Perception of Male Nursing Student Support

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Background

The Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) recommendation to the nursing profession in 2011 was to increase diversity to match the patient population. The report states “stereotypes, academic acceptance, and role support are challenges for men entering the nursing profession” (IOM, 2011, p.23).

The importance of increasing the number of men in the nursing workforce is further supported by the existing nursing shortage which is projected to continue.

Perception is an individual viewpoint and including faculty and female students/alumni may provide additional insight as compared to limiting the study to faculty and male students/alumni. Given that perception can be a powerful driving force for change (McDonald, 2012), comparing and aligning perceptions between groups can neutralize barriers and enhance male nursing student support to enhance recruitment and maximize retention.

The purpose of our study was to explore perceptions of male student support among faculty, female, and male students/alumni in nursing.

Methods

This was a mixed method (qualitative and quantitative), descriptive, correlational study. The surveys were developed based on: The Inventory of Male Friendliness in Nursing Programs (IMFNP) (O’Lynn, 2004), and the University and Facilitators for Men during Nursing Education ID (Clark-Ott, 2015).

Two surveys were distributed via the Qualtrics survey platform to four nursing programs in southwest Missouri. One survey to senior nursing students, one-year alumni, and one survey to faculty.

Survey question categories included recruitment and retention items. Retention was further categorized into three sub-sections: 1) faculty availability 2) classroom opportunities/education 3) clinical opportunities/education.

The instrument was a five-point Likert-type scale. Participants chose a response from five options: 1) Did not experience this at all, 2) Very little, 3) Somewhat, 4) Great amount (almost all the time), 5) Almost always.

Optional open-text question: "Please list specific examples from your perspective that would guide faculty understanding of environment and transition to practice for males" included in all survey instruments.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Female Faculty</th>
<th>Male Students/alumni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Mean 1.62</td>
<td>Mean 1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Mean 3.66</td>
<td>Mean 3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Opportunities</td>
<td>Mean 2.86</td>
<td>Mean 2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Opportunities</td>
<td>Mean 3.71</td>
<td>Mean 4.40</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A statistical difference between faculty and students/alumni was found in the areas of recruitment and clinical opportunities/education.

Faculty do not feel that recruitment of men is adequate or that they would strongly encourage men to seek nursing as a career choice, but male and female student responses demonstrate confidence in their choice to become a nurse.

Faculty perceive that male students are less supported in the areas of assistance from clinical staff, the variety of simulation roles, and acceptance by patients.

Open-text responses indicate that all groups feel that more clinical opportunities should be available for male students particularly in women’s health. Men’s health is considered a specialty, yet it is not an opportunity experienced by students in clinicals.

Mal, male faculty members were excluded from the primary analyses due to inadequate sample size (n=3).

Male faculty responses were imperative to include therefore, follow up analyses using a series of independent sample t-tests (n=6; three male faculty and three randomly selected female faculty from total sample size) showed no significant differences in the four subgroups between the male and female faculty.

Discussion

Nursing has not yet broken the gender barrier as has been demonstrated in other professions with a baccalaureate enrollment percentage of men at 12.9%. (AACN, 2019).

Considering the perception of both faculty and students/alumni is important for schools of nursing to strengthen the overall recruitment and support of males in the program and to assure equal opportunities for male students. Until perceptions align, a change in practice will be slow or be viewed as unnecessary.

The need to address perception issues to raise awareness of unconscious bias is highlighted by one faculty comment, “I don’t know – this survey brought new issues to my attention!”. This statement also indicates that lack of support to male nursing students may not be primarily overt actions, but rather uninformated omissions.

Faculty have the advantage of a long-term view of the program over several cohorts of students and may have a clearer understanding of clinical opportunities and the barriers that exist for men.

To address the shortage and increase the number of men in nursing, we must recruit and retain male students, and to retain them, we must support them.

Particpants

Faculty, senior nursing students/alumni, and one-year alumni from four Missouri nursing programs. Twenty-two faculty and 94 students/alumni participated in the survey.

Male Students/alumni (n = 22)
Male faculty (n=3)
Female Faculty (n = 25)
Female Students/alumni (n = 87)

References


Exhaustive list of references utilized available upon request.

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