

## Exploring Nursing Students' Experiences of Privacy in Pediatrics Ward: A Qualitative Study

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### Abstract

**Background and Objectives:** Respecting privacy means respecting individuals, their dignity and independence. It is mandatory to observe privacy in health-care systems. Therefore, this study was carried out with the aim of expressing nursing students' experience of privacy in pediatrics ward.

**Methods:** This qualitative study was done inductively using content analysis method. The participants included 10 nursing students studying at 6th semester. The samples were selected purposefully. The semi-structured interview with each participant lasted for 30 minutes.

**Results:** Based on data analysis obtained from students' experiences three following major categories were obtained: The need to change pediatrics ward, lack of attention to observance of patient's privacy and the necessity of paying attention to patient's rights.

**Conclusion:** The results of our study revealed that inappropriateness of ward atmosphere, ward crowdedness, training state of hospital are among factors which give rise to failure in observing privacy. Considering that maintaining privacy is one of fundamental human rights, it is also necessary to change attitudes of students and personnel and to train them in order to observe privacy. The academic staff and instructors should provide nursing and medical students with required trainings in observing privacy.

**Keywords:** Nursing students, Privacy, Clinical training, Qualitative study

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### Introduction

Man is a social being with spiritual, mental and physical dimensions, who has some rights during his sickness and health (1). Maintaining privacy is one of fundamental human rights (2). It is mandatory to observe privacy in health-care systems (3). Observing patients' rights improves the relationship between patients and health-care providers and promotes quality of health-care services (4). World health organization has enumerated the following as the most important rights of patients: Informed consent, access to health

services, privacy of information, and maintaining privacy (5).

Maintaining privacy is a fundamental value which is rooted deeply in traditions and history of nursing profession. Respect for privacy is respect for individuals, their dignity and independence. The patients need to feel comfortable in order to give information to nurses and other specialists. Furthermore, patients may avoid giving information in case they do not rely on these people or they may distort information (6). Studies revealed that

nursing and medical personnel have little information about patients' privacy (7). Most studies showed that observing patients' privacy is average to weak (8, 9). Ghodsi and Hojatollahi stated that students' awareness of patient's right is weak (10). In addition, Heidari et al. obtained four classes of system weakness, serious effort of entrepreneurs, effort to maintain privacy and cause tension (6).

Nurses are the largest group of care-providers. Their spiritual behavior together with their responsibility play an important role in improving and enhancing patients' health (11). Considering that studies have revealed the status of patient's privacy to be inappropriate and the insufficiency of our knowledge in this regard, and that the sociocultural situation of our care system is different as well as the need for a qualitative study in order to clarify these differences, a qualitative study was chosen to answer the research question.

Since observing patients' privacy is possible when care-providers have required knowledge in this field and considering that nursing students are future nurses who take the responsibility for patient's care, and also in case of offering proper training, sustainable results will be followed and taking into account the observance of privacy in patients' care, therefore, this study was carried out with the aim of expressing students' experiences of privacy in pediatrics ward.

### Methods

This qualitative study was carried out inductively using content analysis method. Qualitative content analysis method is appropriate when theories or research articles are limited about a phenomenon. There are 7 steps for content analysis: 1- forming the question(s) of study; 2- selecting the sample for analysis; 3- defining items; 4- determining coding process and training coder; 5- doing coding process; 6- determining approaches for validity and reliability of study; 7- analyzing results of coding process (12). The participants included 10 nursing students studying at 6th semester. The content analysis was used

inductively in this study. This process included open coding, classification and abstraction (13). The inclusion criteria were students who had passed pediatrics training and were interested in participating in the study. In this study, the interested students were interviewed after signing the informed consent form. The interviews were conducted in hospital and each lasted 30 minutes. The interviews started with the open-ended question of "please talk about your experience about privacy in pediatrics ward." and it continued with other probing questions. In order to obtain more accurate data, the researcher paid attention to the purpose of interview; she avoided giving her own opinions and did not correct the interviewees' words. Sampling, data collection and interviews continued until saturation occurred. Saturation means that the participants do not propose any new issue and the information are repetitive. Interviews and data analysis were done simultaneously. In the present study, the researcher was drowned in studying the data after listening to tape recordings in order to find general concepts in the interviews. All interviews were transcribed word by word so that the words carrying the main concepts were made to appear in bold type and in this manner, the codes were extracted. Having extracted concepts and codes from important sentences and paragraphs, they were grouped based on their similarities and differences and finally categories emerged according to their relationship and were at last decreased in number. The following measures were taken in order to increase data validity: reading the data repeatedly and being drowned in data, using complementary suggestions of colleagues to confirm and correct accuracy of codes and extracted categories, giving back some of interviews to participants after coding in order to investigate the consensus on codes between researcher and participants. In addition, after the interviews, the researcher reviewed conceptual codes in order to make data reliable with participants. It should be also mentioned that the present study was carried out confidentially, as the names of participants are not mentioned and the ethical considerations have been taken into account.

