

Nursing Shortages and Ethical Implications in Practice

I chose to focus on the current issue of staffing shortages in current nursing practice today. In the EBP article study, the conductors did a deep dive into the possible factors that contribute to the current nursing staffing shortages that exist in the field today (Tamata & Mohammadnezhad, 2022). They conducted this review by using PRISMA guidelines throughout reviewing 42 different studies during their research. They found within these studies that the key contributors to the nursing shortage are high turnover rates, heavy nurse workloads, workplace violence, insufficient staffing, and a lack of organizational support. Throughout this study, they were able to conclude that these staffing shortages aren't caused by one specific issue, but instead multiple complex issues that are integrated into the workplace today.

One important principle from the American Nurses Association Code of Ethics that I felt applied best to this issue is Provision 3, which states "the nurse promotes, advocates for, and protects the rights, health, and safety of the patient" (ANA, 2025). When we don't have proper staffing levels, nurses may be subjected to situations which require them not to be able to care for patients safely. This may be because of unsafe ratios, lack of experience, or improper knowledge on certain levels of care. If we uphold this provision and apply it in practice, we can provide safe, exceptional care to all patients, and report unsafe conditions we may notice. As a nurse, advocacy is one of our professional responsibilities, and we must uphold ethical standards and codes to promote our patient's well-being.

The ethical principle I feel fits this current nursing issue best is non-maleficence, which is the obligation to do no harm. Nursing shortages may cause the nurse to be assigned to too many patients, increase staff fatigue, and cause delays in care due to lack of time. These conditions will most likely result in harm of the patient, no matter how hard the nurse may be working to prevent it. By having proper staffing, this will allow the nurse to uphold the ethical principle of non-maleficence in their day-to-day practice.

In conclusion, the EBP article confirms that nursing staffing shortages are a current key issue in the workplace today. Applying the ANA code of ethics and ethical principles helps the nurse to advocate for safe practice environments and promote patient well-being. It may take many approaches to change this issue that exists today, but by applying core ethical principles and values will help us start to make that change.

References

ANA. (2025). Code of ethics for nurses. *American Nurses Association*.
<https://codeofethics.ana.org/home>

Tamata, A. T., & Mohammadnezhad, M. (2022). A systematic review study on the factors affecting shortage of nursing workforce in the hospitals. *Nursing Open*, 10(3), 1247-1257. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nop2.1434>