

## Nursing Future Nurses: Equipping a Gender-Responsive Workforce

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### ***Abstract***

*This paper explores the critical importance of gender inclusivity in nursing education and its implications for creating a gender-responsive nursing workforce. It discusses nursing as a traditionally female-dominated profession and the barriers to inclusivity, including cultural perceptions, gender stereotypes, and institutional limitations. The paper outlines strategies to enhance gender inclusivity, such as curriculum and policy changes, promoting awareness and changing cultural perceptions, institutional support and mentorship programs, and creating a gender-inclusive academic environment. Through the implementation of these strategies, nursing programs can nurture a supportive atmosphere that encourages students of all genders to thrive, thereby promoting nursing practice that is likewise gender-responsive. It is concluded that the promotion of gender inclusivity in nursing education enriches the learning experience and leads to improved patient care and health outcomes, as diversity better equips the nursing workforce in meeting the varied needs of the population it serves.*

Keywords: gender, inclusivity, nursing education

### **Introduction**

Gender responsiveness is crucial in making nursing education stronger. It refers to a policy or program which fulfills two basic criteria: gender norms, roles, and relations are considered, and measures are taken to actively reduce the harmful effects of gender norms, roles, and relations - including gender inequality (GPE & UNGEI, 2017). As nursing education programs welcome people of all genders, they build a more diverse and skilled workforce

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that is ready to care for everyone. This responsiveness breaks down old stereotypes and prepares nurses to meet the needs of a diverse world, creating a healthcare system that serves all clients. According to Achrekar, et al. (2024), health systems that are not gender responsive will fail. Following the same principle, nursing education that lacks gender responsiveness is also bound to crash.

With its evolving history, nursing education in the Philippines today is regulated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), as stipulated in Republic Act (RA) 9173, otherwise known as the Philippine Nurses Act of 2002. According to the statute, the learning experiences under the nursing education program shall strictly adhere to specific requirements embodied in the prescribed curriculum as promulgated by the CHED's policies and standards of nursing education.

Nursing holds a vital role in the Filipino healthcare system, serving as the backbone of patient care and contributing significantly to the health and well-being of the population. RA 9173 states that nurses in the Philippines are on the front lines of healthcare, providing nursing care through the utilization of the nursing process, establishing linkages with community resources and coordination with the health team, providing health education to individuals, families, and communities, teaching, guiding, and supervising students in nursing education programs, and undertaking nursing and health human resource development training and research (Section 28).

Additionally, nurses in the Philippines play a significant role in addressing global healthcare needs. Renowned for their exceptional skills, compassionate care, and commitment to serving communities, Filipino nurses have emerged as indispensable assets in healthcare systems worldwide, as they represent a significant portion of the internationally recruited nursing workforce (Valdez, et al., 2024). This global demand is a manifestation of the country's nursing education system known for producing skilled, adaptable, and culturally competent professionals who excel in both domestic and international healthcare environments.

However, as a female-dominated profession, nursing practice is faced with gender-related concerns, as is the nursing academe. As such, this paper aims to explore strategies to enhance gender inclusivity in nursing education, to help in the equipping of a gender-responsive workforce in the field of nursing.

### **Nursing as a predominantly female-dominated profession**

Nursing has been portrayed as a feminine occupation ever since the appearance of Nightingale nursing training style in the mid-nineteenth century which favored women over men to become nurses (Barrett-Landau and Henle, 2014, as cited in Mao, Cheong, Van, and Tam, 2024). Until this time, according to Wu et al. (2023), it was firmly believed that nursing

was a job for women, and male nurses were gradually marginalized, after which women dominated the nursing profession, and it became more difficult for men to become nurses, influenced by gender role stereotypes.

