

Perception Of Staff Nurses regarding Professional Values At AinShams Specialized Hospital

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Abstract: *Background:* Nurses professional values are standards for action and provide a framework for evaluating behaviors. Nursing practice is influenced by nurses' perceived professional values. *Aim:* This study aimed to assess the staff nurses' perception regarding professional values. *Methodology:* This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted at Ain Shams University Specialized Hospital. It included a Convenient sample of 95 staff nurses in intensive care units. The data were collected by a self-administered questionnaire sheet that included a part for socio-demographic characteristics, and the second part included the Nursing Professional Values Scale-Revised (NPVS-R). *Results:* The finding indicated that the total mean score of the nurses' professional values was high (3.56±0.57). From nurses' perspective items such as "Maintaining confidentiality of patients" Advance the profession through active involvement in health related activities. Establish standards as a guide for practice, Maintain competency in area of practice, Protect health and safety of the public had more importance; however, Act as a patient advocate, Participate in public policy decisions affecting distribution of resources, Participate in peer review, Engage in on-going self-evaluation, Assume responsibility for meeting health needs of the of the culturally diverse population had less importance. *Conclusions:* Although the total mean score related to the staff nurses' perspective on professional values was high, the importance of certain values was at a lower level. Owing to the emerging ethical challenges, it is indispensable to design educational programs in order to improve nurses' awareness and understanding of the comprehensive importance of professional values. *Recommendation:* Further investigations are needed to evaluate how they actualize these values in practice.

Keywords: Ethics, Nursing, Professional values, staff nurses

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I. Introduction

Nursing is the protection, promotion, and optimization of health and abilities, prevention of illness and injury, facilitation of healing, alleviation of suffering through the diagnosis and treatment of human response, and advocacy in the care of individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations (*American Nurse Association, 2017*). Globally, ethics and professional nursing values have been acknowledged as the foundation of nursing care. Since the early times of Nightingale, ethics and professional values have been a fundamental element of the profession (*Kangasniemi et al., 2015*).

Any professional group has primary standards called professional values. These values are considered as the guideline and motivation of professional behavior for the members of a certain profession (*Lai and Lim, 2012*). Values are generally defined as beliefs or principles that influence behaviors (*Baillie and Black, 2015*). *Gallegos and Sortedahl (2015)* further define professional values as established requirements set by the nursing profession that all nurses must achieve and maintain as they provide care. Nurses professional values are standards for action and provide a framework for evaluating behaviors (*Özsoy and Donmez, 2015*).

Professional values are commonly characterized with professional standards recognized by the professional practitioners and groups that provide guidance to educational programs and practices and also shape beliefs and attitudes (*Lynneham and Levett-Jones, 2016*). Nursing values are the most important components necessary for the maintenance of high quality standards in the nursing profession (*Parvan et al., 2012*). Professional values are derived from the codes of ethics (*Jiménez-López et al., 2016*). *The International Council of Nurses (ICN) Code of Ethics* for nurses (2012) subsumed all these values into five main ones: caring, activism, professionalism, trust, and justice

Nurses, as the largest health care group, have well known and important professional values. The use of these values in nursing practice increased the quality of patients care, nurses' occupational satisfaction, their retention in nursing and commitment to the organization (*Dehghani et al., 2015*). A nurse's professional values

are influenced by educational level, culture, personal values, learned experience and work knowledge and skills (*Mathooko, 2013; Iacobucci et al., 2013*).

Developing professional values starts with the formal nursing education and continues with professional practice which, therefore, should be one of the major missions of nursing schools (*Kaya et al., 2016*). Professional values are in relationship with individual beliefs and they are mostly rooted in personal values and it is as something that is considered good or appropriate for the members of every profession (*Blais and Hayes 2015*).

In this regard, Professional values considered a major determinant for attitudes and decisions of nurses (*Schmidt, 2016*). A professional nursing practice is possible only when nurses are aware of their professional values and act accordingly (*Lynham and Levett-Jones, 2016*). Professional values are a source to promote nurses' ethical competencies in clinical settings and dealing with ethical concerns in the present era. Professional values are a solution to the current problems in the nursing profession (*Kim et al., 2015*). Therefore, they are expected to be aware of professional values and apply them to their decision makings while dealing with such problems (*Borhani et al., 2015*).

