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A STUDY ON ETHICAL CHALLENGES FACED BY NURSES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT
The COVID -19 pandemic has changed the image of our world with its circular impact on health, living tradition and economy. Nurses face ethical challenges in providing care activities during COVID-19. The nurses are in the middle of the battle against various ethical challenges. The ethical challenges of nurses were categorized into three thematic areas, nurses safety role and moral distress, and patient and nurses and their family relationship. The purpose of the study is to identify the common ethical challenges faced by nurses during covid-19 pandemic and To identify the difficulties faced by nurses while treating covid-19 patients. It is a descriptive study and this study deals with sample size of 70 samples among nurses. The duration of the study is two months (February and March 2024). A structured questionnaire (primary data) is used for the data collection.

Key words: Hospital, Ethical challenges, Nursing services, COVID-19

INTRODUCTION:

The healthcare industry is one of the emerging service sectors. In India, it has become one of the largest sectors in terms of revenue and employment, growing rapidly due to strengthening coverage, services, and increased expenditure. Nurses are frontline caregivers, tirelessly working to ensure the well-being and recovery of patients, especially during the challenges posed during COVID-19 times.

Nursing services are crucial during pandemics for preventing sickness, educating patients, and putting infection control measures in place to protect patients and medical personnel. Nurses have been responsible for monitoring patients' conditions, administering medications, and implementing treatment plans. They have provided emotional support to patients and families, helping them cope with the stress and anxiety associated with the illness.

Nurses have been involved in COVID-19 testing and screening efforts, conducting swab tests, collecting samples Nurses have been responsible for implementing infection control measures in healthcare settings to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. They have enforced protocols for hand hygiene, personal protective equipment (PPE) usage, isolation precautions, and environmental cleaning to minimize the risk of infection among patients and healthcare workers.

There is a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), work-related stress, emotional and mental health strain, and work-life balance are the challenges faced by nurses. Addressing these challenges faced by nurses and providing them with the necessary support and resources are crucial steps towards building a sustainable healthcare workers and ensuring quality care services

REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

[1]Study explore ethical challenges faced by nurses in the COVID-19 pandemic, categorizing them into safety, role & moral distress, resource allocation, and client-nurse relationship. It highlights issues like inadequate protection, moral distress, and limitations on end-of-life communication, emphasizing the need for support and investment in nurses, Gebreheat.G, Hirut Teame (2021).

[2]Study explores a descriptive study involving interviews with 10 nurses explored the ethical challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Three major themes emerged: nurses' obligation to care for all patients, dilemmas regarding personal safety versus patient care, and the importance of self-care. The study emphasizes the importance of adhering to ethical standards and professional values in healthcare during crises, Alladeen Alloubani, Wejdan Khater(2021).

[3]Nurses played a crucial role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, adapting to changing conditions and caring for patients. A study aimed to identify ethical challenges in ICU care during COVID-19, interviewing 49 participants. Five themes emerged, including visitation policies and patient isolation. Nurses showed resilience and teamwork, but further ethics training for nurse managers is recommended, Georgina Morley, Dianna Jo Copley(2022).

[4]A qualitative study explored hospital administrators' perspectives on COVID-19's impact on healthcare workers' mental health. Findings revealed common mental health issues, increased self-care, and organizational challenges. The study underscores the need for interventions like training programs to address staff mental health during crises, Anahita Ali, Santosh Kumar(2023).

[5]A qualitative study investigated ethical challenges among nurses caring for COVID-19 patients. Data from 20 nurses revealed themes including institutional issues, lack of knowledge, and emotional strain. Coping strategies were identified. Support for nurses is crucial for ethical care provision amidst pandemic uncertainties, P. Soylar, M.Ulucan(2022).

[6]Nurses faced ethical challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting their physical and mental health and work performance. A qualitative study with 19 nurses revealed themes of ethical conflicts and inequalities, emphasizing the need for support and adequate working conditions to ensure quality patient care, Arpi Manookian, Nahid Dehghan Nayeri(2023).

[7]A qualitative study explores ethical challenges among nurses caring for COVID-19 patients. Findings reveal themes such as professional ethics and coping styles. The study emphasizes the importance of supporting nurses' mental health for improved patient care,Yuxiu Jia, Ou Chen(2020).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

• To identify the common ethical challenges faced by nurses during covid-19 pandemic.

• To identify the difficulties faced by nurses while treating covid-19 patients.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:
The systematic enquiry of study undertaken founded on a quantitative   perspective in which the primary data is gathered from 70 nurses. The research study was focused on nursing service convenient sampling procedure was used to collect the sample. For the data analysis part, Descriptive statistics like percentage analysis, weighted average, Chi- square analysis, and SPSS software was used to decode the yield.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS:

(A)- PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

Table 1- The table shows that among 70   respondents 16% of respondents are male and   84% of respondents are female.

Gender	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	11	16
Female	59	84
Total	**70**	**100**

Table 2-The table shows that among 70 respondents 48% of respondents are less than 30 years of age ,48% of respondents are between 30 to 35 years of age and 4% of respondents are above 35 years of age.

Age group (in years)	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
<30	34	48
30-35	34	48
>35	2	4
Total	**70**	**100**

Table 3-The table shows that among 70 respondents 14% of respondents belong to Emergency department, 14% of respondents belong to OPD, 22% of respondents belong to IP department, and 50% of respondents belong to ICU.

Department	No .Of .Respondents	Percentage%
Emergency	10	14
OPD	10	14
IP	15	22
ICU	35	50
Total	**70**	**100**

Table 4 -The table shows that among 70 respondents, 56% of respondents belong to UG, 20% of respondents belong to PG, and 24% of respondents belong diploma.

