

Men in Psychology Profession: Navigating Career Paths, Masculinity, and Stigmatization

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Abstract

This research looks at the distinct experiences and challenges men face while working in fields primarily populated by women, specifically focusing on psychology professionals in Bangalore. By applying Career Construction Theory, it aims to learn how men make their way into these careers, adjust to their roles, and handle the pressures that come with them. The study also considers how social, economic, and educational factors influence their job choices and aspirations, along with the dynamics at work, satisfaction levels, and issues around inclusivity. career entry pathways and orientation preferences for men in female-dominated occupations, role strain and societal expectations impact men's professional experiences, job satisfaction younger men in female-dominated professions? The information was gathered through interviews with men aged 25-44, using purposive sampling sampling method, the data will be collected until data saturation. The results add to our understanding of gender theory by revealing the complexities of masculinity and career advancement in roles that diverge from traditional expectations, guiding efforts toward greater inclusivity and balance in the workplace, the study underscores the significance of inclusive policies, diverse role models, and sustained advocacy for gender diversity across all occupational sectors. As society persistently dismantles entrenched gender roles, workplaces are poised to benefit from the skills and insights that a heterogeneous workforce provides. This advancement not only enables individuals to pursue their selected trajectories but also amplifies the potential for a more dynamic, empathetic, and innovative work environment masculinity is increasingly recognized as adaptable and inclusive.

Keywords: Female-Dominated Occupation, masculinity, stigmatization.

INTRODUCTION

This study looks into how males who want to work in fields where women predominate are affected by gender norms and cultural expectations of masculinity. Careers have traditionally been classified according to gender, with some professions being linked to either femininity or masculinity. Many people consider occupations like teaching, social work, psychology, and nursing to be "feminine," and most of their employees are women. Due to their minority status, men who pursue these careers may encounter particular social and professional obstacles. This research examines how gender norms and masculinity intersect with career experiences for men in female-oriented jobs. Career paths have often been gendered, leading to roles that are heavily skewed toward one gender. These occupations, typically linked with either femininity or masculinity, contribute to job segregation. Men in professions associated with women like nursing, teaching, psychology, and social work go through different social and professional realities than their female colleagues. Non-Traditional Paths for Men: Roles where less than 25 percent of the workforce

is male are deemed non-traditional for men. Common examples are nursing, primary education, human resources, and social services. These jobs are often perceived as “feminine,” and men entering these fields have to manage the expectations that come with this perception. Understanding Masculinity: Masculinity includes the socially built roles and behaviors seen as suitable for men. These concepts shift and evolve with cultural, social, and historical contexts. Men stepping into female-dominated careers may challenge conventional ideas of masculinity since their choices might not align with societal expectations for men. Stigma in Female-Dominated Fields: Occupations like nursing (92% female), primary education (82%), and psychology (68.8%) often have men in the minority, which can lead to stigmatization. Men in these jobs might be viewed as less capable, face stereotypes, or feel pressure regarding their masculinity. This research aims to explore their experiences, the stigma they deal with, and how they find their footing in their professional lives.

Career Construction Theory (Mark Savickas)

This study uses Career Construction Theory from Mark Savickas, which looks at how people shape their careers through personal stories and life experiences. For men in female-led occupations, this theory helps to explain their experiences, the meaning behind their career choices, and how these paths affect their sense of identity and masculinity. Challenging Gender Norms: Understanding how men maneuver through female-oriented fields is key to challenging gender norms and reducing job segregation. Unique Challenges for Men: Men in these roles face specific issues compared to women, like role strain and stereotypes. Recognizing these challenges can uncover details about job satisfaction and workplace dynamics. Effect on Organizational Culture: By looking at how men are viewed and treated in female-dominated jobs, the research offers insights into the workplace culture and highlights biases that may exist.

Gender Role Theory (Sandra Bem):

The research provides evidence to enhance the conversation on gender and masculinity by examining how men adapt to traditionally feminine roles. Despite strides toward gender equality, significant job segregation continues, with certain professions remaining dominated by one gender. Men in female-dominated fields like nursing, teaching, social work, and human resources represent a minority group facing unique hurdles, including identity struggles and societal perceptions. Traditional gender norms strongly associate specific career paths with masculinity or femininity, affecting how individuals pursue their professions. This underrepresentation of men in female-dominated jobs perpetuates rigid gender roles and hinders diversity in sectors that could benefit from the contributions and viewpoints of all genders. Men in these roles often navigate role strain, marginalization, and stigma as they diverge from societal expectations, which can lead to dissatisfaction and hinder their career success and identity development.

Hegemonic Masculinity (R.W. Connell):

Current studies often highlight the advantages men may have in these fields, such as quicker advancement, while overlooking their unique challenges, including societal pressures and mental health impacts. This research aims to investigate the nuanced experiences of men in female-dominated careers, focusing on their career entry, role strain, job satisfaction, and the broader implications on gender theory and workplace inclusivity. By addressing this gap, the study seeks to enhance understanding of how men navigate challenges in environments that defy traditional gender roles. This research is significant for its potential to reshape workplace gender norms, fostering more inclusive environments in female-dominated fields.

Social Identity Theory (Henri Tajfel and John Turner):

By understanding the experiences of men in these roles, it aims to tackle gender imbalances, reduce stigma, and encourage acceptance of diversity across the workforce. This study also contributes to discussions around masculinity, work, and identity, providing evidence to support policies that promote equity and inclusivity in various sectors.

This study is guided by a mix of theories that help explain the experiences of men in female-dominated jobs, mainly focusing on Career Construction Theory and additional perspectives from gender theory concerning masculinity and stigma. First, This theory highlights how individuals craft their careers through personal stories and experiences, shifting away from the traditional view of linear career development. Secondly, Men in these roles might show flexibility in their careers, choosing paths that stray from societal norms while handling the social pressures tied to their decisions. Thirdly, Career choices stem from underlying stories that reflect larger themes of challenging gender roles or aligning work with personal values.

