

## Obstacles Facing Male Nursing Students at Maternity Clinical Learning Settings

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### Abstract

**Background:** Male nurses face challenges in their education and practice as a result of their gender and stereotypes associated with being a male in a female dominated profession. **The aim of this study** was to determine obstacles facing male nursing students at maternity clinical learning settings. **Methods:** A descriptive study design was used. **Sample:** A purposive sample composed of 114 male nursing students from the Faculty of Nursing at Fayoum University. **Tools:** two tools were used (1) An interviewing questionnaire. (2) Likert rating scale. **Results:** findings of the presenting study showed that, the majority of the study students reported that they faced practical and theoretical obstacles during their studying of maternity nursing course as students, academic, curriculum, teaching environment, client/ community and hospital obstacles. Furthermore, more than half of male nursing students had negative attitude toward maternity clinical course. **Conclusion:** the majority of male nursing students are facing obstacles during their studying of maternity nursing course which make them had negative attitude toward maternity clinical course. **Recommendations:** Preventing discrimination against male nurses and supporting male nurses to grow professionally at obstetric department and nurse educators should assist male nursing students to be well prepared to interact with women clients in various settings.

**Key words:** Obstacles, Male nursing students, Maternity clinical settings.

### Introduction

Historically nursing has not always been a predominately female career. Prior to the 1800s and Florence Nightingale men significantly represented the nursing profession, mainly because of the association between nursing and the military (**Office of Medical History, 2016**).

The first formally trained nurses in ancient Greece, Rome and India were men (**O'Lynn, 2013**). However, the contributions of men to the development

of nursing in the early centuries have not and continue not to be recognized by society largely because of the dominant influence that the 19<sup>th</sup> century female nursing movement has had on the occupation's historical ideology (**Achora, 2016**).

There are many factors influencing the professional presence of male in nursing to a great extent such as health care needs, nurse's shortage, recruitment and employment chances and the advancement in profession (**El-Sayed & Mohamed, 2013**).

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In general, male nursing students have experienced discrimination in their obstetrical nursing practice because of their gender. Gender and sex role stereotyping are recognized as having the potential to limit the professional development of males within the nursing profession (Tzeng et al., 2009).

Many male students were not allowed to participate in the full range of caring interventions during the obstetric placement (Young et al., 2015). Preventing men from participating in certain areas of nursing practice and education experiences (e.g. labor and delivery) greatly restricts their capacity to function as nurses and denies the nursing profession of an untapped resource. Discrimination and lateral violence directed toward male nurses adversely affects their performance and this compromises patient care (Kronsberg et al., 2017).

The current and impending nursing shortage is well documented in the literature. Nursing needs to look at alternative strategies to meet the demands faced by the nursing shortage in both practice and education. One strategy would be to increase the number of men in nursing. While the percentage of men in nursing has increased incrementally, male nurses are underrepresented in nursing constituting approximately 9.6% of the nursing workforce (Kronsberg et al., 2017).

### **Significance of the study**

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Nowadays, large numbers of male student nurses are enrolled in faculty of nursing especially in rural area as El Fayoum to gain by the end of studying years and graduation a good profession with high rate salary and chance to travel for work in Arabian or international institution, but they are facing different problems in both government and private settings among which are trained

especially in maternity clinical training setting as; disrespect, not accepted by women and by hospital's administrators and discrimination. Therefore, given less or denied opportunities for growth and development in the profession.

In previous Egyptian study done by (Atia, 2016) reported that all male nursing students included in the study facing practical and theoretical obstacles during their studying of maternity nursing course, added to half of them 50,3% had negative attitude toward maternity nursing course.

Dilemmas related to gender role stereotypes seem to be exacerbated when men first enter the maternity clinical training settings rotation in their nursing education program. The intimate nature of maternity care and its sexual overtones make male nurses uncomfortable and anxious about this aspect of care and finally refused to be assigned or recruited in those areas (O'Lynn, 2013).

So, this study is intended to explore obstacles that facing male nursing students and interfere with their acceptance to work in maternity field in maternity clinical course.

### **Aim of the study:**

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#### **This study aimed to:**

- Determine obstacles facing male nursing students at maternity clinical learning settings.
- Assess male nursing students' attitude toward maternity clinical course.

#### **Research questions:**

- Are male nursing students facing obstacles regarding working in maternity clinical settings?

- What is male nursing students' attitude toward maternity clinical course?

