

NURSES PROTECT PATIENTS' LEGAL RIGHTS AT NURSING CLINICS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Nurses are vital to patient rights. Not only do nurses provide clinical services. They must also comprehend patient rights and their legal and ethical implications. Due to new legislation and a complex health system, nurses need legal expertise. This helps them perform professionally and protect patients. **Purpose:** This study examines nurses' involvement in patient rights protection, identifies practical challenges, and suggests managerial assistance and legal training to improve patient legal protection. **Methods:** Nurses' views on patient legal protection were examined using a descriptive qualitative constructivist approach. Ten participants from three East Java clinics were chosen. Selected themes were identified using inductive thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and verbatim transcriptions. **Results:** This study focused on nurses' legal protection, ethical knowledge, and implementation issues. This systematic classification and categorizing topics show how Indonesian nurses utilize legal and ethical concepts in clinical practice. **Conclusion:** Nurses advocate for patient rights, but workload and management support are issues. Legal training and policies are needed to protect nursing clinic patients.

Keywords: clinical nursing practice, legal protection, nursing advocacy, patient rights

BACKGROUND

The legal safeguarding of patients within nursing profession is an increasingly significant concern in contemporary society. In nursing clinics, nurses bear significant responsibilities for ensuring patient rights, which encompass the right to information, the right to get safe care, and the ability to lodge complaints. Patient advocacy is a crucial component of nursing practice that can impact the quality of care (Abbasinia & Ahmadi, 2019). This indicates that nurses must possess a robust comprehension of legal and ethical principles in their practice to properly safeguard patients.

Nurses' responsibilities encompass not just the provision of physical care but also the legal and ethical dimensions pertaining to patient rights. A study by Abd-Elraouf Rashdan et al. (2023) indicates that numerous nurses lack comprehensive awareness of their legal obligations, potentially leading to infringements of patient rights (Indonesia, 2023). In this context, it is essential to enhance nurses' awareness and comprehension of pertinent legal concerns to enable them to perform their jobs effectively.

The significance of legal patient protection in nursing practice is escalating due to the growing complexity of the healthcare system and the rising number of patients seeking treatment. The

Ministry of Health (2024) reports that the number of patients receiving treatment in primary health service facilities, including nursing clinics, has risen by nearly 18% over the past three years, indicating an increasing demand for professional nursing services. The 2023 Indonesian Health Profile report indicates that "the utilization of outpatient and inpatient services in primary healthcare facilities has consistently increased each year in accordance with community health demands" (Ministry of Health, 2024, 2023). The Laporan Kinerja Kementerian Kesehatan Tahun 2023 reveals a concurrent rise in patient complaints regarding service quality and rights infringements, underscoring the necessity for enhanced legal awareness and accountability among nursing professionals (Ministry of Health, 2024). This issue highlights the necessity for nursing management to deliver organized legal protection training, enabling nurses to successfully advocate for and preserve patients' legal and ethical rights in clinical practice. (Ministry of Health, n.d.).

Additionally, in light of continuously changing legislation, nurses must comprehend the most recent laws and regulations that govern nursing practice. Health Law Number 17 of 2023 governs multiple facets of health services, encompassing patient rights and the responsibilities of health professionals. By comprehending these regulations, nurses can more effectively safeguard patient rights and mitigate any legal risks (Sianipar et al., 2024).

Therefore, it is essential to investigate further the role of nurses in safeguarding the legal rights of patients in nursing clinics. This research seeks to delineate the function of nurses, the issues they encounter, and to offer ideas for nursing management to enhance legal protection for patients.

OBJECTIVE

This research aims to investigate the role of nurses in safeguarding patient rights within nursing clinics. This research seeks to delineate the multifaceted function of nurses, particularly their advocacy efforts to uphold patient rights. Ibrahim et al. (2024) assert that a comprehensive awareness of legal responsibilities enhances nurses' ability to perform their advocacy role more successfully. This study will investigate how nurses perform this job in their regular practice.

