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A Comparative Study of Male and Female Nursing in Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

*Pakistan is one of the countries around the world that is creating job opportunities for the health sector instead of a weak economy. The government is creating more facilities for the health sector. The government is increasing the health budget to patch up health-related issues. However, there is also a need to enhance the nursing staff to care for the patients and facilitate them as best as it is possible. In Pakistan, the nursing profession has many types of problems related to their salaries, their shortage of vacancies, and other religious, cultural, and ethical issues. However, the government is trying to facilitate the nursing profession and overcome all the health-related issues. Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) is the main body to controls the nursing profession in Pakistan. PNC is a regulating body that frames the rules and regulations for nursing institutions in Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Healthcare Opportunities; Nursing Challenges; Government Initiatives; Health Budget Increase; Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC)

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Cite Us



## Title

### A Comparative Study of Male and Female Nursing in Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities

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## Abstract

*Pakistan is one of the countries around the world that is creating job opportunities for the health sector instead of a weak economy. The government is creating more facilities for the health sector. The government is increasing the health budget to patch up health-related issues. However, there is also a need to enhance the nursing staff to care for the patients and facilitate them as best as it is possible. In Pakistan, the nursing profession has many types of problems related to their salaries, their shortage of vacancies, and other religious, cultural, and ethical issues. However, the government is trying to facilitate the nursing profession and overcome all the health-related issues. Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) is the main body to controls the nursing profession in Pakistan. PNC is a regulating body that frames the rules and regulations for nursing institutions in Pakistan.*

#### Keywords:

[Healthcare Opportunities;](#)  
[Nursing Challenges;](#)  
[Government Initiatives;](#)  
[Health Budget Increase;](#)  
[Pakistan Nursing Council \(PNC\)](#)

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## Introduction

The nursing profession is said to be primary work or efforts done by a health professional to assist a sick person to make the health recover to the best form according to the best knowledge and expertise Ali & Baig, (2018).

The nursing profession is an important field in the medical life. The nursing staff provides the basic medical aids to the patients. They built a strong link between the patients and medical specialist.

i.e. the physicians or the surgeons. The nursing profession has a special place in developing countries



like Pakistan due to the financial crisis and medical staff. The nursing profession in Pakistan has had an important place over the last two decades and has performed its duties according to the basic health care necessities. The nursing program in Pakistan changed its dimension from a diploma to a degree program in past years. Now Pakistan is offering Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.ScN)

program to make valuable nursing teaching and education. In Pakistan, PNC is a regulatory body of nursing education. This institution was laid in 1973 and provides the license and registers the new institution related to the nursing program (Anwar & Awan, 2021). In Pakistan, especially Agha Khan University initiated post-RN B. Sc program related to nursing education in 1988 for a period of 2 years and a diploma of nurses for the period of 4 years of the B.ScN program for fresh candidates in the year of 1997 (Asif & Jameel, 2023). In Pakistan, both male and female nurses have a variety of difficulties in their field related to ethical issues morality and economic crisis. Low and minimum aid packages also harm the new candidates to enroll in the nursing program. In the rural areas of Pakistan, these problems also show their intensity and more difficulties (Aziz & Khan, 2023).

### Literature Review

Historically the profession of nursing is a yield of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has a lot of benefits to the health sector of any country. There are many rules and regulations framed for the nursing profession to facilitate it in the better footstep. The ethical foundations' fundamental beliefs, culture, and societal norms are some of the key motivations behind the rules and regulations for the nursing profession. The philosophical foundations of ethics are much important for this profession (Bano & Malik, 2024). By female nursing, it is an important issue of ethical consideration in society. Ethical educators must know the true meaning of ethical codes related to the nursing profession. The

parameters related to the nursing profession should be realized on all the ethical codes of the health profession and do not base on the societal norms of the society (Fatima & Ahmed, 2024). To overcome the issues of nursing it is need to empower this institution. The leadership of nurses should be aware hardships and oppression related to nursing. The empowerment of nursing can impact positive behavior overall in the nursing institution (Fooladi,

2008). Many significant issues which are faced by nurses include objectivity navigating criticism upholding integrity addressing biases and ensuring confidentiality. These issues are created by the low-level knowledge bases societies and persons (Hussain & Parveen, 2022).

