The Relationship Between the Application of The Nursing Code of Ethics and Caring Behavior Among Nursing Students at Universitas Advent Indonesia

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Abstract

Background: Professional nursing calls for clinical expertise, ethical conduct, and genuine care for patients in equal measure. When students work with patients during clinical placements, the nursing code of ethics acts as their moral and professional reference point, and this is thought to shape how caring behavior forms. The present study investigated whether the extent to which third-year students in the Bachelor of Nursing Program at Universitas Advent Indonesia follow the code of ethics is linked to their caring behavior. Methods: The research was designed as a cross-sectional correlational analytic study. All active third-year undergraduate nursing students at Universitas Advent Indonesia were enrolled through total sampling, giving 75 respondents. Instruments consisted of standardized questionnaires: the translated nursing code of ethics (PPNI, 2017), the Caring Professional Scale (CPS) rooted in Swanson's theory, professional values scales, and ethical sensitivity questionnaires, selected to secure dependable measurement. Descriptive (univariate) statistics were followed by Spearman Rank testing, a nonparametric bivariate method, with α = 0,05. Results: Most respondents (43 students; 57,3%) were classed as less favorable in following the code of ethics, while 39 students (52,0%) were rated good in caring behavior. Spearman Rank analysis gave a coefficient (r) of 0,373 and a p-value of 0,001 ($p < 0,05$), indicating a significant, positive, weak-to-moderate link between the two variables. Conclusion: Ethical code adherence and caring behavior are significantly related among nursing students at Universitas Advent Indonesia; students who internalize the values and guidance of the code more fully tend to show stronger caring behavior in the nursing care they provide.

Keywords: *Nursing Code of Ethics, Caring Behavior, Nursing Students, Swanson's Theory, Professional Ethics, Clinical Practice*

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A. INTRODUCTION

Beyond meeting patients' bodily needs, nursing is a profession grounded in humanity, ethics, empathy, and caring during the provision of care (Fadhilah et al., 2024; Kaya et al., 2023). Since patients differ in their conditions, needs, values, and backgrounds, nurses are expected to act professionally and with accountability in every intervention. Nursing education must accordingly develop not only knowledge and clinical skills but also professional attitudes, moral judgment, and ethical sensitivity in students (Zhang et al., 2024).

Among the main sources of direction for nurses' professional conduct is the nursing code of ethics. It guides nurses and students toward attitudes and actions that reflect moral values, professional obligations, and regard for patients' rights and dignity (Pattyranie & Andriani, 2024; Soemanto et al., 2025). Ethical competence is likewise a cornerstone of present-day clinical work because it equips prospective nurses to deal safely with intricate moral dilemmas (Halldorsdottir & Bryngeirsdottir,

2025). Caring behavior also matters greatly: it is what separates nursing from purely technical task performance, because it is built on the interpersonal relationships that sustain patient well-being (Swanson, 1991; Afifah et al., 2019; Damayanti et al., 2023).

Ethics and caring are taught in theory at nursing schools, yet practice often falls short of what is taught. Students commonly contend with heavy clinical duties, academic pressure, and tightly packed psychomotor skill requirements, which make steady observance of the code of ethics and of caring behavior hard to maintain (Danacı & Erdoğan, 2025; Dokoohaki et al., 2026). Early observations and previous research at Universitas Advent Indonesia (UNAI) indicate that students' caring behavior is typically rated highly, although certain facets, including sensitivity to the other person's experience, call for further development (Aprilianti Sihotang et al., 2024; Gustirosi & Br Perangin-angin, 2025). Digital transformation and contemporary healthcare settings add further ethical questions for which students need to be ready (Yang & Jang, 2025). Against this background, the present research examines the link between ethical code application and caring behavior in nursing students at Universitas Advent Indonesia, supported by the broader literature on nursing ethics (Supraba et al., 2025; Merbawani & Rofi'ah, 2024).

B. METHOD

To explore how the independent variable (nursing code of ethics application) relates to the dependent variable (caring behavior), a cross-sectional correlational analytic design was chosen, in which all measurements were taken at one point in time (Danacı & Erdoğan, 2025).

Eligible participants were all active third-year students enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing Program at Universitas Advent Indonesia. Total sampling produced 75 respondents who fulfilled the inclusion criteria (active third-year enrollment, having completed nursing ethics courses, and giving voluntary consent) and who were not excluded under the exclusion criteria. Data were collected using two standardized questionnaires:

1. **Nursing Code of Ethics Application Questionnaire:** This 46-item instrument was adapted from the PPNI (2017) behavioral guidelines and scored on a Likert scale (1-4). Scores were classified as good (≥173) or less favorable (< 173).
2. **Caring Professional Scale (CPS):** This 18-item scale follows Swanson's caring theory (2001) and uses Likert scoring (1-6). Scores were classified as good (≥100) or less favorable (< 100).

