

The Educators' Role in Navigating the Learning Experience of Male Nursing Students

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Male nurses are regarded as an underutilised resource in healthcare and can potentially strengthen the nursing workforce (1). Yet, the narratives of how male nursing students strive to navigate their educational journey in academic and clinical environments have predominantly depicted challenging experiences. For example, a recent Japanese study examined acknowledged male students' experiences with various forms and shapes of learning needs (2). While these experiences offer a candid and valuable viewpoint of the challenges faced by the students, they also draw attention to the possibility of how educators may have inadvertently overlooked crucial gaps in teaching style and interactions with male students, which could have influenced their academic progress and overall satisfaction. According to a recent recommendation, strengthening the awareness of nursing educators regarding gender bias in their teaching practices, resources, and clinical environments could foster more inclusive educational environments, restrict attrition among undergraduates, and strengthen the nursing profession as a whole (3). Put simply, an educator's awareness regarding gender bias in nursing education is the highest priority, given that it could result in non-discriminatory treatment of students. It is, therefore, possible that the educators do not intentionally participate in discriminatory behaviour or have a biased attitude towards their students. This editorial highlights three key roles educators should take when supporting male nursing students through their learning journey.

The first role is to acknowledge the impact of gender on the process of teaching and

learning. The faculty must possess a heightened sensitivity to develop a comprehensive understanding of the barriers encountered by male students and actively work towards resolving them. There has also been a call for faculty to actively confront gendered prejudices that male students may encounter, such as using terminology associated with females in their teaching methods (4). For example, educators might employ examples that encompass both genders rather than relying on a single gender or male nurses can be invited to the class to deliver lectures and share their experiences. This is a highly efficient method for empowering the male students. It is crucial to address these initiatives, especially in light of the widespread report that the curriculum is geared towards women and that numerous textbooks portray female nurses, thereby contributing to ambiguity regarding gender roles in the field (5). An alternative approach to achieving gender equality in nursing education would be implementing the Gender Equity Scale in Nursing Education, which was recently developed (6). Therefore, educators would be able to foster a gender-neutral and gender-equal environment for all students, where male students are able to excel academically and feel comfortable as they develop professionally, irrespective of their gender (7).

The second role entails correcting gender bias. Male students frequently experienced isolation during group projects and found it unsettling to be coerced into the group leader or presenter role (2). In part, male students' lack of decision-making authority has been attributed to the strong peer pressure

experienced by female students (8). Once again, it is up to us as educators to be mindful of how this manifests in the classroom. This could enable us to intervene actively in the engagement and interaction of educators with students. It has been observed that male students received unnecessary or excessive attention from the faculty (9). Therefore, rotating group leadership responsibilities and prohibiting “male only” or “female group” groups would guarantee equitable workload distribution without favouritism or bias towards one gender. Correcting the bias also allows faculty to engage in a systematic reflection process by utilising midterm feedback forms. Promoting inclusive teaching requires that faculty take a step back and reflect on what they have accomplished and what they have not—a process that is both engaging and demanding (10). Nursing institutions may also consider revisiting and revising their curricula to eliminate gendered terminology, such as using “she” to refer to nurses (11).

Finally, it is essential that educators continually uphold the students’ rights to fair treatment, particularly in fostering a strong student-faculty relationship. Minority students often faced challenges in their interactions with educators, particularly when they observed that faculty members usually targeted male students in class (2). To cultivate a positive relationship, faculty must be able to proactively prevent and identify any sign of discrimination in their teaching and learning activities (12). Failure to consider this element may result in disregarding its effects on students’ learning experiences. In addition, neglecting to pay attention to their distinct learning needs jeopardises the long-term viability of the profession. Moreover, it is not practical to anticipate students to exhibit candour towards the faculty, as they harbour concerns that such behaviour may compromise their rapport with the educators. In summary, evidence has shed light on the barriers male nursing students encounter as they navigate the complexities of nursing education, encompassing theoretical and clinical training. Understanding the value of a gender-neutral learning environment for all nursing students is thus crucial, and this contribution should be acknowledged. It is crucial to consider how we can address the gaps in teaching for male students, place a higher value on their learning experiences,

and assume greater accountability. To achieve this, I have put forward three roles of the faculty: acknowledging gender influences on teaching and learning, rectifying gender bias, and upholding the rights of students to impartial treatment. Faculty members are expected to actively engage in these roles throughout teaching and learning to strengthen efforts that promote inclusive teaching and bring attention to the challenges and ongoing barriers that male nursing students are likely to face.

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