



BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS FACING THE MALE STUDENTS DURING THE BACCALAUREATE NURSING PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Background: The nursing program demands strategies to overcome the male nursing students' barriers, and reinforce their facilitators as attracting more male students to the nursing program will increase the professional nurses' number and can alleviate the serious nursing shortage. This study aimed to determine the male nursing students' barriers and facilitators during the baccalaureate nursing program. **Design:** A descriptive design was utilized in this study. **Setting:** This study was conducted in the Faculty of Nursing-Zagazig University. **Subjects:** A convenience sample of the male nursing students from second, third, and fourth academic years (n=277). **Tools of data collection:** A questionnaire sheet composed of three parts: personal characteristics, inventory of male friendliness in nursing programs-short, and the facilitators for men during nursing education. **Results:** Revealed that the most common barriers facing the male nursing students were related to the students themselves, followed by the training in the hospital (73.16% & 56.19%, respectively). The most common male nursing students' facilitators during the baccalaureate nursing program were related to the family & friends, followed by the students themselves, and the training in the hospitals (67.9%, 64.3% & 62.3% respectively). **Recommendations:** Research must continue to explore gender bias in nursing program, and the implications of this bias on attracting, recruitment and retention of men in the nursing profession.

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Introduction

The nursing profession is commonly viewed as a feminine occupation that is evaluated by male dominated patriarchal society. The gendered nature of nursing work is reflected by the patriarchal social structure that associates the characteristics of caring, compassion, nurturance, and empathy exclusive to women. As a result, the nursing is considered not to be suited to male students who are believed not to have any of those attributes. Generally, the gender stereotypes associated with men who are in nontraditional occupations are problematic that limit their choice of specialty like nursing profession [1, 2].

Male nursing students are severely underrepresented in the current nursing program. The lack of male nursing students is significant because adding more males to the nursing program could help to alleviate the current and continuing severe nursing shortage. There are three main factors contributing to the underrepresentation of males in nursing that include; low male nursing program enrollment, the high attrition rate for male nursing students compared to their female counterparts, and the loss of male professional nurses from the nursing profession [3].

Male nursing students meet barriers within the nursing program such as nursing is still viewed as a female profession, faculty members are not supportive of male nursing students in certain areas such as the obstetric and pediatric nursing rotation, lack of mentorship programs, no male faculty, absence of guidance on the use of touch, lack of male role models, different requirements for men, isolation, no information on the contributions men have made to the profession, men's health issues, and communication differences between males and females [4, 5].

Otherwise, there are many facilitators for male nursing students in the nursing program that include; the presence of male faculty members, the presence of other male nursing students, support from the family and friends, job security, and the prospects of career opportunities. These facilitators serve as a source of power, and provide the margin for male nursing students to overcome the barriers they encounter in the nursing program [6].

Healthcare faces a nursing shortage that will be different and more complex than the nursing shortages that have occurred in the past. Excluding men from entering the profession of nursing has been recognized as an important factor in the development of the nursing shortage. Many nursing leaders are beginning to understand that the key to eliminate the nursing shortage is to recruit more men into the profession, and if men entered the profession at the same rate as women today, there would be no nursing shortage, and the resulting gender balance in the profession would change perceptions of society in nursing [7].

Materials and Methods

A descriptive design was used to achieve the objectives of the present study. This study was conducted at the Faculty of Nursing, Zagazig University. A convenience sample of the male nursing students was obtained from the second, third and fourth academic years (n=277).

Tool of data collection:

A questionnaire sheet containing three parts was used for data collection as follows:

Part I: Personal characteristics.

Part II: Inventory of Male Friendliness in Nursing Programs-Short (IMFNPS) was developed by [8], to measure the educational and practical barriers facing the male nursing students during the baccalaureate nursing program and contained 15 items subdivided into four domains.

Part III: Facilitators for Men during Nursing Education was developed by [9] to measure the male nursing students' educational and practical facilitators during the baccalaureate nursing program and contained 35 items categorized under six domains.

Results

Table (1) indicates that, the most common barriers facing the male nursing students were that they were nervous that women might accuse them of sexual inappropriateness when they touched their bodies, the nursing program did not include men's historical contributions in the nursing profession, during obstetric rotation, different limitations placed on them compared to their female classmates, and they felt they had to prove themselves in nursing because people expect nurses to be female and most of the faculty members referred to the nurses as she (93.5%, 93.5%, 92.8%, 90.6%, & 89.2%, respectively).

