IMPACT Evidence Review:

Recruiting more men into social care work

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# What is the Issue

The recruitment and retention of men in social care professions represent significant challenges within a field traditionally dominated by female practitioners. Scholarly investigations have illuminated a multifaceted landscape marked by socio-cultural norms and gender stereotypes that dissuade men from pursuing careers in caregiving professions (Moskos, 2020; Loughrey, 2008). This reluctance is often rooted in deeply ingrained perceptions that associate caregiving with femininity, perpetuating the devaluation of men's contributions to this crucial sector.

Gender role socialisation and societal expectations play pivotal roles in shaping individuals' career choices, further contributing to the hesitancy of men to enter the social care workforce (Simpson, 2005). Research underscores the importance of dismantling these ingrained stereotypes, emphasizing that caregiving is not exclusive to any gender and recognising the diverse skills and perspectives that men bring to the profession (Hussein and Christensen, 2017; Storm and Lowndes, 2019). Strategies to challenge these norms involve targeted educational initiatives that redefine caregiving as a universal and valuable human activity, irrespective of gender (Holtermann, 2019).

The scarcity of male role models within the social care sector compounds this issue, acting as a deterrent for boys and men to envision themselves in caregiving professions (Barker et al, 2012). A dearth of visible representation perpetuates stereotypes and limits the aspirational scope for men within the field. Initiatives to address this challenge include showcasing successful male care workers through media campaigns, educational programs, and community outreach to provide tangible examples of men thriving in caregiving roles (Yi & Keogh, 2016; Whitford et al., 2020).

Beyond the imperative of fostering gender diversity, actively engaging men in social care jobs responds to the escalating demand for skilled workers in a sector grappling with an aging population and increasing social care needs (Humphries, 2022). Research highlights that men, bringing unique perspectives and qualities to caregiving roles, have the potential to enhance the overall caregiving experience and contribute to better outcomes for people who draw on care and support (Skills for Care, 2010).

Strategic interventions to address the challenges of recruiting and retaining men in social care professions necessitate evidence-based approaches. Initiatives should go beyond superficial awareness-raising and actively challenge entrenched stereotypes (Pease, 2011). Deploying comprehensive educational programs that emphasize the benefits and opportunities for men in social care is crucial, with a focus on disrupting gender norms and fostering inclusivity (Holtermann, 2019; Clifton et al., 2020).

Creating inclusive work environments and rectifying gender biases within recruitment and promotion processes are pivotal steps in fostering the retention of men in social care jobs (Clifton et al., 2020). Organisations play a critical role in providing gender-sensitive training and professional development opportunities that enhance awareness and challenge discriminatory practices (Abril, 2021; Hrzenjak, 2019). Mentorship programs and support networks tailored to men in social care can significantly contribute to bolstering job satisfaction, facilitating career progression, and enhancing overall well-being (Clifton et al., 2020). These interventions align with broader societal shifts towards gender equality and represent proactive measures to address the unique challenges faced by men in caregiving professions.

This evidence synthesis, aim to provide a comprehensive and analytical overview of the current state of knowledge on the subject, offering evidence-based insights to inform policies and practices in the social care sector.

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## Box 1 Note on methodology

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| This evidence synthesis systematically examined a total of 29 articles sourced from peer-reviewed academic literature and the grey literature to comprehensively investigate the barriers and workplace experiences of male workers in female-dominated care industries. A systematic search was undertaken across various scholarly databases, including Social Policy and Practice, HMIC, ScienceDirect, and others using a precise search strategy with relevant keywords. The search terms included phrases such as "male workers," "caseworkers," "social care staff," "care work," "nursing," "caregiving," "gender diversity," "men in caring roles," "staff recruitment" and "retention of male staff". Strict inclusion criteria were applied to identify articles focused specifically on men working in nursing, care work, childcare, social work and related traditionally female-dominated care sectors. Two relevant special issues were identified and included - one in the Journal of Men and Masculinities examining migrant men in care work and another issue in Teorija in Praksa journal also with a focus on male migrant caregivers. Additionally, relevant systematic reviews in nursing studies and articles on long-term care roles were incorporated. After screening, a total of 29 articles were selected for synthesis, including 18 articles focused on men in direct elderly and disability care roles, 3 examined male social workers, 6 were within nursing and 2 explored personal assistants. The chosen articles underwent thorough review and qualitative analysis to systematically extract key themes and insights based on the documented challenges and experiences of the male workers in these care-focused female-majority sectors. This rigorous systematic methodology aimed to comprehensively map the current state of academic literature on the topic and elucidate the barriers and opportunities impacting males in care-centric professions as well as recommendations for policy and practice. |

# Evidence: Why some men choose to do care work

This review synthesizes insights from diverse research exploring why men are entering care professions traditionally dominated by women. Despite lingering gender imbalances, more men are pursuing roles in areas like nursing, childcare, domestic service, and elderly care, reflecting evolving labour markets, concepts of masculinity, and recognition of the value of compassionate caregiving. This review reveals a spectrum of intrinsic, pragmatic, and socio-political motivations driving men's entry into care work. Their reasons span seeking personal fulfilment to actively pursuing gender equality and securing livelihoods. Recognising this diversity provides vital perspectives on diversifying the care workforce.