This research also seeks to examine the issues encountered by nurses in their daily work concerning the legal protection of patients.

Legal training, excessive workloads, and insufficient managerial assistance. Kumar et al. (2013) assert that these obstacles may impede nurses' capacity to deliver excellent care in compliance with relevant regulatory standards. By comprehending this difficulty, it is anticipated that suitable solutions can be identified to enhance nursing practice focused on patient rights.

This research also seeks to offer advice for nursing management to enhance legal protection for patients. These recommendations may encompass the establishment of initiatives aimed at diminishing disparities in legal knowledge and training among nurses (Wang et al., 2024). To enhance the comprehensiveness of legal training, it is essential to augment managerial assistance and fortify reporting and documentation procedures. Ronnebaum and Schmer (2015) assert that effective management assistance can enhance nurses' legal awareness, hence improving patient protection.

This research aims to contribute significantly to the advancement of nursing practices in Indonesia and enhance legal protections for patients in nursing clinics. Additionally, this research aspires to serve as a reference for other studies in this domain, facilitating the ongoing development of policies and practices that enhance patient protection. Nursing practice is governed by numerous

legal considerations, as nurses are accountable for their professional judgment and acts (Devi, 2023).

METHODS

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative methodology to investigate and comprehend nurses' viewpoints on their duty in safeguarding patients' legal rights. The qualitative technique was selected to elucidate the depth and intricacy of participants' lived experiences and to assess the significance of their behaviors and attitudes within the clinical environment.

The research was based on the constructivist paradigm, which posits that reality is socially produced through interaction and interpretation. In this framework, the researcher aimed to comprehend how nurses perceive, interpret, and respond to their legal and ethical obligations in routine practice. The study was additionally informed by Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory, which offers a theoretical perspective for comprehending nurses' responsibilities in facilitating patients' autonomy, rights, and welfare within the context of professional care and legal responsibility.

Data collection was executed via comprehensive semi-structured interviews with ten registered nurses employed in three nursing clinics located in East Java.

Table 1. Summary of Participant Characteristics (N = 10)

Participant ID	Age (years)	Gender	Years of Nursing Experience	Highest Education Level	Current Position / Role
P1	28	Female	5	Bachelor of Nursing	Staff Nurse
P2	32	Female	10	Bachelor of Nursing	Staff Nurse
P3	26	Male	4	Diploma in Nursing	Staff Nurse
P4	35	Female	12	Bachelor of Nursing	Senior Nurse
P5	29	Female	6	Bachelor of Nursing	Staff Nurse
P6	31	Male	8	Bachelor of Nursing	Staff Nurse
P7	27	Female	5	Diploma in Nursing	Staff Nurse
P8	33	Female	9	Bachelor of Nursing	Senior Nurse
P9	30	Female	7	Bachelor of Nursing	Staff Nurse
P10	34	Male	11	Bachelor of Nursing	Staff Nurse

The research participants were registered nurses aged 26 to 35 years, possessing an average professional experience of 7.7 years. Concerning educational qualifications, eight individuals possessed a Bachelor's degree in Nursing, whilst two held a Diploma in Nursing. The gender distribution comprised seven female nurses and three male nurses. The characteristics offered pertinent context for comprehending the participants' viewpoints and experiences concerning their role in safeguarding patients' legal rights, as age, experience, education, and gender may affect knowledge, confidence, and methods of patient advocacy in clinical practice.

The comprehensive interviews with participants averaged 50 minutes, with a duration ranging from 45 to 60 minutes per session. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent to guarantee precise data collection. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, the original language of both participants and the researcher, and were later transcribed verbatim in the same language to preserve the authenticity and nuances of the participants' responses.

