Collaborative Care and Patient Rights: The Influence of Ethical and Professional Commitment in Saudi Health Institutions

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The healthcare system in Saudi Arabia is undergoing significant transformation under Vision 2030, with increased emphasis on patient-centered care and ethical practice. This study examines the complex relationship between healthcare professionals' ethical and professional commitment and the protection of patient rights within the Saudi healthcare system. Through analysis of current literature, the article explores how these factors interact within a collaborative healthcare environment. Findings indicate that professional commitment, ethical sensitivity, and awareness of patient rights significantly influence healthcare delivery quality. The article highlights the importance of educational interventions, organizational culture, and systemic support in fostering ethical commitment among healthcare professionals and promoting patient rights in Saudi Arabia's evolving healthcare landscape. **Keyword**: collaborative, commitment, professionals, interventions

Introduction

Healthcare systems worldwide face the dual challenge of maintaining high professional standards while respecting the fundamental rights of patients. In Saudi Arabia, this challenge is particularly relevant as the country undergoes significant healthcare transformation under Vision 2030, which aims to improve healthcare quality, accessibility, and sustainability (Nair et al., 2024). Central to this transformation is the relationship between healthcare professionals' ethical and professional commitment and their adherence to patient rights.

Professional commitment in healthcare refers to the dedication of practitioners to their profession's values, goals, and ethical standards (Singh & Gupta, 2015). This commitment is not merely a personal attribute but is embedded within the broader framework of healthcare delivery, influencing how professionals interact with patients, colleagues, and the healthcare system itself. Ethical commitment, meanwhile, encompasses the moral obligations healthcare professionals have toward their patients, including respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice (Cheraghi et al., 2023).

Patient rights, as articulated in various international declarations and national charters, include the right to high-quality care, informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, and dignity (Balynska et al., 2021). In Saudi Arabia, the Patient's Bill of Rights, established by the Ministry of Health, outlines these rights within the cultural and religious context of the country.

The relationship between professional and ethical commitment and patient rights is particularly complex in Saudi Arabia's healthcare system, which combines public and private sectors and serves a diverse population including citizens

and expatriates (Nair et al., 2024). The system is characterized by rapid development, technological advancement, and significant reforms aimed at improving efficiency and quality of care.

This study explores the intricate relationship between healthcare professionals' ethical and professional commitment and the protection of patient rights within the Saudi healthcare context. It examines how these factors interact within a collaborative healthcare environment and identifies strategies to strengthen this relationship to enhance patient care quality and safety.

Professional Commitment in Healthcare
Conceptual Foundation

Professional commitment in healthcare encompasses multiple dimensions, including affective commitment (emotional attachment to the profession), normative commitment (sense of obligation to the profession), and continuance commitment (awareness of the costs associated with leaving the profession) (Singh & Gupta, 2015). This multidimensional nature makes professional commitment a complex construct that influences healthcare professionals' behavior, decision-making, and interactions with patients.

Research indicates that professional commitment develops through a combination of personal characteristics, educational experiences, and workplace environments (Cheng et al., 2021). Nursing students, for example, develop professional commitment through exposure to clinical practice, role modeling by experienced professionals, and theoretical understanding of nursing's core values (Nesje, 2015).

Amini et al. (2019) found that nursing students' professional commitment was significantly influenced by their perception of nursing as a profession, the social status of nurses, and their own personal values. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2022) observed that professional commitment among undergraduate nursing students changed significantly after clinical internships, highlighting the importance of practical experience in shaping professional identity and commitment.

Professional Commitment in Saudi Healthcare

In the Saudi healthcare context, professional commitment is shaped by unique cultural, religious, and organizational factors. The country's healthcare workforce is diverse, comprising Saudi nationals and expatriates from various countries, each bringing different professional values and commitments (Nair et al., 2024).

Islamic principles significantly influence professional commitment among Saudi healthcare professionals, emphasizing compassion, integrity, and service to others (Dehghani et al., 2016). These principles align with universal healthcare ethics but are expressed within the specific cultural context of Saudi Arabia.

The ongoing Saudization policy, which aims to increase the proportion of Saudi nationals in the healthcare workforce, has implications for professional commitment. As noted by Nair et al. (2024), the percentage of Saudi doctors and nurses in Ministry of Health hospitals has increased significantly in recent years. This demographic shift may influence the collective professional commitment within healthcare institutions as new graduates bring fresh perspectives on professional values and practices.