Altruism and Helping Others: A major motivation is an altruistic desire to directly help vulnerable populations through caring acts (Hussein et al., 2016Yi & Keogh, 2016; Lupton, 2000; Storm, 2023). Men report being compelled by humanitarian objectives, personal values of compassion, and a sense of duty to serve those in need (Lupton, 2000; Campbell & Carroll, 2007; Pease, 2011). Many are driven by intrinsic goals to make a positive, meaningful difference in people's lives.

Challenging Gender Stereotypes: Another key driver is actively confronting stereotypes that position caregiving as inherently feminine (Lupton, 2000; Loughrey, 2007; Abril, 2021). Some leverage care roles to redefine conventional masculinity, framing care work as a platform for progressive, inclusive manhood (Storm, 2023). Their participation challenges societal expectations regarding suitable careers for men (Loughrey, 2007; Whitford et al., 2020). Storm's (2023) investigation emphasizes a significant motivation among men entering care work – a fervent desire to contribute to more gender-equal work environments. The article underscores that managers actively seek to hire more men in caregiving teams, reflecting a commitment to challenging traditional gender norms within the caregiving sector

Personal Growth and Fulfilment: The relational dimensions of care work can facilitate personal growth, self-actualisation, and fulfilment for men (Campbell & Carroll, 2007; Lupton, 2000; Barker et al., 2012). The emotional engagement and satisfaction derived from improving lives provides meaning (Abril, 2021). Careers like nursing and care work allow men to develop qualities like empathy and compassion (Whitford et al., 2020). Care work also provides opportunities for skill enhancement, emotional growth through connections, and self-actualisation for some men (McLean, 2003; Scambor et al., 2015; Scrinzi, 2010). Strong intrinsic motivations related to personal fulfilment are a key driver behind the decision to pursue care work for some men (Bartolomei, 2010; Abril, 2021).

Integrating Feminine Attributes: Some men view care work as enabling them to integrate conventionally feminine attributes into their identity and move beyond restrictive norms of masculinity (Loughrey, 2007; Villeneuve, 1994). Careers like nursing present opportunities to escape constraints of traditional male roles and explore alternative paths aligned with shifting masculinities (Loughrey, 2007; Ruby and Scholz, 2018).

Stable Employment and Career Opportunities: The abundant openings, career prospects, job stability and benefits associated with care sector positions offer pragmatic motivations, especially amidst declines in traditionally male industries (McLean, 2003; Lupton, 2000; Whitford et al., 2020). Care work provides viable employment options for men seeking security. For some economically marginalised men with limited opportunities, care work represents a critical source of income and livelihood (Hussein & Ismail, 2016; Bartolomei, 2010; Moskos and Isherwood, 2019). The wages and benefits incentivise men needing to support themselves and their families. Scambor et al. (2015) highlight the impact of career diversification on men's career choices. The decline of men in heavy industries and the rise of the service sector offer more flexible and fulfilling job prospects, fostering a more inclusive and diverse caregiving landscape. The emergence of "caring masculinities" legitimised caregiving as a valuable identity for men, encouraging their participation in caregiving professions and challenging traditional gender norms (Scambor et al., 2015; Yi and Keogh, 2016).

Normalisation Through Prior Exposure: Previous positive exposures to caregiving, like caring for relatives, help normalise these roles for some men and provide social contacts facilitating entry into female-dominated health fields (Yi & Keogh, 2016; Hussein & Christensen, 2017; Whitford et al, 2020). Familiarity and networks ease the transition (Hussein et al, 2016).

Social Justice Values: Some men report being drawn to care roles by desires to advance social justice, make a community impact, and serve populations in need (Pease, 2011; Lupton, 2000). Caregiving provides opportunities to enact values of equity and empowerment. For a minority, choosing care work constitutes an act of defiance against traditional gender role expectations and a chance to cross boundaries (Clifton et al., 2020; Abril, 2021; Storm, 2023). They are motivated by being able to pursue non-stereotypical interests.

# Evidence: Men’s experiences in care work roles

The reviewed studies also explore the experiences of men working in feminised care professions such as nursing, childcare, elderly care, and domestic services. Despite increasing participation, men remain a minority in these sectors. The research reveals some common themes in how masculine identities and gender norms shape men’s encounters with care work.

Isolation and Lack of Peer Support: A common theme is that men often feel professionally isolated as the minority gender, lacking peer social support networks (Hussein et al., 2016; McLean, 2003). The female-dominated environments can contribute to a sense of alienation. Hussein et al. (2016) note that men reported feeling deliberately isolated through behaviours like exclusion from social events and unofficial information sharing among female peers. Women co-workers were also more likely to monitor and critique men's behaviours more closely (Hussein et al., 2016).