Review Of Literature:

Butler (1990) conducted a study on “Masculinity and Non-Traditional Occupations: Men’s Talk in Women’s Work” that says gender is a performed social construct rather than an inherent trait, influencing how individuals enact their identities in various contexts. This perspective has shifted the focus of language and gender research from essentialist views to examining the active processes through which gendered identities are constructed and performed in the workplace (Cameron, 2000; Holmes, 2006). Research by Whittock and Leonard (2003) highlights the motivations and experiences of men in nursing, revealing that language plays a crucial role in how male nurses negotiate their identities. The use of interactional sociolinguistics (IS) allows for a nuanced analysis of naturally occurring discourse, demonstrating how male nurses adapt their language to align with both professional expectations and personal identities (Mullany, 2007; Schnurr, 2008). Studies indicate that male nurses often grapple with societal perceptions of masculinity while performing roles traditionally associated with femininity. Williams (1995) discusses how men in "women's work" face stereotypes that challenge their masculinity, leading to a complex interplay between professional identity and gender performance. The Community of Practice paradigm further elucidates how male nurses navigate their identities by forming in-group dynamics that reflect shared experiences and language use (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1998).

Dr. Ruth Simpson; Brunel conducted a study on “Masculinity at Work: The Experiences of Men in Female Dominated Occupations” The exploration of gender dynamics within organizations has evolved significantly, particularly concerning men's experiences in non-traditional occupations. Early research positioned masculinity as the normative standard, often overlooking the complexities of men's minority status in female-dominated fields. This literature review synthesizes key frameworks and findings related to masculinity, career motivations, and the implications of occupational choice for gender identity. Connell (2000) defines hegemonic masculinity as the culturally exalted form of masculinity that maintains men's dominant position. This concept has been pivotal in understanding how men navigate their identities in occupations traditionally associated with femininity. Scholars like Chodorow (1994) and Kimmel (1994) argue that masculinity is often constructed in opposition to femininity, leading to a repudiation of female-associated traits. This perspective highlights the psychological investments men have in maintaining traditional masculine identities. Carrigan et al. (1985) emphasize that masculinity is a set of

social practices shaped by power dynamics and emotional relations. Connell (1987) further explores how these practices create a 'gender regime' within institutions, influencing men's experiences in non-traditional roles. Research indicates that men in non-traditional occupations often face unique challenges and opportunities. Interviews with male librarians, teachers, cabin crew, and nurses reveal diverse motivations for their career choices, including a passion for service and a desire to challenge gender norms. However, these men also navigate tensions between their professional roles and societal expectations of masculinity, often employing strategies to assert their masculine identity while engaging in traditionally feminine tasks. The findings suggest that men's minority status in female-dominated fields can lead to both advantages and disadvantages. While some men experience enhanced career opportunities and support, they may also feel pressure to conform to traditional masculine ideals. The interplay between their professional roles and personal identities underscores the complexity of gender processes in contemporary work environments. The literature on masculinity in non-traditional occupations reveals a nuanced understanding of how men negotiate their identities in the face of societal expectations. Future research should continue to explore the implications of these dynamics for both individual experiences and broader organizational practices, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of gender in the workplace.

Schwiter, Karin ; Nentwich, Julia ; Keller, Mariso conducted a study on "Male privilege revisited: how men in female-dominated occupations notice and actively reframe privilege" The exploration of male privilege, particularly in female-dominated occupations, has gained traction across various academic fields, including sociology, psychology, and gender studies. This literature review synthesizes key findings and theoretical frameworks that inform the understanding of how men perceive and articulate their privilege in contexts such as nursing and childcare. Critical race studies and gender studies have laid the groundwork for understanding privilege. Laura Nader's concept of "studying up" emphasizes the importance of examining the lives of the privileged rather than solely focusing on marginalized groups (Nader, 1974). Similarly, Raewyn Connell's notion of the "patriarchal dividend" shifts the focus from women's discrimination to men's advantages (Connell, 1995). These frameworks highlight the necessity of analyzing how privilege operates and is maintained within societal structures. Recent empirical studies have investigated men's experiences in gender-untypical occupations. Schwiter et al. (2021) conducted a systematic secondary analysis of interviews with male childcare workers and nurses, revealing that men often acknowledge their privilege but employ discursive strategies to reframe it as an individual achievement or a natural advantage. This finding aligns with previous research that indicates a tendency among privileged groups to downplay systemic advantages (Kimmel, 2018). The literature identifies specific discursive strategies employed by men to silence their privilege. These include justifying their advantages as personal merit or attributing them to inherent qualities of masculinity (Schwiter et al., 2021). Such reframing not only obscures the structural nature of privilege but also reinforces existing gender norms and inequalities. The body of literature on male privilege in gender-untypical occupations underscores the complexity of privilege acknowledgment and the strategies used to mitigate its implications. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics, focusing on how discourses surrounding privilege can be challenged to promote greater equity in the workplace.

Barbara Bagillhole; Simon Cross conducted a study on "It Never Struck Me as Female': Investigating Men's Entry into Female-dominated Occupations" The dynamics of gender in the workforce have been a focal point of sociological research, particularly concerning men who enter female-dominated occupations. This literature review synthesizes key studies and theories that explore the motivations,

experiences, and societal perceptions of men in these roles. Gender segregation in the labor market has been extensively documented, with scholars like Hakim (1996) and Jacobs (1993) emphasizing the structural barriers that women face in accessing certain jobs. However, the entry of men into traditionally female roles challenges these notions, suggesting that individual choices and societal changes also play significant roles (Williams, 1992). Bradley's infiltration hypothesis posits that men may enter these fields for various personal and occupational reasons, which this review seeks to explore. Research indicates that men in female-dominated occupations often cite motivations such as a desire for meaningful work, career ambition, and the influence of non-traditional role models (Galbraith, 1992; Jome & Tokar, 1998). The qualitative study by Bagilhole and Cross (2005) highlights that men perceive their work as a means to foster social change, although they also acknowledge societal stigma associated with their roles. This duality reflects broader cultural processes regarding gender and work. The societal perception of men in female-dominated jobs is complex. As noted by Radcliffe Richards (1991), it is often more socially acceptable for women to enter male-dominated fields than vice versa. This disparity can lead to feelings of "otherness" among men in these roles, as they navigate societal expectations and personal identity (Williams & Heikes, 1993). The concept of the "glass escalator" further illustrates the hidden advantages men may experience in these professions, complicating the narrative of gender equality (Williams, 1992). The literature reveals that men's participation in female-dominated occupations is influenced by a combination of personal motivations, societal perceptions, and structural factors. While individual choices play a crucial role, the broader cultural context and gender norms significantly shape these experiences. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics to better understand the implications for gender equality in the workforce.

