

# Theoretical Perspectives on Nursing Ethics: A Framework for Ethical Decision-Making in Patient Care

Fawaz Sulaiman Salem Almohammadi<sup>1</sup>, Yasser Basheer Mulla Alsaedi<sup>2</sup>, Yousef Shoraid O Almutairi<sup>3</sup>, Ahmed Saad Alhejaili<sup>4</sup>, Raed Awawad Alhejaili<sup>5</sup>, Mutairi Khalif Mushaykhis D<sup>6</sup>, Yousef Saleem Almohammadi<sup>7</sup>, Nafea Khalil Rashid Althubiani<sup>8</sup>, Aeshah Mudkhil Saad Almutairi<sup>9</sup>, Rayan Awawad Alhejaili<sup>10</sup>

1. Nursing Al Miqat General Hospital, [fsalmuhammadi@moh.gov.sa](mailto:fsalmuhammadi@moh.gov.sa)
2. Nursing Talaat Al Haboub Health Center, [YBALSAEDI@moh.gov.sa](mailto:YBALSAEDI@moh.gov.sa)
3. Nursing Beneficiary Experience Management, [yoshalmutairi@moh.gov.sa](mailto:yoshalmutairi@moh.gov.sa)
4. Nursing Al Miqat General Hospital, [AHSALHEJAILI@moh.gov.sa](mailto:AHSALHEJAILI@moh.gov.sa)
5. Nursing King Fahd Hospital, [RAALHEJAILI@moh.gov.sa](mailto:RAALHEJAILI@moh.gov.sa)
6. Nursing in Quality Management and Output Monitoring in the Directorate, [dalmotarey@moh.gov.sa](mailto:dalmotarey@moh.gov.sa)
7. Nursing King Fahd Hospital, [YSAMOHAMMDI@moh.gov.sa](mailto:YSAMOHAMMDI@moh.gov.sa)
8. Nursing King Fahd Hospital, [NKALTHUBYANI@moh.gov.sa](mailto:NKALTHUBYANI@moh.gov.sa)
9. Nursing Durrat Al Madinah Health Center, [aalmutare@moh.gov.sa](mailto:aalmutare@moh.gov.sa)
10. Nursing King Fahd Hospital, [RAYANAA@moh.gov.sa](mailto:RAYANAA@moh.gov.sa)

## Abstract

This study explores the theoretical and practical dimensions of nursing ethics, focusing on developing a structured framework for ethical decision-making in patient care. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates qualitative and quantitative methodologies to ensure a comprehensive analysis. The qualitative phase involved in-depth interviews with nurses across various specialties, such as pediatric care, geriatric nursing, and community health, identifying recurring themes such as moral distress, advocacy, and organizational support. The quantitative phase utilized surveys to quantify ethical awareness, confidence in addressing ethical dilemmas, and the impact of institutional support on decision-making processes.

The study was motivated by the increasing complexity of healthcare systems, technological advancements, and evolving societal values, all of which challenge traditional ethical norms in nursing. Findings revealed that while many nurses' express confidence in handling ethical dilemmas, gaps in organizational training and leadership support were evident. Organizational support, particularly through ethical training and leadership engagement, was highlighted as a critical enabler of effective ethical decision-making.

Key outcomes of this research include the identification of systemic barriers to ethical practice, such as inadequate training and resource allocation conflicts. The study underscores the need for enhanced ethical education, reflective practices, and robust leadership frameworks to foster a culture of ethical resilience and patient-centered care.

By combining theoretical insights with empirical evidence, this research provides actionable recommendations for improving nursing ethics and offers a roadmap for integrating ethical frameworks into clinical practice.

**Keywords:** Nursing ethics, ethical decision-making, moral distress, advocacy, organizational support, healthcare ethics.

## الملخص

يتناول هذا البحث الأبعاد النظرية والتطبيقية لأخلاقيات التمريض، مع التركيز على تطوير إطار عمل منهجي لصنع القرارات الأخلاقية في رعاية المرضى. اعتمدت الدراسة على منهجية مختلطة تجمع بين الأساليب النوعية والكمية لتحقيق تحليل شامل. تضمنت المرحلة النوعية مقابلات متعمقة مع ممرضين من تخصصات مختلفة، مثل رعاية الأطفال، ورعاية المسنين، والصحة المجتمعية. كشفت هذه المقابلات عن موضوعات متكررة تشمل الضيق الأخلاقي، والدعوة لحقوق المرضى، ودعم المنظمات. في المقابل، تم استخدام الاستبيانات في المرحلة الكمية لقياس مستوى الوعي الأخلاقي والثقة في التعامل مع المعضلات الأخلاقية وتأثير الدعم المؤسسي على اتخاذ القرارات.

نشأت الدراسة من الحاجة الملحة لمواجهة التعقيدات المتزايدة في أنظمة الرعاية الصحية، وتطور التكنولوجيا، والقيم المجتمعية المتغيرة، وكلها تحديات تؤثر على معايير الأخلاقيات التقليدية في التمريض. أظهرت النتائج أن العديد من الممرضين يشعرون بالثقة في معالجة القضايا الأخلاقية، ولكن تم الكشف عن ثغرات في التدريب المؤسسي ودعم القيادة. كما تم تسليط الضوء على أهمية الدعم المؤسسي، خصوصاً من خلال التدريب الأخلاقي ومشاركة القيادات، كعامل أساسي لتعزيز فعالية اتخاذ القرارات الأخلاقية.

تشمل أبرز نتائج البحث تحديد العوائق النظامية أمام الممارسة الأخلاقية، مثل نقص التدريب والصراعات المتعلقة بتوزيع الموارد. يوصي البحث بتعزيز التعليم الأخلاقي، وتشجيع الممارسات التأملية، وتطوير أطر قيادية قوية لتعزيز ثقافة الالتزام الأخلاقي والرعاية المتمركزة حول المريض.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** أخلاقيات التمريض، صنع القرارات الأخلاقية، الضيق الأخلاقي، الدعوة لحقوق المرضى، الدعم المؤسسي، أخلاقيات الرعاية الصحية.