Significance of the study

Nursing values are the most important components necessary for the maintenance of high quality standards in the nursing profession. Nursing values influence nursing actions and serves as a guide when dealing with ethical issues. Professional values and their resultant behavior are a major concern. It is for this reason the researchers sought to assess the staff nurses' perception regarding professional values.

Aim of the study

This study was aimed to assess staff nurses' perception regarding professional values in Ain Shams University specialized Hospital.

Research questions:

What is the staff nurses' perception regarding professional values?

II. Subjects and Methods

Research design.

The study was conducted using a descriptive cross sectional study design.

Setting

The study was conducted in intensive care units(ICUs)A, B,C,neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), Coronary Care Unit (CCU) and emergency unitattheAin Shams Specialized Hospital,Cairo,Egypt.

Study subjects

All staff nurses (128) working in previous mentionedintensive care units at Ain Shams University Specialized Hospital. The inclusion criteria included staff nurses involved in the direct patient care. Sample size: convenient sample as utilized in this study consisted of (95) nurses.The Sample size was calculated using OpenEpi, Version 3, open source calculator and based on a study carried out by *Poorchangizi,et al.,(2017)* Who found that the total score of the nurses' professional values was high (102.57 ± 11.94 7), taking into consideration that the sample size was calculated with a confidence level of 95% and a power of 80.0%.

Sample size equa

$$n = [DEFF * Np(1-p)] / [(d^2 / Z^2_{1-\alpha/2} * (N-1) + p*(1-p)]$$

Data collection tools.

Data collection was performed using a two-section questionnaire: The first section collected the participants' demographic characteristics including age, marital status, level of education, years of experience , and participation in professional value training. The second section was Weis and Schank's Nursing Professional Values Scale-Revised (NPVS-R). The NPVS-R is the only known instrument for measuring professional nursing values. In order to develop the professional values scale, Weis and Schank used the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics as well as the studies related to the values and professional value development in nurses *Weis and Schank (2009)*.The NPVS-R consisted of 26 items in five dimensions of caring (nine items), activism (five items), professionalism(four items), trust (five items) and justice (three items).

Scoring system

The response for each of the items is on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 to 5, with score 1 as not important, score 2 somewhat important, score 3 important, score 4 very important and score 5 the most important. The possible range of scores was between 26 and 130. The more importance an individual ascribes to a scale item was reflected in a higher total score, indicating greater congruency with the professional values measured by the NPVS-R. Additionally, the scores below 43, between 43 and 86, and above 86 indicated low, medium, and high importance, respectively.

Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted on 10% of nurses from different units to assess the clarity of the questions. The tool was finalized based on the results of the pilot. The subjects who participated in the pilot study were not included in the main study sample. The pilot study also served to assess the tool's reliability through measuring its internal consistency. The reliability turned to be high as shown by the values of Cronbach alpha coefficients which was calculated as 0.90.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork was started after finalization of the data collection tool, review by experts, testing it through the pilot study, and securing official permissions from relevant official authorities. The sampling procedure was then done. The researcher met with the director and heads of department of the selected settings, with official letters indicating the purpose of the study, its rationale, and the field procedures. Their permissions were obtained to start the data collection process. The researchers met with the nurses in groups and explained to them the aim

and procedures of the research and solicited their participation after obtaining their verbal consent. The questionnaire forms were handed and asked them to specify their knowledge concerning the importance of professional values. To achieve the same perception of the questionnaire's items and eliminate any kind of ambiguity concerning answering the questions for all the nurses, the researchers provided the participants with necessary explanations and then collected the questionnaires with maintaining confidentiality. The data collection was done during the period of January to March 2017.

Ethical considerations:

The research approval was obtained from the faculty of nursing research ethics committee before initiating the study. Aim and procedures of the study were explained to staff nurse, with emphasis on the confidentiality of any obtained information. Moreover, the questionnaire form was anonymous. A verbal consent was secured from each subject after explanation of the rights to refuse participation and to withdraw at any time without giving reason, and without consequences, and confidentiality of any obtained information.

Statistical Analysis

After data collection from the staff nurses participants, the data were analyzed using SPSS (for Windows, version 13). Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize the data.