“Young Men’s Entry and Persistence in Female-Dominated Occupations” The study focuses on young men's participation in female-dominated occupations amid changing labor market demands since the 1970s. It explores whether younger men (ages 18–24) are more likely to enter and remain in these occupations compared to older adults (ages 25–44) and middle-aged men (ages 45–65). Many traditionally male-dominated jobs have decreased, while demand for female-dominated jobs has risen significantly. Despite job growth in sectors such as healthcare and education, men have been slow to enter these fields due to social stigma and lower pay associated with female-dominated occupations. Younger men may be more open to female-dominated jobs because: They are viewed as having more egalitarian gender views. Economic pressures may push them toward these jobs as opportunities in traditional male fields decline. Cultural pressures often dissuade men from entering because of beliefs about masculinity and potential social penalties. The research uses data from the 2004 and 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). Whether younger men are more likely to enter female-dominated jobs. If they remain in these roles compared to their peers in male-dominated occupations. Younger men are more likely to work in female-dominated occupations than older men. Younger men do not show higher turnover rates in female-dominated occupations compared to those in mixed or male-dominated jobs. Young men showed a significant increase in percentages working in female-dominated occupations from 2004-2013, rising to 13%. Figures showed young men participating predominantly in healthcare, retail, and food service. Young men aged 18-24 were found to have better odds of entering female-dominated occupations. Conversely, older men had much lower chances of entering these jobs. Those with higher education and racial minorities were also more likely to work in female-dominated positions. The study found that young men in female-dominated positions were not significantly more likely to change employers or occupations,

suggesting higher job satisfaction or stability. Many men perceived their roles as consistent with masculinity through job tasks not typically viewed as feminine, contributing to their likelihood of staying. Results support the notion that younger men are increasingly entering and remaining in female-dominated occupations, partly due to changing views on masculinity and the necessity of adapting to a service-oriented labor market. This trend suggests that newer generations might contribute to reducing gender segregation in various professions, countering the historic stigma associated with such roles.

Research Gaps:

Existing studies often focus too much on the benefits men might experience in female-dominated jobs, like quicker promotions, neglecting the challenges they also face. There's also a lack of diversity in sample sizes and many studies don't consider how different factors like race, class, and sexual orientation affect experiences. Furthermore, many studies miss giving a voice to the men themselves working in these roles.

Methodology

Problem Statement:

Men in specific fields often deal with role strain, criticism, from their profession. This research focuses on their more complex realities aiming to create more inclusive environments, and rectify gender biases, for the careers that are largely seen as belonging to either females or males.

Objectives of the Study:

To examine what drives men to choose this profession and how societal, economic, and educational influences shape these career paths, understand how it relates to societal expectations of masculinity. To assess how job satisfaction and career opportunities affect men's success and retention, and enhance understanding of masculinity by providing evidence on how men adapt to traditionally feminine roles, focusing on promoting inclusivity and reducing workplace stigma.

Research Question:

1. To examine how men enter female-oriented careers and what influences their decision.
2. To understand how role strain and societal expectations affect their work experiences and aspirations.
3. To gain insights into workplace dynamics and how to support younger men in these fields.
4. To encourage inclusivity and lessen gender imbalances in the workplace.

Key Terms:

Gender Norms: These are social expectations regarding appropriate behaviors, attitudes, and roles based on gender, impacting occupational choices and workplace interactions.

Female-Dominated Occupation: Fields where women make up the majority of the workforce, such as nursing or social work, which can pose unique challenges for men.

Role Strain: This is the stress that occurs when individuals struggle to meet the expectations tied to their social or professional roles.

Masculinity: This encompasses the socially constructed behaviors and norms associated with being a man, examined here in light of men's professional identities in female-dominated fields.

Career Entry Pathways: These are the various factors that influence an individual's decision to pursue a specific profession, reflecting on their career orientation.

Job Satisfaction: A measure of a worker's happiness with their job, shaped by various factors, including work relationships and expectations.

Organizational Dynamics: The culture and interactions within an organization, which can influence experiences, especially for men in female-dominated roles.

Stigmatization: The labeling of individuals negatively due to their involvement in certain professions, which can lead to discrimination and social exclusion.

Career Construction Theory (CCT): A framework that explores how individuals shape their career identities based on personal and social influences.

Inclusive Workplace Policies: Strategies aimed at fostering diverse and equitable work environments that support all employees regardless of gender.

Gender Diversity: The representation of different gender identities in the workforce, significant for promoting balanced and inclusive professional environments.

Research Design:

A Qualitative research design, using the phenomenological approach

Population Of the Study:

This study will focus on gathering data among adults from the age range of 25-44.

Geographical Area:

This study is situated in India, Bangalore

Sample:

In this study, the data will be collected until data saturation.

Sampling Technique:

In this study, a Purposive sampling technique will be used.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Working professional men in psychology.
- They should age between 22-45.
- Participants should have a minimum of two year of work experience in their current profession.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Someone who is studying and working.
- Someone who belongs to LGBTQIA+ community.