With the history of nursing having been led by mostly women, it is not surprising to note that the profession is dominated by the female sex. This may be attributed to the fact that across cultures, women have typically been stereotyped as more warm, communal, kind, and nurturing, among others (Bye, Solianik, Five, and Again, 2022). Since nursing is a caring profession, it is expected that women, presumably seen with such stereotype, indeed dominate the discipline.

Such dominance is manifested by several practices in nursing education including the traditional capping ceremony during which students (who are traditionally wearing an all-white uniform with an apron) are awarded their caps, signifying their readiness to care for clients in the field. According to Rollins (2024), these traditional nursing caps were symbolic of the dignity of the profession and helped with the identity of professional nurses. With the joining of men in the nursing discipline, however, they were not made to wear caps, although they would be honorees as women are during the significant ceremony.

In terms of gender disparity, Landay & Henle (2014) (as cited by Wong, Goh, and Zhou, 2022) stated that such has long been noted in nursing, being a predominantly female-dominated profession. In fact, the World Health Organization (2020) recorded only 11% of males comprising the nursing workforce worldwide. As such, men in the profession experience gender role conflicts, stereotypes, and challenges in educational and clinical settings (Younas et al., 2019; Zeb et al., 2020). There has also been found a gender stereotype in the distribution of opportunities between male and female nurses despite no difference in the professional practices of all sexes, according to a Tanzanian study (Masibo, Mukoya, & Masika, 2024).

### **Challenges and implications arising from female dominance in nursing**

With the profession being predominantly female-dominated, several setbacks can be observed. These include stereotyping and gender role reinforcement, tokenism, professional stigma, and barriers to inclusive policy development, among others.

The perception of nursing as "women's work" reinforces traditional gender roles, deterring men from entering the profession and leading to misconceptions about their capabilities. A study by Ramjan et al. (2024) found that male nursing students often face harmful stereotypes that question their career choice and masculinity. Moreover, male nurses may experience tokenism, being either hyper-visible or marginalized within their work environments. This can result in increased pressure to perform and feelings of isolation. The

same study highlighted that men in nursing are under-recognized for their competence and over-recognized for their physical strength, leading to role strain. Furthermore, societal stigma can portray male nurses as less masculine, leading to challenges in their professional identity. A systematic review by Ng et al. (2025) identified themes of discrimination faced by male nurses, including stereotypes and labels that question their suitability for the profession. Lastly, the underrepresentation of men in nursing can result in policies that overlook their specific needs. For instance, facilities may lack appropriate changing rooms or fail to address paternity leave adequately, reflecting a gap in inclusive policy development.

Based on studies, some of the implications and risks that may occur if female dominance persists without intervention include sustained gender segregation in the workforce, creation of gendered professional silos, exclusion of men from empathy-based professional identities, entrenchment of a hidden curriculum, and potential erosion of gender equality gains.

According to Ramjan et al. (2024), continued gender imbalance may reinforce occupational segregation, limiting diversity within healthcare teams and perpetuating stereotypes that nursing is unsuitable for men. The same study claims that if caring professions remain feminized, men may be culturally disincentivized from developing emotional intelligence and empathy, skills that are vital in both personal and professional realms. It also states that an uncritical acceptance of female dominance in nursing can replicate patterns of exclusion, undermining efforts toward true equality, which requires balance and mutual respect.

The study of Ng, et al. (2025) claims that a lack of gender diversity can lead to professional silos that may hinder collaboration and the integration of diverse perspectives that are essential for holistic patient care. It also posits that nursing education may perpetuate implicit messages that men are anomalies in the field, reinforcing feelings of exclusion and deterring male enrollment.

With the given setbacks and risks of female dominance in the nursing profession, it is necessary to deconstruct the gendering of nursing and promote it as a profession that is open to all genders.

### **Gender inclusivity**

According to a position paper of the United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures (2024), gender is defined by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Committee as socially constructed identities, attributes, and roles for women and men and society's social and cultural meaning for these biological differences resulting in hierarchical relationships between women and men. The United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2021) (as cited in UNESCO, 2024) states that gendered expectations, whether of oneself or of others, impact the choices people make. They structure people's relationships and have the power to shape what people believe they can and should accomplish.