Aspect	Details
Interview Duration	Average 50 minutes (range: 45–60 minutes)
Data Recording	Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent
Language	Bahasa Indonesia (used for both interview and transcription)
Transcription	Verbatim transcription in Bahasa Indonesia to preserve accuracy and participant nuances

In compliance with SRQR (Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research), data were handled by anonymizing participant information and securely keeping transcripts in password-protected files. A comprehensive audit trail, comprising field notes, memos, and coding records, was preserved to guarantee openness and trustworthiness. Alexandra Stam, 2023.

An inductive thematic analysis was utilized, facilitating the emergence of topics straight from the data. The method commenced with open coding to discern significant portions pertaining to nurses' obligations in the legal safeguarding of patients. Axial coding subsequently organized linked codes into overarching categories, emphasizing patterns and relationships. Ultimately, selective coding distilled these categories into primary themes that encapsulated the substance of participants' experiences while conforming to the research objectives and Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory. (Williams, 2019).

To augment believability, triangulation was performed by contrasting data from the three nursing clinics. Member checking was employed to validate initial themes with participants, while peer debriefing assessed coding and thematic interpretations. These procedures guaranteed that the concluding themes appropriately reflected nurses' viewpoints on patient legal protection within the Indonesian healthcare framework. (Ahmed, 2024).

RESULTS

Table 1 below summarizes the results of in-depth interviews conducted with ten nurses in nursing clinics in the East Java region, supporting the thematic analysis. This table summarizes the experiences, perspectives, and obstacles encountered by nurses in securing legal protection for

patients. Moreover, representative quotations from each participant are incorporated to offer a tangible depiction of the context and substance of the discussions during the interviews.

Table 1. Summary of Qualitative Interview Results with Ten Nurses

Participant Code	Experience in Guaranteeing Patient Legal Protection	Views on the Role of Nurses in Legal Protection	Challenges Faced	Representative Quotes
P1	Always explain procedures and obtain written consent	Nurses are the spearhead in ensuring patient rights	Pressure from management to be less transparent	"We were asked to speak sparingly so that patients don't ask too many questions, even though this is legally important"
P2	Help patients understand their rights, especially in medical decision making	Nurses have an important role, but are often not considered	High workload makes it difficult to communicate details	"Sometimes, patients are discharged before we have time to explain their rights"
P3	Record all nursing actions in detail in the medical record	Legal responsibility is attached to every nursing action	There is no special training in legal matters	"Everything I know about patient law, I taught myself"
P4	Striving to provide education on patient rights during invasive procedures	Nurses should be involved in medical legal decisions	Lack of legal protection for nurses when conflicts arise	"When there are complaints, we are often the first to be blamed, even though the decision was not ours"
P5	Provide written information about patient rights and obligations	Nurses as liaison between doctors and patients in a legal context	It is difficult to balance ethical and administrative responsibilities	"Many administrative regulations actually limit our freedom to explain to patients"

	Attend internal training on health law, although still limited	The importance of legal education since basic nursing education	Lack of SOPs that support legal protection	"If there is no guidance, we will be confused when facing legal problems"
P7	Explain the risks and benefits of medical procedures verbally	Legal protection is part of holistic nursing care	Very limited consultation time	"With so many patients, time becomes an obstacle for comprehensive legal education"
P8	Involved in preparing the informed consent form	Nurses can be a bridge of justice between patients and institutions	Not all colleagues understand the law, making teamwork difficult	"There are nurses who just follow the procedure without thinking about the legal aspects, that's risky"
P9	Actively advocates for patients when there is a potential rights violation	Nurses are patients' legal advocates in the field	The work culture is still authoritarian, making nurses reluctant to speak out	"If we are too vocal about patient rights, it could be seen as going against the system"

P10	Be a resource for educating patients about their basic rights	Nurses as legal education agents in clinics	Minimal managerial support for legal protection initiatives	"We need support from superiors, not just being asked to keep patients calm"
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This table provides comprehensive data that illustrates the intricacies of the nurse's position within the framework of nursing legislation and ethics.

