Men in Female Dominated Professions  
(A Case Study of Nursing Profession)

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Abstract
This study examined the difficulties and structural barriers faced by men who choose professions which are assumed to be dominated by women for instance, Nursing Profession. Also, this study explored and described the factors involved in the pursuance of nursing profession by men, attitude and mindset of people that affects job performance of male nurses was also examined. To fully understand the different stereotyped views of society regarding this issue, it was considered crucial to explore the viewpoints of male nurses. Researcher was specifically interested in exploring personal experiences of men in nursing profession. For the philosophical foundation of study, the researcher took into consideration the nature and core objectives of the study and thus, the study was conducted qualitatively. The process to study the phenomenon is also subjective so the researcher used case study as a Research Design. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants from different hospitals of Lahore. Interview guide was developed for extracting in depth information from the participants. The data is analyzed by thematic analysis because the researcher had generated themes and analyzed the data by considering the codes generated by the literature review and research conducted in field.

INTRODUCTION
Nursing is a profession which is normally considered to be associated with women. Since it is presumed that women are more caring than men, which makes this profession a female dominated. Associating a profession with one gender exclusively discourages other gender to join it. Men’s image is often portrayed as non-caring, this image may influence experiences, perceptions, and satisfaction levels of patients about the care provided by male nurses. According to a research and concept analysis conducted by
Drahosova and Jarosova, “caring in nursing includes two perspectives: nurses’ perspectives and patients’ perspectives. They explained that nurses view caring as an attitude of supporting and protecting patients by focusing on their perceived needs and intervening accordingly, whereas patients view caring as emotional and physical support provided by an individual nurse”. (Drahosova L, Jarosova D.2016). Caring is also considered as a context-specific interpersonal process attributed to effective nursing practice and friendly nurse–patient relationships resulting in physical and emotional well-being of both patients and nurses. Concept of care has different meanings for patients and for nurses themselves. If we talk in the context of Pakistan, patients view caring as the friendliness and kind attitude of nurses which helps develop nurse-patient relationship. From the views of patients, the nurses who offer all kind of support, be it emotional, physical support, are considered caring and empathetic. It has been said that since Florence Nightingale introduced the profession, so it is stereotyped as a female dominated profession with stereotypical feminine traits of nurturing in comparison with masculine traits of power, authority and aggression. worldwide. There is also evidence of men providing care to the wounded before the Crimean war. But, after the war, the profession continued to be dominated by females. Inclusion of men in nursing profession has improved over the past years but overall, still the ratio is very low. The reason for their lower number might be the lack of support and acceptance of men entering a female dominated profession. It is observed that women are being accepted to move into previously male dominated professions, such as medicine, law, and business, because they are being provided the support to join these professions. Literature shows that gender bias determined by parents in relation to career choices made by their children is also important to note. A clear difference is observed in attitudes towards men in non-traditional professions compared with women in non-traditional professions: “My daughter, the physician” makes parents feel more comfortable than “My son the nurse” (McMurry, 2011). Now the question arises that, what drives men to enter nursing profession? It is assumed that men choose nursing because of the benefits associated with it for instance, attractive salary package, more chances of promotion and job security. There are always two sides of the coin, on one hand men face many problems and are discouraged to join female dominated professions because this profession does not complement masculine traits. On the other hand, men being a minority in nursing profession enjoy certain advantages over women, because men have abilities of high-tech specialties in nursing, such as intensive care, operation abilities, and physical strength. Moreover, concept of care lies in the heart of nursing profession and men are supposed to show caring attitudes, as men are socialized not to be very expressive of emotions as compared to women, who openly express emotions and caring behaviors. Historically, caring within the female-dominated profession of nursing has been perceived as a result of social and biological differences that exist between the genders, though, nursing requires both masculine and feminine skills. A nurse may need to be assertive and soft, instrumental and expressive to untangle the meaning of caring within historical patriarchy.
According to World Health Organization: Global Atlas of the Health Workforce, over 60% of WHO Member States state to have less than 40 nursing and midwifery personnel per 10,000 population (about 25% report to have less than 10). In many countries nurses and midwives constitute more than 50% of the national health workforce. Though globally, it is estimated that by 2030, the shortage of nurses and midwives will reduce from the current 9 million to 7.6 million, the shortage in the African and Eastern Mediterranean Regions will actually worsen. International as well as National statistics show the grim picture of men in nursing profession. Analysis of the Current Population Survey (CPS) data shows that the total number of male RNs continues to increase, reaching over 350,000 FTEs in 2016. Although they have increased in total numbers, the representation of male FTE RNs in the workforce has remained steady at 11% over the past 5 years, indicating that their numbers have been growing proportional to that of the entire RN workforce. (Auerbach, D., Buerhaus, P., & Staiger, D (2017)