As illustrated from Diagram (1), the most common barriers facing the male nursing students were related to the students themselves followed by the practice in the hospital (73.16% & 56.19%, respectively).

Table (2) indicates that, the most common male nursing students' facilitators during the baccalaureate nursing program were they had one or two supportive male friends in the faculty, they kept social relationships separated from professional relationships, they felt respected by most patients, patients tend to give them positive feedback, there were other male nursing students during the practice in the hospital, they had been assigned to provide nursing care to male and female patients, and they had been assigned to provide care to patients with different diagnosis (77.3%, 76.1%, 75.8%, 72.2%, 71.5%, 70.4%, & 70.4%, respectively).

As portrayed in Diagram (2), the most common male nursing students' facilitators during the baccalaureate nursing program were facilitators related to the family & friends followed by the students themselves (67.9%, & 64.3%, respectively).

Table 1. The educational and practical barriers facing the male nursing students during the baccalaureate nursing program (n=277)

| Barriers | N | % |
|--|-----|------|
| I- Barriers related to the faculty members | | |
| In the nursing program, male and female students were treated more differently by the faculty members | 79 | 28.5 |
| Most of the faculty members referred to the nurse as "she". | 247 | 89.2 |
| The faculty members used disparaging remarks against male nursing students | 180 | 65.0 |
| II- Barriers related to the training in the hospital | | |
| During obstetrics rotation, I had different limitations placed on me compared to my female classmates | 257 | 92.8 |
| I was provided opportunities to work with male professional nurses during the training in the hospital | 220 | 79.4 |
| I felt welcomed by most female professional nurses during the training in the hospital | 115 | 41.5 |
| III- Barriers related to the nursing program | | |
| The nursing program included men's historical contributions in the nursing profession | 259 | 93.5 |
| The nursing program actively works to attract male students to the faculty | 168 | 60.6 |
| The nursing program included content on men's health issues | 189 | 68.2 |
| The nursing program discussed how to overcome communication differences to ensure good therapeutic and working relationships | 103 | 37.2 |
| The nursing program encouraged me to strive for leadership roles | 132 | 47.7 |
| The nursing program prepared me well to work with female nurses | 167 | 60.3 |
| IV- Barriers related to the students themselves | | |
| I was nervous that a woman might accuse me of sexual inappropriateness when I touched her body | 259 | 93.5 |
| I felt I had to prove myself in the nursing because people expect nurses to be female | 251 | 90.6 |
| My gender was a barrier in developing relationships with some of faculty members | 164 | 59.2 |

Table 2. The male nursing students' educational and practical facilitators during the baccalaureate nursing program (n=277)

| Items | N | % |
|---|-----|------|
| I. Facilitators related to faculty members | | |
| Some of faculty members were men | 193 | 69.7 |
| The faculty members were supportive of male nursing students | 105 | 38 |
| There were one or more faculty members I felt comfortable going to for advice | 97 | 35 |
| The faculty members were helpful when I became ill or had an emergency | 79 | 28.5 |
| II. Facilitators related to the practice in hospitals | | |
| I felt respected by most patients during the practice in hospitals | 210 | 75.8 |
| One patient praised the quality of nursing care he received from male nurses | 138 | 49.8 |
| I have been assigned to provide nursing care to male and female patients during the practice in hospitals | 195 | 70.4 |
| I have been assigned to provide care to patients with different diagnosis during the practice in hospitals | 195 | 70.4 |
| There are other male students in the practice in hospitals | 198 | 71.5 |
| Male professional nurses help me in how to maintain my hobby in the nursing profession during the practice in hospitals | 111 | 40.1 |
| Patients tend to give positive feedback during the practice in hospitals | 200 | 72.2 |
| III. Facilitators related to faculty | | |
| There were opportunities in the faculty to participate in a group supporting men in nursing | 47 | 17.5 |
| The faculty taught me gender-specific communication strategies to promote good working relationships | 174 | 62.8 |
| The faculty taught me how to touch patients respectfully when intimate care was needed | 97 | 35 |
| The faculty fosters a sense of belonging among male students | 101 | 36.5 |
| The faculty was helpful when I became ill or had an emergency | 191 | 69.4 |
| The faculty shows interest in me | 71 | 25.6 |
| I had one or two supportive male friends in the faculty | 214 | 77.3 |
| The faculty taught me that caring may be expressed differently by males and females | 129 | 46.6 |
| IV. Facilitators related to nursing program | | |
| The nursing program includes men's historical contributions in the nursing profession | 18 | 6.5 |
| The nursing program actively works to attract male students to faculty | 109 | 39.3 |
| V. Facilitators related to the students' themselves | | |
| I developed caring relationships with some patients. | 58 | 21.3 |
| I Keep social relationships separate from professional relationships | 211 | 76.1 |
| I feel comfortable while interacting with females most of the time | 38 | 13.7 |
| I have a strong vision or goal to be a nurse | 90 | 32.5 |
| Nursing seems to me more than just a job | 74 | 26.7 |
| I think completing a nursing program is a way to achieve my long-term goals | 78 | 28.1 |
| I plan to get a post-graduate degree to strengthen my career in nursing | 28 | 10.1 |
| I have prior experience in providing health care to patients before joining faculty | 80 | 28.9 |
| I think my life as a nurse will be interesting | 48 | 17.3 |
| I am confident in my decision to become a nurse | 142 | 51.2 |
| I feel comfortable during interaction with males most of the time | 190 | 68.6 |
| VI. Facilitators related to the family & friends | | |
| There are members of my family or friends in the nursing profession | 185 | 66.8 |
| I receive positive feedback about the choice of profession from the people who are important to me | 191 | 69.4 |