Procedure:

With the agreement of the participants that will be given an informed consent, an interview will be conducted for 15 to 20 minutes on understanding the experiences and perceived accuracy of symptoms and observation of the practices of self-diagnosis among themselves and will be recorded with the consent of the participants and then transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke's).

Tools For the Study:

1. Informed consent
2. Interview

Data Analysis:

The collected data was transcribed and analyzed using Thematic Analysis on NVivo 14. Thematic analysis was done according to the following 6 phases, as given by Braun & Clarke (2006).

1. Familiarising with the data: Transcription, reading, and note-taking
2. Initial coding
3. Finding themes
4. Review of themes
5. Defining and labeling themes
6. Writing the report

Description of Tools

The Google form for this paper will be used to gather the socio-demographic data of the participant like, initials, age, gender, occupation, social economic status, profession details, phone number and consent. The semi-structured interview will be used to gain a deeper understanding of men's experiences in female-dominated professions. This approach focuses on exploring their motivations, workplace dynamics, gender role expectations, job satisfaction, and career development challenges. The goal is to gather detailed insights into barriers to retention and factors that impact their career advancement and professional fulfillment.

Research Ethics Followed:

Ethical Considerations: Informed consent will be obtained from all participants.

Extent of confidentiality: Efforts are made to keep the personal information in the research records private and confidential. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with the permission of the participant or as required by law. The members of the research team may access the data for analysis and academic use. Data will be kept for at least 3-5 years after the study is complete and published and then it will be destroyed

Results

This chapter will present the findings that emerged out of the interviews and subsequent thematic analysis. There were 6 key themes that emerged from analysing the data about the male psychology professor. Eight male participants agreed to participate in this study to discuss about their work experience in working profession of teaching in psychology.

Table no 1: showing the duration of participants working years

participant	age	Duration of working years
1	28	6
2	26	2
3	29	5
4	33	5
5	27	3
6	28	5
7	29	4
8	32	8

Socio-demographic details:

Table 2: showing demographic details of the participant.

participant	native	educational background	geographical location
1	Bengal	MSc clinical psychology	Bengaluru
2	Kerala	PhD	Bengaluru
3	Bengaluru	MSc counselling psychology	Bengaluru
4	Bengaluru	MSc counselling psychology	Bengaluru
5	Bengal	PhD	Bengaluru
6	Kerala	MSc clinical psychology	Bengaluru
7	Jammu & Kashmir	MSc clinical psychology	Bengaluru
8	Bengaluru	MSc clinical psychology	Bengaluru

Table 3:

Thematic Analysis Table:

Theme	Sub-theme	description
Career Entry and Motivations	Practical Career Decisions	This shows that career entry for this participant was based on practical choices, rather than a passion for teaching, which might reflect broader trends among men entering female-dominated fields due to external circumstances or available opportunities.
	Desire for Change	The desire for new challenges or a shift in job dynamics indicates the search for career satisfaction or novelty, a key factor in job retention and satisfaction in

		male-dominated or female-dominated fields.
Workplace Culture and Gender Dynamics	Gender Imbalance	This highlights the gender imbalance in the workplace, which is a critical factor in understanding how men navigate female-dominated fields.
	Supportive Female-Dominated Environment:	The participant notes the benefits of working in a female-dominated environment, suggesting that empathy and emotional intelligence are valued, which might increase job satisfaction and retention for men who thrive in such environments.
	Limited Gender-Specific Support	This points to a lack of formal structures that support men in female-dominated occupations, an issue that could affect career advancement and job satisfaction in male participants, pointing to the need for greater inclusivity.
Societal Expectations and Role Strain	Societal Expectations of Masculinity	Men in these fields might face pressure to conform to traditional expectations, but are also learning how to navigate these without compromising their values or emotional expression.
	Frustration with Gender Roles	The participant's reference to male-dominated environments lacking emotional sensitivity points to the frustrations some men may experience when transitioning into more empathetic, female-dominated environments.
Job Satisfaction, Career Development, and Retention	Job Satisfaction Linked to Supportive Environment	Positive relationships with colleagues play a major role in job satisfaction, which can enhance retention, especially

		when men feel understood and accepted in a female-dominated setting.
	Balancing Work and Personal Life	This comment illustrates the challenges of balancing professional and personal life, which can affect career satisfaction and burnout, influencing men’s long-term retention in these fields.
Barriers to Advancement and Professional Growth	Lack of Authority to Influence Policy	Men may feel restricted in influencing institutional policies (such as attendance policies), which could impact their sense of agency and career development, especially if they perceive these policies as unnecessary.
	Perception of Equal Opportunity	This statement highlights that while there may be perceived gender equality in career advancement, structural or informal barriers might still exist, which can be subtle but impactful in male-dominated career growth dynamics.

Career Entry and Motivations:

All of the participants have revealed it was their own choice. Some men chose teaching as a practical shift within their field rather than a calling, while others found inspiration through mentors who demonstrated the balance between teaching and practice, sparking a deeper commitment to guiding others. For those who embraced both teaching and practice, the role became more meaningful, particularly as they were able to supervise and mentor students.

As participant 2 said

“During my master’s program, I was inspired by my faculty, who not only taught counseling skills but also practiced them. I admired how they were able to balance teaching and practicing simultaneously, which sparked my own interest in both. The aspect of teaching counseling skills and supervising students intrigued me, as I found it rewarding to guide others in developing these essential abilities. When I received the opportunity early in my career to pursue this dual role, I embraced it eagerly, as it aligned well with my interests and professional goals.”

These results highlight the need for patience, resiliency, and supporting systems that acknowledge and address the distinct experiences males have in fields dominated by women in order to dispel prejudices and build fulfilling careers in these areas. Organizations may better promote men's career growth and

create a more inclusive professional environment by cultivating a workplace culture that values a variety of masculine expressions.