Inclusion, according to the American Psychological Association (2021), refers to an environment that offers affirmation, celebration, and appreciation of different approaches, styles, perspectives, and experiences, thus allowing all individuals to express their whole selves (and all their identities) and to demonstrate their strengths and capacity.

Therefore, gender inclusivity can be understood as the practice of creating environments where people of all gender identities feel valued, respected, and fully included. It goes beyond avoiding discrimination to actively ensuring that all individuals—regardless of whether they identify as male, female, non-binary, transgender, or other gender identities—have equitable opportunities to participate, contribute, and succeed. Moreover, gender inclusivity involves creating policies, using inclusive language, and fostering behaviors that support diverse gender identities, challenging traditional stereotypes and biases.

In professional settings, gender inclusivity brings important benefits. It creates an environment where people of all genders feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents. By embracing gender inclusivity, enterprises unlock a wealth of diverse ideas, experiences, and insights that fuel creativity, enhance decision-making processes, and ultimately drive their competitive advantage. Businesses that prioritize gender inclusivity and diversity tend to be more innovative, make better decisions, and are more profitable in the long term (United Nations Development Programme, 2024).

In sectors such as healthcare, education, and public service, gender inclusivity is particularly important, as it enables professionals to provide better, more empathetic care and service. When organizations reflect the diversity of the populations they serve, they are better equipped to address the needs of all individuals, fostering trust and positive outcomes. In client-facing roles, an inclusive team is also more adept at handling sensitive situations, as employees bring a broad range of perspectives to understanding and addressing clients' concerns.

Hence, embracing gender inclusivity in the nursing discipline can bring about advantages not only to the professionals, but also to clients. By attracting a more gender-diverse workforce, nursing can become more inclusive and reflect the population it serves (Smith et al., 2020). Inclusive environments promote equal access to leadership roles, career advancement, and fair wages, reducing gender-based discrimination. In addition, a diverse workforce nurtures collaboration, respect, and mutual understanding among colleagues, which lead to a more supportive and productive practice environment. Breaking stereotypes

encourages more individuals of all genders to join and thrive in the profession, addressing workforce shortages. Moreover, gender inclusivity challenges traditional nursing stereotypes, allowing all nurses to define their professional identity based on skills and expertise rather than societal expectations.

For patients and families on the other hand, inclusive practices ensure that care is customized for the diverse needs of patients, respecting their gender identities and cultural background. Nursing, being one of the most trusted healthcare professions, as well as having non-discrimination statements in their codes of ethics, has an imperative to promote equity and meaningfully address health disparities of transgender and gender diverse people (International Council of Nurses, 2021, as cited by Crawford, et al., 2024). As such, gender inclusivity is a crucial element in the delivery of nursing care to patients, as it helps address biases in healthcare delivery, ensuring that all patients receive equal treatment and quality care. inclusivity also enhances nurses' ability to provide culturally sensitive care, which is essential for patients from diverse backgrounds. As trust is the foundation of the nurse-patient relationship (American Nurses Association, 2023), this will allow patients to be more willing to discuss sensitive health issues when they feel respected and included, leading to better diagnoses, treatment adherence, and health outcomes.

### **The role of gender diversity in patient care**

Gender diversity plays a vital role in patient care, significantly enhancing the quality and effectiveness of healthcare services. While such in leadership positions has been correlated with heightened performance, engendering a broader spectrum of perspectives, experiences, and problem-solving approaches, fueling creativity and innovation (Nishii, 2013, as cited in Trinchese, Vainieri, and Cantarelli, 2024), gender diversity may also cause difficulties in reaching a consensus due to different viewpoints and communication styles (Hambrick, Cho, and Chen, 1996, as cited in Trinchese, Vainieri, and Cantarelli, 2024).