### Research Methodology Study Design

In this research, a qualitative descriptive study design is adopted by the researcher. In a sample of purposive sampling, twenty nurses of THQ hospital Darya Khan are selected for interview and five male nurses from the Mayo hospital Lahore are also selected for the interview purpose.

### Data Collection

Data is collected through primary and secondary research tools. A secondary data is collected from the journals articles and books from the health department. A primary data is also collected from the purposive sampling technique among the twenty five male and female nurses in the form of open ended questionnaire.

### Data Analysis Technique

The data is analyzed by the thematic analysis technique of qualitative research design. In which the researcher coded all the possible issues of nursing profession presented by the Pakistani society.

**Thematic Analysis Tables**

**Table 1**

*What Are The Key Challenges You Have Faced In Your Nursing Career, And Do You Think These Challenges Differ Based On Gender In Pakistan?*

Themes	Description	Example Quotes from Respondents
Gender Stereotypes & Social Stigma	Also, male nurses are disapproved of socially while female nurses are restricted by traditional gender roles.	<i>"My family was not sure I should work night shifts as 'a Man,' and then people look at me like they don't know why I chose nursing as a man." / "They wonder why I chose nursing as a man, and that's why people think it's for women."</i>
Workplace Discrimination	In a female-dominated field, male nurses struggle with little acceptance and female nurses have fewer leadership opportunities.	<i>"This is me as a nurse, a male nurse who is sometimes assigned tasks anyway to do patient care. Even as years in experience, I see male nurses being promoted for reasons faster."</i>
Safety & Harassment Concerns	Hardly there is anything that affects female nurses but while male nurses are stereotyped as aggressive, there is a lot to complain about by female nurses—harassment, and unsafe working conditions are among the primary reasons.	<i>"Now, 'reporting it doesn't always help': patients, as well as staff, think harassing ones is a big hospital problem." Male nurses are less compassionate."</i>
Low Salaries & Financial Challenges	Due to low salaries, many nurses do not mind working abroad with or without the gender angle.	<i>"There is no matching salary and the workload forcing most to think abroad."</i>
Workload & Staff Shortages	Male nurses also experience long hours and a deficient number of staff leading to high stress and burnout.	<i>Sometimes ... I have to take care of more patients than I should because of staff shortages."</i>
Limited Career Growth & Education Opportunities	It is difficult for male nurses to have access to professional training and career advancement but males have a bit more mobility.	<i>"Specialized programs are very few and most nurses stay in the same position for years."</i>

**Description**

The nursing profession in Pakistan is a difficult task due to many factors that influence gender. Traditionally speaking, nursing has always been a female-dominated occupation, and it is a much less intimidating line of work even for the toughest, most macho male right. However, they are unable to be accepted in society as many would ask, why did they decide on this career? Despite that, the progression of the female nurse within their overall profession is

inhibited by such issues as family pressure and constraints towards the work of night shifts. For instance, workplace discrimination is another serious problem male nurses may be excluded from certain duties and female nurses are less likely to get promoted or leadership. Female nurses in the hospital environment are handled tough stressed and, by and large, harassed. However, male nurses can have empathy or the capability to care face bias that arouses doubt in their sense of empathy and being a capable nurse.

**Table 2**

*How Do Societal Perceptions And Cultural Norms Impact Male And Female Nurses In Terms Of Career Growth, Workplace Environment, And Job Satisfaction?*

