

# Gender Violence Experiences in Nurse Students

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## Abstract

Educational institutions from different academic grades should promote gender equality in their courses, in order to prevent or limit gender violence, as part of preventive actions to foment both physical and mental health in students. The aim of this work was to analyze the attitudes, expressions, and behaviors about gender violence along with nurse students' formation. **Method:** Qualitative, phenomenological, informants were 25 students both genders from 18 - 26 years, students of nursing from a public university in Mexico State. They were enrolled at first to eight semesters; data collection was obtained from 4 focal groups of 6 - 7 students each, along with several sessions post revision of topics related to violence and equality, gender and gender peace culture up to reach data saturation, prior to signature of informed consent. Analysis of qualitative data was according to De Souza Minayo principles, based on similarities and differences. **Results:** Five categories emerged with 16 sub-categories. Category 1 Sexual discrimination learned at home: 1.1 Intolerance, 1.2 Rejection, 1.3 Homophobia. Category 2 Violence during engagement: 2.1 Social isolation, 2.2 Constant disqualifications, 2.3 Rude contact, 2.4 Tampering and threats. Category 3 Digital violence: 3.1 Cyberbullying, 3.2 Sexting, 3.3 Revenge porn. Category 4 Gender discrimination: 4.1 Sexual discrimination, 4.2 Psychological violence, 4.3 Social violence. Category 5 Ignorance of peace culture in gender: 5.1 Poor spreading in social fields, 5.2 First contact in the career with the topics from the program, 5.3 Rejection of information. **Conclusion:** Gender violence fomented at home is highlighted, which is maintained with friends and couple relationships, in society, in school and work settings, and in institutions. It is crucial for students' awareness and thinking to limit the maintenance of *micro-macho* attitudes, as well as violent behavior to promote gender equality and peace culture.

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## Keywords

Gender Violence, Nursing Students, Peace Culture

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### 1. Introduction

Educational institutions from different academic grades should promote gender equality in their courses, in order to prevent or limit gender violence, as part of preventive actions to foster both physical and mental health in students ([Program Gender Equality, Facultad de Estudios Superiores Iztacala, 2024](#)). Facing the current realities, saturated of violence, crisis of values and challenges experienced by educators, new answers and proposals are required that seek as a priority the equitable development of their abilities, with a gender perspective in all settings, from home, school, work, and society to promote a continuous improvement to dignify the present, with a sense of social justice for everyone ([Yang, 2019](#)).

Students' voices demand to be heard, since they denounce gender violence experiences; this opens new horizons and challenges for education in the commitment of the universities, considering teaching and learning of teachers focused on these topics. Universities should build a solid base with new programs about equal opportunities for students, that offer both genders the autonomy and abilities to grow and develop, to foresee stereotype-free worlds and obsolete schemes, that respond to their needs and those required by the current society to reach a peace culture ([UNESCO, 2019](#)).

The starting point of this social phenomenon lies in basic definitions showing essential differences to be immersed in gender perspective, the concepts of sex and gender are relevant, since sex is a construct referring the biological aspect, including hormonal actions, primary and secondary sexual characteristics, is a marker of social division, it is useful to recognize dominant and dominated; while gender is a cultural, social and symbolic construct, introduced by psychological studies on personal identity when searching for a differentiation between biology and culture ([Menshikova et al., 2018](#)). Gender is also used to appoint social relationships between sexes. Its explicit use rejects biological explanations, similar to those encountered as a common denominator for diverse forms of female subordination; then, gender becomes a way to denote "cultural constructions", a totally social creation of ideas about women and men's appropriate roles. The use of gender highlights a complete system of relationships that may include sex, but is not determined by the sex nor directly determined by sexuality ([Scott, 1986](#)).

According to Scott, gender is a constituent element of social relations based on differences between sexes, and gender is a primary form of relations meaningful of power ([Scott, 1986](#)).

One of the scopes of greatest concern to eliminate inequalities among genders is education. Education represents a privileged setting where values are transmitted and reproduced, as well as attitudes and behaviors towards the female gender,

normal in our society, but at the same time, is a change factor to transform realities and promote rights and freedom (Yang, 2019).