Ethical Commitment in Healthcare
Ethical Foundations and Frameworks

Ethical commitment in healthcare is grounded in established ethical principles and frameworks that guide professional practice. These include principlism (autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice), virtue ethics, care ethics, and various professional codes of ethics (Yıldız, 2019).

Cheraghi et al. (2023) emphasize that beneficence—the principle of acting in the best interest of patients—is central to nursing ethics and requires professionals to balance potential benefits and risks in clinical decision-making. This ethical principle underpins many aspects of healthcare practice, from treatment decisions to resource allocation.

Ethical commitment is not static but evolves through education, practice, and reflection. Safari et al. (2020) highlight the role of the "hidden curriculum" in shaping ethical awareness and commitment among medical students. Beyond

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formal ethics education, students absorb ethical attitudes and behaviors through observing mentors, experiencing institutional cultures, and navigating ethical dilemmas in clinical settings.

Ethical Sensitivity and Decision-Making

Ethical sensitivity—the ability to recognize ethical issues in professional practice—is a critical component of ethical commitment. Mohammadi et al. (2015) found that nurses' ethical sensitivity was positively associated with their attitudes toward respecting patient rights, suggesting that the ability to identify ethical dimensions of care situations facilitates rights-respecting practice.

White et al. (2014) argue that ethical practices are contextually situated, influenced by institutional norms, power dynamics, and resource constraints. In the Saudi healthcare system, ethical decision-making occurs within a complex interplay of traditional values, religious principles, hierarchical structures, and modernization efforts (Nair et al., 2024).

Clinical ethics support, including ethics committees and ethics consultation services, can enhance healthcare professionals' ethical commitment by providing resources for navigating complex ethical dilemmas. Rasoal et al. (2017) found that such support services improve ethical awareness, confidence in ethical decision-making, and interprofessional collaboration on ethical issues.

Patient Rights in Saudi Healthcare
Legal and Regulatory Framework

Saudi Arabia has established a comprehensive framework for patient rights through its Patient's Bill of Rights, which aligns with international standards while respecting Islamic values and Saudi cultural norms. These rights include informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, access to medical records, and the right to receive respectful, non-discriminatory care (Balynska et al., 2021).

The Saudi healthcare system's regulatory bodies, including the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties and the Saudi Central Board for Accreditation of Healthcare Institutions, monitor compliance with patient rights standards through accreditation processes and quality assurance mechanisms (Nair et al., 2024).

Despite these frameworks, challenges remain in fully implementing patient rights across all healthcare settings. Mohammed et al. (2018), in a study from neighboring Egypt, found that patient awareness of their rights varied significantly based on education level, socioeconomic status, and previous healthcare experiences. Similar variations likely exist in Saudi Arabia, particularly given the diverse population served by the healthcare system.

Awareness and Implementation of Patient Rights

Healthcare professionals' awareness of patient rights is a prerequisite for protecting those rights in practice. Sheikhtaheri et al. (2016) found that while nurses generally had good knowledge of patient rights, implementation varied based on workload, institutional support, and perceived barriers.

In the Saudi context, Fazeli et al. (2020) observed that the observance of patient rights was influenced by hospital resources, staff training, patient characteristics, and organizational policies. Hospitals with established patient rights monitoring systems and staff education programs demonstrated higher compliance with patient rights standards.

Privacy and confidentiality are particularly important dimensions of patient rights in Saudi culture, where family honor and personal modesty are highly valued. Khawaja Ahmadi (2017) found that maintaining patient privacy during care procedures was challenging in busy clinical settings but was recognized as an ethical priority by nursing students and staff.

The Intersection of Professional Commitment, Ethics, and Patient Rights
Theoretical Connections

Professional commitment, ethical practice, and respect for patient rights are theoretically interconnected in several ways. First, professional codes of ethics explicitly include respect for patient rights as a core professional obligation (Yıldız, 2019). Second, professionals with strong commitment to their profession typically internalize its ethical standards, including patient rights protection (Dehghani et al., 2016). Third, organizational environments that support ethical practice typically also promote both professional commitment and patient rights (Salimi & Khodaparast, 2017).

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Hoseinialiabadi et al. (2022) found that medical and nursing students with stronger ethical knowledge and positive attitudes toward professional ethics demonstrated greater awareness of patient rights. This suggests that ethical education and professional socialization contribute to rights-respecting practice.

Empirical Evidence

Empirical studies have begun to explore the relationships between these constructs in healthcare settings. Bagherinia et al. (2022) found a significant positive correlation between professional ethics and patient rights observance among nurses and midwives, indicating that professionals who adhere to ethical standards are more likely to respect patient rights in practice.