Indeed, a diverse healthcare workforce brings together individuals with different perspectives, experiences, and communication styles, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of patient needs. This diversity is particularly important in healthcare, where gender can influence health outcomes, access to services, and patient-provider interactions.

One of the key benefits of gender diversity in patient care is improved communication. Clinician-patient-communication reportedly affects several health care outcomes, with better outcomes in, for example, patient-reported outcomes such as quality of life, therapy adherence and emotional health (Riedl and Scubler, 2017, as cited by von der Warth, Metzner, Korner, and Farin-Glattacker, 2023). As such, patients often feel more comfortable discussing sensitive health issues with providers who they believe understand their experiences and identities. For instance, transgender and non-binary individuals may have specific healthcare



needs that are best addressed by providers who are knowledgeable about their experiences and challenges. When healthcare teams reflect the diversity of the patient population, it promotes an environment of trust and openness, encouraging patients to share critical information that can inform their care.

A gender diversity study highlighted that the lack of gender diversity in the nursing environment might impact patient care, suggesting actions to make nursing a more inclusive profession (McMullan, et al., 2025). This supports the idea that gender-diverse teams are better equipped to recognize and address health disparities that different genders may face. For example, persons of different gender identities may experience certain conditions differently or may have varying levels of access to healthcare resources. As such, having a workforce that includes individuals of all genders allows healthcare organizations to develop more appropriate approaches to care that consider these differences, ultimately leading to more equitable health outcomes.

Collaborative care is also enhanced in gender diversity, Findings of a study by Prosen (2022) suggested that appropriate strategies need to be adopted to ensure gender diversity in nursing teams and prevent gender discrimination. In diverse teams, the blending of different viewpoints encourages innovative problem-solving and holistic approaches to patient care. For example, nurses or physicians of different gender identities may bring different insights into patient interactions, leading to more effective treatment plans. This collaborative atmosphere benefits patients and improves team dynamics, leading to higher job satisfaction among healthcare providers.

### **Importance of equality to gender-responsive education**

Gender equality is defined by the Implementing Rules and Regulations (2011) of RA 9710, also known as the Philippine Magna Carta of Women, as the principle asserting the equality of men and women and their right to enjoy equal conditions realizing their full human potentials to contribute to and benefit from the results of development, and with the State recognizing that all human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights.

Equality can be considered an important element in promoting gender-responsive education. Recognizing that it plays a significant role in promoting gender equality, education ought to help solve the factors bringing about inequalities. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2017) (as cited in UNESCO, 2023) states that by building gender equal education systems that respect diverse needs, abilities, and characteristics and that eliminate all forms of discrimination in the learning environment, education can eliminate gender inequalities and promote inclusion, which promotes the participation and achievement of all learners, with a particular emphasis on those who have been traditionally excluded from educational opportunities.

One of the primary educational benefits of gender inclusivity and responsiveness is the promotion of diverse perspectives. When students of different genders collaborate and share their experiences, they bring varied viewpoints to discussions and projects. This diversity enriches the learning experience, encourages critical thinking, and helps students develop a more nuanced understanding of complex issues. Exposure to different perspectives can foster empathy and respect, essential skills for working in increasingly global and multicultural settings.

In addition to enriching discussions, gender inclusivity and responsiveness can lead to improved academic performance. When students feel respected and valued, regardless of their gender identity, they are more likely to participate actively in class, seek help when needed, and pursue their academic interests with confidence. This heightened engagement can translate into better grades and a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Moreover, promoting gender inclusivity and responsiveness helps students develop important social skills. Collaborative learning environments encourage teamwork and communication, allowing students to work together across gender lines. This collaboration not only builds a sense of community but also prepares students for future professional settings where teamwork and diverse collaboration are essential. Learning to appreciate different perspectives equips students with the interpersonal skills needed in a workforce that increasingly values inclusion.