Stigma and Suspicion: Many studies find men face stigma, discrimination, and suspicion regarding their motivations in care roles, especially from female colleagues (Barker et al., 2012; McLean, 2003). Accusations about sexuality or impropriety create anxieties. Men in care work perceive their roles as degrading and embarrassing, aligning with societal masculine norms. Stigma is attached to men in care roles, affecting their self-esteem and sense of belonging (Storm and Lowndes, 2019; Hussein and Christensen, 2017). The perception of low status is a shared experience, contributing to the challenges they face. In some contexts, men faced social sanctions from family members or friends for entering care work, which forced them to suppress emotional aspects of caregiving considered incongruous with masculine norms (Moskos & Isherwood, 2019; sarti and Scrinzi, 2010). This blocked avenues for processing experiences and building support.

Conflict with Masculine Identity: Men in care work navigate paradoxes, reconciling a feminised job with traditional gender norms (Loughrey, 2007; Prinzellner, 2023). Strategies include adapting masculinity to the caregiving environment, reconstructing job roles, and emphasizing masculine strengths to align with societal expectations. Care work can challenge conventional masculine identity, leading some men to emphasize stereotypically male qualities like strength (Storm & Lowndes, 2019). Others resist intimate “dirty work” to distance from feminine associations (Sarti & Scrinzi, 2010). Men are often segregated into more technical, heavy, or outdoor care tasks considered masculine, while delegating more intimate inside work to women (Barker et al., 2012; Sarti & Scrinzi, 2010).

Emphasizing Provider Role: Some reconstruct masculine identities in care work by framing it as an economic provider role for their families, a source of wages (Sarti & Scrinzi, 2010; Näre, 2010). This breadwinner narrative helps mitigate stigma. For example, migrant men from the Global South employed as domestic workers in Europe frequently invoke their breadwinning responsibilities to justify taking on cooking, cleaning, and caregiving tasks for other families (Sarti & Scrinzi, 2010; Bartolomei, 2010). Though the work itself is culturally coded as feminine in their home countries, these men underscore their essential role in supporting their own families financially through global care chains. Their identity as good husbands and fathers who sacrifice abroad to provide remains intact. Pease's (2011) research examining men in professional caregiving roles found that and ability to avoid domestic constraints and focus on career advancement reflected traditional masculine breadwinner mentalities prioritising work over family care responsibilities.

Complex Emotions: Men in care work often find themselves grappling with complex emotions like humiliation, shame, or even trauma due to the clash between the demands of their caregiving roles and entrenched societal expectations surrounding traditional masculinity (Sarti, 2010; Bartolomei, 2010). The nature of care work, which involves nurturing, empathy, and emotional engagement, may challenge prevailing stereotypes that associate masculinity solely with strength, autonomy, and emotional restraint (Ruby and Scholz, 2018; Storm, 2023; Lupton, 2000). As men navigate this intersection, they may encounter internal conflicts, feeling a sense of inadequacy or vulnerability that contradicts societal norms (Loughrey, 2007). The potential for stigmatisation and judgment from others who hold rigid views about gender roles can exacerbate these emotions, creating a challenging emotional landscape for men engaged in care work (Lupton, 2000; Scambor et al, 2015). The societal perception that caregiving is a traditionally feminine domain can contribute to a sense of shame or humiliation, impacting men's self-esteem and well-being as they navigate the complexities of fulfilling caregiving responsibilities while contending with deeply ingrained expectations of what it means to be a man (Skills for Care, 2010). Additionally, the internalisation of these societal norms may contribute to a sense of trauma, as men reconcile their genuine commitment to care with the external pressures that question the compatibility of caregiving roles with their masculine identities (Sarti, 2010). But some redefine masculinity.

Precarious Existence: For migrant men engaged in informal care work, the pervasive theme of precarity adds an additional layer of complexity to their experiences (Bartolomei, 2010; Näre, 2010). Operating without formal contracts or stable employment arrangements, these men face heightened vulnerability and insecurity in their caregiving roles Sarti, 2010; Sarti and Scrinzi, 2010). The lack of legal protections amplifies their precarious status, leaving them susceptible to exploitation and uncertainties about job prospects (Hussein et al, 2016). This precariousness is intricately intertwined with their marginalised status as migrants, compounding challenges related to immigration status, economic instability, and social exclusion (Bartolomei, 2010; Scrinzi, 2010). The absence of established employment structures not only contributes to a sense of instability in their professional lives but also underscores broader systemic issues that intersect with their migrant identity, making their experiences in care work marked by fragility and heightened vulnerability (Nare, 2010; Sarti, 2010)

# Evidence: Barriers faced by men entering and working in care profession

The review also explores the various obstacles deterring greater participation of men in care work across fields like nursing, childcare, elderly care, and domestic services. Despite growing numbers, men remain a minority in these female-dominated sectors. The sources reveal common barriers shaped by societal gender norms and stereotypes.

Gender Stereotypes and Stigma: A predominant theme emerging from the literature is the pervasive nature of gender stereotypes that position caregiving as feminine and the ensuing societal stigmas men confront when pursuing these culturally gendered roles (Scrinzi, 2010; Whitford, 2020; Bartolomei, 2010). Research across multiple studies documents that men entering care fields grapple with questioning and scrutiny from peers, colleagues, and society broadly for contravening traditional gender norms that associate caring professions with women (Yi & Keogh, 2016; Villeneuve, 1994; Hussein et al., 2016).