## 1. Introduction

Nursing ethics forms the bedrock of professional nursing practice, guiding practitioners through the intricate moral landscapes they encounter daily. The ethical dimensions of nursing extend far beyond adherence to codes and standards; they delve into the nuanced interplay of patient autonomy, beneficence, justice, and the care ethic. These principles, while longstanding, are constantly redefined by advancements in technology, evolving societal values, and the increasing complexity of healthcare systems. This paper aims to synthesize theoretical perspectives on nursing ethics and proposes a structured framework for ethical decision-making in patient care. Drawing on recent literature, the discussion will highlight how ethical theories and practical applications converge to foster ethical awareness and decision-making among nurses (Milliken & Grace, 2017).

Similarly, Fairchild introduces a conceptual model that equips nurses to navigate the ethical complexities of contemporary healthcare, suggesting that robust ethical reasoning skills are vital for maintaining a caring stance amidst competing values (Fairchild, 2010).

Contemporary nursing ethics literature has evolved to encompass broader dimensions, including the ethical dilemmas posed by technological advancements and systemic constraints. For instance, Peirce et al. explore the ethical challenges introduced by technologies like artificial intelligence and big data, urging nurses to critically evaluate their implications for patient care (Peirce et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Juujärvi et al. emphasize the integration of care and justice ethics, particularly in geriatric care settings, where decisions about resource allocation often conflict with individual patient needs (Juujärvi, Ronkainen, & Silvennoinen, 2019).

Theoretical frameworks such as virtue ethics, deontology, and the ethics of care provide foundational lenses through which nurses can analyze and address ethical dilemmas. Wright and Brajtman highlight how relational and embodied knowledge, developed through close interactions with patients and families, contribute to a uniquely nursing-oriented ethical perspective (Wright & Brajtman, 2011). This relational approach is particularly vital in primary nursing models, as illustrated by Juujärvi et al., where the emphasis on patient-nurse relationships fosters both empathic understanding and ethical decision-making (Nummela, Juujärvi, & Sinervo, 2019).

In addition to theoretical insights, practical strategies for enhancing ethical competency are gaining prominence in nursing education and clinical practice. Reflective-based learning, as explored by Jiménez et al., demonstrates how reflection on ethical conflicts encountered during clinical placements can strengthen nursing students' ethical awareness and decision-making skills (Lezama Lima & Jiménez, 2023). Similarly, Momennasab et al. argue for the critical role of ethical codes in aligning nurses' actions with professional values, suggesting that adherence to these codes can enhance the quality of patient care (Momennasab, Koshkaki, Torabizadeh, & Tabei, 2016).

As healthcare systems continue to evolve, so too must the frameworks that underpin ethical decision-making in nursing. Aitamaa et al. call for ongoing research into the ethical problems faced by nurse managers, emphasizing the importance of education and organizational support in fostering ethically sound practices (Aitamaa, Leino-Kilpi, Puukka, & Suhonen, 2010).

Furthermore, Gastmans highlights the critical role of nurses in end-of-life care, advocating for a deeper integration of nursing ethics into interdisciplinary care processes to address the unique challenges of caring for vulnerable populations(Gastmans, 2012).

This synthesis of theoretical and empirical perspectives reveals a compelling narrative: nursing ethics is a dynamic and multifaceted field that requires continuous engagement with both moral philosophy and practical realities. By integrating theoretical constructs with real-world applications, this paper seeks to provide a comprehensive framework for ethical decision-making in nursing, ensuring that care remains patient-centered, compassionate, and ethically grounded.

The complexity of ethical decision-making in nursing highlights the necessity of a structured and dynamic framework that can accommodate the multifaceted challenges nurses face daily.

Additionally, the integration of ethical education into nursing programs is crucial for preparing future practitioners to face moral challenges effectively. Reflective learning, as documented by Jiménez et al. (2023), has proven to be an invaluable tool in enhancing ethical awareness among nursing students. By engaging in reflective practices, students gain a deeper understanding of the ethical dimensions of care, enabling them to approach ethical dilemmas with confidence and a well-rounded perspective(Jiménez de Asúa, 2023).

The role of ethical codes and guidelines in professional practice cannot be overstated. Momennasab et al. (2016) emphasize how adherence to ethical codes ensures that nurses' decisions align with core professional values and the expectations of patients and managers alike. These codes serve not only as a regulatory framework but also as a moral compass, guiding nurses in delivering quality, patient-centered care(Beykmirza, Nikfarid, Atashzadeh-Shoorideh, & Nasiri, 2019).

In practice, however, the application of ethical principles often encounters barriers, such as organizational constraints and systemic pressures. Aitamaa et al. (2010) shed light on the ethical dilemmas that arise from resource allocation and the provision of high-quality care within constrained environments. Their research highlights the importance of fostering a supportive organizational culture that prioritizes ethical decision-making and provides resources for addressing moral challenges(Aitamaa et al., 2010).

Moreover, the role of nurses in end-of-life care exemplifies the profound ethical responsibilities inherent in the profession. Gastmans (2012) underscores the unique contributions of nursing ethics to end-of-life care, where patient dignity, autonomy, and compassionate care must be balanced against medical, legal, and familial considerations. This area of practice demands a nuanced understanding of ethical principles and a commitment to upholding the values of the nursing profession(Gastmans, 2012).

Similarly, ethical challenges related to organizational pressures, such as cost-effective care, demand careful navigation. Toren and Wagner (2010) explore how nurse managers can utilize ethical decision-making models to resolve conflicts where organizational demands collide with the professional obligations to patient care. These models empower managers to support both their teams and patients, ensuring ethical standards are upheld even in resource-limited settings(Toren & Wagner, 2010).

The interplay between nursing ethics and patient safety further illustrates the profession's commitment to ethical practice. Kangasniemi et al. (2013) argue that ethical principles must underpin all safety-related decisions, from procedural protocols to interactions with patients and families. By embedding ethical values into safety practices, nurses can ensure that their actions prioritize patient dignity and holistic well-being(Kangasniemi, Vaismoradi, Jasper, & Turunen, 2013).