Gender inclusivity and responsiveness also play a significant role in breaking down stereotypes and challenging traditional gender roles. By promoting equal opportunities and representation in educational settings, institutions can help dispel myths that limit individuals based on their gender. This not only empowers students to pursue their interests without the constraints of societal expectations but also contributes to a culture that values diversity in all its forms. Encouraging students to challenge stereotypes fosters resilience and a sense of agency, empowering them to become advocates for inclusivity in their future careers and communities.

Finally, embracing gender inclusivity and responsiveness prepares students to become successful worldwide. In this now interconnected society, understanding and respecting gender diversity is essential for effective communication and collaboration across cultures. Educational institutions that prioritize inclusivity equip students with the skills and awareness needed to explore diverse workplaces and build inclusive communities.



### **Obstacles in ensuring gender responsiveness in Philippine nursing education**

In an article published by UN Women (2024), Baleda of the Philippine Commission on Women shared that some of the most significant challenges encountered in advancing women's rights include the stereotypical beliefs and cultural practices by some Filipinos on the roles that women play in society, which have hindered and slowed down the progress of gender equality and women's empowerment. She added that such beliefs have relegated women to secondary roles and obstructed the development of their full potential to participate and contribute to development.

Cultural perceptions and gender stereotypes significantly hinder gender responsiveness in Philippine nursing education, shaping the experiences of students and limiting the potential of the nursing workforce (Barzallo, Schnyder, Zanini, and Gemperli, 2024). This view can create barriers for male nursing students, who may feel pressured to conform to societal norms that discourage their participation in a profession traditionally associated with women. As a result, potential male candidates may choose to pursue careers in other fields, thereby perpetuating the cycle of gender homogeneity within nursing.

In educational settings, these cultural perceptions can manifest in various ways. For instance, men in nursing are often perceived as violating masculine norms or deviating from male gender roles and are thus labeled in negative ways, such as incapable, troublemakers, effeminate, homosexual, abnormal, and strange (Wu et al., 2023). Female students, on the other hand, may face pressure to conform to certain expectations about behavior and professionalism that align with traditional gender norms, which can limit their opportunities for leadership and assertiveness.

Additionally, these gender stereotypes can affect the curriculum and teaching methods in nursing education. Programs may inadvertently reinforce traditional gender roles. In the Philippines, as it is worldwide, nursing has traditionally been viewed as a female-dominated profession (Mao, Cheong, Van, and Tam, 2024), which can perpetuate stereotypes that associate nursing primarily with women's roles. These cultural beliefs often lead to the marginalization of male nurses, who may face stigma or discrimination for pursuing a career in a field perceived as "feminine." Such stereotypes can discourage men from entering nursing, thereby limiting diversity within the profession.

Moreover, the prevailing cultural perceptions about gender roles in the Philippines emphasize traditional expectations, where caregiving is often seen as a female responsibility (OECD, 2023, as cited in nurturing aspects of nursing, while neglecting to address the importance of diverse skills and perspectives that both men and women bring to the profession. This lack of representation can further alienate students who do not fit the conventional image of a nurse, reinforcing feelings of exclusion and discouragement.

To overcome these barriers, it is essential for nursing education in the Philippines to actively challenge cultural perceptions and gender stereotypes. This can be achieved through initiatives that promote awareness and education around gender inclusivity, as well as policies that encourage a diverse nursing workforce. In order to create a more supportive environment for students, hence enriching the profession and improving patient care, an inclusive culture that values the contributions of all genders can be encouraged. Addressing these barriers enhances the educational experience for all nursing students and helps build a healthcare workforce that is gender-responsive.

### **Strategies to improve gender responsiveness in nursing education**

Considering the challenges mentioned, improving gender responsiveness in nursing education can help develop a diverse healthcare workforce that is capable of effectively meeting the needs of all patients. To achieve this goal, several strategies can be implemented, focusing on curriculum and policy changes, promoting awareness and changing cultural perceptions, providing institutional support and mentorship programs, and creating a gender-inclusive campus environment.

