

NURSES' ETHICAL BEHAVIOR TOWARD COLLEAGUES AND NURSES' ETHICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD PATIENTS

Nunung Rachmawati^{1*}, Pratiwi Araviana², Ni Made Nopita Wati³

¹Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan YKY Yogyakarta (Indonesia)

² Rumah Sakit Umum Daerah Sleman (Indonesia)

³Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan Wira Medika Bali (Indonesia)

*Corresponding author: rachmawa84@gmail.com

Abstract

Background: Nurses are expected to adhere to the nursing code of ethics in their interactions with both fellow professionals and patients. In their daily practice, nurses frequently encounter ethical dilemmas involving both patients and coworkers. Nursing ethics are essential for fostering respectful and effective relationships with patients and colleagues alike. Despite this, a significant number of nurses continue to engage in practices that do not align with the established code of ethics. **Objectives:** This research seeks to explore the overview of nurses' ethical behavior toward colleagues and their ethical attitudes toward patients. **Methods:** This research employs a quantitative, non-experimental approach with a descriptive design to explore the subject matter. The research was carried out between March and August 2023. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling. A total of 101 participants were selected based on predetermined inclusion criteria established by the researcher. **Results:** The majority of nurses at Sleman Regional Public Hospital displayed very good ethical behavior toward their colleagues, with 74 nurses (72.5%) falling into this category. Most nurses at Sleman Regional Public Hospital demonstrated a moderate level of ethical attitude toward patients, accounting for 52 nurses (51%). The study further identified significant associations between nurses' age and length of service with both their ethical behavior toward colleagues and their ethical attitudes toward patients. **Conclusion:** None of the nurses at Sleman Regional Public Hospital demonstrated moderate or poor ethical behavior toward peers, nor were there any reports of poor ethical attitudes toward patients.

Keywords: Attitude, Behaviour, Ethical, Nurse

1. INTRODUCTION

Nursing is a profession inherently centered on interpersonal relationships, as nurses consistently work in situations that involve human interaction. Nurses engage in various forms of interaction, including collaboration with fellow nurses. Through teamwork and communication, they coordinate with one another to deliver effective nursing care to patients (1). When interacting with their peers, nurses frequently encounter challenges involving professional nursing ethics. Nurses are expected to adhere to the nursing code of ethics in their interactions with both fellow professionals and patients.

In Indonesia, the application of nursing ethics is guided by five core pillars of the nursing code of ethics: the nurse–patient relationship, professional nursing practice, community engagement, collaboration with colleagues, and commitment to the nursing profession (2). The responsibilities of nurses toward their colleagues and patients are outlined within the five pillars of the nursing code of ethics. Among these responsibilities is the obligation to foster respectful and collaborative relationships with fellow nurses and other healthcare professionals, maintain a harmonious work environment, and support the overall goals of healthcare delivery. Additionally, nurses have an ethical duty to safeguard patients from healthcare providers who practice incompetently, unethically, or unlawfully (1). Nurses'

responsibilities toward patients encompass the obligation to provide care with respect for human dignity and the individuality of each patient, free from bias based on nationality, ethnicity, race, age, gender, political affiliation, religion, or social status. In delivering care, nurses must also uphold an environment that honors cultural values, customs, and the client's right to religious expression. The nurse's foremost duty is to those who require nursing care. Additionally, nurses are ethically bound to maintain the confidentiality of information entrusted to them, except when disclosure is legally required by authorized authorities (2).

The interactions and conduct of nurses toward both colleagues and patients within the hospital setting are fundamentally guided by the principles of nursing ethics. Applying ethical principles is essential for nurses in delivering nursing care, as failure to uphold these standards can result in significant harm to patients. Such harm may include physical injury, such as pain, disability, or even death, as well as emotional distress, including feelings of helplessness or social isolation (3). Unethical behavior by nurses toward their colleagues can have serious repercussions. It may erode trust among nursing staff, which in turn can lead to negative perceptions from patients, their families, and the broader community. Ultimately, such behavior can hinder the hospital's ability to fulfill its vision and mission (1).

A preliminary study involving interviews and observations revealed that nursing care practices at Sleman Regional Hospital generally adhere to established ethical standards. Nevertheless, a few nurses were found to unintentionally breach ethical guidelines in their interactions with both colleagues and patients. Often, these individuals only become aware of their ethical misconduct during formal investigations, when they are asked to clarify their actions in relation to alleged violations. Interviews with five nurses revealed several consequences associated with violations of nursing ethics. These include the development of a negative public perception of the nursing profession, disrupted collaboration among healthcare professionals, reduced confidence among colleagues working alongside the individual who committed the violation, and a decline in morale, with some nurses feeling that their efforts are in vain.