**Subjects and Methods:**

**Technical Design:**

Includes research design, setting of the study, subjects of the study and tools for data collection.

**Research design:**

A descriptive study design was used to determine obstacles that facing male nursing students at maternity clinical learning settings.

**Setting:**

The study was conducted at Faculty of Nursing, Fayoum University and Hospital clinical training settings (Maternal and Child Health, Delivery room, Operation room, High risk unit, In patient and postpartum ward).

**Subjects of the study:**

**Sample size:**

The sample of this study was composed of 114 male nursing students from Faculty of Nursing at Fayoum University.

**The students were distributed as follows:**

- ✓  
third year male nursing students = 72 student.
- ✓  
internship male nursing students = 42 student.

**Sample type:**

A purposive sample was used to include all male nursing students newly enrolled in 3<sup>rd</sup> year maternity course and internship academic year (2017-2018) in the Faculty of Nursing, Fayoum University.

**Tools of Data Collection**

Two tools were used for data collection:

**Tool I: Interviewing**

**Questionnaire sheet:** It was designed by the researcher based on reviewing related literatures and consisted of 25 questions. It was divided into 4 parts: Part (1): Socio-demographic characteristics of students. Part (2): Male nursing students' experience about maternity nursing course. Part (3): practical and theoretical obstacles at maternity nursing course. Part (4): male students' suggestions to optimize maternity nursing course.

**Tool II: Likert Rating Scale:**

This tool is adapted from (Atia, 2016) and modified by the researcher. It was designed to assess the attitude of male students toward maternity clinical course. The scale was composed of 18 statements. The male nursing student had three possible responses for each statement:

- Positive response was scored by (agree= 3).
- No opinion or indifferent was scored by (Indifferent= 2).
- Negative response was scored by (disagree= 1).

If the total score was less than 60%, the result was considered as negative attitude and if more than 60%, the result was considered as positive attitude toward maternity clinical course.

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### **Operational Design:**

Includes preparatory phase, content validity, pilot study and field work.

### **Preparatory phase:**

Includes reviewing of related literature and theoretical knowledge of various aspects of the study using books, articles, scientific journal and internet with the aim of acquiring in-depth knowledge about the study.

### **Validity and reliability:**

Revision of the tools was done by a panel of expertise composed of 5 professors of Obstetrics and Gynecological Nursing to measure the content validity of the tools and the necessary modifications was done accordingly.

### **Pilot study:**

It was carried out on 10% (13) of male nursing students under the study to test the applicability, clarity and the efficiency of the tools. Male nursing students in the pilot study chosen randomly and then was excluded from the study sample later. There were no major modifications found after pilot study. The pilot showed very high levels of reliability.

### **Field work:**

- The approval to conduct the study was obtained orally after explaining the aim of the study.

- Data collection was started and finished at 7 months from the end of September 2017 to the End of April 2018.

- Sample was collected during the period of clinical training of the students of the Faculty of Nursing; Fayoum University 2 days weekly from 9a.m to 2p.m.

- For third year student's data was collected during and after maternity clinical training, added to after clinical area exams.

- For internship students before and after monthly meeting in Faculty of nursing at Fayoum university for clinical distribution and also in their rotations in hospitals.

- The structured interviewing questionnaire sheet was filled by the investigator from each participant in the study individually. It took about 15- 20 minute to be filled by the male nursing students.

### **Administrative Design:**

An approval to carry out this study was obtained from the dean of faculty of nursing and from the head of maternity and neonatal department in faculty of nursing, Fayoum University.

### **Ethical considerations:**

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The research approval was obtained from scientific ethical committee in faculty of nursing at Helwan University before starting the study. The researcher clarified the objective of the study to male nursing students included in the study to gain their confidence and trust. The researcher assured maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of subjects' data. The students were informed that they are allowed to choose to participate or not in the study and that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Moreover, student informed that their opinions not interfere with their academic achievements.

### **Statistical design:**

The data was collected, coded and entered to a personal computer. It was analyzed with the program statistical

package for social science (SPSS) version 20. The collected data were organized, revised, analyzed and presented in numbers and percentage in tables, figures and diagram. Proper and suitable statistical tests were used to test the significance of results obtained. The statistically Chi-square test for qualitative variables was used.