For instance, Whitford et al. (2020) found in their interviews that men pursuing nursing or social care careers faced pressure and even teasing for selecting an "atypical" career path that defied masculine norms. Such deeply rooted biases linking care tasks like emotional sensitivity and nurturing with femininity permeate across cultural contexts. Baker et al. (2012) highlighted that especially for roles like nursing, societal suspicion concerning men's motives served to diminish appeal and deter participation.

Collectively, these studies underscore how men risk social marginalisation and must overcome assumptions that caregiving lies outside conceptions of conventional masculinity. The literature indicates stigmatisation contributes to men ruling out care occupations, while those entering these female-dominated fields often struggle with feelings of isolation or being scrutinised as they navigate sociocultural norms still prone to impose gender dualisms (Skills for Care, 2010; Loughrey, 2007).

Threats to Masculine Identity: Engaging in care work introduces a profound challenge to conventional masculine identity, necessitating a delicate balance for men navigating this field (Holtermann, 2019; Sarti & Scrinzi, 2010; Storm and Lowndes, 2019). The intersection of traditionally feminine tasks, particularly intimate care responsibilities, creates a clash with established norms of manhood, serving as a multifaceted barrier to male participation in caregiving roles (Bartolomei, 20100. The conflict between social expectations surrounding masculinity and the demands of care work is evident, as men grapple with the pressure to conform to the traditional breadwinner role (Lupton, 2000; Morrell & Jewkes, 2011). The inflexible care hours associated with these roles often overshadow family commitments, contributing to the reluctance of men to engage in caregiving.

This identity conflict extends beyond societal expectations to encompass deeply ingrained gender stereotypes that position caregiving as exclusively "women's work" (Prinzellner et al., 2023; Hussein & Manthorpe, 2016). The cultural bias reinforces the perception of women as "natural" caregivers while stigmatising nurturing roles as "unmanly" or incompatible with masculinity. Such norms act as a significant barrier to men entering care roles, preventing them from embracing caregiving tasks and expressing emotions that challenge traditional gender expectations. Redefining masculinity within the context of care work requires a conscious effort to accommodate values like nurturance, patience, and empathy (Ruby and Scholz, 2018). However, the scarcity of male peers and public role models embracing these values hinders men's ability to perceive the reconcilability of these attributes within their gender identity, further complicating the dismantling of barriers to male entry into care roles (Hussein et al., 2016; Barker et al., 2012). Future research should explore strategies to foster a more inclusive and flexible understanding of masculinity, providing insights into overcoming these challenges and promoting gender-inclusive care environments.

Pay and Career Prospects: The literature consistently illuminates the substantial economic barriers that deter men from actively participating in care work. A notable aspect highlighted by Holtermann (2019) and Hussein et al. (2016) is the pervasive issue of lower pay within the caregiving sector. These studies underscore that men often view care work as economically unattractive when compared to other professions that offer more competitive compensation. The review reveals a recurring pattern where the financial remuneration associated with caregiving roles falls short of what is perceived as financially rewarding, acting as a significant deterrent for men considering a career in this field (Hussein et al, 2016; McLean, 2003).

In addition to lower pay, a critical facet of the economic disincentive lies in the limited opportunities for career advancement within the caregiving sector, as emphasized by McLean (2003) and Moskos and Isherwood (2019). Men, the literature suggests, are deterred by the perceived lack of prospects for climbing the career ladder in care work. The limited avenues for career progression contribute to the reluctance of men to view care work as a viable long-term profession (Hussein and Christensen, 2017). This not only affects individual aspirations but also perpetuates gender imbalances within the caregiving workforce by dissuading men from pursuing caregiving roles beyond entry-level positions.

The economic challenges extend beyond native populations, particularly impacting migrant men seeking roles in care work, as highlighted by Bartolomei, (2010) and Nare, (2010) The review underscores the additional barriers faced by migrant men, such as the lack of recognition for their prior qualifications in the host country. These challenges compound the economic disincentives, making care work less appealing to migrant men compared to alternative occupations that offer better financial rewards and societal recognition.

Cultural Norms and Gender Socialisation: Prevailing cultural norms and ingrained gender socialisation present formidable barriers, perpetuating the view that caregiving roles are inherently inappropriate for males. This enduring perspective is deeply rooted in societal beliefs that steer boys and men away from pursuing careers in care work (Holtermann, 2019; Barker et al., 2012; Sarti, 2010; Bartolomei, 2010; Scrinzi, 2010). The literature consistently underscores the impact of these cultural barriers, revealing how entrenched gender norms shape societal expectations and influence career choices.

Holtermann's (2019) work highlights the persistence of cultural norms that associate caregiving with femininity, creating a societal bias against men entering such roles. Barker et al. (2012) and Sarti (2010) delve into the impact of gender socialisation, elucidating how boys are often discouraged from considering caregiving professions due to deeply ingrained beliefs about appropriate career paths for men. Bartolomei's (2010) research further emphasizes how cultural perceptions surrounding masculinity discourage men from pursuing nurturing roles, contributing to the prevailing gender disparity in care work.