Mohamadkhani Shahri et al. (2020) specifically examined the correlation between professional commitment and both awareness of and compliance with patient rights charters among nursing and midwifery staff. Their study revealed that higher professional commitment was associated with greater awareness of patient rights and more consistent application of those rights in clinical practice.

These findings align with broader research on professional values in healthcare. Kaya et al. (2017) found that personal and professional values among nursing students—including human dignity, responsibility, and altruism—directly influenced their approach to patient care and respect for patient autonomy and rights.

Challenges and Barriers
System-Level Challenges

Saudi Arabia's healthcare system faces several challenges that impact the relationship between professional commitment, ethics, and patient rights. Resource constraints, particularly in public healthcare facilities, can create ethical dilemmas for professionals committed to providing high-quality care while respecting patient rights (Nair et al., 2024).

The dual system of public and private healthcare creates disparities in access and quality that raise ethical concerns about equity and justice. As noted by Nair et al. (2024), despite universal coverage for Saudi citizens, many households incur out-of-pocket expenses for private healthcare due to perceived quality and access issues in public facilities.

The ongoing transformation of the healthcare system under Vision 2030, including privatization initiatives and public-private partnerships, introduces new organizational dynamics that may influence professional commitment and ethical practice (Nair et al., 2024). These changes require healthcare professionals to adapt to new working environments while maintaining their ethical commitments and respect for patient rights.

Individual and Organizational Barriers

At the individual level, healthcare professionals may face knowledge gaps, time constraints, and competing priorities that hinder their ability to fully uphold patient rights. Dashti and Shahmari (2017) found variations in professional ethics scores among nurses, with factors such as work experience, education level, and ethical training influencing ethical awareness and practice.

Organizational culture significantly impacts both professional commitment and ethical practice. Salimi and Khodaparast (2017) found that organizational culture directly affected professional ethics and job performance among faculty members, suggesting similar influences may exist in clinical settings. Healthcare institutions with cultures that prioritize efficiency over ethics may inadvertently create environments where patient rights are compromised.

Power imbalances between healthcare professionals and patients, as well as hierarchical structures within healthcare teams, can create barriers to patient-centered, rights-respecting care. These dynamics may be particularly pronounced in Saudi healthcare settings, where traditional respect for authority combines with professional hierarchies (Nair et al., 2024).

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Strategies for Enhancement

Educational Interventions

Education plays a crucial role in developing professional and ethical commitment among healthcare professionals. Formal ethics education, including courses on bioethics, professional ethics, and patient rights, provides the theoretical foundation for ethical practice (Hoseinialiabadi et al., 2022).

Experiential learning approaches, such as case-based discussions, simulation scenarios, and guided reflection on ethical dilemmas, help students develop ethical sensitivity and decision-making skills (Safari et al., 2020). These approaches bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application of ethics in clinical settings.

Interprofessional ethics education facilitates collaborative approaches to ethical issues and patient rights protection. By learning together, healthcare students from different disciplines develop mutual understanding and respect, which translates to more effective teamwork in addressing ethical challenges (Rasoal et al., 2017).

Organizational Support and Culture

Healthcare organizations can foster professional commitment, ethical practice, and respect for patient rights through explicit policies, leadership support, and organizational culture. Clear policies on patient rights, including mechanisms for addressing violations, signal organizational commitment to patient-centered care (Sheikhtaheri et al., 2016).

Ethics committees, ethics consultation services, and regular ethics rounds provide resources for healthcare professionals facing ethical dilemmas. These supports facilitate ethical decision-making and promote consistent application of ethical principles across the organization (Rasoal et al., 2017).

Leadership that models ethical behavior, recognizes and rewards ethical practice, and addresses ethical lapses creates a culture where professional commitment and patient rights are valued. As noted by Canizales (2002), leaders significantly influence the moral development and ethical practice of those they supervise.

Systemic Approaches

At the system level, several approaches can strengthen the relationship between professional commitment, ethics, and patient rights in Saudi healthcare:

1. Integration of patient rights monitoring into quality assurance and accreditation processes ensures that rights protection is systematically assessed and improved (Nair et al., 2024).

2. Patient and community education about healthcare rights increases awareness and empowers patients to advocate for their rights within the healthcare system (Mohammed et al., 2018).

3. Collaborative governance structures that include healthcare professionals, administrators, ethicists, and patient representatives in policy development promote balanced approaches to ethical issues and patient rights (Nair et al., 2024).

4. Research on professional commitment, ethical practice, and patient rights in the Saudi context provides evidence for targeted interventions and policy development (Latifi et al., 2023).