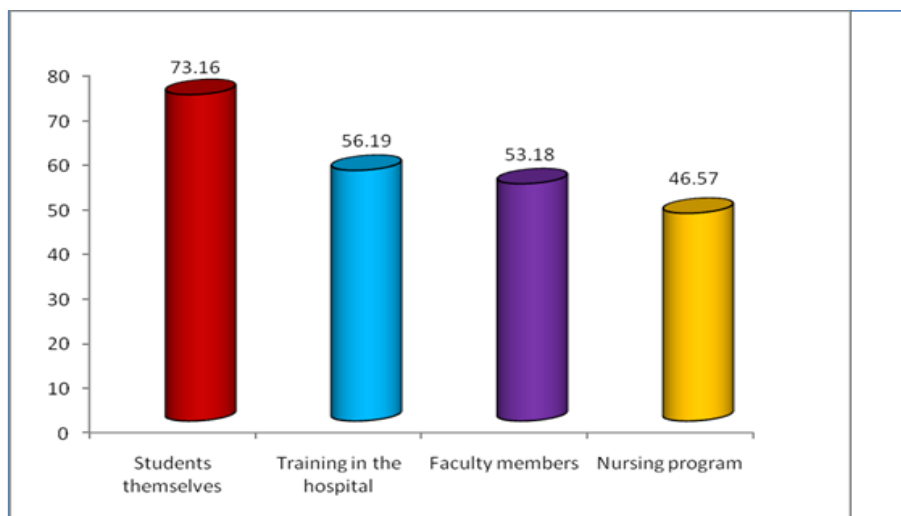


Diagram 1. The educational and practical barriers facing the male nursing students' during the baccalaureate nursing program (n= 277).

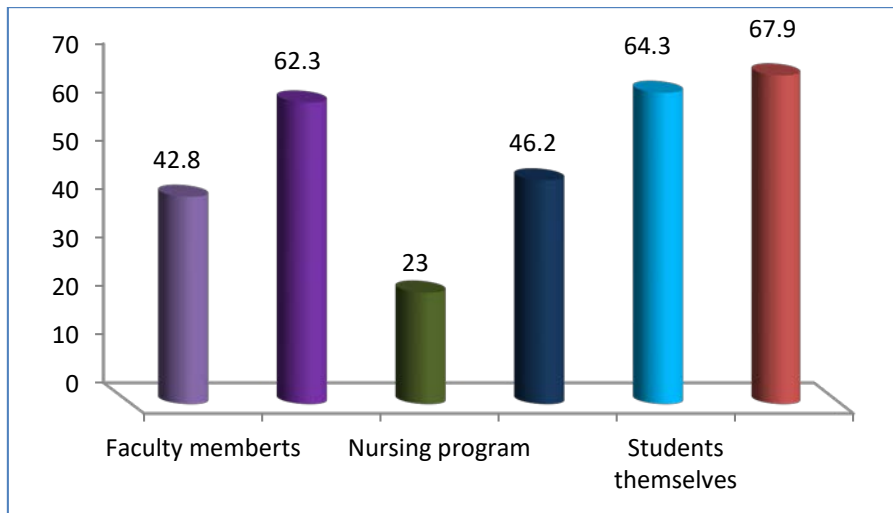


Diagram 2. Male nursing students' educational and practical facilitators during baccalaureate nursing program (n= 277).