There are a number of studies done, stating barriers for men to enter nursing profession for instance, female dominance, lack of policies for male recruitment, stereotypes and gay images of male nurses. (Chauhan, 2013). In Pakistan, lack of opportunities for male nurses in public sector hospitals and gender discrimination is main obstruction to male recruitment in nursing. Pakistan Nursing Council has enforced male–female quotas in nursing education and job recruitment. The female-to male ratio for student enrollment in Bachelor of Nursing programs is 90:10, in post registered Bachelor of Nursing programs is 50:50, and in diploma programs is 100:0 (Strong, 2006; Coleman, 2008). As mentioned earlier, the proportion and recruitment of male nurses in the specialty areas such as critical care has grown at a faster rate at both national and international level. At present men are being accepted as nurses in many developed and developing countries but there is a need to change the attitudes towards male nurses in order to encourage them to join nursing profession. Gender stereotypes need to be abolished because perceiving care as a feminine trait negatively affects the image of male nurses.

**Statement of the Problem:**

Nursing Profession is often associated with females, though it is considered a feminized profession still public image is a major concern for the nursing profession, worldwide. Low socio-economic status of nurses, lack of prestige of the profession, and the very nature of nurse's work creates a clash in society's attitude towards the nursing profession. Nursing literature has revealed stereotypical images of nurses around the world. Researcher considered studying self-perception of nurses about their image, important because stereotypical image affects their public image and their practice. One of the fundamental reasons for scarcity of men in the nursing profession is the stigma attached to the profession as it is perceived as an option for the less privileged. The deficiency of nurses, though, is not just a national problem as the downward trend is affecting medical care overall. In this presumed feminine profession, critics often...
portray men’s image as un-masculine, homosexual and/or the inability of showing or behaving in a feminine, nurturing way. This research is conducted to explore the perceptions of male nurses about the nursing profession. Besides, to explore the reasons for pursuing nursing as a career, and to identify the barriers and factors in male nurses’ practice.

**Research Question**

What are the reasons that account for the pursuance of nursing profession by men?  
What are the challenges faced by them in this presumed feminine profession?

**Objectives of the study**

1) To understand experiences of male nurses from their own perspective  
2) to identify the reasons for the pursuance of nursing profession by men  
2) To explore the obstacles faced by men in nursing profession

**Significance of the Study:**

The research study provides us information on the job satisfaction level of male nurses and the attitudes and behaviors that affect their career. Finding opinion of male nurses about their job helps you to make policies by focusing their specific needs and reservations. It is very unfortunate that nursing profession is stigmatized and is only linked with one gender i.e. Females. Also, the educators refer to nurses using the word “she” which further exclude the men from this profession. Prior researches on the history of nursing profession, mainly focused on female’s history in nursing and a little is written on the history of men in nursing This paper explores the impact of attitude and people’s behaviors towards male nurses that may adversely affect their job performance. Past researches, especially in Pakistan, do not provide a clear opinion of male nurses about their own profession so this research will explore in depth their experiences and will prove a salubrious addition to the existing researches on this particular topic.

**Literature Review:**

Literature shows that male nurses are discouraged to join predominantly female profession because of the stereotypes and gender biases that they face in profession. These stereotypes surround men with a number of challenges who wish to join this profession. Furthermore, media also plays its role in reinforcing and strengthening such stereotypes regarding nursing profession through films and other sources. (Dahlborg-Lyckhage, 2009; McLaughlin et al., 2010; Stanley, 2008, 2012). One of the major examples of this outlook was shown in Swedish nurses recruitment campaign: ‘We
need more women. We need more people. We also need men’ (Dahlborg Lyckhage, 2009). Along with society’s portrayal of the profession, the nursing curriculum is full of strong feminine connotations.