III. Results

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of nurses in the study sample (n=95)

Demographic Characteristics	NO	Percent
Age (years):		
< 30	45	47.4
30 < 40	30	31.6
> 40	20	21.0
Marital status:		
Single	23	24.2
Married	67	70.5
Divorced /Widow	5	5.3
Educational qualification:		
Bachelor degree	15	15.8
Diploma degree in nursing	80	84.2
Experience (Year)		
<5	22	23.1
5- 10	26	27.4
>10	47	49.5
Attended courses related to professional values	3	3.1

Table 1 indicates that less than half (47.4%) of nurses in the study sample their age less than 30 and, less than three quarter of the nurses were married (70.5%). The majority of the nurses were having a diploma degree (84.2%). Only (3.1%) of the nurses had attended related training courses.

Table (2): Mean scores of nurses perception of caring dimension of professional values (n =95)

Item	Rank	Mean±SD
Maintain confidentiality of patient.	1	4.17±0.94
Protect moral and legal rights of patients.	4	3.96±0.96
Safeguard patient's right to privacy.	11	3.66±0.97
Practice guided by principles of fidelity and respect for person.	7	3.85±0.99
Provide care without prejudice to patients of varying lifestyle.	13	3.59±1.03
Refuse to participate in care if in ethical opposition to own professional values.	17	3.41±1.20
Confront practitioners with questionable or inappropriate practice.	18	3.39±1.07
Act as a patient advocate.	24	3.15±1.06
Protect rights of participants in research.	19	3.37±1

As illustrated in Table 2, the most important values of the caring dimension identified by the nurses was maintain confidentiality of patient while the least important values reported were act as a patient advocate and protect rights of participants in research. The scores of caring dimension ranged from 3.15±1.06 to 4.17±0.94.

Table (3): Mean scores of nurses perception of activism dimension of professional values (n =95)

Item	Rank	Mean±SD
Advance the profession through active involvement in health- related activities.	12	3.61±1.06
Recognize role of professional nursing associations in shaping health care policy.	20	3.26±1.15
Participate in activities of professional nursing associations.	22	3.16±1.09
Participate in nursing research and/or implement research findings appropriate to practice.	21	3.19±1.08
Participate in public policy decisions affecting distribution of resources.	25	3.08±1.07

Table 3 describes the mean scores of nurses perception of the activism dimension of professional values. It shows that the most important and least important values of the activism dimension identified by the subjects were "advance the profession through active involvement in health related activities" and "participate in public policy decisions affecting distribution of resources". The scores of activism dimension ranged from 3.08±1.07 to 3.61±1.06.

Table (4): Mean scores of nurses perception of professionalism dimension of professional values (n =95)

Item	Rank	Mean±SD
Promote and maintain standards where planned learning activities for students take place.	8	3.52±1.08
Initiate actions to improve environments of practice.	9	3.74±1.03
Establish standards as a guide for practice.	26	3.83 ± 1.06
Participate in peer review.	16	2.87±0.94

Table 4 shows that at the professionalism dimension of nursing professional values, the statement of "Establish standards as a guide for practice received the highest priorities, while "Participate in peer review statement obtained the lowest priority. The scores of professionalism dimension ranged from 2.87±0.94 to 3.83±1.06.

Table (5): Mean scores of nurses perception of trust dimension of professional values (n =95)

Item	Rank	Mean±SD
Maintain competency in area of practice.	2	4.06±0.95
Seek additional education to update knowledge and skills.	3	4.05±0.98
Accept responsibility and accountability for own practice.	5	3.93±0.98
Request consultation/collaboration when unable to meet patient needs.	23	3.59±0.88
Engage in on-going self-evaluation.	14	3.18±1.01

As shown in Table 5, The highest and lowest rank of the trust dimension values was assigned to the "maintain competency in area of practice" and "Engage in on-going self-evaluation" statements, respectively. The scores ranged from 3.18±1.01 to 4.06±0.95 for this factor.

Table (6): Mean scores of nurses perception of Justice dimension of professional values (n =95)

Item	Rank	Mean±SD
Protect health and safety of the public.	6	3.89±0.93
Promote equitable access to nursing and health care.	10	3.72±1
Assume responsibility for meeting health needs of the culturally diverse population.	15	3.55±1.17

Table 6 shown that, the most highly valued survey item on the justice was "Protect health and safety of the public". While, the item rated with the least score by the nurses was "assume responsibility for meeting health needs of the culturally diverse population". The justice factor scores ranged from 3.55±1.17 to 3.89±0.93.