Themes 2	Descriptions	Examples of Quotes of Different Respondents
Gender Stereotypes in the Nursing Field	Society is traditionally resistant to male nurses and restricts the career opportunities for male nursing as a traditionally female profession.	My question is why I did not decide to be a doctor than a nurse.” As a female nurse, my career choice was acceptable, but my male colleagues struggle with social approval.”
Limited Career Advancement for Women	In many cultures, specifically, women are expected to be more obedient to family responsibilities over professional development to leadership positions.	"Despite the experience, women are promoted faster than women in our hospital." / "Although only a few women in our hospital become discouraged, they don't specialize."
Harassment and Safety Concerns for Women	For female nurses, this is often workplace harassment and unsafe conditions, which makes it nearly impossible to work comfortably.	“Since we often work late shifts and many of us feel unsafe working late shifts because of harassment worries, reporting harassment doesn’t always result in action, which discourages us from speaking up.”
Male Nurses Facing Social Stigma	Male nurses are often subjected to social stigma as they are simply considered less competent or more compassionate than their female counterparts in the field of patient care.	“Patients may reject some male nurses as they perceive being in the care of a male nurse is less skilled / expertise than with a female nurse.” / “Often male nurses are assigned to administrative work jobs and not patient care work jobs.”
Cultural Restrictions on Work Conditions	Female nurses as they cannot work for example, at night shifts or in rural areas due to cultural restrictions on	"Every time I ask my family to let me work night shifts, they won't do it.' / 'There are no

Themes 2	Descriptions	Examples of Quotes of Different Respondents
	work conditions.	workplaces that I can hold with female nurses not being allowed to attend to male patients.'
Workload and Burnout	Both male and female nurses experience excessive workloads due to staff shortages, which cause a high amount of stress and job dissatisfaction.	"We should be handling fewer patients than we do because there isn't a sufficient number of nurses to deal with them." / "The workload is overwhelming, but our wages aren't commensurate with the hours we put in."
Job Satisfaction and Migration	Many nurses feel the need to move abroad for better working conditions and financial stability.	I plan to go overseas where working as a nurse is they respect me more." / "A lot of my colleagues have left because of more money and professional growth."

**Description**

For nursing males and females in Pakistan, society and cultural norms are responsible to some extent for what they perceive and exist to do about their career growth, job satisfaction, and working environment in Pakistan. Male nurses are usually stigmatized by social stigma but not accepted in the way society entertains in healthcare institutions. In fact, many male nurses are subjected to skepticism in choosing this career path to the extent up to the point they are assigned administrative posts as opposed to patient care posts. On the other hand, female nurses also go through cultural depression that either discourages further career advancement or they are not given opportunities to further advance their career as leaders and are forced to adhere to the work and family balance. It also depends on the impact on the workplace environment that has an effect on the same based on gender biases or safety reasons. These women find hospitals at an uncomfortable and unsafe

work environment where the female nurses are harassed. This is why a lot of people are discouraged from working night shifts or in rural areas for family concerns and societal norms. However, there is little professional growth among male nurses due to discrimination in patient care between male nurses and due to some patients and families' preference for female nurses based on the fact that she is more comfortable with them as a medical assistant, leading to low job satisfaction not only in female nurses but also in male nurses. Excessive workload, burnout, and staff shortages make even nurses migrate to more comfy and better opportunities abroad in some cases because burnout is literally one percent and paid less than doctors. Policy reforms requiring the safeguarding of equal access and support of nurses across Pakistan that reflects our societal and cultural barriers is the need of the hour, so as to establish a supporting gender inclusive placement policy and gender awareness campaigns.

**Table 3**

*What Changes or Improvements Do You Think Are Necessary to Create Equal Opportunities for Both Male and Female Nurses in Pakistan's Healthcare System?*

Themes-3	Descriptions	Examples of Quotes of Different Respondents
Eliminating Gender Stereotypes	Changing societal perceptions that nursing is a gender-specific, nature of work profession.	"Giving men the opportunity to become nurses is important for improving the nursing