**Result:**

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**Table (1):** illustrates that the study group were in the age range between 20 to 25 years with mean (21.9±1.13) and nearly two thirds (65.4%) of them were from rural areas and almost all of them (92.9%) were single. In addition, the majority of the study group (96.9%) graduated from secondary school. Regarding academic year, nearly two thirds (63.2%) of the study students were in third year meanwhile, slightly more than one third (36.8%) were in internship. Concerning academic achievement, slightly more than one third (36.8%) of the study sample were in internship and completed maternity course and slightly more than half (54.8%) of them taking excellent in maternity nursing course.

**Figure (1):** shows that slightly more than half (51.2%) of the study group described the maternity nursing curriculum as interesting. Moreover, more than one quarter (29.1%) reported that the maternity nursing curriculum was embarrassing for a male student nurse.

**Table (2):** shows that more than one third (43.9%, 39.5%, 39.5%) of the study group reported that the objectives of ante-natal, labor and postpartum clinical training were not achieved. In addition, more than three quarters of them (80%, 77.8%, 80%) respectively reported that rejection or non-cooperation of some female clients was the most common cause

for non- achievement of objectives in these areas.

**Table (3):** illustrates that more than one quarter (32.5%, 26.3%) of study group reported that using MCH centers and hospital for OR area was bad. Moreover, slightly more than three quarters (75.7%, 81.1%) of them mentioned that male are not allowed to deal with female clients and crowdnness in clinical place were the most common causes for bad evaluation in MCH area. On the other hand, more than half (56.7%) of students reported that low number of cases was the most common causes for bad evaluation in OR area.

**Table (4):** illustrates that more than three quarters (89%) of the study group reported that the most embarrassing procedure in antenatal clinical training was breast examination. Meanwhile, the most embarrassing procedure in labor clinical training was vaginal examination as reported by majority of the study students (89%). In addition, more than three quarters (84.3%) of them reported that the most embarrassing procedure in postpartum clinical training was Care of episiotomy area.

**Table (5):** illustrates that nearly two thirds (65.8%) of the study group reported that the antenatal area was the most useful area of experience for them. In addition, more than three quarters (78.7%) of them reported that from their reasons for choosing the antenatal area was that it helped them to gain skills useful for family life.

**Figure (2):** illustrates that more than three quarters (87.4%) of the study students reported that they faced practical and theoretical obstacles during their studying of maternity nursing course in general.

**Table (6):** reflects that nearly two thirds (61.0%) of study students had

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students' obstacles during their studying maternity course. In addition, nearly three quarters (73.8%) of them mentioned that different requirements and limitations for male nursing student during obstetric placements and providing intimate care for female clients was the most common students' obstacles faced them.

**Table (7):** illustrates that the majority (91.2%) of the study group

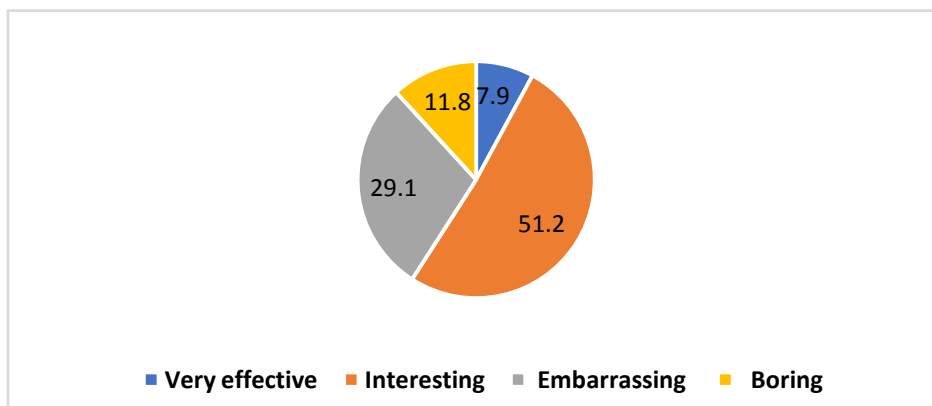
suggested presence of male instructor at obstetric department to optimize practical maternity nursing to act as a role model for them and supported them.

**Figure (3):** illustrates that slightly more than half (53.5%) of the study group had negative attitude toward maternity clinical course.

