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DOES SECTION 7 OF REPUBLIC ACT 11036 IMPROVE NURSING PERSONNEL JOB SATISFACTION? EVIDENCE FROM NCMH AND POLICY FIXES

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Abstract

This study evaluates Section 7 of Republic Act No. 11036, also known as the Mental Health Act, on the job satisfaction among nursing personnel at the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH), as basis to propose policy recommendations. Section 7 highlighted the rights, well-being, and support for mental health professionals in addressing the demands of mental healthcare delivery, and as the nursing personnel play a crucial role in implementing mental health policies, the effects of the policy on their job satisfaction remain underexplored. A mixed-methods approach were used, with surveys and interviews in a representative sample of NCMH nursing personnel were employed. Quantitative data measured the job satisfaction among the nursing staff and its relationship to Section 7 while qualitative findings provided deeper insights into staff experiences and perceptions of the provision's implementation. The study concluded that there is a strong positive relationship between the awareness and understanding of Section 7 and job satisfaction among nursing personnel; however, as the provision was aligned with the nursing personnel's expectations on their rights and well-being, the implementation aspect was viewed as inconsistent and inadequately resourced. A significant factor that affected the job satisfaction levels among nursing personnel are workload imbalance and limited staff support. And despite of these findings, the respondents still showed a high level of professional commitment, underscoring the importance for a targeted institutional support. Therefore, to ensure effective implementation of Section 7, increase resource allocation and structured mental health support programs for personnel and monitoring systems were recommended.

Keywords: *Mental Health Act, Section 7, job satisfaction, mental health policy, National Center for Mental Health (NCMH), nursing personnel, policy implementation, workplace well–being*

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INTRODUCTION

Since its name change from National Mental Hospital to National Center for Mental Health (NCMH) through Memorandum Circular No. 48 of the Office of the President in 1986 "*to better define their functions and capabilities*" (**Official Gazette, n.d.**), the NCMH is the national institution providing mental healthcare services for the Filipino people, classified as a Specialized Research Training Center and Hospital under the Department of Health since 1987 (**National Center for Mental Health, n.d.**).

Despite its name change and classification, conditions at NCMH became a center of attention in the late 1990's as Luchi Cruz-Valdes unveiled in her 1999 GMA Documentary the dire situation of the facilities that affects the well-being of the patients. The documentary highlighted the situations of NCMH that despite being classified as a national center, the institution still is the end point of many patients with mental health conditions. Accommodating 3,400 patients with a 4,200-bed capacity, patients are placed in prison-like wards with an average of 50 patients per ward, with some patients sleeping on the floor. Patients have to endure lack of toilets, lack of medicine, lack of proper ventilations, food with no flavor, and the unpleasant smell of the wards. According to Benny Vicente, the NCMH Medical Chief at the time of the documentary, the budget of the institution was slashed by ₱29 million with a daily budget for each patient of ₱110, excluding medical expenses, maintenance of its facilities, and funding for doctors, nurses, and other hospital staffs. (**GMA Public Affairs, 2018**).

With the lack of government support which plagued the NCMH, it took 18 years for the passage of Republic Act No. 11036, also known as the Mental Health Act. Since 2017, the Mental Health Act has provided the legal framework for the effective and efficient delivery of mental healthcare by protecting the rights of individuals with psychiatric, neurologic, and psychosocial needs, and to integrate strategies that promote mental health in educational institutions, the workplace, and in communities. Even with its progressive patient-centered approach, the law institutionalized the rights of mental health professionals as provided in Section 7. These rights include having a safe and supportive work environment (*Paragraph A*), participate in a continuous professional development program (*Paragraph B*), contribute to the development and regular review of standards for evaluating mental health services by participating in the planning, development, and management of mental health policy and service delivery guidelines (*Paragraphs C, D, and E*) (**Official Gazette, n.d.**).

In spite of these legislative efforts to recognize and protect the rights of mental health professionals, it was soon challenged after three years in a 2020 news report by Ivan Mayrina that there are at least 28 psychiatrists for 3,280 patients and around 409 nurses, when the standard of the DOH is 1,094 nurses. In the said report, NCMH nurse Aileen Suyo stated that if both she and her fellow nurse are on duty, the ratio will be 1 nurse to 66 patients, if not, that one nurse will handle all patients (**GMA Integrated News, 2020**). Far from the ideal DOH nurse to patient ratio of 1 nurse to 12 patients, this significantly low nurse to patient ratio became the reason for nurses to be overworked, overstressed, and overwhelmed with their profession, to the point that feel they are not cared for by the government, a factor on why a handful of nurses are discouraged to work in the Philippines (**Alibudbud, 2022**). Moreover in 2023, Senator Raffy Tulfo conducted a surprise ocular inspection of the NCMH as he received reports on the conditions of the institutions and later described one of the facilities as a "*pigpen*" due to the smell, the lack of ventilation, and patients are either sleeping on the floor or in a cramped space (**Raffy Tulfo in Action, 2023**). During the visit, the senator has also pointed out that the facilities should have proper ventilation so that the nursing personnel are encouraged to work despite the number of patients needed to be accommodated. This inspection has led him to

conduct an inquiry in aid of legislation on the conditions of the facilities of the NCMH (**Senate of the Philippines, 2023**).