Themes-3	Descriptions	Examples of Quotes of Different Respondents
		shortage.” / “Nursing is a profession for both men and women.”
Equal Career Advancement Opportunities	Transparent promotion policies that guarantee equal leadership roles and a professional way forward for both sexes.	"Women stay in the same jobs for years and get passed over for promotion by men." / "Women do not have equal opportunities."
Addressing Workplace Harassment and Safety	Policy and legal impediments to developing strict policies to prevent harassment and to create a safe working environment for female nurses.	“The problem with harassment is it’s one that is very serious, that needs very serious action.” / “There should be more security for female nurses on night shift.”
Fair Workload Distribution	To address staff shortage and fair distribution of duties irrespective of gender.	“That’s why female nurses usually carry too much patient care load while male nurses do administrative things; we would need more hiring to balance the work for everyone.”
Improved Salary Structures	To maintain and increase the salaries of skilled nurses in Pakistan.	"Why the hell are we paying little wages to nurses when many want to leave to earn more — leaving the healthcare system weakened?" / “They’ll improve job satisfaction and keep nurses, reducing migration.”
Better Educational and Training Opportunities	Ensuring equal access for male and female nurses in specialized training as well as access to higher education.	“Nurses should be introduced to more scholarships and training so that they can specialize.” / “Men and women should be provided equal opportunity for gaining higher education in nursing.”
Encouraging Male Nurses in Patient Care	Removes diversion, and gender barriers that restrict male nurses to non-clinical positions.	“As some patients refuse to be treated by male nurses, we have a limited role in hospitals.” / “We should be allowed to work under all departments as female nurses do.”

### Description

To have equal opportunities for male and female nurses in Pakistan's healthcare system, many changes and improvements are to be made. This will also ensure that nursing can be a well-respected, gender-neutral profession by eliminating gender stereotypes in mass awareness campaigns. Having a transparent

promotion policy will promote equality for advancement to leadership roles through merit and not gender biases, whereby both men and women can have access to leadership roles. Above all, it is important to address workplace harassment and safety because such concerns pertain specifically to female nurses, who experience harassment and unsafe working conditions. Particularly, as night shifts are

heavy, this could be done with strict policies, legal protections, and security measures. However, in addition, there should be a fair workload distribution as tasks shouldn't be taken up by gender (male and female nurses should not have gender-assigned tasks and the parties shouldn't work equally in patient care). The second important improvement that must be undertaken is to improve salary structures and financial incentives to deter nurses from leaving Pakistan for rich lands abroad for lucrative opportunities and attract them inside Pakistan. Meanwhile, male as well as female nurses will be given scholarships and specific programs that will provide them with continued education and climbing the career up the career ladder. Finally, male nurses must be broken from their biases when tending to patients as society still has its norms in place that do not allow them to work. In effect, introducing these measures will make Pakistan's healthcare system more inclusive towards all nurses and also improve the quality of patient care.

### Research Findings of Primary Data

Here are the key findings based on the challenges faced by the nursing profession in Pakistan due to gender disparities:

- **Social Stigma for Male Nurses** – Male nurses struggle with societal acceptance as nursing is traditionally seen as a female-dominated profession. They often face stereotypes and questioning of their career choices.
- **Cultural Restrictions for Female Nurses** – Women in nursing encounter family pressures and limitations, such as restrictions on working night shifts, which can hinder their career advancement.
- **Workplace Discrimination** – Male nurses may be excluded from specific nursing duties, while female nurses face fewer opportunities for leadership roles and promotions.
- **Harassment and Safety Concerns** – Female nurses are disproportionately affected by workplace harassment, making hospital environments stressful and unsafe.

- **Bias in Professional Roles** – Male nurses often face biases that challenge their caregiving abilities and empathy, while female nurses encounter barriers to professional growth.
- Nursing is traditionally seen as a female-dominated profession, leading to social stigma for male nurses.
- Male nurses struggle with acceptance in both society and healthcare institutions.
- Skepticism about their career choice often results in their restriction to administrative roles rather than direct patient care.
- Female nurses face limitations in career advancement due to societal norms.
- They have fewer opportunities for leadership roles and must balance work with family responsibilities.
- Family restrictions often discourage them from working night shifts or in rural areas.

