



Assessment Of Nurses' Knowledge About Ethical And Legal Issues Of Mental Health Nursing At Psychiatric Teaching Hospitals

Mohammed Bader Almotiry^{1*}, Ahmed Ali Alqahtani², Amera Mussa Al Nime³,
Bader Fayyadh Alonezi⁴, Naïf Ghazi Alotaibi⁵, Hassan Ali Mohammed Khubrani⁶,
Nawaf Nasser Saad Alotaibi⁷

¹*Nursing technician, MBALMOTIRY@MOH.GOV.SA, Riyadh third health cluster

² Nursing, Ahmed11410@gmail.com, Health control center at king khalid Airport

³ Nursing, Amera3234@gmail.com, Health control center at king Khalid International Airport

⁴ NURSING HEATH ASSISTANT, Bader202020@hotmail.com, Ministry of health

⁵ Nursing Technician, Naifga@moh.gov.sa, Hit Health Center

⁶ Nursing Technician, hakhobrani@moh.gov.sa, Imam abdulrahman al faisal hospital

⁷ Nursing specialist, Nalotaibi99@moh.gov.sa, Prince Salman bin Muhammad Hospital

***Corresponding Author** Mohammed bader almotiry

*Nursing technician, Mbalmotiry@Moh.Gov.Sa, Riyadh third health cluster

Abstract:

This study aims to assess nurses' knowledge about ethical and legal issues in mental health nursing at psychiatric teaching hospitals. Ethical and legal considerations play a crucial role in the provision of mental healthcare, ensuring patient rights, and maintaining professional standards. Evaluating nurses' knowledge in this domain helps identify gaps and areas for improvement. The study utilized a cross-sectional design, collecting data through a questionnaire specifically designed to assess nurses' knowledge of ethical and legal issues in mental health nursing. The sample consisted of nurses working in psychiatric teaching hospitals. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and inferential tests to examine the relationship between demographic variables and nurses' knowledge.

Keywords: *mental health nursing, ethical issues, legal issues, nurses' knowledge, psychiatric teaching hospitals, assessment.*

Introduction:

Ethical and legal issues are integral to mental health nursing practice, influencing patient care, decision-making, and professional conduct. Nurses working in psychiatric teaching hospitals encounter complex situations that require a deep understanding of the ethical and legal dimensions of mental healthcare. Assessing nurses' knowledge in this area is crucial to identify gaps and promote best practices.

Ethical and legal issues are indeed integral to mental health nursing practice. Mental health nurses are responsible for providing care and support to individuals experiencing mental health challenges. In the course of their work, they encounter various ethical and legal dilemmas that require careful consideration and adherence to professional standards. Understanding and addressing these issues are essential for maintaining patient rights, ensuring quality care, and upholding the integrity of the nursing profession.

Ethical Issues in Mental Health Nursing:

Confidentiality: Mental health nurses must respect and protect the privacy and confidentiality of their patients. They should maintain strict confidentiality unless there is a legal requirement or a threat to the patient or others' safety. Balancing confidentiality with the need to share information for coordinated care can be challenging.

Informed Consent: Mental health nurses must ensure that patients have the capacity to provide informed consent for treatment, and they should respect patients' autonomy and right to make decisions about their care. This includes providing clear and comprehensive information about treatment options, potential risks, and benefits.

Autonomy and Paternalism: Mental health nurses often face dilemmas regarding respecting patients' autonomy while ensuring their safety and well-being. Balancing patient autonomy with the duty to protect vulnerable individuals can be complex, especially in cases where patients may not have the capacity to make decisions for themselves.

Benevolence and Non-malevolence: Mental health nurses have an ethical obligation to act in the best interest of their patients, promoting their well-being and preventing harm. This includes providing evidence-based care, advocating for patients' rights, and ensuring a safe and therapeutic environment.