The existence of these stereotypes is observed in some studies with most respondents agreeing that nursing is an appropriate profession for females because it is not a very masculine career. (Bartfay et al., 2010; Stanley et al., 2014). Researches carried out in developing countries show similar attitudes surrounding the unsuitability of nursing as a career for males prevail in other cultures (Abushaikha, Mahadeen, AbdelKader, & Nabolsi, 2014; I. Y. Cheng, Meei-Ling; Wang et al., 2011). The narrative that nursing profession has a feminine nature has made society assume that men who are nurse are different from other men and are, therefore, stigmatized accordingly (Meadus & Twomey, 2007). Stanley et al. (2014) discovered different views from the respondents who said that apart from being marginalized or oppressed and bullying by colleagues, they felt that they have been treated differently because of gender. According to While O’Lynn (2013) anti-male response in the nursing profession exists because of the influence of patriarchal society. But he believes that such discrimination is not universal, and it is weakening as more stress is given to teamwork and diversity in the workplace. People believe that while nursing may be a suitable career choice for a female, but it may not be the case for males. Parents wish their sons to enter traditional, socially acceptable and prestigious professions, especially, fathers are more likely to discourage nursing as a career for their sons Coleman (2013).

Apart from gender stereotypes, Nursing education also needs to be re-examined in order to create friendly and welcoming environment for male nurses as well. Different barriers were identified to nursing education for men by Cook-Kreig (2011):

- social isolation,
- refusal to address individual learning needs, and
- reluctance of other nurses to acknowledge men as a vital part of the nursing profession.

According to Brown, (2009): "They assert that nursing schools do not address the differences in communication styles of men and women, and do not prepare them to work primarily with women".

Concentration of females in nursing profession has given birth to a belief that nursing is an option for less privileged as it offers low pay, lack of autonomy of the profession, and low status. Cottingham (2014) has proposed solution to deal with this problem. According to him, recruitment of men in nursing could increase the recognition of nursing as a profession, as well as to aid in improving wage and working conditions by their ability to bargain competitively and in the perception of their having greater coalition strategies as compared to women. In short, men in nursing are less likely to adapt to poor salaries and working conditions without campaigning for more and better (Cottingham, 2014).
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Descriptive, qualitative design is chosen for this study to gain information about the phenomenon as it naturally occurs. Researcher used Case study as research design for in-depth study of the phenomenon because researcher tried to discover the underlying meanings of events and activities. Researcher adopted a person-centered and holistic perspective to develop an understanding of male nurse experiences. Through “case study” method, researcher generated in depth accounts that presents a close picture of the participants’ reality. Male nurses were focused on within their social and cultural context, not just on specific clinical conditions of professional and educational tasks. Researcher used purposive sampling technique for this study. In qualitative research, achieving saturation is considered an important feature so the researcher stopped interviewing when 13-14 male nurses were interviewed. The age range was 23-53. Participants were recruited on their willingness to participate in the research. Their anonymity and confidentiality were not violated. The researcher used detailed interview as a tool of data collection to gather maximum information on experiences, beliefs and motivations of the participants. The researcher developed an interview guide, based on information extracted from literature review.

Limitations of the Study:

Although the research has reached its aims, there are some unavoidable limitations. First, the researcher used subjective method i.e case study, to explore in-depth the experiences and challenges faced by men in nursing profession. Though, subjective nature of case study gives weight to only one side of the argument. Also, because of the time limit, this research was conducted only on a small size of population to get rich, in-depth understanding of a phenomenon thus the findings cannot be generalized. Apart from this, researcher also recognizes that the research can also be considered to have cultural preconceived notions, that maybe hard to decipher for the readers of another culture. The research is carried out by a researcher of the same culture as that of the narratives, and consequently a possibility of cultural prejudice may exist.

Data Analysis:

Data was analyzed through “Thematic analysis”, a technique in which the researcher classifies themes or patterns in the data to reflect the participants’ experiences (Munhall, 1994). Interviews were transcribed first. Data collected from the interviews and diaries was handled using the manual method of color coding where the researcher worked through the text marking in color those words, ideas or nuances which appeared to be connected to the research topic, hence themes and sub-themes emerged. (Roberts and Taylor, 1998). Researcher made sure that no significant statement has been overlooked by comparing interview transcript and diaries to previous narratives.
FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH:

Figure 1 below shows the themes and sub-themes derived from the data.