Workplace Culture and Gender Dynamics:

It shows the culture has mixed of both supporting as well as subtly challenging for men. Participants spoke of cooperative, upbeat workplaces where coworkers were willing to lend a hand to one another. Subtle gendered expectations, however, emerged in this culture, as male employees were given more physically taxing assignments or faced differing demands about work-life balance. Despite not being explicitly stated, these expectations represent implicit prejudices that may affect the positions and everyday lives of male employees.

Participant 4 said:

“The workplace culture within my department is very supportive. I am surrounded by colleagues who encourage and assist each other in navigating the challenges of our profession. This supportive environment makes it easier to work collaboratively, knowing that my colleagues are there to help if needed. The overall culture is positive, fostering an atmosphere where we can learn from each other and offer guidance and support in both personal and professional matters”

This shows coworkers were willing to lend a hand to one another despite gender being a thing and that’s the normality here.

Participant 5 said:

“At my current institution, and even in previous organizations I’ve worked in, the psychology field is predominantly female. This has influenced the workplace culture in unique ways. In psychology departments, there is generally a higher proportion of women, which can sometimes lead to a different set of expectations for men. For instance, tasks that involve physical effort—like handling event logistics or managing discipline—are often assigned to male staff members by default. There’s also a certain degree of flexibility given to female colleagues in terms of leaving early or attending to family responsibilities, which might not always extend to male staff. However, from an administrative point of view, I’d say there isn’t a significant bias in terms of authority or opportunity.”

These results emphasize the necessity for female-dominated industries to foster inclusive work environments that recognize and value each employee's distinct experiences. Organizations might better assist males in feeling appreciated and completely integrated by broadening the scope of team dynamics and implicit expectations, which would eventually promote a more inclusive and balanced atmosphere.

Societal Expectations and Role Strain:

The result shows that societal expectations and role strain create a complex dynamic for men in female-dominated fields, influencing their professional identities and interactions. Many participants expressed that their gender brought a unique perspective by the general public or strangers in the first interaction.

Participant 3 said:

“I haven’t personally noticed any gender-specific advantages or disadvantages in my career progression. However, I’ve heard from others that being a male in this field may sometimes be perceived as advantageous. There are people who might think that opportunities are offered to me based on gender-related biases, but I don’t see it that way. To me, career progression is influenced more by individual effort, workplace dynamics, and other factors unrelated to gender”

These observations highlight the necessity for female-dominated fields to address overt and covert male role expectations. By addressing it men's sense of authenticity and participation in these sectors can be improved and role tension can be lessened.

Job Satisfaction, Career Development, and Retention:

Many participants reported equal opportunities for growth, noting that recognition and promotion were often based on qualifications, such as degrees and research output, especially in academic settings. However, career progression varied significantly depending on institutional priorities, with some institutions placing heavier emphasis on research and others valuing a blend of teaching skills and professional experience.

Participant 4 said:

“Career advancement in teaching can vary significantly between institutions. In most cases, advancement is based on qualifications, such as degree levels and publication records, rather than just teaching skills. Some institutions may place heavy emphasis on research and publication as criteria for career growth, while others might look at a combination of factors, including teaching ability and experience. Career progression in this field is thus heavily dependent on the priorities of each institution.”

Growth opportunities are formally accessible and contribute positively to job satisfaction. The absence of focused mentoring and the sporadic exclusion from informal networks highlight places where male employees may feel disadvantaged, have equitable support and guidance, which may enhance retention and long-term career satisfaction.

Career Advancement and Support:

The support from family and friends plays a crucial role in the experiences of men pursuing careers, though it often comes with complexities. Participants expressed that their friends value their mental health expertise, frequently seeking advice or guidance when needed. This support from friends contributes positively to their sense of purpose and highlights the social value of their career choice.

Participant 4 said:

“Yes, in different ways. My friends value having someone they can turn to for mental health advice, even if indirectly. They appreciate my background in psychology and sometimes seek support when needed. With my family, it’s been a mixed experience. While they are supportive, they don’t fully understand the profession and sometimes express concerns about its financial stability. They worry about the modest income psychology provides compared to fields like IT, where salaries tend to be higher. This difference in income can lead to occasional tension, but overall, my family is supportive and curious about my future career prospects.”

Participant totally support this finding. Findings highlight the value of family and social support for males in psychology. Realistic conversations about career opportunities and initiatives to raise knowledge and comprehension of the significance of the psychological profession may improve family support.

Discussion

Theme 1: Motivation for Choosing a Professional Role

In professions where women are the majority, many men often make their choices based on practical reasons rather than a deep passion. One individual mentioned that he chose teaching mainly because he was looking for a change after becoming bored with his previous job. This highlights how the availability

of career options plays a big role in why men select jobs in these fields. Often, men prioritize stability and work-life balance when deciding on their careers. Therefore, helping men with diverse motivations transition smoothly into these roles can lead to greater satisfaction and retention.

Many men find themselves in careers like teaching not because of a strong passion but due to practical circumstances. One participant shared, “I didn't really have a strong attraction to teaching at first. It was more about the options I had.” Over time, this individual discovered the positives of his job, which included meaningful interactions and a refreshing change from his previous work. He reflected, “After spending years just practicing, I got bored and wanted something new. Teaching felt like the right move.” Research supports the idea that men entering these fields often look at practical benefits, job security, and immediate career options rather than a personal calling. For workplaces, it's important to help these employees discover a deeper purpose in their work, which can lead to increased engagement and a stronger commitment to their roles.

The decision-making process for men entering female-dominated fields often reveals a practical orientation rather than a purely passion-driven approach. For the participant in this study, career entry into a field like teaching was influenced more by practical factors—such as job security, economic stability, or available opportunities—than by a deep-seated passion for the profession itself. This trend may highlight a broader pattern where men view these career paths as viable options based on situational needs or market opportunities rather than personal interest or enthusiasm for the role.

Many female-dominated fields, especially in healthcare and education, offer stable employment with consistent demand, making them attractive options for men seeking reliable career paths.