Migrant men face an additional layer of complexity within this cultural context. While grappling with the existing gender norms, they must also navigate cultural differences in host countries (Sarti, 2010; Sarti and Scrinzi, 2010). The literature suggests that migrant men encounter heightened challenges as they strive to reconcile their cultural backgrounds with the expectations and stereotypes prevalent in the new society. For instance, traditional views on masculinity from their home countries may clash with the cultural expectations in the host country, adding an extra layer of resistance to their entry into care work (Nare, 2010; Scrinzi, 2010). This intersectionality of cultural barriers places migrant men in a particularly vulnerable position, as they contend not only with gender norms but also with acculturation challenges.

Workplace Culture and Biases: Men encounter substantial challenges within care settings, primarily stemming from unwelcoming workplace cultures marked by discrimination, unequal treatment, and exclusion. Research by McLean (2003), Hussein and Christensen (2017), and Scrinzi (2010) consistently highlights how assumptions about the sexual orientation of male nurses or care workers, coupled with the perception of nursing and care work as a "woman's profession," contribute to pervasive biases in the workplace. These biases manifest in discriminatory practices, impacting job satisfaction and hindering the professional integration of men in caregiving roles.

The study by Loughrey (2007) emphasises the repercussions of workplace biases, revealing that male caregivers may face challenges in asserting their professional identity and encounter resistance in the workplace solely based on their gender. This resistance and exclusion contribute to difficulties in integrating into the workplace and fostering a sense of belonging within the nursing profession, perpetuating a gender imbalance that affects professional dynamics.

Prinzellner et al. (2023) shed light on how workplace norms and policies can further exacerbate these challenges. Limited paternity leave, the absence of flexible work arrangements, and the lack of supportive organisational cultures create barriers for men seeking to combine caregiving responsibilities with employment. These institutional practices not only deter men from taking on caregiving roles but also limit their involvement in care work.

# Evidence: Potential benefits of men’s participation in care work

The compiled research explores possible advantages of greater involvement of men in traditionally female-dominated care professions, including nursing, childcare, domestic services, and elderly care. Despite persisting gender imbalances, the studies suggest men's participation could positively impact individuals, families, and society.

Diversifying and Balancing the Care Workforce: A commonly cited benefit is diversifying and balancing the gender makeup of the heavily female-skewed care workforce (Villeneuve, 1994; Whitford et al., 2020; Loughrey, 2007). Including more men can bring varied perspectives and approaches that enrich quality of care (Sarti & Scrinzi, 2010; Campbell & Carroll, 2007).

Providing Role Models: Numerous sources propose men provide much-needed role models and mentors for male care recipients, students, and aspiring caregivers, which helps attract more men to the field (Yi & Keogh, 2016; Villeneuve, 1994; Barker et al., 2012). Exposure to male care workers challenges gender stereotypes (Pease, 2011).

Meeting Care Needs and Demands: Some studies suggest care users may prefer or better relate to male caregivers for certain tasks, like assisting male clients (Sarti, 2010). Expanding the talent pool to include men also helps address growing care workforce shortages in healthcare and social services (Villeneuve, 1994; Barker et al., 2012).

Promoting Gender Equality and Social Change: Many sources propose involving men in care work promotes gender equality by normalising men in traditionally female roles (Barker et al., 2012; Sarti & Scrinzi, 2010). It contributes to social change by challenging restrictive gender norms and assumptions that caring is "women's work" (Abril, 2021; Lupton, 2000).

Enhanced Job Prospects and Development: Some research indicates care work provides viable employment and career development opportunities for marginalised or unemployed men (Sarti, 2010; McLean, 2003). Skill enhancement and leadership pathways in the field can benefit men lacking other options.

# Evidence: Recommendations

The compiled review proposes various recommendations aimed at dismantling barriers and transforming gender stereotypes to increase male participation and inclusivity in care work. The studies advocate multi-level strategies spanning educational interventions, policy changes, recruitment initiatives, and public messaging.

## Educational Initiatives:

Challenging Gender Stereotypes: Addressing and dismantling deeply ingrained gender stereotypes is crucial to fostering inclusivity in care work. Educational initiatives play a pivotal role in reshaping societal perceptions and challenging traditional gender norms. Holtermann (2019), Sarti and Scrinzi (2010), and Clifton et al. (2020) advocate for comprehensive educational programs that actively challenge the prevailing narrative that caregiving is exclusively a woman's domain. These initiatives should emphasize the diversity of roles and break down the notion that certain professions are inherently linked to gender (Yi and Keogh, 2016; Villeneuve, 1994).

Implementing gender-sensitive educational initiatives begins in schools and extends to vocational training programs (Holtermann, 2019; Clifton et al, 2020). Schools should actively challenge stereotypes and promote an understanding that caregiving roles are not determined by gender. For instance, incorporating modules that highlight the historical contributions of men in caregiving professions can provide a more inclusive narrative. Gender-sensitive career counselling, as recommended by Holtermann (2019), becomes integral in expanding boys' perspectives on careers, countering gender stereotyping from an early age.

