

ETHICAL CHALLENGES FACED BY NURSING EDUCATORS IN NURSING INSTITUTES OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Background: In nursing education, ethical challenges are a significant aspect that educators encounter while preparing future healthcare professionals. **Objective:** This study aims to assess the ethical challenges nursing educators face in Pakistan's nursing institutes. **Methodology:** The research adopted a cross-sectional survey design to gather data from nursing educators about their perceptions of ethical challenges in their roles among nurse educators in nursing institutes located in Punjab, KPK, and Sindh. A total of 78 participants were recruited through the purposive sampling method. **Result:** Nursing educators highlighted challenges, including maintaining grading objectivity (53.8%), balancing constructive criticism and student morale (62.8%), and addressing personal biases (46.2%). Upholding academic integrity (39.7%), handling ethical dilemmas from student issues (44.9%), and accommodating diverse learning styles (48.7%) were also cited. Notably, 84.6% favored regular ethics training, with 23.1%, 44.9%, and 16.7% demonstrating low, moderate, and high readiness levels for ethical challenges. **Conclusion:** The study highlights significant ethical challenges nursing educators face, encompassing objectivity, integrity, bias, and confidentiality. Educators' readiness spans low to highly skilled levels, underscoring the need for tailored support. To address these findings, nursing institutes are urged to establish comprehensive ethics training programs, catering to varying readiness levels to equip educators for intricate ethical decisions.

Keywords: Ethical, Challenges Faced, Nursing Educators.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, nursing has emphasized ethics because of its foundational beliefs, values, and dedication to society. A subfield of philosophy known as ethics examines the norms and ideals that establish what constitutes proper and improper behavior. We are better equipped to make the appropriate decision when we act ethically. For several years, nurses have strongly emphasized the necessity of establishing morally and physically sound work conditions in clinical settings (1). Moreover, an ethically competent educator must be accountable, truthful, and equitable. To increase their competency, the educator regularly assesses their behavior and performance and participates in continuous education. Educators must conduct themselves according to moral standards and beliefs to practice ethical teaching. By thinking back on ethical teaching, nurse educators become more adept at recognizing and evaluating ethical challenges and how well their ethical convictions align with how they teach (2).

Nurse educators are worried about the legal ramifications of having students learn in clinical settings. Still, there isn't much information available in the literature to help clinical nursing faculty members who want to know what legal considerations to make when working with students or how to lower their chances of getting sued (3). Furthermore, it has been noted that nursing ethics education is a crucial component of nurse retention and a significant countermeasure to the professional illness of moral distress (4).

An organization's ethical climate can be evaluated by surveying its employees' opinions about the policies and procedures that enable them to speak and reflect ethically and help resolve ethical conflicts. Because they establish their interactions based on intention and respect and engage in self-reflection over their practices and fundamental values, members of a moral community understand the significance of diversity of viewpoints (5). It is evident that nurses today confront more ethical challenges than they did in the past; a growing body of research in the field of nursing ethics has established that the competing demands placed on them in today's intricate healthcare environments cause nurses to experience "moral distress." Nurses often face ethical dilemmas in their work, such as when they can't give patients all the care they need, according to a review of various national and international empirical research of nurses' experiences in the field. Conflict between moral principles and the moral anguish that results from having to make moral concessions (6).

New ground may also be broken in ethical concerns in nursing education. There are publications in the nursing literature that address some ethical issues that come up in the setting of nursing education. Nevertheless, nothing in the English-language literature on nursing ethics thoroughly or methodically addresses moral dilemmas in the context of nursing education (7). Over the last twenty years, there has been an increase in interest in healthcare research and the concept of ethical climate (8). Therefore, this study aims to assess the ethical issues faced by nursing educators in different nursing institutes in Pakistan.

METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the ethical challenges nursing educators face in nursing institutes across different regions of Pakistan, specifically Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), and Sindh. The research involved a comprehensive survey approach to collect data from nursing educators. The research adopted a cross-sectional survey design to gather data from nursing educators about their perceptions of ethical challenges in their roles. The sampling frame included nursing institutes in Punjab, KPK, and Sindh. A purposive sampling technique was used to select diverse institutes from each region. Permission for data collection was sought by sharing the questionnaire with the management of each selected nursing institute. The data collection process involved several steps: Sharing the questionnaire with the management of selected nursing institutes to seek permission. Upon receiving permission, an online survey was administered to nursing educators. The survey platform ensured data security and anonymity. A total of 78 nursing educators participated in the survey, representing diverse experience levels and backgrounds. Educators not currently involved in teaching roles or did not provide consent were excluded from the study.