Because the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed non-normal data ($p < 0,05$), the hypothesis was tested bivariately with the non-parametric Spearman Rank correlation test, setting the significance threshold at $\alpha = 0,05$ (Inocian et al., 2022).

C. RESULT

1. Univariate Analysis

Respondent demographics, the level of nursing code of ethics application, and caring behavior are shown as frequency distributions in Table 1.

Table 1 Respondent Characteristics, Ethical Code Application, and Caring Behavior (N = 75)

Characteristic	Frequency (f)	Proportion (%)
Age		
19 years	6	8,0
20 years	33	44,0
21 years	22	29,3
22 years	6	8,0
23 years	7	9,3
24 years	1	1,3
Gender		
Male	23	30,7
Female	52	69,3
Nursing Code of Ethics Implementation		
Good (≥173)	32	42,7
Less (< 173)	43	57,3
Student Caring Behavior		
Good (≥100)	39	52,0
Less (< 100)	36	48,0
Total	**75**	**100,0**

Table 1 shows that respondents were mostly aged 20 years (44,0%) and mainly women (69,3%). In terms of ethical code application, 43 respondents (57,3%) were in the less favorable group. Caring behavior, in contrast, was good in 39 respondents (52,0%), the larger share.

2. Bivariate Analysis

Results of the Spearman Rank correlation between ethical code application and caring behavior appear in Table 2.

Table 2 Results of the Spearman Rank Correlation Test

Variable	N	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Conclusion
Ethical code application and caring behavior	75	0,373	0,001	H_a Accepted

The *p*-value in Table 2 is 0,001 ($p < 0,05$); H_0 is therefore rejected and H_a accepted, demonstrating a significant association between nursing code of ethics application and caring behavior in the students of Universitas Advent Indonesia. With $r = 0,373$, the relationship is positive and of weak-to-moderate strength (Zhang et al., 2024).

D. DISCUSSION

1. Students' Ethical Code Application

Over half of the respondents (57,3%) showed a less favorable level of ethical code application. A likely explanation lies in the psychosocial and technical demands of clinical settings: heavy workloads, academic pressure, and an emphasis on completing technical skill targets frequently push procedural ethical duties, for instance obtaining verbal informed consent, safeguarding patient privacy, and engaging in in-depth therapeutic communication, into the background for a time (Danacı & Erdoğan, 2025; Dokoohaki et al., 2026). The example set by clinical role models is also a major influence on how disciplined students are ethically and how well they uphold professional standards (Luciani et al., 2024).

2. Students' Caring Behavior

Caring behavior, by comparison, was favorable: 52,0% of students were in the good group, consistent with earlier findings from the same institution (Aprilianti Sihotang et al., 2024; Gustirosi & Br Perangin-angin, 2025). In light of Swanson's Theory (1991), the dimensions of *maintaining belief*, *knowing*, *being with*, *doing for*, and *enabling* seem to have been absorbed reasonably well. Students displayed fundamental empathy, were willing to hear patients' concerns, and offered sincere emotional support as they delivered care (Mårtensson et al., 2024; Hynnekleiv et al., 2024).

3. Linking Ethical Code Application with Caring Behavior

The hypothesis test showed a significant positive link between ethical code application and caring behavior (r = 0,373, p = 0,001). Theoretically, commitment to principles such as *autonomy*, *beneficence*, *confidentiality*, and *veracity* provides the moral grounding that drives nurses and nursing students to show real concern for patients (Fadhilah et al., 2024; Halldorsdottir & Bryngeirsdottir, 2025). Students who honor patients' autonomy and keep medical information confidential are, in the same act, exercising caring within a professional frame (Dogan & Gocmen Baykara, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). Since the correlation is only weak-to-moderate, the code of ethics is evidently one major support among several; academic support, emotional intelligence, clinical mentoring, and the institution's ethical climate also influence caring behavior (Inocian et al., 2022; Dokoohaki et al., 2026).

E. CONCLUSION

In summary, most third-year undergraduate nursing students at Universitas Advent Indonesia applied the nursing code of ethics less favorably (57,3%), but most still showed good caring behavior (52,0%). A significant positive association was found between the two (p = 0,001, r = 0,373). Institutions should consider reinforcing case-based learning and aligning ethics assessment in clinical placements to raise student professionalism.

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