**Table (1):** Distribution of the Study Group According to Socio Demographic Data (N= 114).

Items	N	%
<b>Age:</b>		
Range		20-25
Mean ±SD		21.9±1.13
<b>Residence:</b>		
- Rural	75	65.4
- Urban	39	34.6
<b>Marital status:</b>		
- Single	106	92.9
- Married	8	7.1
<b>Graduate:</b>		
- Secondary school	110	96.9
- Secondary nursing school	4	3.1
<b>Academic year:</b>		
- Third year	72	63.2
- Internship	42	36.8
<b>Academic achievements:</b>		<b>N =42</b>
- Excellent	23	54.8
- Very good	19	45.2

**Figure (1):** Distribution of the Study Group According to Their Description of Maternity Nursing Curriculum (N = 114).



**Table (2):** Distribution of the Study Group According to Their Evaluation for Clinical Training Objectives Achievement.

Items	Clinical area					
	Antenatal		Labor		Postpartum	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
- Achieved	64	56.1	69	60.5	69	60.5
- Not achieved	50	43.9	45	39.5	45	39.5
- Reasons for non-achievement.	N=50		N=45		N=45	
1. Embarrassment from female client.	35	70	30	66.7	32	71.1
2. Embarrassment from male student.	28	56	28	62.2	30	66.7
3. Rejection or non-cooperation of clients.	40	80	35	77.8	36	80
4. No male faculty members in obstetric nursing staff.	35	70	29	64.4	28	62.2
5. Male students are not welcomed by nursing, medical staff.	20	40	29	64.4	30	66.7
6. Not acceptance of female client for care from male students.	29	58	30	66.7	32	71.1
7. Intimate care for female client by male students is culturally unacceptable.	32	64	32	71.1	30	66.7
8. Lack of male student's interest.	20	40	19	42.2	21	46.7

**Table (3):** Distribution of the Study Group According to Their Evaluation of Clinical Areas.

Items	Clinical Area								
		MCH		Labor		Postpartum		OR	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fair	Good	48	42.1	54	47.4	66	57.9	46	40.4
		29	25.4	40	35.1	29	25.4	38	33.3
	Bad	37	32.5	20	17.5	19	16.7	30	26.3
<b>Reasons for bad evaluation</b>		N= 37		N=20		N=19		N=30	
	Embarrassment from female client.	27	73	13	65	14	73.7	19	63.3
	Rejection or non-cooperation of clients.	15	40.5	12	60	15	78.9	15	50
	Male students are not welcomed by nursing, medical staff in hospital.	11	29.7	9	45	9	47.4	10	33.3
	Male are not allowed to deal with female clients.	28	75.7	14	70	15	78.9	10	33.3
	Low number of cases	13	35.1	9	45	5	26.3	17	56.7
	Crowdness in clinical place	30	81.1	0	0	0	0	10	33.3

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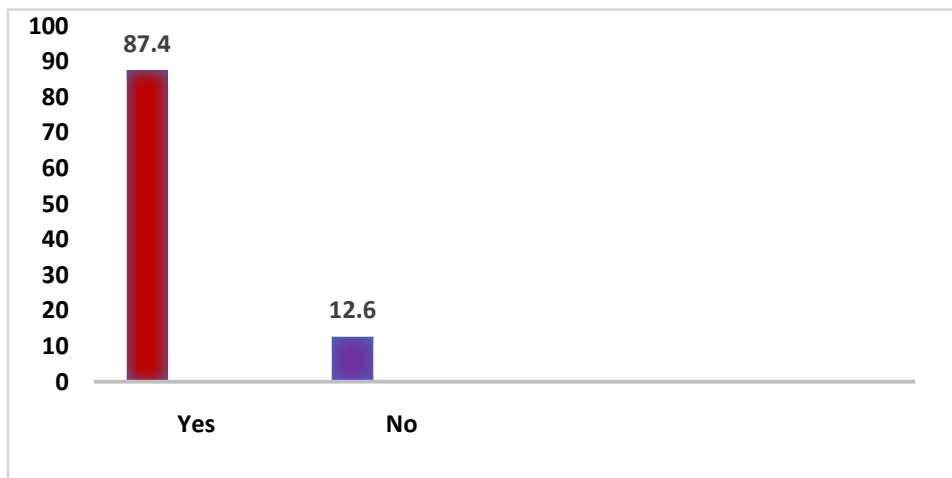
**Table (4):** Distribution of the Study Group According to Embarrassing Procedures in Clinical Training.