Qualification	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
UG	39	56
PG	14	20
DIPLOMA	17	24
Total	**70**	**100**

Table 5-The table shows that among 70 respondents, 60% of the respondents belong to less than 1 years, 34% of respondents 2-3 years, and 6% of respondents belong to >3 years.

Work Experience In Current Organization	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
<1	42	60
2-3	24	34
>3	4	6
Total	**70**	**100**

Table 6- The table shows that among 70 respondents, 34% of respondents belong to less than 5 years, 62% of respondents belong to 5 – 10 years and 4% of respondents belong to above 10 years.

Overall work experience	No of respondents	Percentage%
<5	24	34
5-10	43	62
>10	3	4
Total	**70**	**100**

Table- 7 The table shows that among 70 respondents, 3% of respondents says recreational activities has been provided and 97% of respondents says has not been provided.

Recreational activities	No of respondents	Percentage %
Provided	2	3
Not provided	68	97
Total	**70**	**100**

(B)-WEIGHTED AVERAGE
ETHICAL CHALLENGES FACED BY NURSES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Table-8: The above table shows that among 70 respondents, the highest weightage is 4 for reusing PPE due to scarcity and the least weighted average is 1.6 for duty time extended for nurses, 1.7 for hospital managed resources and patient flow and worked beyond job description

S.no	Description	Strongly agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly disagree 1	Total	Weighted Average
1	Duty time extended	36	25	8	1	0	70	**1.6**
2	During covid-19 Hospital effectively managed resources and patient flow	26	36	8	0	0	70	**1.7**

3	Patient autonomy during covid-19	1	21	24	23	1	70	3
4	Fair bed allocation during scarcity time in hospital	17	37	14	2	0	70	2
5	Reused PPE due to scarcity	2	14	45	9	0	70	4
6	Worked beyond job description	33	30	5	1	1	70	**1.7**
7	Challenges faced when patients wishes was not fulfilled at last stage	2	21	47	0	0	70	3.6
8	Fear of spreading covid-19 to your family member	8	21	32	8	1	70	2.6

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY NURSES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Table 9: The above table shows that among 70 respondents, the highest weightage is 3.7 for taken risk to their health during pandemic while treating patients and least weighted average is 2.4 for facing challenges in transferring patients to the ICU due to limited resources.

S.no	Difficulties faced by nurses	Strongly agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly disagree 1	Total	Weightage
1	Taken risk to your health during pandemic while treating patients.	0	7	15	37	11	70	**3.7**
2	Lack of avoiding risk even with full PPE	1	7	31	31	0	70	3.3

3	Facing challenges in transferring patients to the ICU due to limited resources.	1	48	14	7	0	70	**2.4**
4	Difficulties communicating with patients while wearing face shield.	0	3	34	27	6	70	3.5
5	Difficulty in handling patients family members when patient wasn't response to treatment.	1	5	37	25	2	70	3.3

(C) - CHI- SQUARE

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN NURSES TAKEN RISK TO THEIR HEALTH DURING PANDEMIC WHILE TREATING PATIENTS AND GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS.

Ho: There is no significant association between nurses taken risk to their health during pandemic while treating patients and gender

H₁: There is a significant association between nurses taken risk to their health during pandemic while treating patients and gender of the nurses

Nurses taken risk to their health during pandemic while treating patients					
Gender	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**Total**
Male	0	0	7	4	11
Female	7	15	30	7	59
Total	**7**	**15**	**37**	**11**	**70**
Calculated Chi-square Value				**0.04**	

P-Value < 0.05

Table 10- The above table shows that among 59 respondents, 37 % from female agrees that they have taken risk to their health during pandemic while treating patients.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN NURSES FACING DIFFICULTIES TO COMMUNICATE WITH PATIENT WHILE WEARING FACE SHEILD AND EDUCATION

Ho: There is no significant association between nurses facing difficulties to communicate with patient while wearing face shield and education of the respondents.
H₁: There is a significant association between nurses facing difficulties to communicate with patient while wearing face shield and education of the respondents.

Nurses facing difficulties to communicate with patient while wearing face shield				
Education	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**Total**
UG	0	21	16	2	39
14PG	0	6	5	3	14
Diploma	3	7	6	1	17
Total	**3**	**34**	**27**	**6**	**70**
				Calculated Chi-square Value	**0.037**

p- value =<0.05

Table 11- The above table shows that among 17 respondents, 59% from diploma nurses agree that the nurses facing difficulties to communicate with patient while wearing face shield.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN FEAR OF SPREADING COVID-19 TO THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS AND DEPARTMENT

Ho: There is no significant association between the fear of spreading covid-19 to their family members and department they belong to.
H₁: There is a significant association between fear of spreading covid -19 to their family members and department.

Fear of spreading covid-19 to their family members and department					
Departments	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	**Total**
Emergency	0	0	10	0	0	10
Outpatient	0	2	6	1	1	10
Inpatient	2	3	9	1	0	15
ICU	6	16	7	6	0	35
Total	**8**	**21**	**32**	**8**	**1**	**70**
					Calculated Chi-square Value	**0.002**

p- value =<0.05

Table 12- The above table shows that among 35 respondents, 63% from the ICU department agree that fear of spreading covid-19 to their family members.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that during COVID-19 pandemic the nurses faced various challenges such as scarcity of PPE (personal protective equipment), bed shortage, basic facility to transfer patients within the wards, extended duty hours, work beyond job description, fear of spreading COVID-19 to their own family members. It will be more helpful for them to manage their mental well-being by engaging in recreational activities like yoga or meditation during pandemic times. In near future managing pandemic situation requires nurses to exhibit a range of skills, adaptability and resilience can play a vital role in mitigating the spread of disease and providing high-quality care to patients and supporting their communities during times of crisis.

REFFERENCE
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