



**LEVELS OF NURSING ETHICS KNOWLEDGE AMONG STUDENTS  
WITHOUT CLINICAL EXPERIENCE**

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**ABSTRACT**

Nursing ethics plays a crucial role in shaping the nursing profession, and a thorough understanding of ethical values serves as the foundation for delivering quality healthcare services. Objective: To describe the level of nursing ethics knowledge among nursing students who do not yet have clinical practice experience in hospitals. Method: This research employed a quantitative descriptive research design. Data analysis utilized a descriptive statistical approach, presenting frequency data and percentage levels of knowledge. The population in the study consists of all first-semester nursing students who have yet to undergo clinical practice. The sampling technique employed is purposive sampling. The research sample comprised 82 students lacking clinical practice experience. The questionnaire assessing nursing ethics knowledge underwent validity testing, obtaining a value of  $1 > 0.355$  and reliability testing with a Cronbach's alpha value of  $0.961 > 0.60$ . The questionnaire consisted of 29 items. Results: The findings of this study indicate percentage categories for the level of nursing ethics knowledge among students as follows: (21%) abysmal, (28%) poor, (20%) fair, (18%) good, and (16%) very good. Conclusions: Innovative learning strategies, practical experiences, and in-depth curriculum studies in the field of professional ethics in nursing are important to help address the limitations of nursing ethics knowledge.

Keywords: levels of knowledge; nursing ethics; nursing practice

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**INTRODUCTION**

The nursing profession is an integral part of the healthcare system, carrying significant responsibilities and playing a central role in delivering holistic healthcare services focused on meeting patients' needs (Nursalam, 2015). Nursing extends beyond the provision of healthcare services; it must encompass a crucial ethical dimension in fulfilling the professional role of a nurse. The ethical dimension encompasses aspects of nursing ethics such as patient rights, autonomy, justice, and privacy policies. (Fernández-Feito et al., 2019). Therefore, in fulfilling the intricate role of a nurse, it is imperative for the nurse not only to possess high levels of clinical knowledge and skills but also to integrate the principles of nursing ethics into daily practice. Nursing ethics is a crucial ethical foundation to ensure that nursing practitioners can deliver patient care with integrity and expertise. Furthermore, nursing ethics is an essential aspect of shaping the nursing profession, and a sound understanding of ethical values forms the basis for delivering quality healthcare services (Abbas, 2015). Fundamentally, nursing ethics serves as a guiding principle for nurses in addressing various moral dilemmas and ethical situations that may arise while providing nursing care.

Nursing ethics encompasses a range of values and moral principles that guide the behavior and decision-making of nurses. Nursing ethics is associated with patient autonomy, justice, non-maleficence, and beneficence in the literature (Felix et al., 2014). According to the American Nurses Association (ANA), nursing ethics encompasses a commitment to moral standards, safe and effective practices, and the preservation of public trust in the nursing profession (Harper & Maloney, 2016). Hence, a profound understanding of nursing ethics becomes an urgent necessity for nurses, as this concept forms the moral foundation and steadfast basis for nurses in delivering dignified and professional nursing care. While nursing ethics has long been recognized as a crucial element in nursing practice, several challenges persist in its implementation. The research by (Nora et al., 2016) They indicate that nurses often encounter complex situations that necessitate ethical considerations in decision-making. Hence, the understanding and application of nursing ethics constitute an ethical obligation and serve as a practical necessity for nurses to address potential moral dilemmas that may arise in daily practice.

Presently, there is a need to comprehend the extent to which nursing students, as aspiring professional nurses without clinical practice experience, possess adequate knowledge of nursing ethics. Nursing students who have not engaged in clinical practice may hold preliminary views on nursing ethics. However, their understanding in the context of clinical practice remains a knowledge gap that requires attention. Recent research indicates that nursing students who have yet to undergo clinical practice may have a less profound understanding of ethics than their counterparts with practical experience. Nursing students without clinical practice experience exhibit varying levels of ethical understanding, with some demonstrating more limited comprehension (Ngozika Ugwu et al., 2023). Recent research findings reveal a considerable variation in nursing ethics knowledge among students who have yet to be involved in clinical practice (Alnajjar & Abou Hashish, 2021a). The research results highlight that several nursing students need more clinical practice experience to comprehend the principles of nursing ethics. Despite existing literature providing some information on nursing ethics for students, specific attention to the subgroup of students who have yet to engage in clinical practice remains limited (Albert et al., 2020; Lechasseur et al., 2018).