Nursing career is characterized by being more of 60% females, though currently more men students are enrolled; the different formation settings along the career are prone to gender violence situations, those should be eradicated and one way to do it is the gender equality promoted in the classroom and hospitals, to reach a better mental and physical health among nurse students. Accordingly, the aim of this study was to identify the expressions, attitudes and behaviors of gender violence in the relations student-student, and student-teacher in the nursing career.

## 2. Method

Qualitative research, known as: “Any type of research that produces findings not reached by means of statistics and other quantitative ways” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), used to know individuals’ experiences, through emotions, behaviors and feelings, as well as cultural and social phenomena. The method of study was phenomenological descriptive that allows to know the individual in a subjective manner, considering feelings, emotions, perceptions, and experiences which meaning comes from two greek words: phainomenon or phenomenon, and logos meaning study or treatise, being the study of phenomena or facts. This research was conducted in a public university from the State of Mexico, that teaches Nursing as a career, where participants were selected by convenience for this work; they were enrolled from first to eight semesters of the nursing curriculum.

### 2.1. Inclusion Criteria

Informants are nursing students from a public university in the State of Mexico, 18 to 26 years old and both genders, enrolled from first to eight semesters in courses Gender equality or Addictions’ attention in health area, where gender topics are included, and accepted to participate signing the informed consent.

### 2.2. Data Collection

Data was obtained through four focal groups with 6-7 students, along 9 sessions post related topics on violence and gender equality, and peace culture revision, up to reach data saturation and before reading and signing the informed consent letter. This approach was complemented with field notes and participant observation. Triggering questions in the focal group were evaluated by expert judges and by pilot test. Data collection was gathered from August through November 2024, lasting two hours per session in the university classrooms.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using Flick work, including: data reduction by categorization and data coding, separating contents units post identification and classification of categorization elements, up to reach the synthesis and categories grouping

(Flick, 2014); in this step, conceptual diagrams, and phrasing and verifying conclusions were done. This last step used informants' validated data, and then codes recount and verification by comparison were done (Greckhamer & Cilesiz, 2022).

#### 2.4. Ethical and Legal Aspects

The study was conducted after the Ethics Committee from the university approved the protocol (CE/FESI/092023/1658). The principle of the Nuremberg code was observed, where the informed consent was read and signed by the informants, they understood the research proposal.

The ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki were followed, such as Privacy and confidentiality, personal data from participants were protected by means of change of current name by a pseudonym using preferred color name. Researchers are committed to have data available for public consultation, as well as the integrity and accuracy of the informs; all parts accepted the ethical norms for information delivery, as well as the results publication, and the responsibility to keep the obtained results (World Medical Association, WMA, 2023). The ethical principles of the Belmont inform for the protection of human subjects in research were observed. Respect for the person: participants were treated respectfully. Doing good: their conditions were respected, assuring their physical and mental welfare, giving benefits by their participation in the research, i.e., support facing gender violence. Justice: Participants were treated equally and with their rights (The Belmont Report, 1979).

### 3. Results

Informants' characteristics are shown in **Table 1**. Anonymity for each informant was kept by assigning a color. In the study 75% females and 25% males of 18 to 26 years old participated. After the qualitative analysis, five categories emerged with sixteen sub-categories, according to their speeches and the reference frame, as shown in **Table 2**.

**Table 1.** Informants' characteristics.

Participants	Gender	Age	Semester
Dark blue	Female	18	1 <sup>st</sup>
Light blue	Female	19	1 <sup>st</sup>
Brown	Female	19	1 <sup>st</sup>
Orange	Female	19	1 <sup>st</sup>
Rainbow	Female	19	1 <sup>st</sup>
Sepia	Female	19	1 <sup>st</sup>
Gray	Female	21	4 <sup>th</sup>
Purple	Female	21	4 <sup>th</sup>
Beige	Female	21	4 <sup>th</sup>