An analysis of in-depth interviews with ten nurses, employing a thematic approach, yielded three primary themes about the role of nurses in safeguarding patients' legal rights. The three themes encompass legal protective measures implemented by nurses, comprehension of the law's role in nursing practice, and the obstacles encountered in fulfilling this function. Every topic is supplemented by subthemes that delineate variances in participants' experiences and perspectives. Table 1 below provides a summary of the thematic analysis results, accompanied by descriptions and representative statements from participants that reinforce the research findings.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis Results: The Role of Nurses in Ensuring Legal Protection for Patients

Main Theme	Subtheme	Description	Representative Quotes
1. Legal Protection Measures	a. Open Communication with Patients	Nurses try to maintain communication so that patients understand their rights and medical procedures	"I always try to explain medical procedures in detail so that patients understand and agree consciously"
	b. Accurate Documentation	Documentation is carried out completely to avoid legal disputes	"Medical records must be complete, because they can be evidence if one day a legal problem occurs"
2. Understanding the Role of Law	a. Awareness of Ethical and Legal Responsibilities	Nurses realize the important role in protecting patient rights according to law and nursing ethics	"We not only provide physical care, but also guarantee the patient's legal rights"

	b. Limited Education and Training	Lack of training on legal aspects makes understanding uneven	"So far we have learned more from experience, not from formal legal training"
3. Challenges in Practice	a. Institutional or Superior Pressure	Sometimes there is a conflict between management policy and the patient's interests	"Sometimes we are pressured not to be too open with patients, so that there are no complaints"
	b. Lack of Legal Protection for Nurses	Nurses feel they are not legally protected when facing conflict	"If there is a problem, we are usually the ones to blame, even though not all decisions are in the hands of the nurse"
	c. Workload and Time Limitations	The high workload makes it difficult for nurses to focus on legal aspects	"There are a lot of patients, so it is difficult for us to provide legal explanations one by one"

In-depth interviews with ten nurses from nursing clinics in East Java yielded three primary themes that encapsulate the role and challenges faced by nurses in providing legal protection for patients: legal protection measures, comprehension of legal roles, and practical challenges.

Legal Protection Measures

Nurses recognize the significance of transparent communication as a primary means of legal safeguarding for patients. Effective communication enables nurses to ensure that patients comprehend their rights and the medical procedures they are experiencing. This is evident from a participant's statement: "I consistently endeavor to elucidate medical procedures in detail to ensure patients comprehend and consent consciously." This method of communication reinforces the principle of informed consent and may avert potential legal infractions in the future.

In addition to communication, nursing documentation is a crucial practice for assuring legal protection. Nurses meticulously document all actions performed, both clinical and administrative, as a demonstration of professional accountability. One respondent stated, "Medical records must be comprehensive, as they may serve as evidence in the event of a legal issue arising." This indicates that nurses recognize the strategic significance of documentation as a legal safeguard for both patients and healthcare professionals.

Understanding the Role of Law

Nurses comprehend their responsibilities extend beyond clinical duties to include safeguarding patients' legal rights. They recognize that the nursing profession is intricately linked to ethical

ideals and legal restrictions. One participant asserted, "We not only deliver physical care but also ensure the protection of the patient's legal rights." This is an acknowledgment of the role of nurses within the healthcare legal framework.

Nevertheless, this comprehension is frequently not bolstered by sufficient knowledge or training. Several nurses acknowledged that their understanding of legal matters was acquired informally, primarily through practical experience or conversations with colleagues. A quotation asserts, "To date, we have acquired more knowledge from experience than from formal legal education." The lack of formal training reveals a deficiency in the educational and professional development framework for nurses, which ought to include legal comprehension as a fundamental ability.

Challenges in Practice

Nurses encounter numerous structural and institutional obstacles in the execution of their responsibilities. Pressure from management or superiors frequently hinders effective contact with patients. A nurse stated, "At times, we face pressure to limit our transparency with patients to prevent complaints." This signifies a mismatch between institutional interests and patient interests, potentially undermining the values of transparency and accountability.