Furthermore, introducing interventions like job shadowing or open house events, as suggested by Holtermann (2019), becomes a practical approach. These initiatives allow boys to witness first-hand the diversity of caregiving roles and interact with relatable role models, challenging preconceived notions and promoting an informed perspective on gender-neutral career options.

Yi and Keogh (2016), Whitford et al. (2020), and Abril (2021) emphasize the significance of positive media representations and the inclusion of male role models in caregiving. Media platforms can play a transformative role in shaping societal perceptions. Public service announcements, documentaries, and social media campaigns can spotlight the experiences of men excelling in caregiving professions Hussein et al, 2016; Prinzellner et al., 2023; Villeneuve, 1994). This strategy not only counters stereotypes but also provides aspiring male caregivers with relatable figures, demonstrating that caring roles are not exclusive to one gender.

## Organisational Initiatives:

Promoting a Caring Culture: Companies play a pivotal role in shaping societal attitudes toward caregiving professions. As emphasized by Clifton et al. (2020), actively promoting a caring culture within organisations is essential for fostering inclusivity. To achieve this, companies can implement inclusive policies that support work-life balance for all employees (Abril, 2021; Baker et al., 2012). Workshops on work-life balance can be organised to raise awareness and provide practical strategies. Additionally, celebrating caregiving achievements within the organisation is crucial for recognising and normalising the diverse contributions of caregivers (Abril, 2021). For instance, organisations can establish recognition programs that acknowledge and appreciate employees actively involved in caregiving activities. By incorporating caregiving into the organisational culture, companies contribute to breaking down gender stereotypes and creating a supportive environment for all employees (Hrzenjak, 2019; Lupton, 2000).

Holtermann (2019) further advocates for organisations to integrate caring values into their corporate ethos. This involves not only recognising the importance of caregiving within the company but also actively promoting a cultural shift that values care as a fundamental aspect of the workplace. By doing so, organisations contribute to the broader societal goal of challenging traditional gender norms and embracing caregiving as a shared responsibility.

Enhancing Local Recruitment and Career Development: Engaging employers to improve local recruitment targeting men and encouraging career development in caregiving are indispensable strategies (Skills for Care, 2010; Holtermann, 2019; Hussein et al., 2016). Local recruitment initiatives can involve proactive collaboration with community organisations to identify potential male candidates interested in caregiving professions. Employers can participate in job fairs, community events, and outreach programs to actively seek and attract male talent (Clifton et al., 2020; Hussein et al, 2016). To further support this initiative, mentorship programs within organisations can be established. These programs aim to guide and support male caregivers in their professional growth within the caregiving sector. Mentorship provides invaluable insights, helping individuals navigate challenges, overcome barriers, and succeed in their chosen caregiving careers (Lupton, 2000; Clifton et al, 2020).

Moreover, Hussein et al. (2016) emphasize the importance of fostering an organisational culture that values and prioritises career development for all employees, regardless of gender. This can involve establishing clear career pathways, providing training opportunities, and offering mentorship programs. By actively promoting local recruitment and investing in the career development of male caregivers, organisations contribute to creating a more diverse and gender-inclusive caregiving workforce.

Challenging Workplace Norms and Policies: It is imperative to challenge workplace norms and policies that hinder the seamless integration of caregiving responsibilities with employment, as advocated by Abril (2021). Organisations should proactively engage in regular reviews of existing policies, seeking feedback from employees to identify and address potential barriers. An inclusive work environment is fostered through the implementation of policies that facilitate flexible scheduling, remote work options, and family-friendly initiatives (Campbell, 2007; Prinzellner et al, 2023). For instance, companies can revise attendance policies to accommodate unforeseen caregiving needs or provide resources for employees to set up home offices, ensuring they can fulfil both professional and caregiving roles effectively (Lupton, 2000; Barker et al., 2012).

Promoting policies that actively support flexible work arrangements and encourage a harmonious balance between caregiving and employment is essential, as highlighted by various authors (Yi and Keogh, 2016 Hussein et al, 2016; Baker et al., 2012; Prinzellner et al., 2023. Forward-thinking companies can implement initiatives such as flexible working hours, telecommuting options, and part-time schedules (Hussein et al, 2016; Baker et al., 2012; Prinzellner et al., 2023). These policies go beyond traditional gender norms, accommodating caregivers of all genders and contributing to the creation of a healthier work-life balance. For example, a company may establish a system where employees can choose from a range of flexible arrangements based on their caregiving responsibilities, fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace culture (Hussein et al, 2016).

### Networking and Support Groups: Creating networking and support groups for male caregivers is instrumental in fostering inclusive environments (Clifton et al., 2020). These groups provide a platform for sharing experiences, addressing challenges, and advocating for change. Organisations can sponsor and facilitate the formation of such groups, encouraging open discussions on gender dynamics in caregiving.