### Discussion

#### Challenges of Male and Female Nursing

The main theme in the nursing profession is the segregation of the nursing profession. Many people consider that the nursing profession is mostly related to female nursing and it is not related to male nursing Iqbal, S., & Ali, S. (2020). In the sense of treatment, many people prefer to be treated by female nurses. In Muslim countries, this situation is most intensive. The culture and the religious scholars guide the patient to be treated by the same gender in the possible situation i.e. the male patient should be treated by the male nurse and the female patient also be treated by the female nurse. In the sociological perspective, there are two main classes of society. The patriarchal and matriarchal societies, the patriarchal society believe that women are created only for the needs of men and its better for women to stay at home and raise their children. In this situation, it is difficult for women to struggle for their profession and get knowledge from outside the home (Javed & Khan, 2014)..If the male and female nurses work together in the same institution then it is very difficult for them to save their special identity (Khan & Rasul, 2016). By doing

in the same institution both male and female nurses have a lot of problems with patients and also from conservative societies Malik, S., & Qureshi, S. (2020). The difficulties of female nurses are also discussed by a female nurse in that sense (Naseem & Munir, 2021).

“My female friend's brother does not consider nurses to be good professionals— neither male nor female nurses (Naz & Gul, 2013). His point of view about nursing professionals is no more positive. I wish he would marry a nurse so he could understand their situations and how the judgment of societies is purely based on cultural stigmas” (Qasim & Rehman, 2024).

The inappropriate portrayals of media also showed the negative aspects of nursing. In that sense media showed that female nursing provides pleasure to the doctors in their sexualized Gauze.

The Buresh, Golden and Bell: Raza and Ahmed (2023) said that the worldwide shortage of nurses is also due to this phenomenon i. e the negative perspective of media towards the nurses. The misperception of the nursing profession also discourages the nursing profession. A nurse having the experience of twelve years of service summarized this situation in her own words (Shah & Khan, 2022).

“I remember a drama serial called “Nurse” that was aired during my childhood. The image of nurses was that they took money from patients’ relatives for the sake of their poor families. The story of this drama was about kidnapping a newborn by a nurse for the sake of money”

### Opportunities for Male and Female Nursing

There are many opportunities for both male and female nurses around the world. In the medical fields the nursing staff is the basic and fundamental staff outside the doctors and medical specialist. Now in Pakistan the government and ministry of health are giving more and more opportunities to the citizen to adopt the profession. Now in the developing countries, like Pakistan the health department is paying a stipend to the candidates of B. Sc N degree in the duration of their study.

In a united states there are nursing homes in

which the nurses are working to deal with the adults to care them in the best terms. In Pakistan the average life of citizen is around 60 years and there is need to develop the nursing homes for them to care outside their homes. In the nursing homes there are three main levels of nurse which are responsible to care the adults.

The nursing profession is also recognized by some accreditation bodies to legalize their jobs. These bodies are the National League for Nursing and Collegiate Nursing Education (Tariq & Ali, 2023). In Pakistan, nursing council is trying to coordinate the worldwide accreditation bodies. The world accreditation bodies provide the basic facilities and aid to the aligned institutions (Ullah & Ali, 2021). Pakistan is a developing country and has a mass burden on the national economy

.The government is trying to resize the many types of institutions and trying to drag them into the lower numbers. Pakistan instead of resizing the institutions, the health department is creating various types of jobs around the country. In this sense, there is a great opportunity for the youngsters to choose the health profession as a young nurse. In many countries of the world there are also programs for doctors and post-doctor programs for nurses. In Columbia 1924 the government initiated e

program for PhD programs for nurses to equip them on the best footstep. In Pakistan, the KPK is giving the opportunities of PhD in nursing. The post-doctorate fellowship is a new trend in the field of nursing to advance the nursing profession around the world. There are also nursing research centers for nurses in the world to solve the issues and problems of the nursing profession around the world. Outside of these facilities in many countries there are also inter-professional collaboration centers for the nursing to collaborate their work with other health professionals. Various disciplines of health share their experience with each other to make the nursing profession fruitful (Yousaf, & Ahmed, 2020).

Pakistan is a developing country and has a weak economic condition but instead of bad conditions is giving more opportunities to the health department. The government is creating more positions for

doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff. The provincials and the federal government of Pakistan are providing especially more opportunities to the nursing staff. The government has opened many institutions and departments to enroll young male and female nurses. In these institutions the nurses are facilitated with education, stipend, and practical and other necessary experiences related to their fields. The nursing profession has many types of problems as well as opportunities. There is a need for time to be aware of the problems related to the health profession and solve them in their true meaning.

