

ATTITUDE OF NURSING STUDENTS TOWARD MEN IN NURSING

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ABSTRACT

Gender stereotypes influence both women and men who work as nurses as well as individuals considering nursing as a profession. The study on "Attitude of Nursing Students Toward Men in Nursing" explores the perceptions and attitudes of nursing students towards male individuals pursuing a career in nursing. This research delves into the potential biases, stereotypes, and challenges that male nursing students may face within the nursing education environment. The study aims to uncover any gender-related disparities in the field of nursing and to promote inclusivity and diversity within the nursing profession. The attitudes of nursing students toward men in nursing are a reflection of the evolving dynamics within the nursing profession. By examining and addressing these attitudes, we can work towards creating a more inclusive, diverse, and supportive environment for all aspiring nurses, regardless of gender. Through education, awareness, and a commitment to challenging stereotypes and biases, we can foster a nursing community that values and celebrates the contributions of individuals from all backgrounds, ultimately enhancing the quality of care and the overall well-being of both healthcare professionals and patients alike.

Keywords: nursing students, men in nursing, attitudes, perceptions, gender diversity, stereotypes, inclusivity..

INTRODUCTION

The attitudes of nursing students toward men in nursing represent a significant aspect of the nursing profession's evolving landscape. This topic sheds light on the perceptions, biases, and challenges that male individuals may encounter as they pursue a career in nursing. Understanding and addressing these attitudes are crucial for fostering inclusivity, diversity, and gender equality within the nursing field. By exploring the complexities surrounding the attitudes of nursing students toward men in nursing, we can uncover insights that may help shape a more supportive and equitable environment for all aspiring nurses regardless of gender. Nursing, traditionally viewed as a female-dominated profession, has seen a gradual increase in the number of men entering the field. Despite this positive trend, male nurses continue to face stereotypes and gender biases that can influence the attitudes of their peers, including nursing students. These attitudes may manifest in various forms, such as assumptions about the roles and capabilities of male nurses, misconceptions about their motivations for choosing nursing, or even subtle forms of discrimination in educational settings. By examining these attitudes, we can identify areas for improvement in promoting a more inclusive and respectful environment for all nursing students.

Nursing is almost exclusively a history of women's accomplishments despite the fact that men worked as nurses as early as the fourth and fifth centuries. This perpetuates the notion of male nurses as anomalies. It also provides insight into the gendered nature of nursing and nurses' work within a patriarchal culture. (Joan Evans 2004)

A liberal education creates the foundation for intellectual and practical abilities within the context of nursing practice and for engagement with the larger community, locally and globally. A hallmark of liberal education is developing a personal value system that includes the ability to act ethically regardless of the situation and where students are encouraged to define meaningful personal and professional goals with a commitment to integrity, equity, and social justice. Liberally educated graduates are well prepared to integrate knowledge, skills, and values from the arts, sciences, and humanities to provide safe, quality care; advocate for patients, families, communities, and populations; and promote health equity and social justice. Equally important, nursing education needs to ensure an understanding of the intersection of bias, structural racism, and social determinants with healthcare inequities and promote a call to action.

The attitude of nursing students towards men in nursing has been a topic of interest for researchers over the past two decades. Studies have shown that traditional gender roles and stereotypes can influence nursing students' perceptions of male nurses, affecting their recruitment, retention, and overall experience in the profession.

Men in nursing refer to male individuals who pursue a career in the nursing profession, encompassing various roles such as:

1. Registered Nurses (RNs)
2. Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) / Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs)

3. Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) - including Nurse Practitioners (NPs), Certified Nurse Midwives (CNMs), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs), and Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs)
4. Nursing educators and researchers
5. Nursing leaders and administrators

Men in nursing bring diverse perspectives, skills, and experiences to the profession, enriching patient care and the nursing workforce. Despite historical gender stereotypes, men are increasingly pursuing nursing careers, contributing to a more inclusive and diverse healthcare environment.