A structured questionnaire was developed to assess nursing educators' perceptions of ethical challenges. The questionnaire consisted of Likert-scale items addressing various ethical scenarios and challenges commonly encountered in educational settings. The research tool had two parts: one to gather basic participant information and the other with 15 statements. Among these statements, 13 used a 1 to 5 scale to gauge agreement levels, while one asked about views on training benefits, and another assessed general awareness in handling ethical issues. The tool was carefully checked by four expert nurse educators, who offered suggestions for improvement.

Moreover, the reliability of this tool was calculated on 10% of the sample size, which is 0.66. Informed consent was obtained from all participating nursing educators, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

The collected data were analyzed through SPSS version 26. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each response category on the Likert scale.

RESULT

Table 1 shows the result of demographic variables. Regarding age, 11.5% fall within the 20-25 range, 33.3% are between 26 and 30, 28.2% fall within 31-35, and the remaining 26.9% are above 35 years old. Gender distribution indicates that 62.8% identify as male, while 37.2% identify as female. Regarding their working experience, the participants' backgrounds vary: 14.1% have 1 year of experience, 11.5% possess 2 years, 15.4% have 3 years, 14.1% have 4 years, 10.3% have 5 years, and a significant 34.6% boast over 5 years of experience. Finally, in terms of working institutes, the majority (87.1%) are affiliated with private institutions, whereas 12.8% are associated with public ones.

Table 1: Demographic information of the Participants n=78

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Age		
20-25	9	11.5
26-30	26	33.3
31-35	22	28.2
Above 35	21	26.9
Gender		
Male	49	62.8
Female	29	37.2
Working experience		
1 year	11	14.1
2 years	9	11.5
three years	12	15.4
four years	11	14.1
five years	8	10.3
above 5 years	27	34.6
Working Institute		
Public	10	12.8
Private	68	87.1

Table 2 shows the result of Nursing Educators' Perceptions Regarding Various Ethical Challenges. The educators expressed that maintaining objectivity in grading was considered a challenge 53.8% while balancing constructive criticism with avoiding

demoralization of students was a struggle for 62.8%. Upholding academic integrity and addressing plagiarism was difficult for 39.7%, and managing personal biases when discussing sensitive healthcare topics posed a concern for 46.2%. Additionally, 44.9% found ethical dilemmas in addressing students' problems affecting their academics. Maintaining confidentiality while discussing student matters challenged 46.2%, and ensuring fairness in evaluations alongside personal circumstances was a struggle for 44.9%. Encouraging open dialogue while upholding a respectful environment required effort for 39.7%, and accommodating diverse learning styles proved demanding for 48.7%.

Regarding ethical support and resources, 51.3% felt adequately trained to address ethical challenges. The institution's provision of clear ethical guidelines was acknowledged by 60.3%, while 41.0% were aware of resources for guidance. Encouragement of open discussions on ethical challenges was supported by 59.0% of participants.

Table 2: Nursing Educators' Perceptions Regarding Various Ethical Challenges

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
I am faced with situations where maintaining objectivity in grading is challenging.	2(2.6)	13(16.7)	15(19.2)	42(53.8)	6(7.7)
Balancing the need for constructive criticism with avoiding demoralization of students is a struggle	2(2.6)	7(9.0)	12(15.4)	49(62.8)	8(10.3)
Upholding academic integrity and addressing instances of plagiarism are difficult	2(2.6)	20(25.6)	17(21.8)	31(39.7)	8(10.3)
Managing personal biases and opinions when discussing sensitive healthcare topics is a concern	4(5.1)	10(12.8)	12(15.4)	36(46.2)	16(20.5)
Addressing students' problems that affect their academic performance poses ethical dilemmas	4(5.1)	13(16.7)	13(16.7)	35(44.9)	13(16.7)
Maintaining confidentiality when discussing student matters with colleagues or mentors is a challenge	1(1.3)	7(9.0)	12(15.4)	36(46.2)	22(28.2)
Ensuring fairness in student evaluations while considering personal circumstances is tough	3(3.8)	13(16.7)	13(16.7)	35(44.9)	14(17.9)
Encouraging open dialogue while maintaining a respectful and non-discriminatory environment requires effort	3(3.8)	20(25.6)	14(17.9)	31(39.7)	10(12.8)
Balancing the duty to educate with the need to accommodate different learning styles can be demanding	0(0)	7(9.0)	15(19.2)	38(48.7)	18(23.1)
Ethical Support and Resources					
I feel adequately trained and prepared to address ethical challenges in my role as a nursing educator	0(0)	3(3.8)	11(14.1)	40(51.3)	24(30.8)
The institution provides clear guidelines on ethical issues and dilemmas that may arise in the classroom	0(0)	8(10.3)	12(15.4)	47(60.3)	11(14.1)
I am aware of the available resources for seeking guidance on ethical matters related to teaching	2(2.6)	17(21.8)	15(19.2)	32(41.0)	12(15.4)
The institution encourages open discussions about ethical challenges among nursing educators	1(1.3)	10(12.8)	10(12.8)	46(59.0)	11(14.1)