Given that nurses represent the largest professional group within the hospital setting, they are more visible to others and often become role models for other healthcare professionals. This underscores the critical importance of nurses consistently upholding the professional code of ethics. In their daily practice, nurses frequently encounter ethical dilemmas involving both patients and coworkers. Nursing ethics are essential for fostering respectful and effective relationships with patients and colleagues alike. Research findings indicate that a majority of staff nurses 34 individuals, or 54% possess a high level of knowledge regarding nursing ethics (4). Despite this, a significant number of nurses continue to engage in practices that do not align with the established code of ethics (5).

2. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a quantitative, non-experimental approach with a descriptive design to explore the subject matter. The research was carried out between March and August 2023. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling. A total of 101 participants were selected based on predetermined inclusion criteria established by the researcher.

The research instrument utilized in this study was a questionnaire designed to gather demographic information on nurses, including their age, gender, educational background, and years of professional experience. The questionnaire used in this study is designed to assess nurses' ethical behavior toward their colleagues. It is based on the instrument developed by Enike Tri Ratna Sari (2017), consisting of 34 items. A four-point Likert scale was employed, offering the following response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire comprises only favorable statements, with scoring assigned such that a response of "Strongly Disagree" is given a score of 0. Others questionnaire, adapted from Irfan Firmansyah's 2020 study, aims to assess nurses' ethical attitudes toward patients and comprises 24 items. A four-point Likert scale is utilized, offering

response options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). All items are favorable statements, and responses of "Strongly Disagree" are assigned a score of 0.

The ethical approval of this study was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee, Sleman Regional Public Hospital (Rumah Sakit Umum Daerah Sleman), with approval number : 180/2800.7. Prior to data collection, the researchers explained the objective and the procedures of the study to the respondents. The respondents could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The researchers in this study confirmed that each respondents had obtained appropriate informed consent. The researchers also guaranteed their data confidentiality and ensured them that their information would be published anonymously.

3. RESULTS

1.1 Nurses' Ethical Behavior Toward Colleagues

An overview of nurses' ethical behavior toward colleagues at Sleman Regional Public Hospital can be seen in the following table :

Table 1. Nurses' Ethical Behavior Toward Colleagues at Sleman Regional Public Hospital

Nurses' Behavior Toward Colleagues	Ethical Toward	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Very Good	74	72,5	
Good	28	27,5	
Adequate	0	0	
Poor	0	0	
Total	102	100	

As shown in **Table 1**, the majority of nurses at Sleman Regional Public Hospital displayed very good ethical behavior toward their colleagues, with 74 nurses (72.5%) falling into this category. Notably, none of the nurses exhibited fair or poor levels of ethical behavior toward their peers. Findings from a previous study on nurses' ethical conduct toward their peers revealed similar outcomes, with the majority 15 nurses (50%) classified as demonstrating very good ethical behavior (6). Another study also reported that most nurses demonstrated very good ethical behavior in their interactions with fellow nurses, with 43 individuals (41.7%) falling into this category (7). Fostering positive relationships with colleagues is essential for nurses, whether working independently or as part of a team in hospitals, clinics, or other healthcare settings. Such relationships help maintain a harmonious work atmosphere and support the achievement of comprehensive healthcare objectives (8). Unethical behavior by nurses toward their colleagues can have several adverse effects, such as creating discomfort in communication, diminishing trust among team members, and fostering a tense work environment, all of which can undermine the effectiveness of patient care discussions (6).

Table 2. Nurses' Ethical Attitudes Toward Patients Based on Age, Gender, Length of Work Experience, and Educational Background

Respondent Characteristics	Ethics Toward Patients		Total	r	p value
	Good	Adequate			
Age					
Early Adolescence (17-25 years)	0 (0%)	4 (3,9%)	4 (3,9%)	-0,212	0,033
Early Adulthood (26-35 years)	22 (21,6%)	26 (25,5%)	48 (47,1%)		
Late adulthood (36-45 years)	16 (15,7%)	18 (17,6%)	34 (33,3%)		
Early Elderly (46-55 years)	11 (10,8%)	3 (2,9%)	14 (13,7%)		
Late Elderly (56-65 years)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)		
Gender					
Male	11 (10,8%)	6 (5,9%)	17 (16,7%)		0,156
Female	39 (38,3%)	46 (45,2%)	85 (83,4%)		
Length of Work Experience					
1-5 years	12 (11,8%)	21 (20,6%)	33 (32,4%)	-0,206	0,038
6-10 years	10 (9,8%)	12 (11,8%)	22 (21,6%)		
> 10 years	28 (27,4%)	19 (18,6%)	47 (46%)		
Educational Background					
Nursing Diploma	36 (35,3%)	36 (35,3%)	72 (70,6%)	0,030	0,762
Bachelor's Degree in Nursing	14 (13,7%)	16 (15,7%)	30 (29,4%)		

