

CHALLENGES IN NURSING EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN AND SUGGESTIONS: GUEST EDITORIAL

Prof. Dr. Masood Hameed Khan

Nurses are the unsung heroes of Pakistan's healthcare system, yet the very system that relies on them is failing to equip them with the tools and support they need. As we stand at a crossroads in healthcare evolution, addressing the challenges in nursing education is critical to building a resilient, competent, and sufficient healthcare workforce.

According to the Pakistan Nursing and Midwifery Council (PNMC), Pakistan has approximately 107,643 registered nurses, translating to about 0.45 nurses per 1,000 people for a population of about 241.5 million. This figure is far below the World Health Organization's recommended threshold of 3 nurses per 1,000 people.

With such a low density of nurses, it is impossible to sustain Pakistan's healthcare system or any countries, especially when many nurses lack exposure to world-class training. To meet WHO recommendations and provide high-quality nursing care, Pakistan must urgently expand and enhance its nursing workforce. Below are the key challenges and proposed solutions that require immediate attention from the government, policymakers, nursing governing bodies, and private institutions.

Received: 02/06/2025

Revised: 31/07/2025

Accepted: 20/11/2025

Institution (s) Name: Founding Vice Chancellor, Dow University of Health Sciences

Corresponding Author's Email: mhk1954@gmail.com

**The material presented by the author does not necessarily portray the viewpoint of the editors/ editorial board and the management of ORIC, Iqra University, Main Campus, Karachi, Pakistan. Published by ORIC, Iqra University, Main Campus, Karachi-Pakistan*

Inadequate Educational Infrastructure

Pakistan has over 150 nursing schools and colleges. Still, many struggle with inadequate infrastructure, outdated facilities, limited access to advanced libraries, simulation laboratories, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of sports and recreational facilities.

According to PNMC, only a fraction of these institutions meet international standards of simulation labs, digital learning resources, and modern teaching aids

Proposed Solutions:

1. Invest in infrastructure and teaching facilities to bring nursing colleges up to international standards.
2. Introduce simulation-based education to help students learn complex skills and decision-making in a safe environment.
3. Emphasize community-based learning to expose students to diverse patient populations and healthcare realities in resource-limited settings.
4. Shift from traditional lecture-based teaching to problem-based and experiential learning to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Faculty Shortages and Training Gaps

With an estimated teacher-to-student ratio of 1:40, far below the recommended 1:10, many institutions rely on undertrained faculty, resulting in inconsistent and suboptimal training.

Proposed Solutions:

1. Invest in faculty training and development, including enhancing pedagogical knowledge and clinical expertise, and adopt technology-enhanced learning (e.g., e-learning platforms, virtual reality, and mobile learning).
2. Foster international collaborations with universities and healthcare organizations to facilitate faculty exchanges, higher education opportunities (e.g., MSN, PhD), and international research.
3. Provide competitive remuneration and incentives to retain qualified faculty and curb brain drain.

Outdated Curriculum

A recent International Council of Nurses (ICN) survey revealed that over 60% of Pakistani nursing graduates feel underprepared for modern healthcare challenges, citing a disconnect between theory and practice and limited emphasis on critical thinking, evidence-based care, and leadership skills.

Proposed Solutions:

Revise the curriculum to focus on competency-based education, integrate social determinants of health, and tailor training to Pakistan's specific healthcare needs.

Societal Perception and Gender Bias

Nursing in Pakistan remains undervalued, often seen as a low-status or predominantly female profession. Only 5% of the healthcare workforce are male nurses, reflecting persistent stigma and gender bias.

Proposed Solutions:

Enact legislation and run mass media awareness campaigns to elevate the status of nursing and reduce gender-based stigma.

5. Limited Career Pathways and Recognition

Despite having over 107,643 licensed nurses and midwives, most remain trapped in routine roles with limited opportunities for specialization, leadership, or recognition. Advanced degrees (MSN, PhD) are available in only a few institutions, and their holders rarely receive appropriate compensation or leadership opportunities.

Proposed Solutions:

Establish clear career pathways with specialization options, leadership roles, and improved compensation to attract and retain talent.

Conclusion

Policymakers must recognize that nursing is not just a job—it is a calling. It is high time Pakistan acknowledged the value of nurses and invested in a future where they are empowered, respected, and equipped to lead.

References

1. Pakistan Nursing and Midwifery Council (PNMC). Recognized Institutes. Retrieved from: <https://pnmc.gov.pk/recognized-institutes/>
2. World Health Organization (WHO). State of the World's Nursing 2020: Investing in Education, Jobs and Leadership. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003279>
3. International Council of Nurses (ICN). Nursing Education: Past, Present, Future. Retrieved from: <https://www.icn.ch/>

4. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Labour Force Survey 2021. Retrieved from:
<http://www.pbs.gov.pk/>
5. Bhutta ZA, Lassi ZS, Mansoor N. Systematic review on human resources for health interventions to improve maternal health outcomes in low- and middle-income countries. *Human Resources for Health*, 2010.