Fostering Inclusivity: Inclusivity emerges as a critical theme, reflecting the urgency to create environments that welcome and support the active participation of men in care work (Hussein & Christensen, 2017; Barker et al., 2012). The literature underscores the intersectionality of masculinities, considering how ethnicity, race, and class intersect with gender roles in caregiving (Näre, 2010; Kilkey, 2010). Recommendations emphasize the dismantling of barriers, both overt and subtle, that hinder men from entering the caregiving sector (McLean, 2003; Sarti & Scrinzi, 2010). Positive media representations and the establishment of supportive networks are highlighted as mechanisms to foster inclusivity and encourage a more diverse and balanced representation of caregivers (Ruby & Scholz, 2018; Barker et al., 2012).

### Support for Migrant Workers: An integral aspect of addressing economic disincentives is the establishment of robust support structures for migrant workers in the caregiving sector (Moskos & Isherwood, 2019). Organisations employing migrant caregivers can take proactive measures to enhance the economic well-being of this demographic. This involves collaborating with language institutes to offer targeted language training programs, enabling migrant caregivers to communicate effectively with care recipients and colleagues (Kilkey, 2010; Scrinzi, 2010). Additionally, recognising international qualifications through partnerships with accreditation agencies is vital. By doing so, organisations facilitate the career advancement of migrant workers, acknowledging and utilising their skills and expertise (Scrinzi, 2010).

Furthermore, organisations can advocate for policies that ensure fair and equal treatment of migrant caregivers, both in terms of remuneration and working conditions (Hussein et al, 2016). This includes actively engaging with policymakers to address systemic challenges such as legal statuses, ensuring that migrant caregivers receive the support and recognition they deserve. Such initiatives contribute not only to the economic empowerment of migrant workers but also to the overall enhancement of the caregiving sector's diversity and inclusivity (Nare2010; Sarti, 2010; Scrinzi, 2010).

## Policy related initiatives

Policy Advocacy: Policy-related recommendations consistently appear in the literature, emphasizing the need for systemic changes to support the recruitment and retention of men in care work (Storm, 2023; Hussein et al., 2016). Scholars propose policies that recognise the multifaceted nature of caregiving, challenge traditional power dynamics, and actively promote gender equality within caregiving professions (Pease, 2011; Barker et al., 2012). The literature advocates for paternity leave, flexible work arrangements, and anti-racist strategies within caregiving institutions to create an inclusive and supportive environment (Clifton et al., 2020; Hussein et al., 2016; Storm, 2023; Abril, 2021). Policy advocacy is positioned as a crucial lever for dismantling structural barriers and establishing a framework that values and encourages men's contributions in the caregiving sector (Pease, 2011; Hussein et al., 2016).

Improving Pay and Working Conditions: Addressing economic disincentives within the caregiving sector requires a concerted effort to improve pay, working conditions, and career prospects for men, as emphasized by Holtermann (2019) and Hussein et al. (2016). One key strategy involves advocating for industry-wide changes that prioritise fair wage policies. This includes promoting transparent and equitable salary structures that reflect the value of caregiving roles (Hussein et al, 2016; Moskos and Isherwood, 2019). Organisations within the caregiving sector can collaborate with industry associations and policymakers to establish and enforce fair compensation standards, ensuring that both male and female caregivers receive just remuneration for their essential contributions.

Comprehensive Immigration Reforms: Various authors stress the necessity of advocating for comprehensive immigration reforms as a fundamental step toward providing secure legal statuses for migrant workers in caregiving sectors. Policymakers are urged to recognise and appreciate the invaluable contributions of migrant caregivers, ensuring that their rights are protected. A tangible manifestation of this recommendation involves streamlining visa processes and establishing clear pathways to permanent residency (Bartolomei, 2010; Nare, 2010; Kilkey, 2010).

Hussein et al. (2016) contribution further emphasizes the need for policies that specifically address the rights and well-being of male migrant caregivers. In the context of immigration reforms, policymakers should consider gender-sensitive approaches, acknowledging and mitigating the unique challenges faced by male caregivers. Such reforms would not only enhance the status of migrant caregivers but also contribute to a more inclusive and equitable caregiving sector (Scrinzi, 2010 Kilkey, 2010).

## Research and Awareness

Conducting Research on Men's Experiences: An imperative step in fostering inclusivity in care work is to conduct more research on men's experiences in caregiving roles, as advocated by various authors (Storm, 2023; Ruby and Scholz, 2018; Loughrey, 200; Prinzellner et al., 2023). Research institutions, in collaboration with caregiving organisations, can undertake comprehensive studies delving into the intersections of masculinity, ethnicity, and class within the caregiving landscape (Hrzenjak, 2019; Holetrmann, 2019). For instance, a research project could explore the experiences of male caregivers from diverse cultural backgrounds, shedding light on the nuanced challenges and contributions they bring to the caregiving profession (Kilkey, 2010).

Dissemination of research findings becomes crucial for creating awareness and informing policy decisions. Publications in reputable journals, presentations at conferences, and engaging with media outlets to share insights can collectively contribute to a broader understanding of the multifaceted nature of caregiving. By showcasing the diverse narratives of male caregivers, this research not only challenges stereotypes but also provides valuable knowledge that can shape more inclusive policies and practices.

