positive perceptions of nurses were high among respondents who were older, women, and advised nursing as a career. These results are consistent with those of previous studies, in which as the age increased, the perceptions of nurses improved (Yavaş and Özerli 2023), and women expressed better perceptions of nursing than men (Rubbi et al. 2023). Therefore, young people should be advised about the nursing profession. According to

TABLE 1 | Sociodemographic variables of respondents.

		All N = 959 % (N)	Nurse in the family/as acquaintance = Yes N = 660 % [†] (N)	Nurse in the family/as acquaintance = No N = 299 % [†] (N)
Nationality	Foreigner with permanent residence	2.3 (22)	2.6 (17)	1.7 (5)
	Argentinian	97.4 (934)	97.0 (640)	98.3 (294)
	Other	0.3 (3)	0.4 (3)	–
	Total	100 (959)	100 (660)	100 (299)
Region	Litoral	17.8 (170)	18.6 (123)	15.7 (47)
	Northwest	12.7 (122)	12.8 (85)	12.4 (37)
	Cuyo	9.4 (90)	10.3 (68)	7.4 (22)
	Sierras	5.8 (56)	5.5 (36)	6.7 (20)
	Pampa	36.7 (352)	37.1 (245)	35.7 (107)
	Autonomous City of Buenos Aires	8.0 (77)	5.9 (39)	12.7 (38)
	Patagonia	9.6 (92)	9.7 (64)	9.4 (28)
	Total	100 (959)	99.9 (660)	100 (299)
History of hospitalization	Yes	68.3 (655)	69.5 (459)	65.6 (196)
	No	31.7 (304)	30.5 (201)	34.4 (103)
	Total	100 (959)	100 (660)	100 (299)
Gender	Female	79.0 (758)	79.5 (525)	77.9 (233)
	Male	20.9 (200)	20.3 (134)	22.1 (66)
	I prefer not to say	0.1 (1)	0.2 (1)	0 (0)
	Total	100 (959)	100 (660)	100 (299)

[†]Percentage by column.**TABLE 2** | Perception, roles dimension, and recommendation to pursue nursing, stratified by the presence/absence of a nurse in the family/as an acquaintance.

		All N = 959 % (N)	Nurse in the family/as acquaintance = Yes N = 660 % [†] (N)	Nurse in the family/as acquaintance = No N = 299 % [†] (N)	χ^2 p value*
Perception of nursing	Positive	24.5 (235)	26.4 (174)	20.4 (61)	0.04
	Negative	75.5 (724)	73.6 (486)	79.6 (238)	
	Total	100 (959)	100 (660)	100 (299)	
Role dimension [§]	Yes	55.7 (534)	48.8 (322)	34.4 (103)	0.00
	No	44.3 (425)	51.2 (338)	65.6 (196)	
	Total	100 (959)	100 (660)	100 (299)	
Advised to pursue nursing career	Yes	76.4 (733)	80.8 (533)	66.9 (200)	0.00
	No	23.6 (226)	19.2 (127)	33.1 (99)	
	Total	100 (959)	100 (660)	100 (299)	

* χ^2 test.[†]Percentage by column.[§]Role dimension: Yes: with the role dimension was established when all items within the dimension were rated as “agree” (1–2) or “strongly agree” (3–4).

TABLE 3 | Level of agreement.

Dimension	Variable	All N = 959			Nurse in the family/ as acquaintance = Yes N = 660			Nurse in the family/ as acquaintance = No N = 299			χ^2 p value ^{\$}
		Disagree*	Agree** %	Total	Disagree*	Agree** % [†]	Total	Disagree*	Agree** % [†]	Total	
Roles	Research	32.1	67.9	100	28.8	71.2	100	39.5	60.5	100	0.001
	Hospital management	34.2	65.8	100	28.0	72.0	100	47.8	52.2	100	0.000
	Detecting health problems	15.2	84.8	100	13.0	87.0	100	20.1	79.9	100	0.005
Positions	Postgraduate or PhD	16.3	83.7	100	14.2	85.8	100	20.7	79.3	100	0.012
	Care decisions	16.7	83.3	100	14.1	85.9	100	22.4	77.6	100	0.001
	Specialist	8.9	91.1	100	7.9	92.1	100	11.0	89.0	100	0.111
Work perceptions	Salary commensurate	18.6	81.4	100	18.9	81.1	100	17.7	82.3	100	0.654
	Professional growth	8.8	91.2	100	8.6	91.4	100	9.0	91.0	100	0.842
	Respected occupation	17.7	82.3	100	17.6	82.4	100	18.1	81.9	100	0.856
Aptitudes	Low salaries	74.6	25.4	100	75.0	25.0	100	73.6	26.4	100	0.640
	Sacrificial work	31.8	68.2	100	33.3	66.7	100	28.4	71.6	100	0.131
	Unpleasant tasks	31.4	68.6	100	35.0	65.0	100	23.4	76.6	100	0.000
Stereotypes	Simple tasks	50.9	49.1	100	51.8	48.2	100	48.8	51.2	100	0.391
	University career	15.2	84.8	100	16.4	83.6	100	12.7	87.3	100	0.144
	Being kind	2.4	97.6	100	2.4	97.6	100	2.3	97.7	100	0.938
Work perceptions	Handicraft skills	4.6	95.4	100	5.3	94.7	100	3.0	97.0	100	0.116
	Intelligence	21.2	78.8	100	21.1	78.9	100	21.4	78.6	100	0.904
	Commitment	0.5	99.5	100	0.5	99.5	100	0.3	99.7	100	0.789
Stereotypes	Female	93.9	6.1	100	95.4	4.6	100	90.4	9.6	100	0.003
	Complies with medical indications without questioning them	68.4	31.6	100	72.3	27.7	100	59.9	40.1	100	0.000
	Secure employment	42.3	57.7	100	42.6	57.4	100	41.8	58.2	100	0.823