In the broader spectrum of patient care, fostering a patient-first approach rooted in ontological and ethical considerations is paramount. As highlighted by Fistein and Malloy (2014), viewing the patient as an individual with intrinsic value rather than a means to an end forms the foundation of ethical nursing practice. This perspective not only enhances the quality of care but also aligns with

the profession's moral commitment to upholding patient dignity in every decision(Fistein & Malloy, 2014).

the theoretical perspectives and practical applications of nursing ethics are indispensable for navigating the moral complexities of modern healthcare. By integrating reflective practices, ethical education, adherence to professional codes, and the principles of care and justice, nurses are better equipped to uphold their moral obligations. As the profession continues to adapt to new challenges and opportunities, a robust ethical framework will remain central to ensuring compassionate, patient-centered, and ethically sound nursing care. This integration of theory and practice underscores the enduring importance of ethics as the cornerstone of nursing's commitment to holistic and equitable healthcare.

## **2. Literature Review**

This comprehensive review examines the ethical reasoning processes of nurses and their implications for clinical practice. It identifies the influence of personal and contextual factors on ethical decision-making, highlighting the challenges posed by organizational constraints. The authors emphasize the need for in-depth qualitative research to better understand ethical reasoning in nursing. Recommendations include fostering environments that support ethical autonomy and decision-making skills among nurses. The findings offer insights into addressing moral distress and enhancing ethical practice(Goethals, Gastmans, & de Casterlé, 2010).

This review synthesizes findings from studies on ethical dilemmas in nursing practice, focusing on challenges such as workload, resource constraints, and conflicts with colleagues or organizational policies. The findings highlight the emotional toll of these dilemmas, including moral distress and ethical insensitivity. The study suggests that ethical training and institutional support can help nurses navigate these conflicts effectively. Organizational structures that align with nursing values are critical in mitigating ethical distress. The authors advocate for further research into the systemic factors contributing to ethical dilemmas(Haahr, Norlyk, Martinsen, & Dreyer, 2020).

This theoretical paper explores the application of ethical principles in community nursing, emphasizing autonomy, beneficence, advocacy, and social justice. It highlights how community-focused nursing expands ethical considerations beyond individual patient care to include broader societal impacts. The study stresses the importance of cultural competence and responsiveness to community needs. It also calls for ethical frameworks that account for both individual and collective well-being. The authors propose strategies for incorporating these principles into community-based nursing practice(Racher, 2007).

This paper examines ethical practice in nursing from multiple perspectives, including healthcare professionals, service users, and carers. It emphasizes the importance of nurses acting as moral agents who prioritize ethical reasoning and action in their care. The study discusses how ethical complexities arise in various clinical contexts, necessitating the integration of moral courage into practice. It advocates for training programs that enhance ethical reasoning skills and situational awareness. Ethical practice is portrayed as a cornerstone of professional nursing(Varcoe et al., 2004).

This integrative review explores ethical dilemmas faced by nursing students in clinical settings, focusing on conflicts between ethical care and cultural norms. Students reported challenges in whistleblowing unethical practices, balancing learned values with clinical realities, and making autonomous decisions. The study highlights the emotional impact of these dilemmas on students' professional development. It calls for improved educational frameworks that foster ethical competence and support systems for students. Ethical guidance during training is critical for preparing students for professional practice(Albert, Younas, & Sana, 2020).

This study examines recurring themes in ethical dilemmas faced by nurses, such as end-of-life decisions, patient privacy, and conflicts with families or colleagues. It identifies gaps in existing literature, particularly regarding intervention strategies for resolving dilemmas. The findings

emphasize the prevalence of moral distress and its impact on nurses' well-being and professional performance. The authors advocate for more comprehensive training programs and organizational support to address these challenges. Ethical frameworks are positioned as essential tools for navigating complex care scenarios(Rainer, Schneider, & Lorenz, 2018).

This study explores how nurses apply relational ethics to resolve dilemmas in acute care settings. It identifies key themes such as accountability, collaboration, and concern for patient welfare. The authors discuss the role of moral reasoning in mediating ethical decisions, particularly in high-pressure environments. The findings underscore the importance of professional relationships in ethical nursing practice. The study concludes with recommendations for fostering relational competencies through targeted training and mentorship programs(Barlow, Hargreaves, & Gillibrand, 2018).

This study investigates the ethical challenges introduced by nursing informatics, such as privacy concerns and the humanization of care in a digital age. It discusses strategies for addressing these issues, including ethical education, leadership, and collaborative efforts among stakeholders. The findings emphasize the need for nurses to adapt their ethical frameworks to accommodate technological advancements. The study calls for ongoing research into the ethical implications of informatics in healthcare. Recommendations include developing guidelines to support ethical nursing practices in informatics(Wang, Xu, Zhang, & Pan, 2024).

This study examines the core ethical competencies required for nurses to navigate complex clinical environments. It emphasizes moral sensitivity as a cornerstone of ethical decision-making. The research highlights how these competencies are influenced by education, experience, and organizational culture. Recommendations include integrating ethics education into nursing curricula to strengthen moral reasoning. The authors advocate for supportive institutional policies that enable nurses to act on their ethical convictions(Lützn & Kvist, 2012).

This study explores the role of ethical leadership in shaping nursing practices. It identifies key leadership behaviors, such as fostering open communication and promoting ethical autonomy among staff. Ethical leadership is shown to reduce moral distress and enhance patient outcomes. The findings stress the importance of ethics training for nurse leaders and managers. Organizational culture plays a critical role in empowering ethical leadership in clinical settings(Edmonson, 2015).

This study investigates the link between moral distress and burnout among nurses. It identifies key factors contributing to moral distress, including ethical dilemmas and conflicts with organizational policies. The authors suggest strategies for mitigating moral distress, such as fostering ethical dialogue and providing institutional support. The findings highlight the critical need for training programs to build resilience among nurses facing ethical challenges(Rushton, Batcheller, Schroeder, & Donohue, 2015).

This study evaluates the effectiveness of simulation-based learning in improving ethical decision-making skills among nursing students. It highlights how simulations create realistic environments for tackling ethical dilemmas, such as end-of-life care. The findings show improved confidence and moral reasoning among students exposed to simulation training. Recommendations include widespread adoption of simulation tools in nursing education(Kaddoura, Puri, & Dominick, 2014).