Table 7: Total mean scores perception of professional values of nurses (n =95)

Dimension	Rank	Mean±SD
Caring	3	3.61±0.65
Activism	5	3.26±0.74
Professionalism	4	3.49±0.75
Trust	1	3.76±0.66
Justice	2	3.72±0.75
Total		3.56±0.57

Table 7 demonstrates the total mean score of nurses was 3.56±0.57. The most important and least important factors identified by the participants were the trust and activism factors, respectively.

IV. Discussion

The adoption of Nursing Professional Values (NPVs) result in improved patient care, patient safety and job satisfaction among nurses. NPVs encourages nurses to strive in the implementation and use of best practices in the nursing profession (Fegg et al., 2014). Nursing Values describe the ethical responsibilities central to ethical nursing practice. These values are grounded in nurses' professional relationships with persons receiving care as well as with students, nursing colleagues and other health-care providers (Canadian Nurses Association, 2017).

The main purpose of this cross-sectional study was to assess the staff nurses' perception of professional values. Regarding nurses' socio-demographic characteristics (table, 1), the findings of the present study demonstrated that less than half of study subject their age less than 30. It's congruent with Carrao (2016) who reported that less than half of participant their age was ranged 25-30 year olds.

Concerning nurses' marital status, the results of the current study showed that less than three quarter of the study subjects were married. This finding was similar to that of Mayelafshar et al., (2016) who found that less than three quarter of nurses who were working at hospitals affiliated to Tehran University of Medical Sciences were married.

According to the study findings, the majority of the nurses was having a diploma degree. This finding was in accordance with that of Shazly and Fakhry (2014) Which found the majority of nurses working in Ain shams university specialized hospital, were having a diploma degree. As well, Hussein (2013), who found that the majority of the nurses working in Zagazig University Hospitals had diploma qualification.

As regards the years of experience the finding of the present study revealed that, nearly half of the studied nurses had years of nursing experience more than ten years. This finding was in agreement with El Sayed et al., (2012), who reported that, nearly half of the studied nurses had a working experience more than ten years.

The result of our research revealed that, the most important values of the *caring dimension* identified by the nurses was maintain confidentiality of patient while the least important values reported were act as a patient advocate and protect rights of participants in research. The results were in line with a study from Iran by Kobra et al., (2012) reported that, the most important caring factor statements rated by the bachelor science nursing students were "maintain confidentiality of patient" and the lowest rated statements, were "act as a patient advocate" and "protect rights of participants in research".

Similar to the current study Calleja and Forrest (2011) reported that the statement "patient's confidentiality" was highly rated among participants. Patient privacy and confidentiality is an important consideration for nurses and other members of the health care team. According to an Iranian qualitative study based on nurses' perspectives, respecting patients' confidentiality is one of the most important ethical and professional values in nursing practice (Shahriari et al., 2012). This is expected because the confidentiality is central in the relationship of trust between nurses and their patients

Regarding activism dimension, it shows that the most important and least important values of the activism dimension identified by the nurses were "advance the profession through active involvement in health related activities" and "Participate in public policy decisions affecting distribution of resources", respectively. In this regard, **Butts and Rich (2013)** assured that the nurses should advance their profession by contributing in some way to the leadership, activities and the viability of their professional organization. Nurses can also advance the profession by serving in leadership or mentorship roles or in communities within their places of employment. Nurses can also advance the profession by serving as role models for professional integrity. Nurses can also advance the profession through participation in civic activities related to health care or through local, state, national, or international initiatives.

Regarding participating in the public policy decision item, Similarly **Posluszny (2014)** reported that participating in public policy decision was statement that obtained the lowest level of importance from participants' views. Findings suggest that the values that are not directly related to patient care such as "participating in public policy decisions" ranked as lowest important statements. However, these findings can be interpreted as the "the organizational structure in the hospital confirmed that these activities are among the duties of managers in hospitals. Hence, organizational structures need to be adjusted in accordance with nursing professional values.