Items	N	%
<b><u>Antenatal procedures</u></b>		
General examination of the pregnant woman	39	34.6
Local abdominal examination	98	85.8
Breast examination	101	89
<b><u>Labor procedures</u></b>		
Monitoring of uterine contraction	66	58.3
Vaginal examination	101	89
Perineal care	99	86.6
Immediate care of newborn	13	11
Placental examination	26	22.8
<b><u>Postpartum procedures</u></b>		
Care of episiotomy area	96	84.3
Fundus and lochia assessment	83	72.4
Uterine massage	73	63.8

**Table (5):** Distribution of the Study Group According to Their Most Useful Area of Experience in Maternity Clinical Training.

From your point of view, the most useful Area of experience is	N	%
- Antenatal	75	65.8
- Labor	27	23.7
- Postpartum	12	10.5
<b><u>Reasons for choosing antenatal area</u></b>		<b>N= 75</b>
- Gaining skills of providing caring	53	70.7
- Cooperation of clients	36	48.0
- Gaining skills useful for family life	59	78.7
- Favorable attitude of the hospital health team	31	41.3
- Favorable attitude of clinical instructors	48	64.0

**Figure (2):** Distribution of the Study Group According to Practical and Theoretical Obstacles Facing Them during Their Studying Of Maternity Nursing Course





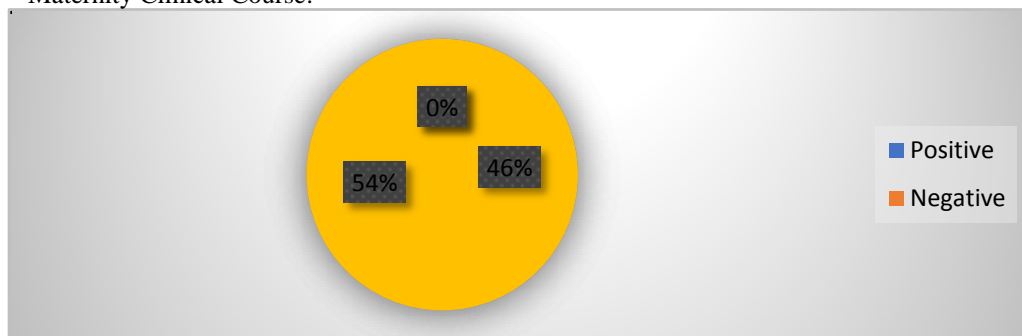
**Table (6):** Distribution of The Study Group According to Students' Obstacles Facing Them During Their Studying of Maternity Nursing Course (N= 100).

Items	N	%
<b>Student's obstacles</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>61.0</b>
Difficulty of acquiring skills	20	32.8
Embarrassment to deal with clients	40	65.6
No interest in studying obstetric	18	29.5
Feeling of social isolation, low self- esteem and loneliness	16	26.2
Different requirements/limitations for male nursing student during obstetric placements	45	73.8
Providing intimate care for female clients is challenging for you as a male student nurse	45	73.8

**Table (7):** Distribution of the Study Group According to Their Suggestions to Optimize Practical Maternity Nursing.

Items	N	%
- Increase community awareness about the important role of male nurse especially at maternity nursing.	65	57.0
- Presence of male instructor at obstetric department.	104	91.2
- Supplying faculty skill lab with simulation for labor to be close to real situation.	50	43.9
- Focusing on practical aspect more than theoretical aspect.	70	61.4
- Providing enough time to be practical training more effective.	40	35.1
- Providing information before clinical training about how to deal with female clients and interact with them.	47	41.2

**Figure (3):** Distribution of the Study Group According to Their Attitude toward Maternity Clinical Course.



**Discussion:**

The current worldwide nursing shortage will likely not be solved unless men are part of the equation. Therefore, it is necessary to develop new strategies in both academic and clinical settings to overcome male students' obstacles and enhance retention and growth of the nursing profession and make diversity in

the nursing workforce (**Inoue et al., 2006 & Nutter, 2010**).

The increasing number of male nurses presents numerous implications for nursing practice and nursing profession. So, this present study was carried out to determine obstacles that facing male nursing students at maternity clinical learning settings.

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Regarding to socio-demographic characteristics of the study sample .the current study revealed that, the study group were in the age range between 20 to 25 years with mean (21.9±1.13) and nearly two thirds of them were from rural areas and almost all of them were single. This result was supported by **Balakrishnan et al., 2013** who studied the perception of male nursing students towards obstetrical nursing clinical experience and reported that the majority of students were in the age group of 20-25 years and most of the male nursing students resided in rural area and all of them were single.