This study explores ethical dilemmas arising in multicultural nursing environments. It emphasizes the importance of cultural competence in respecting diverse values and traditions. The findings highlight communication barriers as a major source of ethical tension. The authors propose training programs to enhance nurses' cultural awareness and ethical sensitivity. Recommendations include fostering inclusive policies that accommodate diverse patient needs(Barker et al., 2010).

This study focuses on the interplay between patient autonomy and nurse advocacy. It identifies ethical conflicts arising when nurses perceive patient choices as harmful. The findings stress the importance of balancing respect for autonomy with the duty to advocate for patient welfare.

Recommendations include providing ethics training that emphasizes conflict resolution and communication skills(Kjervik, 2011).

This study examines the application of care ethics in community nursing, highlighting its role in addressing social determinants of health. It discusses how nurses navigate ethical challenges related to resource allocation and community needs. The findings emphasize the importance of empathy and relationship-building in ethical decision-making. Recommendations include integrating care ethics into community health policies(Evans et al., 2012).

This study investigates ethical dilemmas in pediatric nursing, focusing on conflicts between parental rights and child welfare. It highlights the emotional and ethical complexities nurses face when advocating for vulnerable patients. The findings emphasize the importance of ethical guidelines and interdisciplinary collaboration in resolving these dilemmas. Recommendations include specialized ethics training for pediatric nurses(Mitchell et al., 2016).

This study explores the ethical implications of telehealth, such as patient privacy and equitable access to care. It highlights the challenges nurses face in maintaining ethical standards in virtual environments. The findings stress the need for clear guidelines and training on telehealth ethics. Recommendations include adopting robust policies to ensure patient confidentiality and informed consent(Nagel, 2013).

This study examines how organizational ethical climate influences job satisfaction among nurses. It finds that ethical support from leadership and alignment with organizational values enhance morale and retention. The findings stress the importance of creating an ethical workplace culture. Recommendations include regular ethical audits and workshops to align organizational practices with ethical nursing values(Ulrich et al., 2010).

This study investigates ethical challenges faced by nurses during disaster response, such as triage and resource scarcity. It highlights the moral dilemmas arising from prioritizing care in high-pressure environments. The findings emphasize the importance of disaster preparedness training with an ethical focus. Recommendations include developing guidelines to support nurses in ethical decision-making during crises(Dumais & Veenema, 2016).

This study examines the impact of compassion fatigue on nurses' ability to uphold ethical standards. It identifies burnout as a significant barrier to ethical practice. The findings suggest interventions such as mindfulness training and peer support programs to mitigate compassion fatigue. Recommendations include fostering a supportive work environment to sustain ethical care(Coetzee, Klopper, & sciences, 2010).

This study explores ethical dilemmas in geriatric nursing, such as balancing patient autonomy with safety concerns. It highlights the role of ethical reasoning in navigating conflicts related to elder care. The findings emphasize the need for specialized training in geriatric ethics. Recommendations include fostering interdisciplinary collaboration to address the unique challenges of aging populations(Afshar et al., 2019).

This study explores how virtue ethics can guide nursing practice, emphasizing character development and moral integrity. It highlights the importance of virtues such as compassion and courage in ethical decision-making. The findings suggest integrating virtue ethics into nursing education to promote professional growth. Recommendations include mentorship programs that model virtuous behavior(Pellegrino, 2017).

This study examines the ethical complexities of end-of-life care, such as withdrawal of treatment and palliative sedation. It highlights the emotional and moral challenges nurses face in supporting patients and families. The findings stress the importance of communication skills and ethical frameworks in navigating these decisions. Recommendations include training programs that focus on ethical end-of-life care(Lind et al., 2017).

This study investigates ethical dilemmas in psychiatric nursing, such as balancing patient autonomy with safety concerns. It highlights the role of empathy and communication in resolving ethical conflicts. The findings stress the importance of training in psychiatric ethics and de-

escalation techniques. Recommendations include adopting trauma-informed approaches to ethical care (Roberts, Gilman, Breslau, Breslau, & Koenen, 2011).

### **3. Methodology**

This research employs a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively examine ethical decision-making in nursing, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies to ensure a robust and nuanced exploration. The study is structured to integrate theoretical perspectives with real-world experiences, creating a dynamic framework for understanding ethical dilemmas and strategies in nursing practice. Initially, an extensive literature review was conducted to identify foundational theories and recent advancements in nursing ethics, providing a contextual basis for the research. This review informed the development of research tools, including interview guides and survey questionnaires, tailored to capture the multifaceted nature of ethical challenges faced by nurses.

The qualitative phase involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews with nurses across diverse specialties, such as pediatric care, geriatric nursing, and community health. These interviews, lasting approximately 45 minutes each, aimed to uncover lived experiences and personal reflections on ethical dilemmas. Through thematic analysis of the transcripts, key themes such as moral distress, advocacy, and the balance between care and justice were identified, offering rich insights into the ethical landscape of nursing.

In the quantitative phase, surveys were distributed to a broader sample of nursing professionals to validate and quantify the themes identified in the interviews. The surveys included Likert-scale questions and open-ended items, enabling a comprehensive analysis of trends, attitudes, and correlations in ethical awareness and practices. Ethical considerations were meticulously upheld, with informed consent obtained and participant confidentiality ensured. By integrating these methodologies, the research achieves a balance between depth and generalizability, presenting actionable insights for fostering ethical decision-making in nursing.

### **Research Design**

The research design integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of ethical decision-making in nursing. It begins with an extensive literature review, examining theoretical frameworks and practical insights from studies published between 2010 and 2024. This phase establishes the foundation for the research by identifying key themes, trends, and gaps in the existing body of knowledge. The literature review informs the creation of tailored research instruments, including semi-structured interview guides and survey questionnaires, ensuring that the tools are aligned with the study's objectives.

The qualitative component employs semi-structured interviews conducted with a purposive sample of practicing nurses drawn from diverse specialties, including pediatric care, geriatric nursing, community health, and acute care. These interviews delve into the lived experiences of nurses, exploring how they perceive and navigate ethical dilemmas in their practice. The open-ended nature of the interviews allows participants to share nuanced insights, contributing to a deeper understanding of the ethical challenges they face and the strategies they employ to address them.