**Results**

The participants included 6 female and 4 male students aged between 20 and 23 years old. Based on data analysis obtained from students' experiences, three major categories were obtained: The need to change the structure of pediatrics ward, lack of attention to observing patients' privacy and the necessity to pay attention to patients' rights. Table 1 shows the major categories and categories obtained from data analysis.

The major category of the need to change structure of pediatrics ward was divided into three subcategories of inappropriateness of ward atmosphere, ward crowdedness, training state of hospital. Another major category of lack of attention to observing patients' privacy was divided into two subcategories of the necessity to change the attitudes of students and personnel and training of students and personnel. The other major category of the necessity to pay attention to patients' rights was divided into two subcategories of respect for patients' rights and academic staff' attention to privacy training. These categories will be explained as follows:

*The need to change the structure of pediatrics ward*

Based on data analysis, the major category of the need to change the structure of pediatrics ward was obtained with three subcategories of inappropriateness of ward atmosphere, ward crowdedness, training state of hospital.

Most students stated that there is not enough space for children and parents and especially the mother - the main caregiver- is not in a suitable situation regarding her privacy. There is no space for her to rest beside the child's bed. There is even no partition for separating privacy. In this regard, a student stated:

“The ward is very small and the mother has

no privacy while feeding her child. While the mother is resting the male nursing and medical students enter without knocking.” (Female student No. 4).

Another student stated:

“I talked to the mother of my patient and she said: There is little space between the beds. They are unsatisfied with the number of beds. They said: if beds were separated with curtains we would be more comfortable and had no problem about resting.” (Female student No. 1)

Most students stated that there is not a good space to visit the child and the mother should go out of ward with ward clothes to visit the relatives. A student stated:

“There is no good space in ward for visiting. For example, the patient's relative has to go out of ward for visiting while she does not have a good dress. They don't feel good about this situation.” (Male student No. 4)

Another problem in pediatrics ward is that it is crowded which according to students statement is due to extra beds in hall. In this regard a student said:

“Extra beds have no privacy and this annoys children and their relatives. Specially the beds which are placed near the door. The mother is uncomfortable.” (Male student No. 3)

The overcrowding of ward does not let the mother to do her daily chores easily. In this regard a student said: "There is no privacy for changing baby diaper. The mothers are unhappy to do this in presence of nursing and medical students" (Female student No. 6).

The training state of hospital makes it crowded and disrupts patients' privacy. The presence of different students at patients' bed at different times disrupts their privacy. A student stated:

“The mother and child are not comfortable. Loud noise annoys them. When I went to ask

Table 1: Major categories obtained from students' experiences regarding privacy in pediatrics ward

Inappropriateness of ward atmosphere	Need to change the structure of pediatrics ward
Ward crowdedness	
Training state of hospital	
Necessity to change attitudes of students & personnel	Lack of attention to observing patients' privacy
Students & personnel training	Necessity to pay attention to patients' privacy
Respect for patients' rights	
Academic staff' attention to privacy training	

for the medical history, the mother was complaining about the students asking them too many questions. They were tired. Of course many mothers had to breast feed their children in this situation and so they did not feel comfortable.” (Female student No. 2)

Another student said:

“The number of nursing and medical students is high and they make the ward crowded. For example, the mother of my patient was complaining about the noise and said that they could not rest.” (Female student No. 3)

Another student said:

“My patient’s relative said that students were talking loudly in the hall and no one warned them. We have been here for one week and the situation has been the same. It was better if students had somewhere for their round.” (Male student No.2)

*Lack of attention to observing patients’ privacy*

Based on data analysis, another major category of lack of attention to observing patients’ privacy was obtained with two subcategories of the necessity to change student and personnel’s attitudes and personnel and students’ training.