Concerning other socio-demographic characteristics, the results of the current study illustrated that slightly more than half of students got excellent in maternity nursing course and the remained of them had very good and no failing in the maternity course. This result was contradicted with **Mohamed &El-Nemer (2013)** who studied the experience of newly enrolled Egyptian male nursing students into maternity nursing curriculum and reported that the academic achievement of male students was negatively affected by gender barriers and the probability of failing in the course was also higher. From the researcher point of view, the academic achievement of male nursing students was affected by the barriers facing them during their studying of the maternity nursing course; these barriers could be gender barriers, different treatment by the instructors, female patients and the hospital health team.

Regarding students' description of maternity nursing curriculum, in this present study more than half of the study group described the maternity nursing curriculum as interesting while more than one quarter reported that the maternity nursing curriculum was embarrassing for a male student nurse. This result was supported by **Atia, (2016)** who studied

the practical and theoretical barriers facing male students at antenatal and intra-natal units in Obstetrics and Gynecological hospital of Ain Shams University and found the same result. The researcher believes that male nursing students described the maternity nursing course as embarrassing for them because of the majority of them from rural areas, which is evident by that less than two thirds of them were from rural areas and influenced by culture, customs and habits of these areas.

Regarding the embarrassing procedures in antenatal, labor and postpartum clinical training. The results of present study showed that, from students' point of view more than three quarters reported that the most embarrassing procedure in antenatal clinical training was breast examination and in labor clinical training was vaginal examination and the most embarrassing procedure in postpartum clinical training was care of episiotomy area. The finding of this study was in agreement with **Eswi, & El Sayed, (2010)** who studied the experience of Egyptian male student nurses during attending maternity nursing clinical course and confirmed the same result.

Regarding the most useful area of experience in maternity clinical training. Results illustrates that nearly two thirds of the study group reported that the antenatal area was the most useful area of experience for them. In addition, more than three quarters of them reported that from their reasons for choosing the antenatal area was that it helped them to gain skills useful for family life. This result contradicted with **El-Sayed & Mohamed, (2013)** who found that the majority of the students preferred to take their training in lab area, and only (37.5%) of them preferred the training in family planning area.

Concerning practical and theoretical obstacles facing male nursing students during maternity course. The current study showed that the majority of the students reported facing obstacles during the course. This finding comes in line with **Atia, (2016)** who found that among the obstacles male nursing students faced were providing intimate care for female clients was challenging for them as male students and the private hospitals refused working of male nursing students in obstetrics and gynecological wards.

Regarding male nursing students' attitude towards maternity clinical course, the current study revealed that slightly more than half had negative attitude towards maternity clinical course. This result was supported by **(Atia, 2016)** who found the same result. On the other hand, this previous result was contradicted with **(Balakrishnan et al., 2013)** who found that all the participants (100%) were having moderately favorable attitude and no participant had favorable or unfavorable attitude. The researcher believes that this result reveals that the male nursing students like the obstetrical nursing specialty but they do not have very much interest to work in it or they face certain barriers which hinders their favorable attitude.

Finally, the findings from this study should sensitize faculty members to the needs of the male nursing students in the maternal nursing clinical practice. Nurse educators and clinical instructors should be aware of their discomfort and encourage professionalism in male nursing students.

### **Conclusion:**

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The present study concluded that the majority of male nursing students faced practical and theoretical obstacles during their studying maternity nursing

course; these obstacles were students, academic, curriculum, teaching environment, client/ community and hospital obstacles. Furthermore, more than half of male nursing students had negative attitude toward maternity clinical course. The purposive study supports the research questions.

### **Recommendations:**

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In the light of the present study findings, the following were recommended:

Nursing faculties, media and professional journals should emphasize male roles in different specialties including maternity nursing. Increasing community awareness to accept the presence of male nurses at obstetric department.

Preventing discrimination against male nurses and support male nursing students to grow professionally. Educational strategies should be adopted to overcome the unique obstacles in maternity nursing. Efforts should be made to give male nursing students quality of learning opportunities equal to female students. Nurse educators should assist male students to be better prepared to interact with women clients in various settings.

### **Financial Support**

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No funding was received.

### **Conflict of interest:**

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No Yes

### **References:**

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