## **Conclusion**

The context that Pakistan as a country experienced and had in the presence of Pakistan as a nation has its effects on the nursing profession in terms that it has both challenges and opportunities. Apart from this, gender segregation in nursing is rooted very deeply. Societal acceptance of male nurses is also very difficult since nursing is thought to historically never have been a male-dominated field. Frequently they disbelieve their career choice and are sometimes forced to work in administrative roles instead of direct patient care. At the same time, female nurses suffer from cultural and familial restraints that limit promotion and prevent them from working night shifts in rural areas, and workplace discrimination magnifies these challenges since male nurses are excluded from specific nursing duties while female nurses have fewer leadership and promotional opportunities. Workplace harassment and safety also add to a stressful and insecure environment in which women are less inclined to play an active role in their profession. These misrepresentations of nurses in the press also lend to a wider stigma in broad society, deterring people from pursuing the career.

In nursing. However, in spite of all these challenges, the nursing profession in Pakistan is also moving in the path of progress and opportunities. Nursing has been gaining in importance and nursing institutions and healthcare institutions are beginning to realize the role of nursing and are giving scholarships stipends and professional development programs to those who wish to have a career in

nursing. We are setting up accredited nursing programs and research centers that aim to advance the practice as well as international co-working. New job opportunities in healthcare such as specialized nursing roles, and elderly care are opening up making nursing a more attractive career.

In order to make the most of the opportunities as well as overcome existing barriers in nursing, gender-inclusive policies need to be implemented, workplace safety improved, and a healthy image of nursing built through proper awareness campaigns. To have a sustainable and respected nursing workforce in Pakistan, nursing education will be strengthened, financial incentives will be increased, and the work environment will be made inclusive. The male and female nurses can address the societal misconceptions and improve the working conditions, for them to contribute effectively to the country's healthcare system. Societal perceptions and cultural norms have a determinative role in the shaping of the nursing profession in Pakistan leading to complicated issues for both male and female nurses. Male nurses also face attempts with social stigma, skepticism, and the lack of role in direct patient care in a field that has historically been the domain of women. At the other end of workplace discrimination, nurses have had family pressures, restrictions on leadership opportunities, and limited working night shifts or in rural areas which make it difficult for them to grow professionally. There may be exclusion of male nurses from certain duties because of their biases in charge of caregiving and female nurses may face barriers to achievement of leadership positions. Besides, female nurses have also higher chances of workplace harassment from fellow men, making them stressed and unsafe working conditions. Such reforms, however, will not be sufficient to address such challenges, as gender-inclusive policies, workplace safety measures, as well as awareness campaigns are needed to change societal perceptions regarding actual circumstances. This will go a long way in making the nursing profession in Pakistan more equitable and progressive by providing equal opportunities, creating a supportive work environment, and challenging cultural stigmas. If paid and career advancement for male and female nurses

are provided with fair treatment, then the healthcare system becomes more inclusive and efficient, with more patient care and professional satisfaction.

### **Recommendations for the Policy Makers Related to the Health Sector**

1. The government should provide the basic facilities to the nursing staff.
2. The government and health sector should ensure the necessary training and skills of staff for the betterment of patients.
3. The nursing staff should provide the proper salary to patch up their expenses.
4. In the policy making the nursing leadership should also be incorporated to get the better fruits.
5. The government should also increase the number of seats for the nursing staff around the country to fulfill the shortage of nursing staff.

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## **APPENDIX-A**

### **Interview Protocol Questions**

- What are the key challenges you have faced in your nursing career, and do you think these challenges differ based on gender in Pakistan?
  - How do societal perceptions and cultural norms impact male and female nurses in terms of career growth, workplace environment, and job satisfaction?
  - What changes or improvements do you think are necessary to create equal opportunities for both male and female nurses in Pakistan's healthcare system?
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