
Research

Challenges Faced by Male Nurses of Clinical Practice in a Female Dominated Profession at Uduth, Sokoto.

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Abstract: Nursing remains a predominantly female-dominated profession globally, with male nurses representing a minority within the healthcare workforce. This study assessed the challenges faced by male nurses in clinical practice at Usmanu Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital (UDUTH), Sokoto. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was employed involving 60 male nurses selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. Findings revealed that male nurses experience multiple challenges, including sociocultural bias, workplace discrimination, and professional limitations. Many respondents indicated that cultural perceptions influence how male nurses are viewed, with some patients expressing discomfort receiving care from them. Institutional barriers such as unequal task allocation, limited leadership opportunities, and restricted clinical roles were also reported. Despite these challenges, a considerable number of respondents expressed job satisfaction and commitment to the profession. The study concludes that while male nurses face significant barriers, targeted interventions such as policy reforms, mentorship programs, and public awareness campaigns can improve gender inclusivity and enhance professional experiences.

Keywords: Clinical Practice, Gender Bias, Male Nurses, Nigeria, Nursing Profession, Workplace Discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing is an essential component of healthcare systems worldwide, playing a vital role in patient care, health promotion, and disease prevention. Despite its importance, the profession has historically been viewed as female-dominated due to longstanding cultural and societal beliefs that associate caregiving with women. According to the World Health

Organization (2022), women constitute the majority of the global nursing workforce, while men represent a significantly smaller proportion. This gender imbalance is more pronounced in developing countries such as Nigeria, where sociocultural and religious norms strongly influence career choices and professional roles.

In Nigeria, nursing is often perceived as a feminine profession, and men who choose nursing as a career frequently encounter stereotypes and societal stigma. Adeyemo et al. (2021) reported that male nurses are often viewed as deviating from traditional gender roles, which can lead to discrimination and reduced social acceptance. These perceptions not only affect recruitment into the profession but also influence the experiences of male nurses within clinical settings.

Studies have shown that male nurses often experience discrimination and bias in clinical practice. Patients may feel uncomfortable receiving care from male nurses, especially in sensitive departments such as obstetrics and gynecology. This discomfort may lead to restricted clinical exposure and limited opportunities for skill development (Chukwu & Ibrahim, 2019). Furthermore, male nurses are frequently assigned physically demanding tasks, reinforcing gender stereotypes within healthcare environments.

Institutional challenges also contribute to the difficulties faced by male nurses. Research indicates that male nurses are underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles within healthcare organizations (George & Ogunyemi, 2020). This lack of representation can hinder career progression and contribute to feelings of marginalization. Additionally, workplace discrimination and unequal treatment have been identified as significant challenges affecting job satisfaction among male nurses.

Despite these challenges, male nurses have demonstrated resilience and adaptability. Ashkenazi and Isler (2023) found that male nurses continue to contribute significantly to healthcare delivery despite facing gender-based barriers. Their presence in nursing enhances diversity, improves patient outcomes, and challenges traditional gender norms.

Cultural and religious beliefs also play a critical role in shaping the experiences of male nurses, particularly in Northern Nigeria. These beliefs often define acceptable roles for men and women, influencing patient preferences and limiting the scope of practice for male nurses. As a result, male nurses may experience restricted roles and limited acceptance in certain clinical areas.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes policy reforms, public awareness campaigns, and institutional support. Promoting gender

inclusivity in nursing will not only improve the experiences of male nurses but also strengthen the healthcare workforce. This study therefore examines the challenges faced by male nurses in clinical practice at UDUTH, Sokoto, with the aim of providing evidence-based recommendations for improving gender equity in nursing.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to assess the challenges faced by male nurses in clinical practice at Usmanu Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital (UDUTH), Sokoto. The design was appropriate as it allowed for the collection of data from respondents at a single point in time without the manipulation of variables.

The study was conducted at UDUTH, a tertiary healthcare institution in Sokoto State, Nigeria. The hospital serves as a major referral center providing specialized healthcare services to patients within and outside the state. The target population comprised male nurses working in selected clinical wards within the hospital.

A sample size of 60 male nurses was selected using convenience sampling. Inclusion criteria included male nurses actively engaged in clinical practice and willing to participate. Those not directly involved in patient care were excluded.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into sections covering socio-demographic data, sociocultural challenges, and workplace challenges. The instrument was validated through expert review, and reliability was ensured through pilot testing.

Ethical approval was obtained, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25 and presented using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and tables.

RESULTS & FINDINGS

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequenc y	Percentage(%)
≤25	12	20.0%
25–35	17	28.3%

35–45	18	30.0%
45+	13	21.7%
TOTAL	60	100%

The majority of respondents were between 35 and 45 years, indicating a relatively experienced workforce. This suggests that most participants had sufficient exposure to clinical practice and workplace dynamics.

Table 2: Sociocultural Challenges

Statement	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Cultural bias exists	48.3	20.0
Male nurses seen as weak	36.7	18.3
Religious influence	40.0	33.3
Restricted roles	36.7	31.7
Low public respect	23.3	21.7

The findings reveal that sociocultural factors significantly influence male nurses' experiences. Cultural and religious beliefs contribute to negative perceptions, reinforcing gender stereotypes.