Discussion and Conclusion

The educational and practical barriers facing the male nursing students during the baccalaureate nursing program

The current study findings showed that the most common barriers facing the male nursing students were related to the students themselves followed by the training in the hospital, then the faculty members, and the last barriers were related to the nursing program. This might be due to the feminization image of nursing, lack of male role models in the nursing profession, and fearing of their acceptance by female patients and nurses that could act as barriers for them and affect their studying. This finding is contradicted with [10], who conducted a study in the United States of America to examine gender based barriers in the nursing faculty, and found that the most common barriers facing the male nursing students were related to the nursing program followed by the faculty members.

The most common barrier related to the students themselves was that they were nervous that female patients might accuse them of sexual inappropriateness when they touched their bodies. This might be due to the patients' perception that nurses are always females, the social stigma surrounding the act of touching by opposite gender, and the religion of our society. These findings are in the same way of a study carried out by [10], who declared that the most common barrier related to the students themselves was that they were nervous that a woman might accuse them of sexual inappropriateness when they touched her body.

The second barriers facing the male nursing students were related to the training in the hospital, and the highest percentage of them mentioned that during the obstetrics rotation, they had different limitations placed on them compared to their female classmates. This might be due to the reason that the hospital administration considers male nursing students during obstetrics rotation as visitors and not having the right to deal with patients due to their gender. As well, patients in this area refused to deal with male nursing students during their training. This finding is in the same way of studies carried out by [11], in the USA, who assessed male nursing students' barriers and facilitators in learning success and [12], who conducted a study in the USA to assess experiences of male nursing students in nursing education program, and found that the most common barrier related to the training in the hospital was in obstetrics and gynecological area, where they had different limitations placed on them compared to their female classmates.

The third barriers facing the male nursing students were related to the faculty members, and the highest percentage of them strongly agreed that the faculty members referred to the nurses as she. This might be due to the greater number of female than male nursing students, most of the faculty members are female, and the consistent pronouns of she in nursing textbooks. This finding agreed with a previous study carried out in USA by [13], to determine the perception of male nursing students regarding the gender based educational barriers, and found that the majority of the faculty members referred to the nurses as she. As well, [14], who conducted a study in the USA to examine male nursing students' barriers found that the most common barrier related to the faculty members was that the faculty members referred to the nurses as she.

The last barriers facing the male nursing students were related to the nursing program, and the highest percentage of them strongly agreed that the nursing program didn't include men's historical contributions in the nursing profession. This might be due to the misconception that nursing is always a female profession, and males have no contributions in it, or due to the absence of male nurse role models in nursing, and all famous nurses in the history were female. The previous finding is congruent with [15], who conducted a study in Ireland to examine the barriers facing the male nursing students in the nursing program, and found that the most common barrier was that the nursing program didn't include men's historical contributions in the nursing profession.

The findings of the present study indicated that the most common barriers facing the male nursing students in the second academic year were related to the faculty members. This might be due to the reason that the second year students feel pressured as a result of the difference between secondary school and academic education which require them more efforts to establish a good communication with their faculty members, and the lack of male faculty members in the second academic year. While, the most common barriers facing the male nursing students in the third academic year were related to the training in the hospital and the students themselves. This might be due to the reason that third year male nursing students trained in the hospitals

where they contact more with others such as staff nurses, physicians and patients that result in role strain and exposure to stressful situations especially in the obstetric area in which male nursing students are treated differently from their female classmates. Moreover, the most common barriers facing the male nursing students in the fourth academic year were related to the nursing program. This might be due to the studying of many nursing courses that required them to learn many skills whether in labs, clinical areas as well as homework assignments that required them searching in the internet and books, as well, they attend theoretical parts in the form of lectures in the class to prepare them to be professional nurses in the future and provide high quality care for the patients that may place them under pressure.

The previous study findings are similar to that of [16], who conducted a study in the USA to compare the perceptions of male and female students about perceived gender-based learning barriers for male nursing students, and found that barriers related to the faculty members were the most common among male nursing students in the second academic year, barriers related to the practice in the hospital were the most common in the third academic year, and barriers related to the nursing program were the most common in the fourth academic year.