In comparison, previous research has also found that nursing students who have participated in clinical practice exhibit a higher understanding of ethics than those who have not been involved (Palese et al., 2019). This research also confirms the significance of clinical practice in shaping nursing ethics knowledge. While these findings provide a general overview, the study attempts to complement this understanding by focusing on students not involved in clinical experiences. The strength of this research lies in its specific and comprehensive approach to this student group, offering additional insights and expanding existing understandings. These results provide a robust foundation for further exploration in this research to gain a deeper understanding. The research gap serves as the primary focus of this study, aiming to address the knowledge void regarding the level of nursing ethics knowledge among students who have yet to undergo clinical practice. Therefore, this research seeks to contribute by presenting new data and information on the level of nursing ethics knowledge within the subgroup of nursing students who have yet to engage in clinical practice.

Students in delivering quality nursing care. The urgency of this research is underscored by the critical importance of understanding nursing ethics as the bedrock for quality nursing practice. Nursing students who have yet to engage in clinical practice form a vital segment of this population, and this research offers pertinent insights to enhance the quality of nursing

education. Nursing education institutions can develop practical and relevant learning strategies by comprehending ethical knowledge early. Therefore, this research has the potential to positively contribute to the development of nursing education curricula and enhance the preparedness of nursing students to face ethical challenges in the practical realm. Based on the background description of the research, this study aims to describe the level of nursing ethics knowledge among nursing students who do not yet have clinical practice experience in hospitals.

## **METHOD**

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on nursing students who have yet to be involved in clinical practice. By elucidating the level of nursing ethics knowledge at the early stages of education, this study employs a quantitative descriptive research design. This approach is instrumental in illustrating and measuring students' level of nursing ethics knowledge. The research applies specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to select the study sample. Inclusion criteria involved students who had not undergone clinical practice in hospitals and had consented to participate in the study. Conversely, exclusion criteria in this research pertain to nursing students currently on leave. The population for this study comprises first-semester students in the Nursing Program of Satya Wacana Christian University (UKSW) who have yet to engage in clinical practice. The research utilizes a purposive sampling technique to select samples that meet the inclusion criteria. Through purposive sampling, the study can focus on the most relevant group of students aligned with the research objectives. The research sample consists of 82 students. Data collection involves a questionnaire on nursing ethics knowledge, which has undergone validity and reliability testing using Pearson's Product Moment correlation technique and Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The questionnaire comprises 29 items covering nursing ethics, offering five response alternatives: excellent (5), good (4), satisfactory (3), poor (2), and very poor (1). The research questionnaire is administered directly to the sample based on availability and preferences. Data collection occurred throughout January 2024. Subsequently, data analysis will employ a descriptive statistical approach, presenting frequency data and the percentage of nursing ethics knowledge levels among students

## **RESULTS**

### **Validity and reliability of the instrument**

Interpreted based on the validity correlation coefficient criteria, referencing the  $r$  table, which is 0.355. The instrument consists of 30 questions, and after the validity test, one question item with a value of  $0.272 < 0.355$  was deemed invalid, resulting in 29 valid question items. The remaining 29 question items obtained validity scores  $r_{xy} > 0.355$  with a significance level of  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Therefore, the overall validity test result is 1, falling into the category of very high validity. Based on the reliability test results, the Cronbach's alpha value for all items is  $> 0.60$ . Thus, according to the decision-making basis in the reliability test, it can be concluded that all 29 items are reliable or consistent and fall within the high-reliability category with a value of 0.96. Based on the reliability test results, the Cronbach's alpha value for all items is  $> 0.60$ . Thus, according to the decision-making basis in the reliability test, it can be concluded that all 29 items are reliable or consistent and fall within the high-reliability category with a value of 0.96

### Respondent characteristics

The respondents of this research consist of 82 nursing students who have yet to experience clinical practice. The characteristics of the respondents analyzed include age and gender. Respondent characteristics are presented in the form of frequency and percentage.

Table 1.  
Respondent characteristics (n= 82)

Respondent characteristics	f	%
Age		
a. < 17 years	8	10
b. 17 – 20 years	70	85
c. > 20 years	4	5
Gender		
a. Male	11	13
b. Female	71	87

Table 1, it is evident that respondent characteristics based on age indicate that 85% of the respondents fall within the age range of 17 to 20 years. The respondents are early-semester nursing students who, according to the nursing education curriculum, still need to undergo clinical practice experience in hospitals. Respondents under 17 constitute 10%, while those above 20 years old account for only 5%. The gender distribution of respondents is predominantly female at 87%, with males comprising only 13%.

### Level of knowledge of nursing ethics

Based on the research findings from 82 respondents, the results regarding the level of ethical knowledge among nursing students without clinical experience are as follows:

Table 2.  
Level of knowledge of nursing ethics (n= 82)

Category	score	f	%
excellent	116 – 145	11	16
good	101 – 115	15	18
satisfactory	86 – 100	16	20
deficient	71 – 85	23	28
inferior	29 – 70	17	21

Based on the frequency table and the percentage of ethical knowledge among nursing students without clinical experience, most respondents have a knowledge level of nursing ethics that still needs improvement. Of the 82 participating respondents, 11 (16%), demonstrated excellent knowledge. A total of 15 individuals (18%), had good knowledge, while 16 individuals (20%), showed satisfactory knowledge. However, 23 individuals (28%), displayed a deficient level of knowledge, while another 17 individuals (21%), had an inferior knowledge level. These results indicate a gap in understanding nursing ethics among students who need practical experience. Therefore, efforts are needed to enhance the understanding of nursing ethics through various innovative and interactive learning methods that can assist students in internalizing nursing ethical values, enabling them to apply nursing ethics effectively when facing real-world nursing practice situations.