Figure 1 shows that a large majority of people, around 84.6%, believe that it would be helpful for nursing educators to have regular training and workshops on ethics. Only a small number, about 9.0%, don't think it's necessary, and a few, around 6.4%, are unsure.

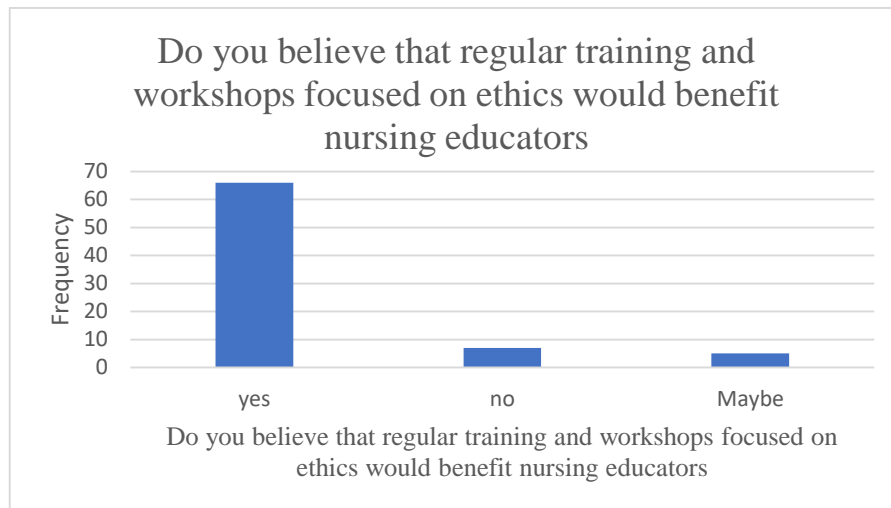


Figure 1: Perceptions Regarding Regular Training and Workshops

Figure 2 shows how well nursing educators can deal with ethical challenges. The educators' abilities are rated in four levels: low, moderate, high, and very high. Of all educators, 23.1% have a low awareness and readiness for ethical challenges, 15.4% have a moderate level, 44.9% are well-prepared, and 16.7% are highly skilled in handling ethical issues.