In some regions or sectors, positions in female-dominated fields may be more readily available, leading men to consider these roles as practical solutions to employment needs.

Some of these fields provide flexible schedules or career advancement options that fit well with broader life goals, such as family commitments or work-life balance. female-dominated fields.

Theme 2: Workplace Culture and Gender Dynamics

The interviews showed that the culture at work and the dynamics between genders significantly shape men's experiences in female-dominated professions. Participants often described their workplaces as supportive and caring, which they felt was a hallmark of environments led by women. This aligns with research indicating that empathy and teamwork are valued traits in these roles, and many men find that these characteristics boost their job satisfaction. However, some men pointed out that there isn't much support geared specifically toward them, with one saying, “My workplace doesn't focus much on support for men.” This lack of attention can lead to feelings of exclusion for some men. By introducing more inclusive policies, workplaces can ensure everyone feels valued.

Participants generally had positive things to say about working in female-led environments, emphasizing how empathetic and supportive these spaces tend to be. One individual remarked, “Working in a female-dominated environment has been a good experience. People here are generally understanding, especially when it comes to emotional issues.” This reflects a common benefit that men find in these roles, which is a contrast to more competitive male-dominated settings.

Yet, even in supportive workplaces, the absence of systems specifically for men can contribute to feelings of isolation. One participant observed, “My workplace doesn't really address support for men.” The lack of gender-specific resources suggests that although the environment feels safe emotionally, there's room for improvement by developing formal support systems that acknowledge men's unique challenges.

Creating mentorship programs or support groups for men could help them feel more included in the workplace.

Gender imbalance in the workplace is a significant factor influencing how men experience and navigate female-dominated fields. In professions where women are the majority, such as nursing, social work, and education, men often find themselves in the minority, which can affect their integration, professional identity, and career trajectory in several ways:

Men in female-dominated fields are often highly visible due to their minority status, which can lead to increased scrutiny and pressure to perform. They may feel the need to prove themselves or outperform to gain acceptance or avoid reinforcing stereotypes about their suitability for the role.

Gender imbalance can affect how comfortable men feel in these work environments, especially if the workplace culture is traditionally shaped by female norms and values. Men may need to adapt their communication and work styles to align with the existing culture, which can either positively enhance inclusivity or lead to feelings of isolation if not adequately supported.

In fields where men are underrepresented, finding male mentors or networking opportunities with peers can be challenging. This imbalance may hinder men's access to mentorship relationships that are often crucial for career development and progression.

Theme 3: Societal Expectations and Role Strain

Expectations from society about masculinity emerged as a key factor affecting men in female-dominated fields. One participant shared, "Masculinity can be helpful without being harmful." This reflects the strain men may feel when societal views conflict with their professional roles. Research shows that men often feel pressure to act in ways that fit traditional masculine roles, even if it doesn't match their personal beliefs. Navigating these expectations can be tough, but it can also be rewarding. Encouraging conversations about gender and creating open dialogues in workplaces might help men feel more at ease with these challenges.

The interviews also showed that working in these roles can positively impact personal relationships, helping men align their work and home life. One participant noted, "My career hasn't really changed my relationships much, though moving away has made it harder to see family." His partner was very supportive, appreciating his teaching role and empathetic approach, which benefitted their relationship. However, balancing personal life with professional duties can still be tough. Another participant mentioned, "I take work home often, and sometimes it feels like I'm always working." This overlap between work and personal life is frequent in teaching and healthcare, where job demands can intrude on personal time, leading to stress. Finding a better balance between work and home life is vital, especially for men who may feel pressure to be providers. Organizations could help by offering flexible scheduling and clearer expectations around workloads, which might ease these pressures and improve overall satisfaction.

Societal norms may suggest that men should restrain emotional vulnerability, particularly in professional settings. However, these roles often require genuine emotional engagement, whether through supporting students, patients, or clients. Men in female-dominated professions are therefore finding constructive ways to express empathy and compassion without feeling as though they are compromising their masculinity. This shift reflects a growing acceptance of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills as positive attributes in both men and women.

Men in these fields may face stereotypes that question their motivations or masculinity, particularly in roles traditionally seen as "nurturing" or "supportive." Nonetheless, many of these men are resilient,

leveraging the support of mentors, colleagues, and inclusive workplace cultures to challenge and resist such stereotypes. This resilience not only reinforces their professional identity but also contributes to breaking down outdated gender norms in the workplace.

Male role models in female-dominated fields help normalize emotional openness and collaboration, contributing to a more inclusive understanding of masculinity. By setting examples for peers and younger generations, these men promote a broader vision of what it means to be masculine in today's society—one that incorporates both strength and sensitivity.

The experiences of men in female-dominated fields illustrate a gradual but meaningful shift in societal norms around masculinity. Their presence in these roles challenges the idea that certain professions are inherently gendered, paving the way for more individuals to pursue careers based on their skills and interests rather than societal expectations.

Ultimately, men in these professions are helping to reshape societal expectations around masculinity by integrating traits that are traditionally undervalued for men, like compassion, patience, and emotional expression. This not only benefits them personally but also contributes to a more diverse and accepting workplace environment, supporting gender equity and a more inclusive understanding of professional identity for everyone.

Theme 4: Job Satisfaction, Career Development, and Retention

Finding joy in one's job and having the chance to grow are essential for keeping men in female-led professions. Participants generally spoke positively about their relationships with coworkers, with one saying those connections added to his job satisfaction. Positive relationships are crucial for job happiness, especially for men who thrive in supportive settings. Yet, participants noted challenges in managing work and personal life. They felt the lines between the two often blurred. Helping men tackle these challenges through work-life balance initiatives and mentoring could lead to better satisfaction and retention in their careers.

Balancing work and personal life is a significant challenge for men in female-dominated fields, affecting their career satisfaction, well-being, and long-term retention. This balance is essential to avoid burnout and maintain both professional and personal fulfillment. For men, navigating these challenges can be complex, especially when balancing societal expectations with the demands of roles that often require high emotional engagement and flexibility.