#### ***Curriculum and policy changes***

Changes in curriculum and policy are essential strategies for improving gender responsiveness in nursing education, as they create a more supportive learning environment for all students. Integrating gender inclusivity into the curriculum and establishing clear policies can challenge stereotypes, promote diversity, and better prepare students to meet the needs of diverse patient populations.

According to Palmen et al. (2020) integrating the gender dimension in education refers to fostering gender knowledge in all areas. It includes measures to mainstream gender issues in higher education curricula to enhance awareness and sensitivity as well as initiatives to foster specific gender programs for researcher training. One of the key components of curriculum change is the incorporation of gender studies and diversity training into nursing programs. This can include courses that address gender issues in healthcare, such as the unique health challenges faced by different genders, the importance of cultural competency, and the role of gender identity in patient care. As nursing programs educate students on these topics they can promote a more profound understanding of the various backgrounds and experiences that influence health and healthcare access. This knowledge enhances students' empathy and communication skills and equips them with the tools necessary to provide inclusive care to all patients.

In addition to curriculum enhancements, policy changes are crucial for creating a responsive educational environment. Nursing schools may develop and implement anti-discrimination policies that explicitly prohibit bias based on gender identity or expression. Such policies set a standard for behavior and create a safe space for all students, ensuring they feel respected and valued within the academic community. This is consistent with the stipulations of CMO No. 1, s. 2015 or Establishing the Policies and Guidelines on Gender and Development in the CHED and Higher Education.

### *Promoting awareness*

The promotion awareness and modification of cultural perceptions are critical strategies for enhancing gender responsiveness in nursing education. Addressing societal attitudes towards gender roles and encouraging an understanding of the importance of diversity in the nursing profession, allows educational institutions to create a more supportive and equitable environment for all students.

One effective approach to promoting awareness is through educational campaigns that highlight the contributions of individuals from diverse gender backgrounds in nursing and healthcare. These campaigns can include workshops, seminars, and guest lectures featuring different nursing role models who share their experiences and insights. Showcasing the achievements of male nurses, transgender nurses, and individuals from various gender identities can challenge traditional stereotypes and demonstrate that nursing is a profession for everyone. This visibility helps to normalize the presence of diverse genders in nursing and encourages students to see the value of inclusivity in their future careers.

Wormley et al. (2021) stated that gender is a cultural identity that confers its own social norms. Changing cultural perceptions also requires engaging with the broader community, including healthcare organizations, policymakers, and the public. Nursing programs can collaborate with local hospitals and community groups to host events focused on gender inclusivity in healthcare, encouraging dialogue and raising awareness about the importance of diversity in nursing. Such collaborations can help shift public perceptions and encourage a more inclusive culture within the healthcare system.

Finally, involving students in advocacy and outreach efforts can empower them to be champions of gender responsiveness within their own communities. CMO No. 9, s. 2013 or the Enhanced Policies and Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services enumerates leadership programs, student publication, student organizations, sports development, volunteerism and peer helper program as examples of student activities in higher education (Section 18). Encouraging student-led initiatives, such as awareness campaigns or support groups, allows students to take ownership of the inclusivity efforts and engage their peers in meaningful conversations about gender diversity. In addition to helping change perceptions, this

initiative can prepare future nurses to advocate for inclusivity and equity in their professional practice.

### *Institutional support and mentorship programs*

Crucial strategies for improving gender responsiveness in nursing education are institutional support and mentorship programs. Facilitating an environment that actively promotes diversity and provides guidance to students of all genders allows educational institutions to create a more equitable and supportive learning experience. These strategies enhance student retention and success and contribute to a more diverse and competent nursing workforce.