Thematic Scheme

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Fig 1: Thematic scheme of the Findings

1) Entry Dynamics

Nursing Profession is a noble profession that offers career growth to the individuals. Participants had different views regarding the pursuance of nursing profession because in Pakistan this profession is assumed to be for females specifically. There were participants who had active choice to enter this profession while some had passive choice. When participants were asked about the factors that were involved in the pursuance of nursing profession, they had different responses depending on the actual reasons. Some of the nurses said that it was their personal choice, and some said that their family influenced them to join nursing profession.

One participant, P4 said:

“I had great interest in Medical Studies since childhood. Always I wished to be a doctor but unfortunately, I couldn’t score well. My sister is a nurse in and she motivated me to pursue career in nursing,“

2) Career Preference

Researcher wanted to explore whether it’s the extrinsic (attractive salary, career development) or intrinsic rewards (job satisfaction or self fulfilment) that motivate men to choose nursing profession. The responses were very interesting as some participants showed the wish to move to managerial positions while others wanted job satisfaction
and this job gave them the opportunity to help people. Diversity was observed in participant’s responses as some people said that men are low in number, therefore, they enjoy more advantages than females. Many Participants straight forwardly mentioned that there are many benefits to nursing that have nothing to do with patient care. There’s the flexible scheduling, the many varied career paths and specialties, not to mention the job security. As one participant, working at Bahria Hospital, Lahore, mentioned:

“I first applied to nursing college because I liked the flexibility involved in the profession and the job availability in my area. But now that I have been in nursing classes, I realize how much I love nursing in addition to all the practical benefits it provides. I am excited about my career choice and couldn’t imagine myself doing anything else!”

3) Lack of awareness of the profession

When the participants were asked about the reaction of people on the choice of their profession, they had different answers. Some people fortunately received very positive response from people while some were ridiculed for choosing a profession that they call a feminine one.

A nursing instructor, from Pakistan Liver and kidney institute shared his experience as:

“People’ reaction was very discouraging…. people were astonished that how could a male be nurse. I used to get embarrassed whenever bombarded with such questions. In my early semesters, I wanted to quit this degree and do something else…”

Some participants mentioned that most people who were aware of this profession appreciated their choice and those who did not know that males are also in nursing profession, when they came to know they also appreciated it because they confuse it with “doctors”.

A participant from a tribal area, mentioned:

“I received mixed responses from people, as I am from an underdeveloped region of Pakistan where people are not that much educated. People of my village appreciate my choice because there are no medical facilities in our village and I help them whenever needed.”

4) Role Strain

Interviews explored that role strain is more likely to occur when occupational stereotypes conflict with one’s gender identity. Participants mentioned that maintaining their masculine traits and fulfilling job demand at the same time is a challenge for them. It often leads to great distress because there are certain expectations of the job which contradict with the family/peer expectation from male nurses to maintain masculinity. Thus, tension between the subject’s masculine and work identity, the response of their peers, family to their non-traditional career preference was evident from the interviews. In this perspective, discomfort, embarrassment, maintaining their masculine identity, were mutual themes stated by men from across the sample.
A Nurse expressed his views as:

“...I suppose these are misjudgments and misconceptions. . . male nurses being judged as less manly. Attendants of the patient often ridicule us because they think that we are not capable enough that's why we chose this feminine profession”

One male nurse expressed his feelings of self-perception:

“sometimes I feel embarrassed.... Because somehow I believe it is a women's job ...”

Men figured out several strategies to help to reduce the chances of being negatively stereotyped and this helped them to minimize potential role stress and tackle the discomfort with public image of nursing job. It was done so by manipulating the meanings surrounding the non-traditional role. However, discomfort in maintaining the balance between gender identity and job demand somehow appeared to be a mutual element for men in nursing profession.

5) Persisting Stereotypes

In Pakistani society, nursing profession is still stereotyped despite of the awareness and education. Conventional way of looking at professions is still here. Almost every participant stated that they are mocked for choosing this profession even if it was their personal choice. It is observed that stereotypes are very profound in nature that men change their occupational preferences just because of the fear of being labelled as “less capable” or “sissy”.

