A study to explore registered nurses’ experiences of ethical and human rights issues in nursing practice with a view to develop an In-service education program

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ABSTRACT

Research aim: To explore the experiences of ethical and human rights issues in nursing practice among nurses.

Method: Descriptive survey among 203 nurses was conducted using questionnaire developed by the investigator.

Major findings: The subjects reported the experiences related to ethical and human rights issues encountered by them in nursing practice. Poor staffing pattern among nurses in the hospital was reported by more than 80% subjects. About 89.66% nurses were providing care with a possible risk to their own health. Majority (42.4%) of the subjects were involved in the ethical dilemma at least 1-3 times a month while 16.7% nurses indicated that they were never involved in any such situations. The study subjects reported that they handled these issues through discussion with nursing peers (80.8%), nursing leaders (71.9%) and 47.3% subjects reported discussing the issue with the patient’s physician. Only 8.9% have mentioned reporting or consultation with ethics committee. 55.2% subjects reported that their work place has ethics committee and out of those only 4.5% reported approaching the ethics committee whereas 27.1% of the nurses reported lack of resources to deal with ethical issues at their work place. Only 14.8% subjects had attended continue nursing education (CNE) related to ethics whereas 67.5% of nurses expressed the desire to study ethics, human rights issues, ethical dilemmas in nursing practice etc.

Multivariate analysis indicated a statistically significant effect of level of education, designation, current work setting, perceived learning needs on ethics and adequacy of sources of work place on involvement of nurses in these issues.

Conclusion: The findings of the present study cannot be generalised however the findings highlight the critical examination of the content on ethics and human rights among nursing students. The results indicate that a significant number of nurses frequently experience ethical issues.

Key words: ethics, human rights, ethical issues, nursing, registered nurses.