Table 3: Workplace Challenges

Challenge	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Physical tasks	31.7	38.3
Leadership bias	21.7	20.0
Less trust	38.3	20.0
Ward restriction	40.0	36.7

Workplace challenges were also evident, including unequal task distribution and restricted access to certain clinical areas. These findings align with previous studies highlighting gender bias in nursing practice.

Overall, the study demonstrates that both sociocultural and institutional factors contribute to the challenges faced by male nurses. Addressing these issues is essential for improving professional experiences and promoting gender equity.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide important insights into the multifaceted challenges faced by male nurses working in a predominantly female profession, particularly within the clinical setting of Usmanu Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital (UDUTH), Sokoto. The results reveal that male nurses encounter a combination of sociocultural, institutional, and professional barriers, which significantly influence their work experiences, role performance, and career progression.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents showed that the majority were in the 35–45-year age group, suggesting that most were in their active working years and had accumulated substantial clinical experience. This implies that the challenges reported are not limited to newly recruited nurses but persist across different levels of professional maturity. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that gender-related challenges in nursing are experienced across all age groups and are deeply rooted in societal perceptions rather than professional competence (George & Ogunyemi, 2020).

One of the major findings of this study is the prevalence of sociocultural barriers affecting male nurses. A significant proportion of respondents agreed that cultural bias exists within the profession, with many also indicating that male nurses are often perceived as weak or unsuitable for caregiving roles. This perception is largely influenced by traditional gender norms, especially in Northern Nigeria, where caregiving is culturally associated with women. These findings are consistent with the work of Adeyemo et al. (2021), who reported that deeply ingrained cultural beliefs continue to discourage male participation in nursing and shape negative societal attitudes toward male nurses.

Furthermore, religious beliefs were identified as another contributing factor influencing patient acceptance of male nurses. In conservative settings such as Sokoto, some patients may feel uncomfortable receiving care from male nurses, particularly in sensitive units such as obstetrics and gynecology. This often leads to restricted practice opportunities for male nurses, as reflected in the study where a considerable number of respondents reported limitations in ward postings. Similar findings have been reported by

Chukwu and Ibrahim (2019), who highlighted that religious and cultural sensitivities significantly affect the roles assigned to male nurses in clinical settings.

Institutional and workplace-related challenges also emerged prominently in this study. Many respondents indicated that they are frequently assigned physically demanding tasks, reinforcing the stereotype that male nurses are primarily suited for manual or labor-intensive roles. While this may reflect perceived physical strength, it can also limit their exposure to other critical aspects of nursing care, thereby affecting professional development. Additionally, the study revealed perceived bias in leadership opportunities, with male nurses reporting fewer chances of occupying managerial or supervisory roles. This finding corroborates studies by Ashkenazi and Isler (2023), which suggest that gender dynamics within nursing institutions can influence career advancement opportunities.

Another significant issue highlighted in this study is the perceived lack of trust in the caregiving abilities of male nurses. Some respondents reported that patients and even colleagues occasionally question their competence, particularly in providing emotional or intimate care. This lack of trust can negatively impact job satisfaction and professional identity. However, despite these challenges, it is noteworthy that many male nurses in this study still reported a level of job satisfaction and resilience. This suggests a strong commitment to the profession and an ability to adapt to challenging work environments. (Vantandost S. et al., 2020)

The findings also indicate that workplace discrimination and gender stereotyping contribute to role restriction and limited autonomy among male nurses. The restriction of male nurses from certain clinical areas not only undermines their professional competence but also reduces opportunities for skill acquisition and career growth. This aligns with global findings that male nurses often face “glass escalator” or “glass ceiling” effects, depending on the context, where they are either fast-tracked into administrative roles or restricted from certain specialties (World Health Organization, 2022).

Importantly, the study highlights the interaction between sociocultural beliefs and institutional practices in shaping the experiences of male nurses. While societal perceptions create the foundation for bias, institutional policies and workplace culture can either reinforce or challenge these norms. In settings where there is no deliberate effort to promote gender inclusivity, these challenges are likely to persist.

In comparison with international studies, the challenges identified in this research are not unique to Nigeria but are more pronounced due to stronger cultural and religious

influences. Studies conducted in other regions have similarly reported gender-based discrimination, role stereotyping, and limited acceptance of male nurses, although the intensity varies depending on societal context (Ashkenazi & Isler, 2023). This suggests that addressing these challenges requires both local and global strategies tailored to cultural realities.

Overall, the findings of this study underscore the need for targeted interventions aimed at improving the professional experiences of male nurses. Addressing sociocultural misconceptions through public awareness campaigns, promoting gender-sensitive policies within healthcare institutions, and ensuring equal opportunities for career advancement are critical steps toward achieving a more inclusive nursing workforce.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the challenges faced by male nurses in clinical practice within a female-dominated profession at UDUTH, Sokoto. The findings revealed that male nurses encounter significant sociocultural and institutional barriers that affect their professional experiences.

Cultural beliefs, gender stereotypes, and religious influences were identified as major factors shaping perceptions of male nurses. These factors contribute to discrimination, limited opportunities, and restricted roles in clinical settings.

Workplace challenges such as unequal task allocation and limited leadership opportunities further hinder professional development. Despite these challenges, male nurses demonstrated resilience and commitment to their roles.

The study recommends policy reforms, mentorship programs, and public awareness campaigns to promote gender inclusivity in nursing. Addressing these challenges will enhance workforce diversity and improve healthcare delivery outcomes.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have declared no conflict of interest.

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