Using an Intersectional Approach: Employing an intersectional approach is paramount in comprehending the construction of masculinities concerning ethnicity, race, and class, as highlighted by various authors (Campbell and Caroll, 2007; Nare, 2010; Kilkey, 2010). Collaborative efforts among researchers across disciplines can facilitate a holistic exploration of how different identity factors intersect with masculinity. For instance, a research project might involve sociologists, psychologists, and gender studies scholars working together to unravel the intricate ways in which ethnicity, race, and class shape the experiences of male caregivers (Nare, 2010; Sarti and Scrinzi, 2010).

This approach ensures a nuanced understanding of the diverse challenges and experiences faced by male caregivers from different backgrounds. By considering the intersectionality of identity factors, researchers contribute to breaking down monolithic stereotypes and promoting a more inclusive discourse on masculinities within caregiving.

# Conclusions

The compiled research on men's motivations for entering care roles reveals a complex interplay of intrinsic desires to serve others, pragmatic motivations around employment, and active efforts to challenge gender stereotypes. However, the studies also expose significant barriers rooted in societal attitudes and workplace cultures positioning care as "women's work" that deter greater participation of men. Tackling these obstacles requires coordinated efforts across multiple fronts.

Fundamentally, reducing gender stereotypes and stigma around men in care starts with public education and socialisation from a young age about the diversity of skills and gender identities in quality caregiving. But counter messaging must also come from policy makers, educational institutions, employers, and media celebrating male contributions to diversify representations. Providing networking, mentors and visible role models enables men to envision pathways into care and supports their retention.

Targeted outreach and recruitment campaigns portraying care as purposeful, economically stable work with advancement potential can effectively draw more men. But organisational initiatives are equally key to improve workplace cultures, peer connections, accommodations and growth opportunities that integrate men into the care workforce. Compensation, benefits and working conditions must be enhanced to reflect the value of skilled caregiving as specialised labour.

Ultimately, realising the benefits of male participation requires multi-level efforts spanning from cultural attitude shifts to programmatic interventions. Only through holistic strategies can men's motivations be aligned with supportive systems enabling them to bring their talents to address the profound needs of our aging societies. This necessitates continued advocacy and research promoting inclusion in care work as an issue of gender equality and human dignity.

# Implementation strategy

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Recommendation Area** | **Implementation Strategies** | **Examples of Implementation** |
| **Challenge Gender Stereotypes** | * Develop educational modules challenging gender norms.
* Launch media campaigns featuring positive male caregiving role models.
 | * Collaborate with schools to integrate caregiving modules into curricula.
* Partner with influencers for media campaigns showcasing male caregivers.
 |
| **Educational Emphasis** | * Integrate caregiving themes into educational curricula.
* Provide gender-sensitive career counselling for boys
 | * Incorporate narratives emphasising the importance of care in literature and science classes.
* Conduct career counselling workshops with male caregivers as mentors.
 |
| **Policy Changes** | * Advocate for comprehensive immigration reforms.
* Implement policies supporting recruitment and retention of men in caregiving.
 | * Collaborate with policymakers to streamline visa processes for migrant caregivers.
* Encourage organisations to offer flexible work arrangements.
 |
| **Organisational Initiatives** | * Promote a caring culture within companies.
* Engage employers to enhance local recruitment and career development in caregiving
 | * Establish recognition programs for caregiving achievements within organisations.
* Initiate mentorship programs for male caregivers
 |
| **Foster Inclusive Work Environments** | * Create networking and support groups for male caregivers.
* Enhance inclusivity in nursing education and workplaces.
 | * Sponsor and facilitate the formation of male caregiver support groups within organisations.
* Implement diversity training in nursing education.
 |
| **Address Economic Disincentives** | * Improve pay, working conditions, and career prospects.
* Provide support structures for migrant workers.
 | * Advocate for fair wage policies in the caregiving sector.
* Collaborate with language institutes for language training of migrant caregivers.
 |
| **Cultural Shift and Dialogue** | * Integrate care activities into masculinity constructs from an early age.
* Promote dialogue between diverse communities.
 | * Include caregiving activities in school programs challenging traditional gender norms.
* Organise forums for community dialogue on gender and caregiving.
 |
| **Research and Awareness** | * Conduct research on men's experiences in caregiving roles.
* Foster awareness on discrimination issues.
 | * Collaborate with caregiving organisations for comprehensive research studies.
* Organise workshops on discrimination awareness in educational institutions.
 |
| **Generational Attitude Shifts** | * Foster a generative attitude in boys during adolescence.
* Recognise men's contributions to care work.
 | * Implement mentorship programs pairing older male caregivers with young boys.
* Feature stories of male caregivers in media campaigns.
 |
| **Promote Intersectionality in Research** | * Use an intersectional approach in understanding masculinities.
* Explore experiences of men across different roles and settings.
 | * Collaborate across disciplines to explore the intersections of masculinity and ethnicity.
* Conduct surveys on experiences of men in diverse caregiving professions.
 |
| **Address Workplace Barriers**  | * Challenge workplace norms hindering caregiving and employment.
* Support flexible work arrangements.
 | * Regularly review workplace policies to identify and eliminate barriers.
* Implement flexible scheduling and remote work options.
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