*Disagreements are responses that were considered to disagree or strongly disagree (1–2).

**For the level of agreement, responses of strongly agree (3–4) and agree were considered.

† Percentage by file in each group (nurse in the family/as acquaintance = yes or nurse in the family/as acquaintance = no).

\$ χ^2 test.

TABLE 4 | Associations of variables with perceptions of nursing.

	Exp(B)	95% CI for exp(B)		P value
		Lower	Upper	
Age	1.012	1.001	1.022	0.017
Have relatives/ acquaintances who are nurses	1.35	0.96	1.90	0.085
I was advised to pursue nursing	1.672	1.14	2.51	0.010
History of hospitalization admission	1.23	0.87	1.75	0.203
Gender (male)	0.49	0.31	0.74	0.001

Dante et al. (2014), the more the younger people are introduced to a profession, the more likely they are to choose it as a career. In fact, the increase in healthcare workers' visibility during the coronavirus 2019 pandemic may have had a positive influence on the number of young people wanting to pursue healthcare degrees in Spain (González Luis 2024).

Perceptions of nursing have changed over time. In the pre-pandemic period, inaccurate information regarding the functions of nursing professionals has been widespread. Most people did not refer to the act of caring and instead attributed the responsibility for patient care to nurses (López-Verdugo et al. 2021). In contrast, 77.6% of the general population in Israel believed that their perception of the nursing profession and their roles improved during the pandemic (Blau et al. 2023). Similarly, although studies prior to the pandemic indicated that the media portrayed nurses' image as mainly negative and inaccurate with negative stereotypes (González et al. 2023), during the pandemic, a slight improvement in the perceptions was noted (Ersan Yaman et al. 2024; González Luis 2024). However, the belief among nursing professionals that the public has a negative perception of their profession persists (Roth et al. 2022). According to the International Council of Nurses' report, many governments fail to fully recognize the value of nurses beyond their specialized and compassionate care. Therefore, there are inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the branding of this profession (Godsey and Hayes 2023).

The findings of the current study suggest that nurses' roles have not been clearly or comprehensively identified. Many of the respondents did not know about nurses' roles of hospital management and participation in research activities. Studies conducted in different countries, such as Spain (Sanz Vega et al. 2020) and Italy (Rubbi et al. 2023), also concluded that nurses were not recognized as researchers. Additional leadership roles in nursing scored the lowest on the Nursing Brand Image Scale in both China and the United States, especially among lower-educated respondents (Zhou et al. 2024). Similarly, those entering the nursing career did not identify the research and management roles as appropriate for nurses (Bastias et al. 2020), reflecting the societal perception of nurses' lacking leadership (Godsey and Hayes 2023; Zhou et al. 2024). Therefore, research is

essential for nursing advancement, fostering professional knowledge, enhancing quality of care, addressing population needs, and strengthening autonomy and development opportunities for nurses.

Regarding working conditions, participants identified sacrificial work and unpleasant tasks, and those who did not know a nurse in the family/acquaintance increased their ideas about undesirable tasks. Several studies have reported high rates of burnout and desire to quit among active nurses (International Council of Nurses 2021). Studies in Argentina have shown that burnout is predominant among nurses (Ramacciotti 2023; Samaniego and Cárcamo 2013). However, nurses not only report poor working conditions but also agree with this perception (Meiring and Van Wyk 2013; Rubbi et al. 2023). Furthermore, a large part of the population considers nursing to be an arduous and difficult job (Uysal and Demirdağ 2022). Recent studies on German (Roth et al. 2022), Canadian, and American (Ménard et al. 2023) nurses reported that nurses intended to quit or regret their chosen careers due to the stress of working during the pandemic (Buchan and Catton 2023). The European Safety Foundation (2024) has acknowledged that working conditions have become increasingly difficult in European healthcare institutions. Consequently, the sustainability of health services is at risk.