**Continued**

Black	Female	21	4 <sup>th</sup>
Jade	Female	21	4 <sup>th</sup>
Vermilion	Female	21	4 <sup>th</sup>
Violet	Female	22	5 <sup>th</sup>
Fiusha	Female	22	5 <sup>th</sup>
Brunette	Female	22	5 <sup>th</sup>
Bicolor	Female	23	6 <sup>th</sup>
Light green	Female	23	6 <sup>th</sup>
Crimson	Female	23	7 <sup>th</sup>
Olive	Female	24	7 <sup>th</sup>
Red	Male	19	1 <sup>st</sup>
White	Male	19	1 <sup>st</sup>
Pearl	Male	21	4 <sup>th</sup>
Rose	Male	21	4 <sup>th</sup>
Aqua	Male	22	5 <sup>th</sup>
Yellow		25	8 <sup>th</sup>

Source: 25 students of Nursing, Mexico, 2025.

**Table 2.** Emerging categories.

Category	Sub-category
Category 1 Sexual discrimination learned at home	1.1. Intolerance
	1.2. Rejection
	1.3. Homophobia
	2.1. Social isolation
Category 2 Violence during engagement	2.2. Constant disqualifications
	2.3. Rude contact
	2.4. Tampering and threats
	3.1. Cyberbullying
Category 3 Digital violence	3.2. Sexting
	3.3. Revenge porn
	4.1. Sexual discrimination
Category 4 Gender discrimination	4.2. Psychological violence
	4.3. Social violence
	5.1. Poor spreading in social fields
Category 5 Ignorance of peace culture in gender	5.2. First contact in the career with the topics from the program
	5.3. Rejection of information

#### 4. Discussion

Gender violence occurs violating the physical, psychological and relational of a person due to its gender. The goal is to cause damage, coerce, limit or tampering the victim by any possible reachable means, this allows to distinguish different types of gender violence, from discrete and imperceptible by the sufferer up to very evident due to the provoked damage; it affects physical and mental health in the victim altering its interpersonal relationships and decision making (Gutiérrez Bernal & Navarrete Sánchez, 2023; Poggi, 2019). Female nursing students are vulnerable to gender violence due to being in diverse situations that show unfairness in treats and its development in different settings; also male nursing students experience gender violence, as observed in Category 1 Sexual discrimination learned at home, and its sub-categories 1.1 Intolerance, 1.2 Rejection and 1.3 Homophobia.

[ ] In some hospital services we are not allowed to practice due that patients or relatives feel uncomfortable because I am a men. Yellow

[ ] During practices patients call us misses and male nurses as doctor. Jade

[ ] Some patients asked me why I studied Nursing, being a female career why I did not choose medicine. Aqua

Transphobia means the rejection, discrimination, hate and intolerance toward persons being part of the collective trans, the attitudes and behaviors behind this violence involve physical aggression, insults, harassment, isolation, rejection and keep beliefs and prejudices against trans persons (de los Ángeles et al., 2022).

[ ] When the teacher takes attendance I asked her to call my name as feminine, and she refused it, saying that in the attendance list it is as masculine and then she will keep it. Rose

[ ] In hospitals the comments about homos and trans are rude and out of place. Rose

Homophobia is the fear, rejection or aversion toward persons in reason of their sexual preference, orientation, identity and gender expression based in stereotypes, prejudices and stigmas, shown as discriminatory attitudes and behaviors that violate equality, dignity, rights and freedom of any person, generating diverse types of violence (de los Ángeles et al., 2022).

[ ] I had not comment to my friends group that I am homos, because I heard their rude and offensive jokes about it. White

Gender violence is everywhere and romantic relationships are no exception, intimate partner violence is any physical, psychological and sexual aggression seeking to control the other person (Greckhamer & Cilesiz, 2022). It starts with any not comfortable comment, followed by a pulling that initially could be mistaken as a game between them, but as time passes it gets worse, as observed in speeches of Category 2 Violence during engagement and its sub-categories:

[ ] my boyfriend got mad if I talked to any male mate, if I said something that he was not in accord, he compared me with other women, he prohibited me to have male friends and only being with him, I ended moving away of my social circle. Gray