According to this study, at the **professionalism dimension** of nursing professional values, the statement of "establish standards as a guide for practice" received the highest priorities, while participate in the peer review statement obtained the lowest priority. On the same line, **The American Nursing Association (ANA, 2015)** stated The standards are authoritative statements of the duties that all registered nurses, regardless of role, population, or specialty, are expected to perform competently. Professional standards describe the competent level of care. They reflect a desired and achievable level of performance against which a nurse's actual performance can be compared. The main purpose of professional standards is to direct and maintain safe and clinically competent nursing practice. So, it is very essential to utilize professional standards to identify areas for improvement in clinical practice, as well as to improve patient and workplace safety. The health care provider should continue to ensure that their clinical practice meets or exceeds established professional standards to maintain the trust and respect of our patients and the community.

In relation to participate in peer review, the result of **Whitney et al., (2016)** in agreement with the present study, who concluded that Chief nurse executives perceived Nursing Peer Review (NPR) as important in improving quality and safety; however, its prevalence was low. Nursing peer review (NPR) is a key component of professional nursing practice focused on self-regulation and improving quality and safety. Despite its known benefits, NPR is not broadly disseminated, and how it is currently used and perceived is not well understood. Results suggest that knowledge gaps exist regarding NPR's purpose, outcomes. Interventions are needed to address these gaps to disseminate and then utilize the nursing peer review.

The finding of the current study confirmed that the highest and lowest rank of the **trust dimension** values was assigned to the "maintain competency in area of practice" and "engage in on-going self-evaluation" respectively. In line with this, **Parvan et al., 2012** reported that one of the most highly valued items among nursing students of type I and III universities in Iran included, "maintain competency in area of practice" meanwhile the "engage in on-going self-evaluation" statement obtained the lowest level of importance. This finding was supported by the study done by **Monroe (2017)** and found that maintain competency in area of practice ranked as the highest scoring item by nurses.

Nurses are expected to demonstrate the ability of evidence based practice, self-assessment and self-reflection to improve nursing practice (**Brekemans et al., 2016**). From the researchers' point of views, maintain competency in area of practice had the highest result; this could be due to the significant relationships between the quality of patient care and the education and competencies of the nurses providing that care. In addition to the nurses spend a lot of time with patients they affect patient experiences of care and this is affected by the competency of nurse who deliver the care.

The most highly valued survey item on the **justice** was "Protect health and safety of the public". While, the item rated with the least score by the nurses was "assume responsibility for meeting health needs of the culturally diverse population". It is in the same line with **Allari et al. (2017)** who reported that Saudi female nurses have a high perception of professional values relating to health and safety. **Terry et al., (2015)** concluded that the role, function and structures of community nursing services varied greatly from site to site and were developed and centered on meeting the health needs in the community to promote good health and prevent illness.

The result of our research revealed that, the most important and least important factors identified by the nurses were trust and activism factors, respectively. Results indicate that most nurses value those nursing values that are directly related to their work. Other values that might require a contribution outside of the work time were not valued highly. The results were in line with a study from Iran by **Poorchangizi et al., (2017)** reported that, the most important and least important factors identified by the student participants were trust and activism

factors, respectively. In the same respect, the finding of the study done by *Donmez and Ozsoy (2016)* on Turkish nursing students was found the highest score for the caring sub-dimension and the lowest score for the activist sub-dimension. In this study, trust factor obtained the first priority. This difference may be related to that the culture plays an important role in giving shape to values. Also, "Health is one's most important asset. It requires trust to allow someone to perform interventions that will affect people precious health. Care providers should build trust with their patients which necessary in order to provide the best care for the best outcomes possible."

V. Conclusions

Although the total mean score of staff nurses' perception regarding professional values was high, the importance of certain values was at a lower level. Owing to the emerging ethical challenges, it is indispensable to design educational programs in order to improve nurses' awareness and understanding of the comprehensive importance of professional values

Recommendations

Based on the current research findings the following recommendations can be deduced:

1. The development of professional values is an important to be considered in the education of nursing students.
2. An orientation program for newly appointed nurses should include session on nursing professional values to ensure its importance on the patient and on health service as general.
3. Conducting continuous educational programs for all nurses to remember them about the importance of incorporate professional values in their work.
4. Further investigations are needed to evaluate how nurses actualize professional values in practice, and identify causes of why certain values were at a lower level.

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