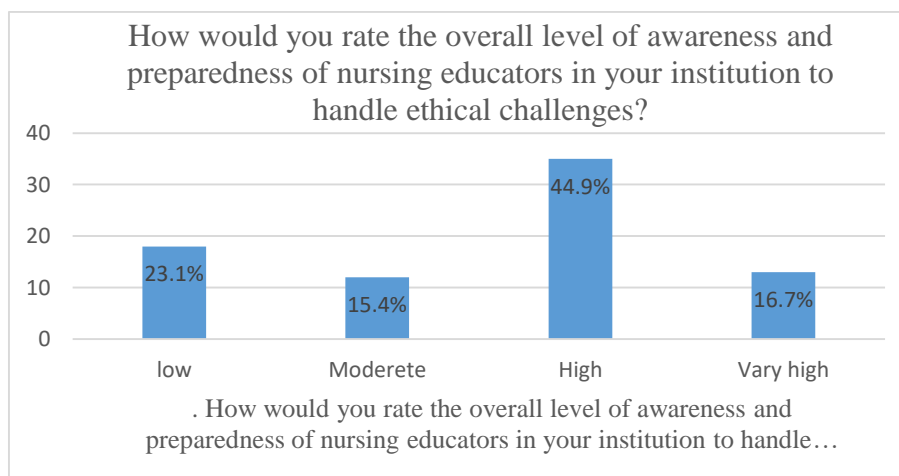


Figure 2: Overall Level of Awareness to Handle Ethical Challenges

DISCUSSION

Nursing professionals deal with ethical issues daily due to the increasing complexity of the field (6). To recognize and investigate ethical issues related to science and technology and to take on leadership roles in practice and education, nurse educators need a solid theoretical grounding in ethics (9). Nursing educators are responsible for imparting clinical knowledge, ethical values, and behaviors to aspiring nurses (10). Therefore, this study aims to assess the ethical challenges nursing educators face in nursing Institutes in Pakistan.

Present findings show that 42% agreed that I face situations where maintaining objectivity in grading is challenging. Another study found that nurse educators face challenges in grading and evaluation (11). Nurse educators could use reflection as a vantage point for assessing teaching practice to avoid ethical dilemmas. In addition to

improving teaching practices, reflection makes educators' experiences, knowledge, and reflections more visible (12).

Moreover, 36% agreed that maintaining confidentiality when discussing student matters with colleagues or mentors is challenging. Another study suggested that it is of utmost importance to uphold and prioritize students' confidentiality consistently. This means that any personal or academic information shared by students should be treated with the highest level of discretion and privacy. Educators and institutions must ensure that student records, discussions, and sensitive data are kept secure and accessible only to authorized personnel (13).

Furthermore, the study highlighted that 31% agreed that encouraging open dialogue while maintaining a respectful and non-discriminatory environment requires effort. In contrast, another study found that most participants positively responded to respect (14). Another study shows that increased ethical issues result from nurses' unethical actions. It is suggested that to deliver safe, moral treatment and serve as positive role models for students, nurses should internalize their professional and ethical responsibilities (15).

Present findings show that 23.1% have a low awareness and readiness for ethical challenges. In contrast, another study found a lack of understanding on the fundamental ideas of ethics relevant to nursing care, including informed consent, truthfulness, confidentiality, ethical theories, value clarification, and general elements of the national code of conduct for nurses and midwives (4). Another study found that knowledge of healthcare ethics was lacking in 51% of nurses (16).

This study shows that 31% agreed that a non-discriminatory environment requires effort. Another study also found discrimination is an ethical issue (16). Present findings show that 31% agreed that accommodating different learning styles is demanding. Similarly, another study found that the main difficulty is balancing the demands of management with the individual teaching philosophies of educators. If an instructor's use of a particular teaching method could keep them from carrying out their duties, management shouldn't be allowed to stop them (17).

Present findings revealed that 47% agreed that the institution provides clear guidelines on ethical issues and dilemmas that may arise in the classroom. The educators also noted a deficiency in cooperation between the nursing homes. Regulatory agencies must play a crucial role in addressing these issues and move forward with efforts to advance the discipline of nursing. If such steps are not taken, the public's perception of nursing will continue to deteriorate, posing more difficulties for educators and students (17). Healthcare workers stated that a lack of resources from management led to their ethical dilemmas (18).

Another study found that the absence of legal protection for patients, the lack of professional assessment of practitioners, the lack of mandatory registration for medical and nursing practitioners, and the inadequate training of these professionals have all been mentioned as reasons for ethical violations in the Pakistani healthcare system. Long work hours and low pay scales have also been mentioned (19). Research indicates that ethical problems for nurses arise when ethical principles and practices do not align (20).

Our findings show that 84.6% believe it would be helpful for nursing educators to have regular training and workshops on ethics. Another study's results are aligned that

(95.6%) agreed that they needed training in nursing ethics (4). To further this objective, nursing institutes should prioritize the integration of ongoing ethics training into professional development. Moreover, fostering open discussions among educators and students on ethical challenges can promote a culture of transparency and shared learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, significant ethical challenges faced by nursing educators, including maintaining objectivity, navigating criticism, upholding integrity, addressing biases, and ensuring confidentiality. Notably, a substantial proportion acknowledges the importance of training, guidelines, and resources. Encouragingly, an overwhelming 84.6% express the need for regular ethics workshops. The educators' readiness spans low to highly skilled levels, emphasizing the need for targeted support. To address these findings, it is recommended that nursing institutes develop comprehensive and ongoing ethics training programs that cater to various readiness levels, ensuring educators possess the tools needed to navigate complex ethical situations effectively.

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