The educational and practical facilitators as reported by the male nursing students during the baccalaureate nursing program

The current study findings showed that the most common male nursing students' facilitators were related to the family and friends followed by the students themselves, the training in the hospital, the faculty, the faculty members and the last facilitators were related to the nursing program. This might be due to the reason that the acceptance of male nursing students by their family and friends decreases their stress, and provide them with positive energy to achieve their goals especially when they are perceived as enthusiastic about the career choice, also the psychologically strongest support is that received from the important people to the person. This finding disagreed with a study carried out in the USA by [9], to identify the facilitators for men during nursing education, and found that the most common facilitators were that related to the faculty followed by the training in the hospital.

The most common facilitators for the male nursing students were related to the family and friends, and the highest percentage of them mentioned that they received positive feedback about the choice of the profession from the people who are important to them. This might be due to increasing the feeling of satisfaction, and clarification of the advantages of nursing which include job security and career opportunities. This result is consistent with the findings of a study which identified policies and practices that facilitate the entry of men into nursing by [17], and found that the most common facilitator related to the family & friends was receiving a positive feedback about the choice of the profession. On the opposite way, this finding disagreed with [18], who conducted a study in the USA to explore the reasons for selecting nursing as a career by male students, and found that the most common facilitator related to the family & friends was that there are members of students' family or friends in the nursing profession.

The second facilitators were related to the students themselves, and the highest percentage of them indicated that they kept social relationships separated from professional relationships. This might be due to the reason that they are afraid of losing their friends if they quarrel with them especially where they represent a small number in the faculty that could affect their social relationships. In the contrary, other studies carried out in the USA by [19], described the factors that led to success of the male students enrolled in a nursing program, and [20], who conducted a study in the USA to describe the real barriers to men seeking a career in nursing and found that the most common facilitators related to the students themselves was that they have prior experience in providing health care to patients before joining the faculty. Also, [21] conducted a study in Australia to investigate the factors influencing both the academic and clinical practice performance of undergraduate male nursing students, and found that the most common facilitators related to the students themselves was that they were confident in their decision to become a nurse.

The third facilitators were related to the training in the hospital, and the highest percentage of the male nursing students indicated that they felt respected by some patients, and these patients tended to give them positive feedbacks during their practice in the hospital. This feeling of respect and the positive feedback from patients may have increased male nursing students' self-esteem and self-confidence that could have improved their motivation. This finding is contradicting with that of [22], who found in a study which examined the lived experiences of the male nursing students, that the most common facilitator related to the practice in the hospital was that there were other male students in the practical work.

The fourth facilitators were related to the faculty, and the highest percentage of the male nursing students indicated that they had one or two supportive male friends in the faculty. This might be due to the reason that the participation in different activities with the same gender may decrease the feeling of loneliness. This finding is congruent with that of [23], who carried out a study in the USA to explore the learning environment for male nursing students, and found that the most common facilitator related to the faculty was the presence of other male students in the faculty.

The fifth facilitators were related to the faculty members, and the highest percentage of the male nursing students indicated that some of the faculty members were men. This might be due to the reason that male nursing students prefer the interaction with the same gender, and male faculty members represent role models for them in nursing. This finding is congruent with a study carried out by [24], in New York which investigated the barriers and facilitators, and predicted the successful completion of male students in nursing program, and found that the most common facilitator was that some of the faculty members were men.

The findings of the present study indicated that the most common facilitators for the male nursing students in the second academic year were related to the training in the hospital. This might be due to the reason that it is the first time for most of them entering the hospital and dealing with patients with a different diagnosis that increases their experience, and made them passionate to learn more and more. While, the most common facilitators in the third academic year were related to the family and friends. This might be due to the cooperation and the support that they could receive from the family and friends to overcome obstacles and stress they faced in the faculty and the practice in the hospital especially during maternal and new born clinical areas. Moreover, the most common facilitators in the fourth academic year were related to the faculty members. This might be due to the establishment of good relations with a greater number of the faculty members, or because most of male faculty members teach in the fourth academic year. It can be concluded that, the most common barriers facing the male

nursing students during the baccalaureate nursing program were related to the students themselves followed by the training in the hospital and the last barriers were related to the nursing program. As well, the most common male nursing students' facilitators during the baccalaureate nursing program were related to the family & friends followed by the students themselves, then the training in the hospitals and the last facilitators were related to the nursing program. Research must continue to explore gender bias in nursing program and the implications of this bias on attracting, recruitment and retention of men in the nursing profession.

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