[ ] it was a relationship full of mistreating me, when we were together he was very rude sexually, he harmed me, he did not care when I said it was painful what he did to me, he continued doing it and then humiliated me saying that I do not cooperate, that I do not regret if he seeks other girls. Beige

[ ] at the beginning everything was ok, but later on he reprimand me about any of his support, saying that he had to help me because my friends and I mada everything wrong, that we were mediocre, that we do not make any thing well. Blue

In the digital era romantic interpersonal relationships lead to high risk actions, through sexting self-photos or videos are sent with sexual connotation. The risk is that these contents may be used by others, as cyberbullying, porn revenge, the disclosure of secrets, intimate images published by resentment as observed in Category 3 Digital violence:

[ ] when I ended my relationship with my last boyfriend, he threatened me with sharing sexual photos to ridiculed me in my circle, I was afraid and for a time I did what he wanted, up to I got upset and I told him do whatever you want, that I endured my shame, but I would accuse him before the cybernetic police to be Punished and he did not publish the photos. Purple

Sexting are discriminatory practices both in behaviors and thoughts, they are based in beliefs related to sex and gender, it considers hostility, exclusion, invisibility from person to person in schools, hospitals and society in general (Yang, 2019), as shown in Category 4 Gender discrimination:

[ ] when we are in the hospital the patients call me miss and to my male peers they say doctor, just because they are men and wear a white uniform; in a reunion due to end of semester the teacher commanded us females to serve the food, he did not say it to male students, and when finishing we females had to pick up dishes and clean. Light green

[ ] when we were together he never accepted my cooperation, he was very offended when I offered half of the cost and he said that he was the man being responsible of the women, later on he was unfaithful to me since the other girl was obedient. Jade

[ ] female teachers said us to pick up trash and place it in the garbage can, at the end of class, they do not tell that to boys and they do not cooperate. Crimson

Facing this process of denaturing the stereotypes of gender being so deep in us, education is the key and it is recommended several strategies to teach with gender equality. Being conscious of the “hidden” *curriculum* to avoid messages that increase or diminish the gender gap (Athanasides et al., 2023).

The goal of Peace culture is to practice gender equality at home, to promote equality at home, in school and in work places, to promote equality, justice and recognition of other persons, it involves being treated with respect, consideration, and participate equally in any life activity (Hernández, 2024; Viorato-Romero et al., 2023). Peace culture must be widespread and promoted in family, at school, at any institution and in society in general (Robles, 2021), such that is deficient spreading will keep gender violence in the different settings, as shown in Category 5 Ignorance of peace culture in gender, and its sub-categories:

- [ ] along the seven semesters I have been coursed through in the career, never revised these topics at this deep and with so god discussions, really we talked about our experiences and what we can do to get better all of us. Olive
- [ ] along our training we were accustomed to see actions and comments as normal, even though they bother us but we let them go to avoid arguing, however it is necessary to reflect how we want to get along. Violet
- [ ] from home we have to initiate attitude and behavior changes, with family, with colleagues and teachers at school, with friends and most of all with our partner, it must be a daily practice. Crimson

The results justify in an alarming way that the changes are urgent, and they should be collectively done, supported in the educational model of care pedagogy of Paulo Freire and Aguado et al., to construct a co-educational model that questions the current dominant, and selects a different one giving priority to gender equality (Scott, 1986; Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

## 5. Conclusion

The strategy to incorporate a topic on gender equality in the Nursing *curriculum* and in optative matters with gender focus will promote the institutional mechanisms that warrant the gender perspective in all public policy and institutional culture. It promotes the social situation under the principle that any person has the same opportunities and rights. In nursing, it favors perspectives contributing to justice and equality from the students' view with a clear gender focus.

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## Authors Contributions

DCT-P designed the research protocol, DCT-P, RV-M and NSV-R implemented training sessions, DCT-P, and NSV-R collected information, DCT-P, ALR-M and NSV-R analyzed qualitative data, DCT-P, NSV-R, RV-M and ALRM wrote and revised, and all authors approved the final manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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