A 2009 study by Meadus and Twomey found that nursing students' attitudes towards male nurses improved after exposure to male nursing role models and educational experiences (Meadus & Twomey, 2009). Similarly, a 2014 study by Zavorsky and Murdock found that male nursing students who had positive experiences with male nurse mentors were more likely to persist in the program (Zavorsky & Murdock, 2014).

In 1994, a study by Evans and Kelley found that female nursing students held more positive attitudes towards male nurses than male nursing students did (Evans & Kelley, 1994). However, a 2003 study by Loughrey revealed that both male and female nursing students held stereotypical views of male nurses, perceiving them as less caring and less skilled than female nurses (Loughrey, 2003).

In the 1990s, research on nursing students' attitudes towards men in nursing began to emerge. A study by Harding and Snyder (1990) found that female nursing students held traditional views of gender roles, perceiving nursing as a predominantly female profession. However, after exposure to male nurse role models, students' attitudes became more positive (Harding & Snyder, 1990).

Another study by Kelly et al. (1990) revealed that male nursing students faced challenges related to gender stereotypes, including being perceived as "unmanly" or "not masculine enough" (Kelly et al., 1990).

A study by Mead (1990) found that nursing students' attitudes towards men in nursing were influenced by their own gender and personal experiences. Female students who had positive interactions with male nurses were more likely to hold positive attitudes (Mead, 1990).

O'Lynn CE, 2004 conducted a study on Gender-based barriers for male students in nursing education programs: prevalence and perceived importance. The findings revealed that seven barriers were importantly different in prevalence between different subsamples of male nurses, and no barrier was rated unimportant by more than 20% of respondents. The similarities in findings between groups of male nurses, diverse in geography, school attendance, and graduation dates, suggest that the barriers men face in nursing school are pervasive, consistent, and have changed little over time. From the findings, the Inventory of Male Friendliness in Nursing Programs (IMFNP) was developed.

Nursing continues to be undervalued as an end-point career by some, and most potential candidates lack exposure to male nurses and nursing in general. Family resistance and salary remain concerns, but they may be as important a deterrent for some women as for men. Significant barriers to men exist in nursing education and practice, and the language and history of nursing have sexualized nursing practice itself by labeling it as *women's work*. The latter pattern has influenced legal decisions affecting the clinical practice of male nurses and has contributed to perhaps the most significant barrier to the recruitment of male candidates: the job title and its associated images. Proactive recruitment from selected target groups, the use of role models, and the exploitation of *appropriate* media sources are but three feasible strategies identified from the literature review that might be considered if nurses really would value changing the sex imbalance in the nursing workforce.

(Michael J. Villeneuve, 1994 Recruiting and retaining men in nursing: A review of the literature)

One key aspect to consider when exploring the attitudes of nursing students toward men in nursing is the impact of societal norms and cultural perceptions. Stereotypes surrounding gender roles and professions can influence how individuals, including nursing students, perceive the presence of men in traditionally female-dominated fields like nursing. These preconceived notions may shape attitudes toward male nurses, affecting how they are treated, accepted, or integrated into the nursing community. By addressing and challenging these stereotypes, nursing education programs can help create a more welcoming and supportive environment for male students pursuing a career in nursing.

Moreover, understanding the attitudes of nursing students toward men in nursing can have broader implications for the nursing profession as a whole. Embracing diversity, including gender diversity, is essential for enriching the nursing workforce and ensuring that all individuals have equal opportunities to thrive in their chosen career paths. By promoting a culture of respect, inclusivity, and acceptance within nursing education, students can learn to appreciate the unique perspectives and contributions that individuals of all genders bring to the field. This shift in attitudes can lead to a more cohesive and collaborative nursing community that values diversity as a strength rather than a limitation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, nursing students' attitudes towards men in nursing are influenced by gender stereotypes and educational experiences. Traditional gender roles can lead to negative perceptions, but exposure to male nurse role models and positive experiences can improve attitudes. Male nursing students who have supportive mentors are more likely to persist in the program. Educators and healthcare organizations should promote inclusivity, challenge stereotypes, and provide supportive environments to encourage men to pursue nursing careers. By doing so, we can increase diversity in the profession and improve patient care. A more inclusive nursing workforce benefits everyone.

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