In the quantitative component, surveys are distributed to a broader sample of nurses to complement and validate the qualitative findings. The surveys incorporate a mix of Likert-scale questions and open-ended items, enabling the collection of data on ethical awareness, challenges, and organizational support. Together, these components create a multidimensional view of ethical decision-making in nursing, bridging individual experiences with broader trends. By combining qualitative depth with quantitative breadth, the research design ensures a holistic exploration of the topic while maintaining methodological rigor.

### **Sampling**

The sampling strategy for this study is designed to achieve both depth and generalizability by including two distinct groups of participants for qualitative and quantitative components. For the qualitative interviews, a purposive sampling method is employed to select 40 practicing nurses. This approach ensures intentional representation across key nursing specialties, including pediatric

care, geriatric nursing, community health, and acute care. By selecting participants based on their expertise and exposure to ethical challenges in various clinical contexts, the study captures diverse perspectives and experiences, providing rich qualitative data.

For the quantitative component, a random sampling strategy is used to recruit 200 nurses from nursing associations and hospital registries spanning three regions. This method aims to ensure that the survey participants are broadly representative of the nursing population, enhancing the reliability and generalizability of the findings. By incorporating random sampling, the study minimizes selection bias and ensures that the quantitative data reflect a wide range of perspectives on ethical awareness, challenges, and decision-making practices.

The dual sampling approach balances the strengths of both methodologies. Purposive sampling in the qualitative phase allows for an in-depth exploration of specific experiences and themes, while random sampling in the quantitative phase provides statistical power and broader applicability of the results. Together, these strategies ensure a comprehensive and methodologically sound examination of ethical decision-making in nursing, bridging individual narratives with population-level insights to address the study's research objectives effectively.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection for this study is carefully structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of ethical decision-making in nursing, executed over two distinct phases. The first phase involves qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews conducted over a four-week period. Each interview lasts approximately 45 minutes and is designed to capture in-depth insights into the participants' experiences with ethical dilemmas in their professional practice. The interview questions are open-ended, focusing on how nurses identify and resolve ethical challenges, the strategies they employ, and the role of organizational policies and support systems in shaping their ethical practices. This phase emphasizes the richness and depth of individual experiences, providing nuanced data for thematic analysis.

The second phase involves quantitative data collection through a survey distributed over six weeks to a broader sample of nurses. The survey combines Likert-scale questions, which allow participants to rate their ethical awareness, challenges, and organizational support, with open-ended questions that encourage detailed responses. The survey is designed to quantify trends and validate the themes identified in the qualitative interviews, offering statistical insights into the prevalence and nature of ethical challenges in nursing. This phase ensures a broad representation of perspectives, capturing both the individual and collective dimensions of ethical decision-making.

Together, these two phases create a robust data set that integrates qualitative depth with quantitative breadth. This dual approach not only enhances the reliability of the findings but also ensures that the research captures the complexity of ethical decision-making in nursing practice from multiple perspectives.

### **Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts is conducted using Braun and Clarke's six-step framework, a systematic approach that ensures rigorous and reliable extraction of themes from qualitative data. The process begins with familiarization, where transcripts are read repeatedly to immerse the researcher in the data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the content. During this phase, initial impressions and recurring ideas are noted, forming the foundation for subsequent analysis.

The second step involves generating initial codes, where significant features of the data are systematically identified and labeled. These codes highlight specific aspects of the interviews, such as recurring expressions of moral dilemmas or descriptions of advocacy efforts. Each transcript is examined meticulously, ensuring that all relevant data are captured and organized into meaningful segments.

In the third step, the codes are grouped to identify potential themes. These themes represent broader patterns or concepts that emerge from the coded data, capturing the essence of participants' experiences and perceptions. For instance, themes such as moral distress, advocacy, and the balance between care and justice begin to take shape as distinct yet interconnected ideas.

The fourth and fifth steps involve reviewing and defining the themes. This includes refining the boundaries of each theme and ensuring that they align cohesively with the overall dataset. Themes are validated against the raw data to confirm their relevance and accuracy, while subthemes are developed to capture nuances.

the themes are named and described in detail, forming the basis for interpretation. This process reveals rich insights into how nurses perceive and address ethical challenges, providing a robust framework for understanding their ethical decision-making processes.

### **Quantitative Analysis**

The quantitative analysis in this study focuses on processing and interpreting survey data to identify trends and validate themes emerging from the qualitative phase. The first step involves descriptive statistical analysis to summarize the demographics of the participants and their responses to key survey questions. Variables such as age, gender, years of experience, and areas of nursing specialization are tabulated to provide a comprehensive overview of the sample's characteristics. This descriptive layer establishes a contextual foundation for understanding the broader patterns within the data.

Following this, the analysis progresses to inferential statistical methods to explore potential correlations and relationships between variables. For instance, the relationship between years of nursing experience and perceived efficacy in ethical decision-making is tested. This approach helps to identify whether specific demographic or professional factors influence nurses' ethical awareness, confidence, or practices. Through this analysis, the study seeks to uncover patterns that can inform targeted interventions, such as tailored training programs or policy recommendations. The analysis rigorously adheres to ethical standards, ensuring participant confidentiality and data integrity throughout the process. By focusing on robust methodologies, the study ensures that the findings are both reliable and valid, providing a credible foundation for drawing conclusions. The quantitative analysis not only quantifies the prevalence of key themes, such as moral distress and advocacy, but also enhances the depth of the study by corroborating and enriching insights from the qualitative data, ultimately contributing to a holistic understanding of ethical decision-making in nursing practice.