One participant disclosed:

“... The biggest challenge is that we cannot even introduce ourselves in front of people because of the taboo attached with the profession. So, we have to be very bold while introducing ourselves that we are male nurses.”

6) Professional Challenges

The challenge which was almost faced by all the participants who were interviewed is non-availability of government jobs. In Punjab, there is no quota for male nurse in public sector hospitals. Participants shared their experience that how lack of government jobs affect their career choice. One participant mentioned:

“the utmost challenge is that we do not get government jobs in Punjab, nursing profession is of great worth in private sector especially in international level hospitals. We are less valued in Government sector.”

Another participant stated that:

“........ We are low in number and especially in Punjab, we are not provided with government jobs so male nurses must strive hard to excel in their career because of less opportunities.”
Many participants think that professional jealousy and leg pulling at workplace is also a challenge. Leg pulling, when done with right intent is an excellent thing for the workplace. It's fun and therefore motivating. It makes work a happier place to be and even helps build team spirit. Done in the wrong way it can be a type of bullying, which is a very bad thing indeed. One participant mentioned shared his detailed experience:

“....., if I talk about our profession, there’s jealousy factor involved in it. If some male is more successful, or if he is going to get promotion, females blame him for harassment just to ruin the reputation. Not every harassment charge is true but females are listened to”

7) Partisanship/ Gender Bias

Men are discriminated in nursing profession but now as their number is increasing, prejudice against men is also somewhat declining. At the present, every profession needs diversity to meet the International standards of gender equality. But in Pakistan where male nurses are a minority, gender-bias still exists. Due to the conservative view and lack of knowledge of public regarding nursing profession, men are still hesitant to choose nursing as a career. People do not have information about this profession because our government sector is not supporting and accommodating male nurses. Our great majority of public goes to government hospitals, there they only get to see female nurses, so they have made a mindset that only females are in this profession. One participant stated:

“.... Men also hesitate to join this profession because of “feminine profession” tag.”

Participants stated that they often face favoritism issues because females favor females in nursing profession as they are more in number, so they are really advantaged. A participant said:

“.... I have observed that if the manager/ director is female, she would prefer female staff. It’s the mindset of females, that they go for female team leaders, no matter how competent a male is, females are preferred just based on personal interests and liking.”

8) Female Domination in Nursing

According to point of views of participants, female dominate this profession because of state sponsorship. There are more nursing colleges for females. The male-female quota imposed by PNC hardly helps to better the situation either. The male to female ratio seen in a BSN classroom is 10:90. But then again, hospitals and other institutions where nurses are required need both genders. It is still not culturally tolerable to have male nurses, patients prefer females over male nurses and a gender balance in the nursing workforce is not right for the Pakistani population. More females are joining this profession because they are given government jobs and are given more incentives. In this profession, managerial posts are given to females that is why this is a female dominated profession.
A participant stated:

“we need to have more nursing colleges for men and stipends should also be given to male nurses because their fees are very high and not everyone can afford it.”

Another participant mentioned:

“If we talk about Punjab, there are less training institutes for male nurses and secondly Government of Punjab do not provide them with jobs. If there are government jobs made available to the male nurses, more people will be encouraged to join this profession”

9) Self-Perception of Male nurses

There are many factors that influence the way nursing is perceived by professionals, by public, and by the people themselves who choose nursing as a career. According to the views of most participants, nursing brings multiple images and ideas to mind. When we hear the word “nurse”, needles, nursing caps and white uniform comes in our mind but at the same time, for others, these images show gentleness, skills, kindness and intelligence. Participants claimed that up to recent years, nurses’ work was not recognized and was poorly understood and even now, many people still have no clear idea about what nursing actually does because of lack of awareness. In Pakistan, nurses are given more medical roles at clinics and health centers which reinforces the image that nurses work in the absence of doctors, else, a person who give injections and other routine activities. This results in concealing the autonomy and independence of nursing profession. This, ultimately, becomes another reason for the dissatisfaction of the profession by nurses.

A participant shared his experience as:

“………. People think that doctors are the only one, who are well educated, and nurses just follow the orders of doctors.”