In a time where the Philippines is continuously fighting the stigma towards mental health, nurses serve as the main frontliners for patients with mental health conditions. After years of lockdown brought by the COVID-19 Pandemic, the country has seen the increasing demand for mental healthcare services, hence it is important to reinforce the rights of professionals to continue their quality service for the Filipino people. Albeit there is a guarantee in the Mental Health Act to safeguard their rights, this research study primarily aims to be an eye-opener for the government, the general public, and other stakeholders on the effectiveness of the Mental Health Act in recognizing the rights of nurses by examining their job satisfaction at the NCMH as a basis for a proposed policy recommendation.

Moreover, as the World Bank classified the Philippines as one of the developing lower-middle income countries among the 193 member states of the United Nations (**Metreau et. al., 2024**) and as one of the countries who voted to adopt the 2030 Agenda, it is necessary for the government, particularly the DOH, to prioritize Target 3.C of Goal 3 of the 17 United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals that to "*substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing states*" (**United Nations, n.d.**). And according to the Sustainable Development Report dashboard, major challenges remain in the country in achieving Goal 3, whereas its trend score is stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of required rate to be considered improving (**Sachs et. al., 2024**).

Although there are a handful of published researches on the effectiveness of the law on the delivery of mental healthcare services, little has been known of its effectiveness on the side of mental health professionals. This study can be used as a basis for the NCMH to create or recalibrate its existing internal policies that are aligned with the institutions' objectives and targets as stipulated by the Mental Health Act by prioritizing the well-being of their nursing personnel. Additionally, this study can be used as an aid of legislation for lawmakers that prioritizes mental health professionals, including other hospital staff as they play key roles in keeping the country's healthcare system alive and functioning.

Objectives

This research study was aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act to the job satisfaction among nursing personnel at NCMH as a basis for a proposed policy recommendation

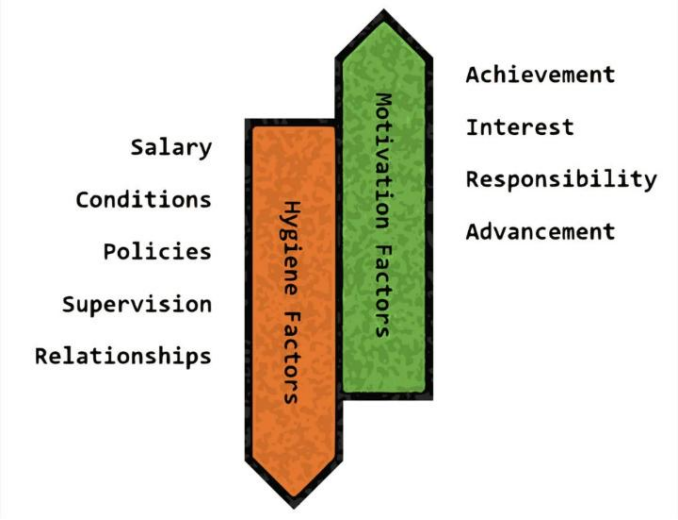
Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How effective is Section 7 of the Mental Health Act in enforcing the rights of nursing personnel at NCMH?
2. How satisfied are the nursing personnel with their work and profession at NCMH in accordance with Section 7 of the Mental Health Act?
3. Is there a significant relationship between Section 7 of the Mental Health Act and the level of job satisfaction of the nursing personnel at NCMH?
4. What policy recommendations can be proposed to improve the level of job satisfaction of the nursing personnel at NCMH while safeguarding their rights as professionals?

Theoretical Framework

Figure 1

Two Factor Theory by Frederick Herzberg (1959)



According to Frederick Herzberg's Two Factor Theory (*1959*), job satisfaction is influenced by two sets of factors which are hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction and motivation factors that promote satisfaction (**Nickerson & McLeod, 2023**). In a pragmatic philosophical perspective, this study views job satisfaction not as an abstract concept but as a measurable reality shaped by the influence and interaction between legislative mandate and clinical practice. This approach stems from the idea that the rights of mental health professionals, in this context are the nursing personnel, are protected whose professional dignity and ethical well-being are the center of an effective and efficient healthcare system. In this study, the effective implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act can be seen as addressing both hygiene and motivation factors to improve job satisfaction among nursing personnel.