Our findings indicate that the nursing profession was not predominantly associated with females, in contrast with evidence from previous studies where nursing was closely linked to the female gender (Rubbi et al. 2023). Teresa-Morales et al. (2022) reported that nursing is still associated with females because of its primary caring role, which is also linked to low social status, skills, and wages. Godsey et al. (2020) also reported that the perceived image of a nurse is close to that of a woman. However, some studies suggest no strong association between the nursing profession and female sex (Sanz Vega et al. 2020; Uysal and Demirdağ 2022). In a study conducted by Uysal and Demirdağ (2022), only 14% of the participants considered nursing as a predominantly female profession, although this percentage slightly increased after the pandemic.

7 | Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the geographical distribution of the sample was heterogeneous, as the survey was disseminated via snowball sampling through social networks. Although we went to an airport where more than 25 flights depart daily to different parts of the country, it was not possible to obtain a homogeneous distribution. However, only participants (Argentines or residents) from Argentina's provinces were surveyed; therefore, the results included perceptions of the profession in the national context.

In addition, most of the surveyed population had family members or acquaintances who were nurses, with a clear predominance of responses from the female population, suggesting the presence of membership bias. However, with a considerable population size, the number of participants who did not closely know nurses ($n = 299$) was adequate to assess unbiased perceptions of nursing image. In addition, this variable was entered into the regression analysis to determine whether it was a confounding variable.

Finally, technological access was a necessary condition for participation in the study.

However, to our knowledge, this is the first study on public perceptions of nursing image in the context of Argentina.

8 | Conclusion

The perceptions of nurses in Argentina remain predominantly negative. Additionally, the integral roles of nurses, especially their management and research roles, are not fully understood. Most of the population is aware that nursing is a profession that offers opportunities for professional growth and is held in high regard by society. However, nurses are perceived as having to undertake self-sacrificing roles and unpleasant tasks. They also agreed that to be a nurse, one must be kind and committed to the task. Age, gender, and recommendations to study nursing were associated with positive perceptions. In contrast, having a nurse as a relative/acquaintance was not associated with an improved perception.

9 | Implications for Nursing and Nursing Policy

In the post-pandemic era, the healthcare workforce, especially nurses, is facing a critical shortage. Negative perceptions of the profession, poor working conditions, and stereotypes hinder the motivation of younger generations to pursue nursing. This reality exacerbates the shortage of nurses and jeopardizes the sustainability of healthcare systems, particularly in less developed countries. Policymakers and healthcare providers must implement measures to evaluate the work performed by nurses and improve their working conditions (Combrinck et al. 2022). These actions will help retain talent, attract new generations, enhance the public perception of the profession, and improve the quality of care that patients are entitled to (Cipriano 2022; McDonald 2022).

The results of the current study confirm that young people in Argentina have a poor perception of nursing; therefore, future studies should specifically delve into children's and adolescents' perceptions of nursing in Argentina. Such studies can facilitate effective communication campaigns funded by public healthcare institutions as well as professional and university nursing organizations (Álvarez-Muñoz et al. 2025).

To combat the shortage of nurses, active nurses who take pride in their profession must clearly explain the identity of nurses in the 21st century and highlight the value of the work they undertake on a daily basis to sustain health systems (González Luis 2022). Moreover, those who know them directly do not improve their image, which encourages us to determine what identity nurses have. The work of nurses must be promoted via professional training and development, prioritized in strategic plans, and rewarded by healthcare organizations (Godsey and Hayes 2023; De Baetselier et al. 2025; Mason et al. 2025). Therefore, the image that Argentinean nurses have of their profession must be evaluated in the future. Public bodies and healthcare providers can finance or support this type of research, as it provides valuable evidence to enable them to make informed policy decisions aimed at ensuring the sustainability of healthcare systems.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: MVB, MMM, VS, MG, and CV. Study design: MVB, MMM, VS, MG, and CV. Data collection: MVB, MMM, VS, MG, and CV. Data analysis: MVB, MMM, VS, MG, and CV. Manuscript writing: MVB, MMM, and HGL.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section.

Supporting file 1: [inr70041-sup-0001-SuppMat.docx](#).