Another participant stated:

“People often think that male nurses do not have any well educational background and they’re not capable of doing anything”

DISCUSSION

This research has practical implications for the nursing profession, for policy makers who should take measures to make nursing profession more encouraging for every gender to join. It is evident from the findings of the research that men often face more challenges than females because they are in minority. So, nursing education should be made friendly and gender specific needs should be focused on. Participants stated that lack of Government jobs in Punjab deter men from entering nursing profession. It is a distress to know that ratio of male nurses in government hospitals is nearly equals to zero. Even in Nursing colleges, they are not provided with stipends or scholarships while females get all the benefits. It is important to address gender bias because having a gender diversity in nursing classroom brings a variety of unique contributions to
nursing (Cudé & Winfrey, 2007). If men tend to stay marginalized in Nursing, it will cost the profession with loss of capable candidates and status of nursing will further diminish as well as a lot of potential will go unutilized. Conservative views of gender specific careers were clearly evident in this research to the extent that some mature male nurses themselves believed that men have no place at all in nursing – this was a place for women only. Traditional discourse on care needs to be revised so that men are welcomed to add value in profession by bringing their unique contribution to it. In Punjab particularly, there is hardly any government nursing institute for men. Now a days, world needs labor in health sector more than ever. Nursing education needs to be made more welcoming to tackle the recruitment challenges being faced by Nursing Profession. In Punjab, ‘

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY:

From the findings of this study, following recommendations are proposed to address the under-representation of men in nursing in Pakistan.

➢ **Address the key male audience**
Government and educational authorities need to take their role serious in shaping the future of youngsters. Seminars should be conducted for career counselling in colleagues during the 12th grade, because that’s the time when male start to think about choosing a particular field. Seminars should have every subject specialist in the panel to tell the importance of every field, and extensive opportunities offered by these professions, including the nursing. There is a lack of information and acknowledgement among the wider public of nursing as a positive career choice for all. Misconceptions about any profession needs to be addressed and nursing should be promoted as a diverse, challenging and highly skilled career.

➢ **Raise awareness among wider public about nursing.**
The major reason drawn from findings for lack of inclusion of men in nursing is the stigma attached to the profession. Attitude of public regarding certain profession is so unwelcoming that they think male nurses are not capable individuals and just act as doctors’ assistants. Therefore, it is deemed crucial to address the public and raise awareness among them so that nursing profession also becomes a diversified one. Media, instead of reinforcing such stereotypes should show the achievements of men in nursing should be highlighted so that male nurses could find role models in nursing profession.

➢ **Avoid reinforcing stereotypes.**
Children at a very young age become aware of their gender roles because of different socializing institutes. Boys at young age do not consider nursing as a career because it is considered a less-manly job. In promoting men in nursing, existing gender stereotypes must be demolished. Children should be taught in gender-neutral way. Though, attention must be given as not to involuntarily reinforce these stereotypes by promoting overtly masculine images. Electronic and print media should be used effectively to elucidate the misconceptions about the nursing profession.
Positive Role of Pakistan Nursing Council:
The Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) should take strong and legitimate steps to create and maintain the educational standards across the nursing educational programmes, from diploma in general nursing to master’s degree in sciences of nursing (MScN) or PhD in Nursing, throughout the country. Equal opportunities should be given to all the genders to actively participate in the profession. No one should be stopped building a career in nursing just because of gender. It should take notice of gender imbalance in nursing profession, break the gender-stereotypes and take revolutionary steps to accommodate males in the nursing services.

CONCLUSION:
Considering the critical shortage affecting the nursing profession worldwide, it is wise to take steps to make nursing institutes welcoming for men as well and encourage more men to join nursing profession. This study highlights that male nurses encounter different challenges during their educational and job experience. In order to achieve goal of holding male students, then teaching staff must be sensitized regarding the necessity and importance of diversity in this presumed feminine profession. Enhancing awareness will confirm that the field and educational context provides maximum learning experiences from a theoretical and clinical perspective. A positive public image of nurses is important for professional satisfaction, their practice as well as improved health outcomes. As it is evident from the findings of the research that men and women face unique challenges solely based on their gender. These challenges and gender specific problems need to be addressed and taken notice of. Nursing students, either male or female, should be provided with opportunity to discuss their problems. This research also concluded that male nurses believed it was an amazing opportunity to open up and tell their challenges, share their experiences. Policy makers can also use interviewing as a medium to listen to the reservations of male nurses to make nursing profession more welcoming.

REFERENCES