Men in female-dominated professions, such as healthcare, teaching, and social work, often face long or irregular hours that make it difficult to maintain personal commitments. The high emotional demands of these roles can lead to exhaustion, which may spill over into personal life, reducing time and energy for family and social activities.

The high demands of female-dominated professions, coupled with emotional strain, can lead to burnout if men do not have adequate work-life balance support. Burnout not only decreases job satisfaction but also affects mental health, which can influence men's commitment to the field and their likelihood of remaining in the profession long-term.

A supportive work environment with policies promoting work-life balance—such as flexible hours, mental health resources, and adequate time off—can improve job satisfaction and retention among men. When men feel supported in balancing their professional and personal lives, they are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and committed to their roles.

Men's ability to balance work and personal life is a crucial factor in their long-term retention within female-dominated fields. When work-life balance is difficult to achieve, men may choose to leave these

professions for careers that offer more predictable hours or higher compensation. Conversely, supportive policies can increase retention by fostering a work environment where men feel both professionally and personally fulfilled.

In summary, achieving a healthy work-life balance is crucial for men in female-dominated fields, as it directly impacts career satisfaction, mental well-being, and retention. By implementing policies and support systems that promote this balance, organizations can reduce burnout, improve job satisfaction, and encourage men to remain and thrive in these professions.

Theme 5: Gender-Based Stigmas

Participants shared that societal views on masculinity can create subtle tensions in female-dominated fields. One interviewed individual said, “For me, being a good person is more important. I haven’t thought too much about how I personally define masculinity.” This perspective shows a broader reevaluation of masculinity, often encouraged in caring and community-focused professions. Another participant echoed this sentiment, stating, “While we often hear about toxic masculinity, I think it’s equally important to discuss positive traits associated with masculinity.” They expressed a wish to redefine masculinity in a more positive way.

These experiences support research showing that men in these roles often face societal pressure to fit traditional masculine ideals, which can clash with their supportive roles. Open discussions about masculinity in the workplace could help break down these barriers and allow men to explore different aspects of their identity. Organizations might consider incorporating discussions about gender roles and positive masculinity in training sessions to help employees feel less constrained by traditional norms.

The perception of equal opportunity in male-dominated career growth dynamics suggests that while gender equality in advancement may seem present, underlying structural or informal barriers often remain. These barriers, although subtle, can significantly impact career growth for women and reinforce the existing male dominance within the field.

Despite outward policies supporting gender equality, some male-dominated fields maintain invisible barriers, such as biased selection criteria, promotion practices, or established professional networks that may favor men. These structures, often ingrained in the workplace culture, can unintentionally hinder the career progression of women and reinforce the status quo.

Women who advance in male-dominated fields may sometimes feel labeled as “tokens,” heightening performance pressures. This perception can lead to feelings of isolation and self-doubt, where women feel they must outperform their male counterparts to prove their capability. Such dynamics can create an added layer of stress that affects job satisfaction and confidence.

Informal expectations or stereotypes about gender roles may shape how women are perceived or treated in these fields. For example, women may be typecast into supportive or administrative roles rather than leadership roles, regardless of their qualifications. This not only restricts their career growth but also perpetuates traditional gender roles within the industry.

These subtle barriers can impact long-term career satisfaction and retention among women in male-dominated fields. The perception of limited advancement, coupled with added pressures and challenges, may lead some women to consider other career paths where they feel their contributions are better valued and their growth is fully supported.

In conclusion, while perceived equality in career advancement may exist on the surface in male-dominated fields, hidden structural and informal barriers continue to impact women’s career growth and satisfaction.

Recognizing and addressing these factors is crucial for creating a truly equitable and inclusive work environment, where career growth is accessible and fair to all, regardless of gender.

Theme 6: Barriers to Advancement and Professional Growth

Despite seeming opportunities for growth, subtle barriers to advancement exist. One participant felt limited in his ability to influence policies, expressing frustration about his lack of power to change practices. Research on workplace dynamics shows that men in female-dominated fields might have fewer chances to shape organizational decisions. While participants generally felt there were equal chances for growth, addressing these hidden barriers could foster a stronger sense of empowerment, encouraging men to pursue long-term development in their careers.

Participants felt that growth opportunities in their professions were generally accessible to everyone, regardless of gender, as long as one showed commitment and performance. “In teaching, opportunities for advancement are available to everyone,” one said, indicating a focus on merit rather than gender. However, there was also a mention of lacking targeted support or mentorship for men. As one participant noted, “There isn’t much gender-specific support in my workplace.” While colleagues were supportive, the administrative structure didn’t actively address the specific needs of men.

While some research suggests that men in female-dominated fields might face challenges because of gender expectations, these findings imply that establishing formal mentorships for men could enhance their visibility and sense of belonging in the workplace. Creating opportunities for men to take on mentorship or leadership roles could help address their unique challenges and encourage ongoing commitment to their professions.

While organizations may strive for equality in promotions and opportunities, underlying structures—such as longstanding networks, traditional mentoring arrangements, or criteria favoring historically female-oriented roles—can indirectly limit men’s advancement. These subtle barriers are often deeply embedded in the organizational culture, shaping men’s career paths in ways that may not be immediately visible.

These barriers, though often subtle, can ultimately affect men’s satisfaction with career growth opportunities, potentially impacting their long-term commitment to the field. If perceived opportunities for advancement feel limited or overly influenced by gender dynamics, men may be more likely to explore alternative career paths.

The perceived equal opportunities in career advancement may create a positive initial impression. However, as men progress in their careers, subtle barriers can become more evident, underscoring the need for organizations to review not only formal but also informal career growth structures. This awareness helps in addressing hidden barriers that could otherwise limit equitable growth.

In summary, while perceptions of equal opportunity in female-dominated fields may initially appear favorable, subtle structural and informal barriers often persist. Recognizing and addressing these nuances is essential for organizations to foster genuinely equitable career advancement, ensuring that all employees—regardless of gender—experience fair, accessible opportunities to succeed and thrive.