Legal Issues in Mental Health Nursing:

Mental Health Legislation: Mental health nurses must be aware of and adhere to the legal frameworks and legislation governing mental health practice in their jurisdiction. This includes understanding laws related to involuntary admission, the rights of individuals receiving mental health services, and the process of mental health assessment and treatment.

Duty to Warn: Mental health nurses have a legal obligation to take appropriate steps to protect potential victims if a patient poses a serious threat of harm to themselves or others. This duty to warn may involve reporting to the appropriate authorities or notifying potential targets of harm.

Restraint and Seclusion: The use of physical restraint or seclusion in mental health settings is regulated by legal guidelines and requires careful consideration. Nurses must understand the legal requirements, obtain informed consent if applicable, and monitor patients' safety and well-being during these interventions.

Documentation and Record-keeping: Accurate and timely documentation is crucial in mental health nursing practice, as it serves as a legal record of the care provided. Nurses must ensure that their documentation is comprehensive, objective, and adheres to legal standards.

It is essential for mental health nurses to receive education, training, and ongoing professional development to stay updated on ethical principles and legal requirements in mental health nursing. Collaboration with interdisciplinary teams, seeking guidance from ethics committees, and consulting legal experts can also support nurses in navigating complex ethical and legal issues in their practice. By upholding ethical standards and complying with legal regulations, mental health nurses can provide safe, effective, and patient-centered care to individuals in need.

Methods:

This study employed a cross-sectional design to assess nurses' knowledge about ethical and legal issues in mental health nursing. The sample consisted of nurses working in psychiatric teaching hospitals. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire specifically developed to evaluate nurses' knowledge in this domain. The questionnaire covered various topics, including informed consent, confidentiality, autonomy, restraint and seclusion, duty to warn, and ethical principles in mental health nursing.

To assess nurses' knowledge about ethical and legal issues of mental health nursing at psychiatric teaching hospitals, a mixed-methods approach will be utilized. Surveys will be distributed to nurses working in psychiatric units to gauge their understanding of key ethical and legal principles. In addition, focus group discussions will be conducted to gather qualitative data on nurses' experiences with ethical and legal dilemmas in their practice. The data collected will be analyzed to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement in nurses' knowledge of ethical and legal issues in mental health nursing.

Results:

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics to summarize nurses' knowledge scores and inferential tests to examine potential relationships between demographic variables (such as years of experience, educational level) and nurses' knowledge. The findings provided insights into the level of knowledge among nurses regarding ethical and legal issues in mental health nursing.

Preliminary results indicate that nurses working in psychiatric teaching hospitals have a solid understanding of basic ethical and legal principles in mental health nursing. However, there are areas where their knowledge may be lacking, such as informed consent, patient confidentiality, and the role of advocacy in mental health care. Nurses expressed a desire for more training and education in these areas to enhance their practice and provide better care to their patients.

Discussion:

The study discussion section highlighted the strengths and areas for improvement in nurses' knowledge of ethical and legal issues. It explored potential factors influencing nurses' knowledge, such as education and experience, and discussed the implications for mental health nursing practice. The discussion emphasized the need for ongoing education and training initiatives to enhance nurses' understanding of ethical and legal principles in mental healthcare.

The assessment of nurses' knowledge about ethical and legal issues of mental health nursing at psychiatric teaching hospitals highlights the importance of ongoing education and training in this critical aspect of nursing practice. By identifying areas of improvement, we can develop targeted interventions to enhance nurses' competency in ethical and legal principles. This will ultimately lead to better outcomes for patients and a higher standard of care in psychiatric settings.

Conclusion:

Assessing nurses' knowledge about ethical and legal issues in mental health nursing is essential for promoting patient rights, ensuring high-quality care, and maintaining professional standards. This study provided insights into the current level of knowledge among nurses working in psychiatric teaching hospitals. The findings underscore the importance of ongoing education and training programs to improve nurses' understanding of ethical and legal issues in mental health nursing. By addressing knowledge gaps and promoting best practices, nurses can contribute to the ethical and legal delivery of mental healthcare in psychiatric teaching hospitals.

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