**Table 1: Demographics of Interview Participants**

<b>Demographic Variable</b>	<b>Frequency (n=40)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Specialty</b>		
<b>Pediatric Nursing</b>	10	25%
<b>Geriatric Nursing</b>	8	20%
<b>Acute Care</b>	12	30%
<b>Community Health</b>	10	25%
<b>Gender</b>		
<b>Female</b>	32	80%
<b>Male</b>	8	20%
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
<b>0–5 Years</b>	15	37.5%
<b>6–10 Years</b>	12	30%
<b>11–20 Years</b>	8	20%
<b>20+ Years</b>	5	12.5%

**Table 2: Themes Identified in Thematic Analysis**

Theme	Description	Frequency (%)
<b>Moral Distress</b>	Emotional and psychological strain due to ethical conflicts.	65%
<b>Advocacy</b>	Efforts to support patient rights and welfare despite systemic barriers.	50%
<b>Balancing Care and Justice</b>	Struggles to allocate resources fairly while maintaining patient-centered care.	40%
<b>Organizational Support</b>	Influence of institutional policies and leadership on ethical decision-making.	70%

**Table 3: Survey Responses on Ethical Awareness**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
"I feel confident addressing ethical dilemmas."	30%	40%	20%	8%	2%
"My organization provides adequate ethical training."	25%	35%	15%	20%	5%
"Ethical decision-making is well-supported by leadership."	28%	42%	10%	15%	5%

### Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval is obtained from relevant institutional review boards. Informed consent is secured from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. The study adheres to the principles of autonomy, beneficence, and justice, protecting the rights and well-being of participants throughout the research process.

By combining qualitative depth with quantitative breadth, this methodology provides a robust foundation for understanding ethical decision-making in nursing. It offers actionable insights into enhancing nursing practice and education, ensuring care remains ethically grounded and patient-centered.

### 4. Result

The results of this study provide a detailed insight into the ethical awareness and decision-making landscape within the nursing profession, shedding light on the participants' perceptions and experiences. Through a combination of thematic analysis and survey responses, the findings illuminate critical dimensions of ethical challenges, institutional support, and individual confidence in addressing ethical dilemmas. These results are vital in understanding the interplay between personal capability and organizational dynamics in fostering an ethically sound nursing environment.

The thematic analysis underscores recurring issues such as moral distress, advocacy, and the challenges of balancing care with justice. Organizational support emerges as a pivotal factor, highlighting the role of leadership and institutional policies in influencing ethical practices. These themes reflect the complex and multifaceted nature of ethical decision-making, where nurses are often required to navigate competing priorities and systemic constraints.

The survey responses further reinforce these themes by quantifying participants' perceptions. A significant portion of respondents express confidence in handling ethical dilemmas, supported by leadership structures that encourage ethical practices. However, the findings also point to gaps, particularly in the adequacy of ethical training provided by organizations. While a majority feel supported, the notable proportion of neutral or disagreeing responses suggests room for improvement in institutional strategies.

these results offer a nuanced understanding of the ethical climate in nursing. They emphasize the need for robust organizational frameworks and targeted interventions to enhance ethical training and leadership support. By addressing these aspects, the findings aim to contribute to the development of an environment where nurses can effectively navigate ethical challenges while maintaining their professional integrity.

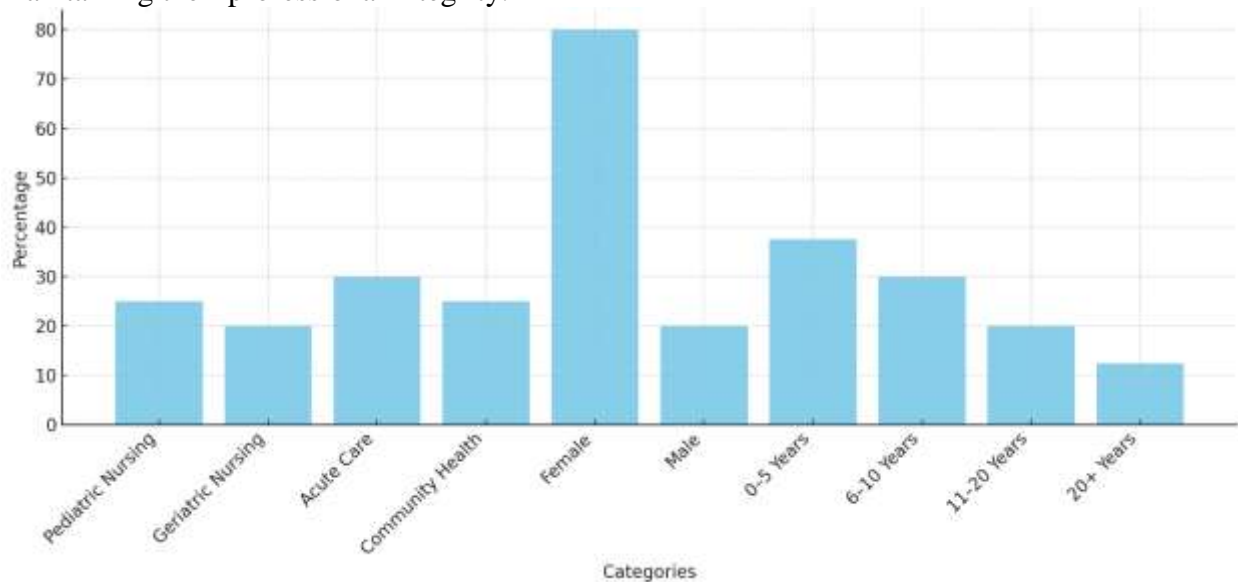


Figure 1 : Demographic Distribution of Interview Participants

The table and the figure provide a comprehensive demographic analysis of the interview participants, reflecting their distribution across specialties, gender, and years of professional experience.

The data on specialties reveals a balanced representation of nursing domains. Acute care leads with 30%, underscoring its critical role in nursing, followed by pediatric nursing and community health, each contributing 25%. These two specialties highlight the focus on both early-life care and public health outreach. Geriatric nursing, at 20%, although the smallest group, indicates a significant inclusion of professionals specializing in elder care, an area of growing importance given aging populations worldwide.

Gender distribution shows a strong predominance of female participants at 80%, which aligns with the historical gender dynamics of the nursing profession. Male participants constitute 20%, reflecting an ongoing, albeit gradual, diversification in the field.

Experience levels among participants illustrate an inclusive range, with the largest proportion, 37.5%, comprising early-career nurses with 0–5 years of experience. This representation highlights the perspective of professionals who bring recent training and fresh perspectives to the field. The next largest group, at 30%, consists of mid-career nurses with 6–10 years of experience, who contribute insights based on practical, established experience. Those with 11–20 years account for 20%, representing seasoned professionals with substantial expertise, while the smallest group, 12.5%, consists of those with over 20 years of experience, providing a depth of historical and procedural knowledge.