Conclusion

This investigation has elucidated the experiences of males employed in occupations predominantly occupied by females, with a particular emphasis on role strain, career satisfaction, and workplace dynamics. Historically, males in these sectors may have encountered significant stigma and stereotyping; however, the findings indicate a transition towards a more accepting and inclusive disposition, both within professional environments and societal constructs as a whole.

Decreasing Stigma and Stereotypes: While stigma has traditionally impacted males in female-centric professions, contemporary transformations in workplace culture and societal attitudes suggest a notable reduction in such stigma. Numerous organizations are proactively confronting gender stereotypes and cultivating an inclusive atmosphere wherein males feel acknowledged and appreciated. Male employees report experiencing a generally supportive environment, characterized by respect and encouragement in their roles, implying a broadening of the social conception of masculinity. This evolution signifies a favorable cultural transition, characterized by diminished pressure on males to adhere to conventional gender roles.

Positive Organizational Changes: The investigation also emphasizes the manner in which organizational policies and dynamics are evolving to promote gender diversity. A multitude of employers are instituting initiatives that prioritize inclusivity and equity, including mentorship programs, gender diversity training, and employee resource groups. Such measures mitigate obstacles for males entering these professions, enhance their job satisfaction, and foster a sense of community. Consequently, males in female-dominated occupations report feeling more integrated and less isolated, thereby contributing to a more constructive and supportive work environment.

Greater Acceptance of Non-Traditional Career Choices: Societal perceptions regarding career trajectories historically associated with a single gender are undergoing transformation. Among younger cohorts, career selections are increasingly informed by individual competencies and interests, as opposed to societal norms dictating "masculine" or "feminine" roles. This is exemplified by the rising number of males pursuing careers in nursing, social work, primary education, and human resources. These individuals report favorable experiences and support from peers, family, and the broader society, reflecting a significant cultural shift towards prioritizing personal fulfillment over gender-specific career paradigms.

Enhanced Job Satisfaction and Career Development: The investigation revealed that males in female-oriented fields experience elevated levels of job satisfaction, particularly when they perceive their contributions as valuable and their career trajectories as progressing. Numerous males conveyed enthusiasm for their work and derive a sense of fulfillment from aiding others, educating, or contributing to community welfare. This satisfaction is linked to positive mental health outcomes and reduced turnover rates, thereby further bolstering retention and advancement within these fields.

Contribution to Evolving Concepts of Masculinity: This study contributes to the expanding comprehension of masculinity by demonstrating how males are reconstructing their identities within these professional roles. Rather than grappling with internal discord, many males perceive that employment in these sectors enriches their understanding of masculinity, aligning it with attributes such as empathy, communication, and collaboration. This transformation has both theoretical and practical ramifications for gender studies, indicating that masculinity is increasingly recognized as adaptable and inclusive.

Implications:

Men who choose occupations that depart from typical notions of masculinity in sectors dominated by women may be challenging and perhaps reshaping conventional concepts of masculinity. This change may expand the range of socially acceptable behavior for males in the workplace. The results also show how males are stigmatized and stereotyped in these jobs, which can affect their well-being and job satisfaction. Companies may think about putting in place training and policies to lessen stigma and create a more welcoming atmosphere for males, which will eventually help to create a more varied and equal workforce in all fields.

Limitations:

Geographical Location: The study's findings are influenced by the specific geographical location where data was collected, potentially limiting the generalizability to other regions or cultural contexts. Local cultural norms, workplace policies, and societal expectations about gender roles may vary, which could affect how men experience female-dominated fields in different areas.

Sample Size and Diversity: A limited sample size restricts the extent to which findings can be generalized across all men in female-dominated professions. Furthermore, a lack of diversity within the sample particularly in terms of race, age, socioeconomic background, and sexual orientation may mean that certain perspectives are underrepresented.

Self-Reporting and Social Desirability Bias: As much of the data relies on self-reported experiences, there may be a tendency for participants to respond in a socially desirable way. This can affect the authenticity of responses, as some men might downplay challenges or highlight successes to align with perceived societal expectations.

Cross-Sectional Design: The cross-sectional nature of this study provides a snapshot in time but lacks the depth of longitudinal data, which would allow for insights into how experiences and attitudes evolve over time. Long-term influences on career satisfaction, adaptation to workplace norms, and retention cannot be fully captured in this design.

Potential for Researcher Bias: Researcher interpretations of qualitative data may introduce bias, particularly in the analysis of sensitive topics like masculinity and gender dynamics. While measures were taken to ensure objectivity, some degree of interpretation is inherent in qualitative research.

Recommendations for Future Research:

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several areas warrant further exploration to deepen understanding of men's experiences in female-dominated fields and to enhance workplace inclusivity. These recommendations aim to address gaps and expand on insights gathered, particularly concerning gender dynamics, professional development, and personal well-being. Future research should investigate how factors such as race, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and cultural background intersect to shape men's experiences in female-dominated fields. Understanding how these additional identities impact role strain, career satisfaction, and workplace dynamics can provide a more nuanced view of the diverse challenges and supports needed. Conducting longitudinal studies would allow researchers to follow men's career trajectories over time, examining factors influencing retention, career progression, and overall satisfaction. Such studies could reveal how experiences evolve as men advance in their careers, particularly concerning burnout, role strain, and work-life balance. Research on how structured support systems—such as mentorship programs and peer networks—affect men's job satisfaction, resilience, and career development within female-dominated fields would be valuable. Exploring how men perceive and utilize these systems can provide insights into designing workplace policies that support gender inclusion more effectively. Conducting cross-professional or cross-cultural comparisons could reveal how different female-dominated fields and societal contexts influence men's experiences and career choices. For example, comparing men in nursing, teaching, and social work across different cultural settings could highlight unique challenges and best practices that are transferable or adaptable across fields.

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