

Guest Editorial

Challenges Faced by Women in Medical Education and Trainings

Zainab Farooq, Noor Zehra Shabbir

^{1,2}Karachi Medical and Dental College, Karachi, Sindh 74700 Pakistan,

Correspondence: doczainabfarooq@gmail.com

Introduction

The development of a nation's health care system depends heavily on medical education and training. Like many other places in the world, Pakistan has historically had a male-dominated medical profession. But the number of women choosing jobs in medicine has increased commendably in recent years. Despite this encouraging development, Pakistani women still encounter many obstacles throughout their pursuit of medical education and training, which may impede their ability to advance professionally and make a contribution to the healthcare industry. Globally, female healthcare employees still have a lot of obstacles to overcome at work, including gender inequality, weak human resource policy, and family responsibilities that limit their ability to advance professionally. Work-family harmony has been cited in many nations as a substantial roadblock to career progress.

In addition to unequal compensation, bad working conditions, little prospects for career advancement, work-related stress, and unfavourable policies that support patriarchy, women in the health sciences also confront issues connected to poor work environments. And in our paper, this issue will be underlined.¹

Problems

- Workplace mistreatment, which includes harassment, bullying and discrimination, creates a hostile work environment that is a well known risk factor for poor mental health, low self-esteem and decreased productivity in surgeons experiencing these behaviours.²
- Socio-cultural norms the scenario is bit different. Majority of females in our society facing social problem as according to survey conducted in Faisalabad, (75.8%) of families faced problems and issues like problems in looking after their children at home.³
- The prevalent gender bias is one of the major difficulties women in medical education and training in Pakistan confront. Women's chances are frequently restricted by stereotypes and societal expectations, which deters them from pursuing jobs in medicine. This prejudice is engrained profoundly and can show up in a number of ways, including lower expectations for women's academic success, a lack of support from families and communities, and discriminatory practises inside medical organisations.⁴
- The lack of infrastructure and amenities that are gender-sensitive is another important issue. Many medical institutes in Pakistan do not offer female students and trainees a welcoming environment. A hostile environment for women is exacerbated by subpar hostel amenities, limited access to private restrooms and changing areas, and poor security measures. This not only compromises their physical security but also hinders their ability to engage in educational activities and constricts their entire experience.



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Solutions

Following are some recommendations that can aid in acknowledging these challenges:

- Politics having zero-tolerance for Gender biasness and harassment should be introduced. Gender equality should be practised and not only preached.⁵ Ensuring principles of respect and equality among all individuals.⁵ This not only benefits healthcare personnel' general well-being, but it also provides equitable opportunities and treatment for patients, thereby improving the quality of healthcare delivery.⁵
- To address the challenges faced by women in medical training and education, an essential solution lies in the implementation of sensitization and training programs. Educational programs that can foster information regarding discrimination, stereotypes and gender biases that are pervasive in the medical industry for students, public health staff and faculty. Such awareness programs help in creating an empowered and supportive environment especially for women in the medical field. It also ensures that everyone is equal and has the same chance to succeed in a medical career.
- Within medical premises and during clinical training any incident of harassment, assault or gender biased violence significantly impacts the professional development and mental wellbeing of female professionals and medical students. Institutes and departments should set up anonymous and confidential reporting systems where people can safely report instances without the fear of retaliation. Protecting the privacy of victims should be prioritized and action should be taken against the offenders immediately.
- Gender Pay Gap: The most frequently addressed issue is the gender pay gap found in the field of medicine. Not only inequality among men and women but economic inequity is being reflected due to this issue. Ensuring transparency in pay checks, making non-bias salary packages and conducting salary audits should be considered.⁶ Continuous checking and monitoring salary practices can make a big difference and aid in identification of any inequalities.⁶
- Juggling between personal life and career hampers the work-life balance and poses a particular challenge for women in medical education and training. Absence of supportive and relevant policies, like having workplace flexibility and helpful regulations like parental leave, often hinders the progress of women and makes difficult trade-offs between their personal and professional lives. Having work flexibility, parental leave provisions, introducing family-friendly policies and having an on-site childcare facility can play a significant role in lessening the pressure women are usually facing.⁷

Healthcare facilities can improve the environment for women which will enable them to maintain a healthy balance and equilibrium between work and life while completing training and medical education.

Conclusion

There are many obstacles that hinders the success of women's education and services. They make a barrier and restrict opportunities needed for professional growth and advancement. If these challenges are recognized by medical organizations and public sectors, a welcoming and inclusive environment would be created. In conclusion, the comprehensive resolution of the obstacles encountered by women in medical education and training necessitates a multifaceted strategy. We have the potential to create a workplace environment in medicine that is fair and supportive of women by putting the proposed fixes and suggestions into practice. It is crucial for medical establishments, regulatory authorities, and society at large to acknowledge the significance of gender parity in healthcare and adopt proactive measures to dismantle the barriers that impede women from pursuing their medical vocations.

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