Healthcare Collaboration and Patient Rights

Interprofessional Collaboration

Effective healthcare delivery increasingly requires collaboration among professionals from different disciplines, each bringing unique expertise, perspectives, and ethical commitments to patient care. This interprofessional collaboration creates both opportunities and challenges for protecting patient rights.

Collaborative practice models facilitate comprehensive, patient-centered care by bringing together diverse professional expertise. When functioning effectively, these models enhance communication, coordination, and continuity of care, all of which support patient rights to high-quality, safe healthcare (Rasoal et al., 2017).

However, interprofessional collaboration can also introduce complexity in ethical decision-making and patient rights protection. Different professional groups may have varying ethical priorities, communication styles, and approaches to

patient involvement in care decisions. Navigating these differences requires mutual respect, shared ethical frameworks, and commitment to patient-centered care (White et al., 2014).

Collaborative Ethics in the Saudi Context

In Saudi Arabia's evolving healthcare system, collaboration extends beyond clinical teams to include partnerships between public and private sectors, healthcare institutions and educational organizations, and local and international entities (Nair et al., 2024). These collaborative arrangements create new contexts for professional ethics and patient rights.

Public-private partnerships, a key component of Vision 2030's healthcare transformation, bring together organizations with different missions, values, and operational approaches. Ensuring that patient rights remain central across these diverse settings requires explicit attention to ethical standards and rights protection in partnership agreements and governance structures (Nair et al., 2024).

International collaborations, including partnerships with global healthcare organizations and recruitment of international healthcare professionals, introduce cross-cultural dimensions to professional ethics and patient rights. These collaborations can enrich ethical perspectives but also require sensitivity to cultural differences in ethical priorities and approaches to patient rights (Nair et al., 2024).

Implications for Saudi Healthcare Under Vision 2030

Alignment with Vision 2030 Goals

The relationship between professional commitment, ethics, and patient rights aligns with several key goals of Saudi Vision 2030's healthcare transformation:

1. Improving healthcare quality and patient experience requires healthcare professionals who are committed to ethical practice and respect for patient rights (Nair et al., 2024).

2. Increasing private sector participation in healthcare delivery necessitates strong ethical frameworks and patient rights protections that apply consistently across public and private settings (Nair et al., 2024).

3. Developing digital health services, including telemedicine and electronic health records, introduces new ethical considerations related to privacy, confidentiality, and equitable access that require professional commitment to ethical principles in technological contexts (Nair et al., 2024).

4. Strengthening primary healthcare as a foundation for the healthcare system depends on professionals who are committed to preventive care, patient education, and community engagement—all of which involve ethical dimensions and respect for patient rights (Nair et al., 2024).

Future Directions

As Saudi Arabia continues its healthcare transformation, several priorities emerge for strengthening the relationship between professional commitment, ethics, and patient rights:

1. Developing Saudi-specific research on professional commitment, ethical practice, and patient rights to inform evidence-based policies and interventions tailored to the local context.

2. Enhancing ethics and patient rights content in healthcare education programs, with particular attention to the practical application of ethical principles in diverse healthcare settings.

3. Establishing robust patient rights monitoring systems across public and private healthcare sectors to ensure consistent protection of rights throughout the system.

4. Creating platforms for ongoing dialogue among healthcare professionals, policy makers, religious scholars, and patient advocates to address emerging ethical challenges in the evolving healthcare landscape.

5. Investing in leadership development programs that emphasize ethical leadership and the creation of organizational cultures that support professional commitment and patient rights.

Conclusion

The relationship between professional and ethical commitment and patient rights is fundamental to high-quality, patient-centered healthcare. In Saudi Arabia's transforming healthcare system, strengthening this relationship requires attention to individual, organizational, and systemic factors that influence healthcare professionals' commitment to ethical practice and respect for patient rights.

Educational approaches that develop ethical sensitivity and decision-making skills, organizational cultures that value and support ethical practice, and systemic policies that protect patient rights create an environment where professional commitment translates into rights-respecting care. Collaborative approaches, involving diverse stakeholders within and beyond the healthcare system, enhance this environment by bringing together multiple perspectives and expertise.

As Saudi Arabia continues to implement Vision 2030's healthcare transformation, balancing technological advancement, organizational change, and economic considerations with unwavering commitment to ethical practice and patient rights will be essential. By prioritizing this balance, the Saudi healthcare system can achieve its goals of improved quality, efficiency, and sustainability while ensuring that the rights and dignity of patients remain at the center of healthcare delivery.

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