Institutional support begins with the commitment of nursing schools to create a culture of inclusivity. This commitment can be demonstrated through clear policies that promote gender equity, such as anti-discrimination policies and equal opportunities for all students. Institutions should also establish resources dedicated to supporting diverse students, including counseling services, safe spaces, and advocacy groups. These resources are vital for creating an environment where students feel comfortable expressing their identities and seeking help when needed.

Mentoring is a popular intervention that is widely endorsed in many walks of life, but particularly in relation to the workplace (House, eal., 2021). With this, mentorship programs play an essential role in providing guidance and support to nursing students as well, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds. Pairing students with mentors who understand their circumstances and experiences can pave the way for institutions to promote a sense of belonging and provide customized guidance. Mentors can offer invaluable insights into exploring the challenges of nursing education, as well as support in professional development and career advancement. These relationships help students build confidence and encourage them to pursue leadership roles within the nursing field.

Another important aspect of institutional support is training faculty and staff to recognize and address gender-related issues in nursing education. Providing professional development on gender inclusivity equips educators with the tools needed to create a more supportive classroom environment. Faculty members who understand the unique challenges faced by diverse students are better able to contribute in the development of an inclusive learning atmosphere that encourages participation from all individuals.

### *Creating a gender-responsive and safe environment*

Creating a gender-responsive environment in the nursing academe that promotes respect, understanding, and acceptance among all students, regardless of their gender identity

is an important strategy for ensuring safety and improving gender responsiveness in nursing education.

One of the laws that should be implemented in the academe is RA 11313, also known as Safe Spaces Act (*Bawal Bastos Law*). It covers all forms of gender-based sexual harassment committed in public spaces, educational or training institutions, workplace, as well as online space (Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), 2021). The law defines gender-based sexual harassment as acts which are committed through any unwanted or uninvited sexual actions or remarks against any person regardless of the motive for committing such action or remarks. These include remarks that are sexist, homophobic, misogynistic, and transphobic. They also include persistent uninvited comments or gestures on a person's appearance, relentless requests for personal details, statement of sexual comments and suggestions, lewd sexual actions, unwanted advances threatening one's sense of personal space and physical safety, persistent telling of sexual jokes and use of sexual names, and stalking, among others.

The PCW states that heads of these institutions are required to disseminate the law, disseminate the law, and develop their own Code of Conduct and establish and/or update the composition of the Committee on Decorum and Investigation (CODI), harmonizing the CODI for their employees and for their students, among others. This CODI has specific requirements that ensure the safety of the stakeholders of the institution.

In addition, salient features of the law, as summarized by the PCW (2021) include restraining orders by the court where appropriate, psychological and counseling services for the victim, exemptions such as breastfeeding in public, and confidentiality to be observed at all times.

Hence, implementing laws, policies and practices that promote inclusivity and safety creates an opportunity for educational institutions to significantly enhance the learning experience and better prepare nursing students to serve diverse patient populations.

## **Conclusion**

Gender responsiveness in Philippine nursing education can greatly improve the quality and equity of healthcare by nurturing a diverse, empathetic, and culturally aware nursing workforce.

First, an inclusive learning environment enhances students' empathy and communication skills, equipping them to address the varied needs of Filipino patients from different backgrounds and identities. This training helps nurses provide respectful, patient-centered care that considers social and cultural differences, ultimately improving patient outcomes.

In addition, promoting gender responsiveness challenges the stereotypes that often label nursing as a female-dominated field. Breaking down these biases allows nursing programs to attract a broader range of students, creating a more diverse workforce with varied skills and perspectives. Supportive policies, inclusive campus environments, and mentorship programs can further help students who may otherwise face discrimination, ensuring equal access to education and professional growth.

Lastly, a gender-responsive approach prepares nursing students to effectively serve the Philippines' diverse population, offering care that respects all identities. This strengthens the nursing profession by making it more welcoming and representative, and leads to a more compassionate and culturally competent healthcare system that better serves the Filipino people.

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