As shown in **Table 2**, most respondents were in the early adulthood age group (26–35 years), with 26 nurses (25.5%) demonstrating a fair level of ethical attitude toward patients. The findings also revealed a significant relationship between nurses' age and their ethical attitudes toward patients ($p < 0.05$). The study revealed a correlation between nurses' age and their ethical behavior toward colleagues. As age is linked to psychological maturity, older nurses are generally more capable of demonstrating professional and ethical conduct in their interactions with peers (6). Age is also linked to a nurse's level of spiritual or religious maturity, which often shapes their everyday behavior. Faith serves as a moral compass in one's life, and because individuals differ in the strength and expression of their beliefs, this can lead to diverse views and approaches in interacting with others (1). A nurse's age is

also related to their ability to discern right from wrong, make life plans, evaluate past actions, and reflect on their own behavior and capabilities (6). Most nurses at Sleman Regional Public Hospital fall within the early to late adulthood age group. At this stage, nurses generally possess strong interpersonal skills, allowing them to communicate effectively with colleagues, avoid conflicts, accept feedback constructively, and show respect for the strengths and limitations of their peers.

Table 2. shows that the majority of respondents had over 10 years of work experience, with 28 nurses (27.4%) displaying a good level of ethical attitude toward patients. This study found a significant correlation between the length of nurses' work experience and their ethical conduct toward patients ($p < 0.05$). This study found that the majority of nurses had over 10 years of work experience, and that work experience was significantly related to their ethical behavior toward colleagues. Nurses with less than five years of experience often demonstrate less refined professional conduct and are more prone to making interpersonal errors in their interactions with fellow nurses (6). As the length of employment increases, individuals typically demonstrate improved job performance due to greater adaptation and familiarity with their roles and the work environment (9). The professional relationship among nurses is reflected through collaborative efforts and complementary roles, all focused on delivering patient-centered care (10).

1.2 Ethical Attitude Toward Patients

The ethical attitudes of nurses toward patients at Sleman Regional Public Hospital are illustrated in the table below:

Table 3. Nurses' Ethical Attitudes Toward Patients at Sleman Regional Public Hospital

Nurses' Ethical Attitudes Toward Patients	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Good	50	49.0
Adequate	52	51.0
Poor	0	0
Total	102	100

Table 3. shows that most nurses at Sleman Regional Public Hospital demonstrated a moderate level of ethical attitude toward patients, accounting for 52 nurses (51%). Notably, none of the nurses exhibited a poor ethical attitude in patient care. Ethical challenges in nursing commonly emerge during the provision of care, often resulting in tension between nurses and patients. Patient dissatisfaction is typically rooted in feelings of neglect and unmet needs during their interactions with nursing staff (11). Nurses who uphold ethical principles in the delivery of care are more likely to foster a sense of comfort and trust in patients. Conversely, nursing care that lacks adherence to ethical standards may lead to patient discomfort and unease in the presence of the nurse (12). Upholding patient dignity, as mandated by the nursing code of ethics, serves as a fundamental principle and primary focus in the execution of professional nursing care (13).

Table 4. Nurses' Ethical Attitudes Toward Patients Based on Age, Gender, Length of Work Experience, and Educational Background

Respondent Characteristics	Ethics Toward Patients		Total	r	p value
	Good	Adequate			
Age					

Early Adolescence (17-25 years)	0 (0%)	4 (3,9%)	4 (3,9%)	-0,212	0,033
Early Adulthood (26-35 years)	22 (21,6%)	26 (25,5%)	48 (47,1%)		
Late adulthood (36-45 years)	16 (15,7%)	18 (17,6%)	34 (33,3%)		
Early Elderly (46- 55 years)	11 (10,8%)	3 (2,9%)	14 (13,7%)		
Late Elderly (56- 65 years)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)		
Gender					
Male	11 (10,8%)	6 (5,9%)	17 (16,7%)		0,156
Female	39 (38,3%)	46 (45,2%)	85 (83,4%)		
Length of Work Experience					
1-5 years	12 (11,8%)	21 (20,6%)	33 (32,4%)	-0,206	0,038
6-10 years	10 (9,8%)	12 (11,8%)	22 (21,6%)		
> 10 years	28 (27,4%)	19 (18,6%)	47 (46%)		
Educational Background					
Nursing Diploma	36 (35,3%)	36 (35,3%)	72 (70,6%)	0,030	0,762
Bachelor's Degree in Nursing	14 (13,7%)	16 (15,7%)	30 (29,4%)		

Table 4. shows that most respondents were in the early adulthood age group (26–35 years), with 26 nurses (25.5%) demonstrating a moderate level of ethical attitude toward patients. The findings revealed a statistically significant correlation between nurses' age and their ethical attitudes in providing patient care ($p < 0.05$). Nurses of older age are generally more likely to demonstrate enhanced caring behaviors toward both patients and their families, which may be attributed to a heightened sense of professional responsibility (14). Caring behavior in nurses is closely associated with ethical conduct in patient care delivery. Ethical nursing practice contributes significantly to enhancing patient satisfaction, fostering a sense of comfort, and building trust in the caregiving relationship.