### DISCUSSION

The primary findings of this research indicate that students in the early stages of education who have yet to engage in clinical practice possess insufficient knowledge of nursing ethics. The results of previous research indicate that academic learning that needs to be integrated with clinical practice in students at the early stages of education hurts the knowledge and awareness of nursing ethics (Alnajjar & Abou Hashish, 2021). Recent research results in

South India explain that nursing students still have limited knowledge about nursing ethics (Ashwini K. Shetty & Ravi Vaswani, 2022). It is crucial to note that nursing students who need clinical practice experience exhibit limitations in understanding nursing ethics despite receiving coursework on nursing ethics in fundamental nursing courses (Huynh & He, 2018). Practical experience in clinical settings plays a crucial role in internalizing and applying knowledge (Nurunnabi et al., 2022). The results of this study align with previous findings that practical experience in clinical environments allows students to confront ethical nursing situations directly, face conflicting values, and experience the pressure of ethical decision-making. Much of nursing ethical knowledge is contextual and can be better understood through direct experiences with patients and colleagues in clinical settings (S. Kim et al., 2018; Kucukkelepce et al., 2020; Ramos et al., 2015).

The results of previous research indicate that academic learning that needs to be integrated with clinical practice in students at the early stages of education hurts the knowledge and awareness of nursing ethics (Y. J. Kim, 2022). Furthermore, integrating nursing ethics material into formal educational curricula can also contribute to low nursing ethics knowledge among students who need clinical experience (Jafree et al., 2015). Although ethical topics are frequently covered in theoretical lectures, expanding this material through practical cases and specific discussions on nursing ethical dilemmas needs to be increased. Research indicates that an integrated approach within the curriculum can enhance the understanding of nursing ethics (Lechasseur et al., 2018b). Learning focused on group discussions and ethical simulation can also improve students' comprehension of applying nursing ethical principles in clinical contexts (Nash & Harvey, 2017). Recent research also explains that learning methods using a case-centered approach and connecting theory with clinical practice can increase nursing students' ethical knowledge (Lee et al., 2020).

Another aspect to be considered is the need for more understanding regarding the urgency of nursing ethics in providing patient care. Students may need to fully comprehend the ethical implications of their actions in the real world. Therefore, curriculum expansion to include case studies highlighting the ethical consequences of nursing decisions and actions can help enhance students' ethical sensitivity. Awareness of the close relationship between ethics and patient care can aid students in internalizing nursing ethical values more effectively (Clark, 2017). Furthermore, personal factors such as values and norms held by students can influence their ethical knowledge. Students with different cultural or moral backgrounds may face challenges integrating universally accepted nursing ethical principles (Tlili et al., 2023). Hence, the curriculum should incorporate cultural and moral dimensions so that students can develop an inclusive understanding of nursing ethics.

Understanding that the lack of clinical experience can pose a barrier to students' recognizing and confronting complex ethical nursing situations is crucial. This may affect students' ability to make ethical decisions and uphold nursing ethical principles confidently. Previous studies have emphasized the significance of clinical experience in shaping ethical attitudes and decision-making in nursing students (Doane et al., 2004). It is noteworthy that the insufficient knowledge of nursing ethics in early-stage students impacts them individually and can have implications for future professionals' quality of nursing care. Therefore, enhancing nursing ethics knowledge at the early education level can improve the overall quality of healthcare services. This research has several limitations that warrant consideration. The focus on early-stage students who have yet to engage in clinical practice restricts the generalizability of findings to students with clinical experience. This limitation creates a gap in understanding nursing ethics between students with clinical exposure and those without. Furthermore, the

need for integration of nursing ethics content in the formal educational curriculum also serves as a limiting factor. Students who have yet to receive sufficient exposure to nursing ethics in practical contexts need an adequate understanding of these concepts. Therefore, further research is needed to develop educational strategies that can enhance the understanding of nursing ethics in early-stage students more holistically and practically.

## **CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of this research underscores the imperative need for further attention to enhancing the understanding of nursing ethics among students lacking clinical experience. Implementing more effective learning strategies, increased practical exposure, and curriculum adjustments are essential to address the limitations in nursing ethics knowledge at this educational stage. This enhancement is not solely advantageous for nursing students but is poised to impact the overall quality of nursing care positively.

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