Additionally, nurses see a lack of sufficient legal protection, particularly when confronted with disputes or grievances from patients. This sense of unease is encapsulated in the assertion, "If a problem arises, we are typically held accountable, despite the fact that not all decisions are within the purview of the nurses." This discrepancy underscores the necessity for legislation that not only govern nurses' responsibilities but also safeguard their legal rights.

The substantial workload presents a considerable impediment to the implementation of legal protection. Constraints of time and energy hinder nurses from delivering optimal legal explanations to every patient. One commenter remarked, "The high volume of patients makes it challenging for us to provide individual legal explanations."

DISCUSSION

Imbalance between Legal Responsibility and Institutional Support

In nursing practice, a considerable disparity exists between nurses' legal obligations and the institutional support provided to them. A nurse's legal responsibilities encompass the duty to deliver safe, effective, and ethical patient care. Nurses frequently encounter stress due to insufficient resources, including an overwhelming patient load and inadequate staffing, which can impede their capacity to meet these obligations (Abbasinia & Ahmadi, 2019). According to Anderson (2022), insufficient institutional support can lead to elevated stress levels among nurses, therefore impacting the quality of patient care. This is evidenced by participant quotations, such as P1: "We are asked to communicate judiciously while serving all patients within limited time constraints," and P9: "At times, we feel compelled to prioritize, resulting in the potential neglect of certain patient rights." These comments exemplify the ethical-legal difficulties encountered at the operational level. A study by Ibrahim et al. (2024) indicated that nurses in settings with minimal administrative support exhibited diminished comprehension of their legal obligations. This may result in infringements of patient rights and heighten the likelihood of litigation. In this context, it

is essential to provide a work atmosphere that facilitates nurses in effectively performing their responsibilities.

This imbalance also presents obstacles for patient advocacy. Nurses frequently operate as intermediaries between patients and the healthcare system; but, in the absence of sufficient support, they may feel incapacitated in advocating for the patient's best interests (Mainey et al., 2025). Studies indicate that nurses who perceive institutional support are more inclined to engage in patient advocacy, hence enhancing legal protection for patients (Nsiah et al., 2019).

To rectify this imbalance, collaboration between hospital administration and nursing staff is essential to formulate policies that guarantee nurses possess the requisite resources and training to meet their legal obligations. This aligns with the suggestions of Kumar et al. (2013), which assert that training in legal and ethical duties must be a fundamental component of nursing education and professional growth.

Ultimately, it is essential to acknowledge that the legal safeguarding of patients is not solely the nurse's duty, but also a collective obligation of the entire healthcare team and institutional administration. Establishing a culture of support and collaboration will guarantee that patients receive safe, high-quality care and sufficient legal protections.

The Importance of Legal Understanding as a Core Competency for Nurses

Comprehending the law is an essential ability that every nurse must possess to safeguard patient rights. Understanding healthcare law and ethics assists nurses in fulfilling their responsibilities while safeguarding them from potential litigation. Ashalata Devi (2017) asserts that a deficiency in legal comprehension may lead nurses to commit errors with potentially catastrophic repercussions for both patients and themselves.

Data indicate that nurses with a comprehensive awareness of their legal obligations exhibit more confidence in clinical decision-making (Abd-Elraouf Rashdan et al., 2023). In instances where a patient declines treatment, a nurse knowledgeable in legal matters can furnish the patient with pertinent information about the ramifications of that choice, enabling the patient to make a more educated decision.

Ibrahim et al. (2024) asserted that a comprehensive understanding of the law can enhance nurses' capacity to advocate for patients. In circumstances where patient rights may be jeopardized, nurses with legal expertise can more effectively advocate.

In the patient's best interests. This indicates that legal education ought to be incorporated into the nursing education curriculum.

The significance of comprehending the law is also evident in everyday life. Nurses frequently engage with legal documents, including medical care agreements and patient medical data. Insufficient comprehension may hinder nurses' ability to manage these documents effectively, thus undermining patients' legal protection (Sianipar et al., 2024).