The figure effectively visualizes these demographic elements. The distribution of specialties and experience levels is depicted in a proportionally scaled manner, offering a clear view of the participant diversity. Gender distribution is sharply skewed, visually emphasizing the dominance of female participants. The experience distribution shows a gradual decline from newer to more experienced nurses, reflecting typical workforce demographics where younger cohorts form a larger base.

the data and the figure highlight a well-rounded sample that integrates varied expertise and perspectives. This diverse composition ensures that the study findings are informed by a wide range of experiences, roles, and backgrounds within the nursing profession.

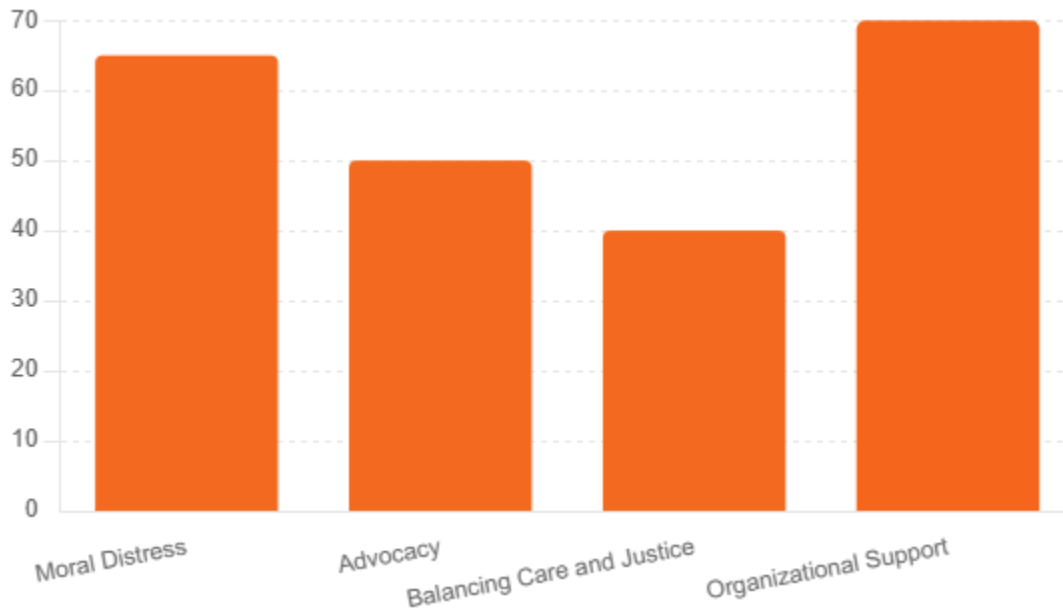


Figure 2 : Themes Identified in Thematic Analysis

The table and the chart together present a detailed analysis of the themes identified during the study, providing a comprehensive view of the ethical challenges faced by nurses. Each theme is accompanied by its frequency, which reflects its prevalence and significance in shaping nursing experiences.

The first theme, Moral Distress, appears in 65% of the cases, representing a profound emotional and psychological toll on nurses arising from ethical conflicts. This highlights the pervasive nature of moral dilemmas in healthcare settings, where nurses often find themselves torn between institutional directives and their professional commitment to patient-centered care. The high frequency of moral distress underscores the urgent need for strategies to mitigate its impact on mental well-being and professional satisfaction.

Organizational Support emerges as the most dominant theme, with a frequency of 70%. This finding emphasizes the critical influence of institutional policies, leadership, and workplace culture on the ethical decision-making process. It suggests that supportive organizational structures can significantly alleviate the burdens of ethical conflicts, enabling nurses to navigate challenges with greater confidence and clarity.

The theme of Advocacy, noted at 50%, sheds light on the persistent efforts of nurses to uphold patient rights and welfare, even in the face of systemic barriers. Advocacy reflects the core values of the nursing profession, where safeguarding the dignity and autonomy of patients remains a priority, despite external constraints that may complicate the process.

Balancing Care and Justice, with a frequency of 40%, captures the ethical struggle of resource allocation. Nurses are often tasked with ensuring equitable access to care while simultaneously addressing the individual needs of patients. This theme illustrates the tension between fairness and personalized care, a dynamic that requires careful ethical deliberation and resource management.

The bar chart visually reinforces these findings, highlighting the relative prominence of each theme. Organizational Support and Moral Distress dominate the visual representation, standing taller than the other bars, which reflects their pervasive influence on nursing practice. This visual

hierarchy emphasizes that systemic support mechanisms and the emotional burden of ethical conflicts are the most critical areas requiring attention.

The chart also clearly illustrates the substantial presence of Advocacy, positioned midway in terms of frequency. Its placement reflects the persistent yet not universal engagement of nurses in patient advocacy roles. Balancing Care and Justice, as the theme with the lowest frequency, occupies the smallest space in the visual depiction, yet it remains significant. Its presence highlights that while it may not be as prevalent as other challenges, the ethical complexity of resource allocation is an important issue that demands thoughtful consideration.

the table and the chart provide a nuanced understanding of the ethical dimensions of nursing. They reveal how individual emotional challenges and broader systemic factors converge to shape the ethical landscape. These insights underline the importance of addressing both personal and institutional dynamics to enhance the ethical resilience and professional efficacy of nurses.