Based on obtained results, most students believed that attention is not paid to observing patients’ privacy in pediatrics ward. Most students stated that for their attitudes to change it is necessary for nursing and medical students to pass required trainings. In this regard, a student said:

“In theoretical courses we had nothing about privacy, but here the situation is different. The situation of ward is unsuitable. But some matters are avoidable. For example, men can knock at the door and enter and this makes the patient’s aid ready and less uncomfortable.” (Male student No. 2)

Another student stated:

“If students themselves believe in observing privacy, they will provide the necessary situation for observing privacy when working as personnel. But unfortunately, the personnel have no supervision on privacy, especial medical students who are not supervised by personnel at all.” (Female student No. 2)

Necessity to pay attention to patients’ rights

Based on data analysis, the other category of the necessity to pay attention to patients’ rights was specified with two subcategories of respect for patients’ rights and the necessity for academic staff to teach privacy.

Most students stated that observing privacy is a part of patients’ rights. They said that providing care should be based on maintenance of the patient and aid’s privacy. Besides, one of the patient’s rights is to be respected and offered information, which right is not highlighted in pediatrics ward.

A student stated:

“Our purpose is to provide care and observe patients’ rights. It is right that we are at the patient’s bed to learn, but our first purpose which is providing care and observing patient’s right should not be forgotten.”

Another student stated:

“My patient’s mother was complaining that students don’t have sufficient information. I asked about my child’s disease and they did not respond. Well, it is the patient’s right to have information about her disease. If we give the patient proper information, she will cooperate. For example, I taught the patient’s mother how to bathe the foot and read the thermometer. She became very happy. She didn’t even know the proper way to bathe the foot.” (Female student No. 6)

Another student declared:

“It is necessary that academic staff pay more attention to privacy. If attend spends time and enough information to patient and aid, they will not complain anymore. Surely they should pay attention to issues such as privacy, especially because we are Muslims. Doctors and nurses are confidants, but it is necessary to teach these points to students in a clear manner.” (Female student No. 1)

## Discussion

Based on data analysis obtained from students’ experiences three major categories were obtained. The first major category of the need to change structure of pediatrics ward was divided into three subcategories of inappropriateness of ward atmosphere, ward crowdedness, training state of hospital. The second major category of lack of attention to

observing patients' privacy was divided into two subcategories of the necessity to change the attitudes of students and personnel and training students and personnel. The third major category of the necessity to pay attention to patients' rights was divided into two subcategories of respect for patients' rights and academic staff' attention to teaching privacy.

The results of this study revealed that the inappropriateness of ward atmosphere, ward crowdedness and training state of hospital are among factors which give rise to lack of observing privacy. The findings of other studies also confirmed this finding. The results of study by Hooshmand and et al. in 2007 indicated that providing required facilities, equipment and sufficient personnel is among organizational factors which facilitate observing the patients' rights (14). The results of present study also revealed that the major reason for lack of observing patients' rights by the nurses is crowdedness of ward, shortage of personnel and inappropriateness of ward atmosphere (15).

The results of the present study also revealed that it is necessary to change attitudes of students and personnel and to teach them to observe privacy. The findings of other studies also confirmed the present finding. Borhani and et al. in 2009 stated that teaching ethics is efficient in promoting students' awareness regarding ethical subjects and their application (16). Furthermore, the results of study by Heidari and et al. showed that maintaining patient privacy helps the professional development, observance of patients' right and their satisfaction (6).

The results of present study also showed that respect for patients' rights and the necessity for academic staff to pay attention to teaching privacy is essential in the area of observing privacy. The results of other studies also confirmed the present finding. The findings of Aghajani and Dehghan Nayeri in 2008 showed that most patients do not become familiarized with the ward when they enter there (9). King & et al. in 2012 stated that the patients like that caregiver personnel ask for permission before asking for information (17). Jolae and et al. in 2010 stated that the nurse is required to show

respect for the patient and her family and to observe her rights. In addition, Hooshmand and et al. stated that observing patients' right is possible when nurses have enough information in this regard. The results of Hajavi and et al. in 2005 indicated that the right of privacy exists in the chart of patient rights in most countries (19).

The present study is a qualitative study which revealed student experiences in terms of privacy. But this study cannot be generalized to other treatment facilities. However, the results showed that more attention should be paid to teaching privacy to medical and nursing students. Based on findings, it is recommended that nursing academic staff pay more attention to the subject of privacy.

### Conclusion

The results of the present study revealed that observing privacy in pediatrics ward is not appropriate for parents. Considering that maintaining privacy is one of the fundamental human rights, therefore, it is necessary that managers and authorities provide sufficient facilities such as enough rooms with partitions in the ward. In addition, they should plan to teach privacy to personnel, because the best time for changing attitudes is when academic staff provide nursing and medical students with required trainings about observing privacy.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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