Consequently, nursing educational institutions and healthcare facilities must collaborate to deliver continuous training in health law and ethics. This will assist nurses in fulfilling their legal obligations while also enhancing patient safety and treatment quality.

The Strategic Role of Nursing Management in Guaranteeing Legal Protection

Nursing management plays a crucial role in safeguarding patients' legal rights. Nursing managers are tasked with establishing an environment that fosters safe and ethical nursing practices. This encompasses the formulation of explicit policies concerning the legal obligations of nurses and the requisite training to adhere to such policies (Management et al., 2023).

A crucial facet of management is guaranteeing that nurses get the requisite resources to execute their responsibilities effectively. Nursing administrators must guarantee adequate staffing and ensure that nurses possess the requisite tools and technology to deliver great care. Studies indicate that a favorable work environment enhances nurse job satisfaction and lowers turnover rates (Anderson, 2022).

Additionally, nursing management must contribute to enhancing legal awareness among nurses. This can be accomplished by training programs that emphasize pertinent legal and ethical considerations. Management can facilitate nurses' comprehension of their legal obligations and methods to safeguard patient rights by adequate education (Tandry et al., 2024).

The management position entails overseeing and assessing nursing practices to guarantee compliance with legal and ethical requirements. This entails establishing a reporting system for instances that contravene legal or ethical standards, enabling prompt corrective action. Consequently, nursing administration can enhance patient safety and legal protection (Ronnebaum & Schmer, 2015).

Nursing administration must ultimately advocate for nurses for legal protection. This entails safeguarding nurses from unjust litigation and providing them with access to legal assistance when required. Nursing management may foster a culture of support and advocacy to ensure that nurses perform their responsibilities safely and effectively, while optimally safeguarding patient rights. Nursing practitioners in the healthcare industry frequently encounter difficulties in safeguarding patient privacy during interactions with multidisciplinary teams, communication with families, and research activities (Parsons, 2015).

Patient rights comprise a collection of legal and social relationships that emerge when individuals seek medical treatment. Health protection encompasses a comprehensive array of political, economic, social, legal, sanitary-hygienic, and anti-epidemic measures designed to preserve and enhance the physical and mental well-being of individuals, promote active longevity, and ensure access to requisite medical care in instances of health deterioration (Nozimakhon & Faringiz, 2022).

Limitations of the Research

Although this study offers significant insights, it possesses multiple drawbacks. The sample comprised ten nurses from three nursing clinics in East Java, potentially failing to represent the experiences of nurses in other regions or healthcare environments. The dependence on self-reported interviews may introduce bias, since individuals may exaggerate positive behaviors or underreport difficulties.

The study excluded observational and document-based data, which could have offered additional triangulation and reinforced the conclusions. Subsequent study ought to augment the sample size, incorporate diverse data sources, and integrate quantitative metrics to enhance qualitative findings.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that nurses play a crucial role in the legal protection of patients. Nurses are responsible for delivering medical care and acting as advocates for the protection of patient rights. This research indicates that while numerous nurses possess a solid comprehension of their legal obligations, issues such as excessive workloads and insufficient managerial assistance persist as impediments in everyday practice.

Consequently, managerial support is essential for enhancing nursing practices focused on patient rights. Health policy recommendations encompass the establishment of more extensive legal training programs, augmentation of resources to assist nurses, and enhancement of reporting and documentation systems. These efforts aim to substantially enhance legal protection for patients. This research indicates the necessity for additional investigation to thoroughly examine the elements affecting the legal protection of patients in nursing clinics. Additional study may assist in finding optimal practices and regulations that can be enacted to enhance patient protection across Indonesia.

Consequently, it is anticipated that the findings of this research will serve as a reference for the advancement of improved nursing practices that prioritize patient rights, while also positively impacting the health system in Indonesia.

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