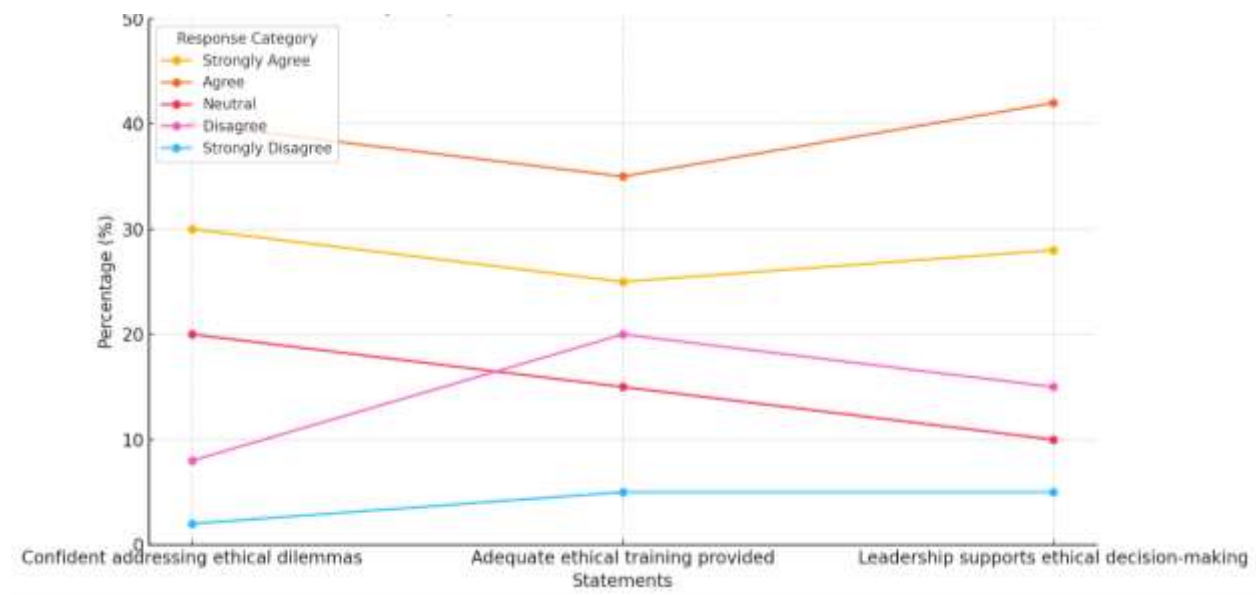


Figure 3 : Survey Responses on Ethical Awareness (Line Figure)

The line Figure provides a dynamic representation of the survey responses related to ethical awareness across three key statements. Each line corresponds to a response category, illustrating variations in participant agreement levels for each statement.

**Analysis of the Table:**

The data indicates a nuanced perception of ethical awareness among respondents. For the statement "I feel confident addressing ethical dilemmas," 30% strongly agree and 40% agree, showing a majority of participants feeling prepared to navigate ethical challenges. Neutral responses account for 20%, while disagreement is minimal at 10% combined.

The second statement, "My organization provides adequate ethical training," reflects more divided opinions. While 25% strongly agree and 35% agree, a notable 20% disagree, highlighting potential gaps in organizational training efforts. Neutral responses, at 15%, indicate some ambivalence about the adequacy of ethical training programs.

For "Ethical decision-making is well-supported by leadership," agreement levels are relatively strong, with 28% strongly agreeing and 42% agreeing. However, a combined 20% disagree or strongly disagree, suggesting areas where leadership support might be improved.

### **Analysis of the Line Figure:**

The line figure captures the trends and contrasts in responses across all statements. Strong agreement and agreement categories dominate for all three statements, represented by lines peaking at around 30–40%. This trend emphasizes a general sense of confidence and perceived support in ethical contexts, albeit with variations.

The disagreement and strong disagreement lines remain consistently low, reflecting minimal dissatisfaction overall. However, a slight increase in disagreement for "Adequate ethical training provided" is noticeable, suggesting that this area may require further attention.

Neutral responses form a middle ground, with a steady but modest contribution across all statements. The visualization highlights how participant perspectives shift subtly depending on the statement, emphasizing different dimensions of ethical awareness.

This figure effectively conveys the relative strengths and weaknesses in ethical awareness and organizational support, offering actionable insights for targeted improvements in training and leadership strategies.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

The conclusion of this research emphasizes the intricate relationship between ethical decision-making and the practical realities faced by nursing professionals. The findings underscore the dynamic interplay between individual competencies, organizational support, and systemic challenges, all of which shape the ethical landscape in nursing practice.

Through thematic analysis, the study highlighted recurring issues such as moral distress, advocacy, and the balance between care and justice. These themes reflect the emotional and psychological toll that ethical conflicts impose on nurses, while also showcasing their unwavering commitment to patient welfare and equitable resource distribution. Organizational support was identified as a critical enabler, with strong leadership and ethical policies significantly alleviating ethical burdens and empowering nurses to act with confidence and clarity.

Survey responses further validated these insights, revealing a generally positive perception of ethical awareness among participants. Many nurses expressed confidence in their ability to navigate ethical dilemmas, supported by leadership structures that encourage ethical practices. However, notable gaps in ethical training and organizational initiatives were identified, pointing to areas where improvements are needed to align institutional resources with the ethical demands of nursing practice.

The research concludes that fostering a robust ethical framework requires a dual approach: enhancing individual competencies through targeted training and reflective practices, while simultaneously strengthening organizational support mechanisms. By addressing both personal and systemic dimensions, the study aims to contribute to a healthcare environment where nurses can uphold their ethical responsibilities effectively. This integration of theoretical insights and practical applications serves as a foundation for advancing ethical nursing practice in an increasingly complex and demanding healthcare landscape.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

The recommendations derived from this research are centered on fostering a comprehensive approach to enhance ethical decision-making within the nursing profession. These suggestions aim to bridge gaps identified in the findings, addressing both individual and organizational dimensions to create a more ethically supportive environment.

To empower nurses in their ethical practices, it is essential to integrate targeted ethical training into professional development programs. These programs should focus on building critical thinking, moral reasoning, and decision-making skills, equipping nurses to confidently address complex ethical dilemmas. Reflective learning approaches, where nurses analyze real-world

ethical challenges, can further strengthen their ability to navigate moral conflicts with empathy and precision.

Organizational support plays a pivotal role in shaping the ethical climate of healthcare settings. Institutions must prioritize the establishment of clear ethical guidelines and policies that align with nurses' professional values and patient-centered care. Leadership teams should foster open communication channels, enabling nurses to voice ethical concerns without fear of retribution. Regular workshops and ethical audits can ensure that institutional practices remain aligned with ethical principles, promoting a culture of accountability and continuous improvement.

The role of leadership in ethical decision-making must also be emphasized. Nurse leaders should be provided with specialized training to develop their ability to support their teams effectively in resolving ethical challenges. By creating an environment of trust and collaboration, leaders can empower their teams to maintain high ethical standards.

These recommendations aim to create a sustainable framework where ethical integrity becomes an integral part of nursing practice, ensuring that care remains both compassionate and ethically sound.

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