Table 4. indicates that most respondents had over 10 years of professional experience, with 28 individuals (27.4%) demonstrating a high level of ethical attitude in patient care. The study findings reveal a statistically significant association between the duration of nursing experience and nurses' ethical attitudes toward patients ($p < 0.05$). Extended years of service provide nurses with richer clinical experience, equipping them to handle patient-related challenges more effectively. Such experiences often serve as a source of motivation for continuous improvement and reflective learning in their professional practice (14). The accumulated experience of nurses with extended years of service can serve as a foundation for developing and refining ethical attitudes in patient care. This continuous improvement is expected to contribute positively to patient satisfaction.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Most nurses displayed a high standard of ethical conduct in interactions with their colleagues (72.5%, n=74), while over half (51%, n=52) exhibited a moderate ethical attitude toward patient care. Notably, none of the nurses demonstrated moderate or poor ethical behavior toward peers, nor were there any reports of poor ethical attitudes toward patients. The study further identified significant associations between nurses' age and length of service with both their ethical behavior toward colleagues and their ethical attitudes toward patients

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise be to Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala, I express my gratitude for His abundant blessings and guidance, which have enabled me to complete this research article. On this occasion, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan YKY Yogyakarta for facilitating and providing assistance, motivation, and funding for the successful execution of this research.

REFERENCES

1. Sari, E., T. R. Gambaran Perilaku Etik Perawat Kepada Sejawat di Rumah Sakit Nasional Diponegoro Semarang. Universitas Diponegoro Semarang; 2017.
2. PPNI. Kode Etik Perawat [Internet]. 2018. Tersedia pada: www.ppni.ac.id
3. Nasir A, Purnomo E. Pengaruh Penerapan Kode Etik Keperawatan Terhadap Pelayanan Keperawatan. J Ilm Permas. 2019;9(4):335–42.
4. Huda C. Pengetahuan Perawat Pelaksana dalam Kode Etik Keperawatan Indonesia di Ruang Rawat Inap Rumah Sakit Jiwa Banda Aceh. universitas Syiah Kuala Banda Aceh; 2018.
5. Annals K. The Association Between Conscience Understanding and Clinical Performance Among Nurses Working at Education Hospital of Arak. 2017;10:4–9.
6. Pashar I, Anto S, Bubun J. Penerapan Perilaku Etik Perawat Sesama Sejawat di Ruang ICU Rumah Sakit Labuang Baji. J Ilmah Ilmu Keperawatan. 2023;14(2):148–58.
7. Woria M, Sembiring, L., N. B, Rustinah. Gambaran Perilaku Etik Perawat Terhadap Sejawat di Rumah Sakit Umum Daerah Serui. Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan Jayapura; 2021.
8. PPNI. Standar Profesi dan Kode Etik Perawat. Jakarta: Persatuan Perawat Nasional Indonesia; 2010.
9. Dwi. Hubungan Lama Kerja Perawat Instalasi Gawat Darurat dengan Kepatuhan Pelaksanaan Standar Prosedur Operasional Penerimaan Pasien Baru di Rumah Sakit Samarinda. Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur; 2017.
10. Noviani W. Persepsi Mahasiswa Profesi Ners Tentang Kode Etik Keperawatan Indonesia di Rumah Sakit Pendidikan Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. Indones J Nurs Pract. 2016;1(1):30–9.
11. Rudi H. Etika Keperawatan dengan Pendekatan Praktis. Yogyakarta: Gosyen Publishing; 2013.
12. Yulianti. Gambaran Perilaku Etik Perawat kepada Pasien di Rumah Sakit Nasional Diponegoro Semarang. Universitas Diponegoro; 2017.
13. Zainuddin S. Gambaran Perilaku Etik Perawat Berdasarkan Penjabaran Kode Etik Keperawatan. J Keperawatan Muhammadiyah [Internet]. 2019; Tersedia pada: <http://journal.um-surabaya.ac.id/index.php/JKM>
14. Anggoro WT, Aeni Q, Istioningsih I. Hubungan Karakteristik Perawat Dengan Perilaku Caring. J

Keperawatan Jiwa. 2019;6(2):98.