Hygiene factors in this study are the nursing personnel's salary, working conditions, organizational policies, supervision, and relationships. From an epistemological standpoint, these factors represent workplace realities experienced by the nursing personnel; for which it could be improved by providing better working conditions, clearer policies, supportive supervision, and positive interpersonal relationships, with the objective of strictly ensuring the proper implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act. Although addressing it may not directly lead to high job satisfaction levels, but it can help to reduce dissatisfaction and to create a more stable work environment.

Motivation factors on the other hand are the work-related achievement, responsibility, recognition and opportunities for advancement played an important role in enhancing job satisfaction. These factors are aligned with the ethical view that the nursing personnel have a right to professional self-actualization or their fulfillment of their professional skills, knowledge, and potential. Section 7 of the Mental Health Act ensures the right of mental health professionals which if effectively implemented will empower nurses, recognize contributions, provide opportunities for growth and increase their level of responsibility then it can enhance motivation and job satisfaction.

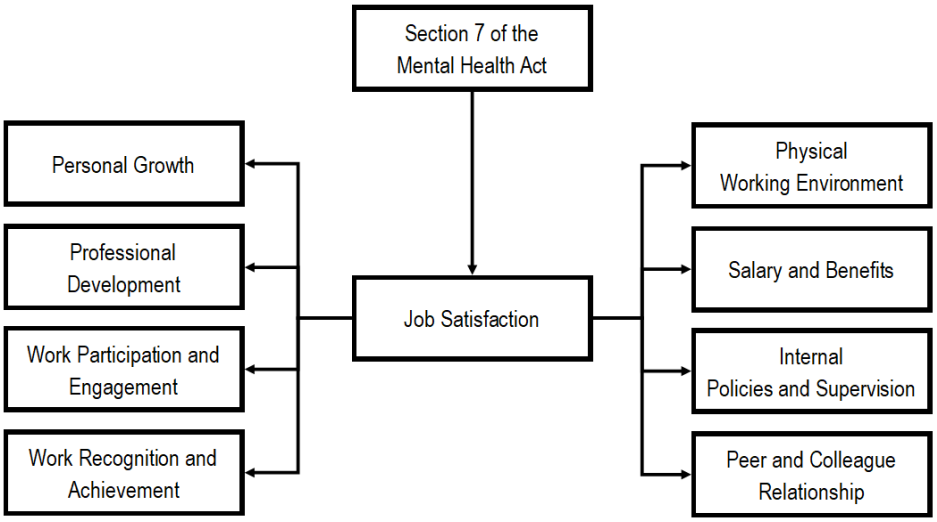
Therefore, by aligning Section 7 of the Mental Health Act to the principles of Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, the organization can address both the hygiene and motivational needs of the nursing personnel. This theoretical synthesis served as the philosophical basis for the study, asserting a policy is most effective when it treats its employee's

well-being, as both a functional necessity and the government's moral imperative, leading to greater job satisfaction and potentially informing effective policy recommendations for sustaining employee well-being.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework



In evaluating the effective implementation of a law in a specific government office, it shall be measured through the job satisfaction among its employees. By applying Frederick Herzberg's Two Factor Theory (**Nickerson & McLeod, 2023**), this study aims to evaluate Section 7 of the Mental Health Act to the job satisfaction among nursing personnel at NCMH as a basis for a proposed policy recommendation.

Personal growth, professional development, work participation and engagement, work recognition and achievement, physical working environment, salary and benefits, internal policies and supervision, and peer and colleague relationship may have an impact on the effective implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act as it covers the rights of the nursing personnel to "*a safe and supportive work environment; participate in a continuous professional development program; participate in the planning, development, and management of mental health services; and, contribute to the development and regular review of standards for evaluating mental health services provided to service users; and participate in the development of mental and health policy and service delivery guidelines*" (**Official Gazette, n.d.).**

Scope and Delimitations

This research will evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act to the job satisfaction among nursing personnel at NCMH. The focus will be on nurses, nursing attendants, and midwives employed at NCMH's main branch in Mandaluyong City. The effectiveness of the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act will be evaluated through the job satisfaction of nursing personnel in accordance with the rights of mental health professionals as stated in Section 7, Paragraphs A, B, C, D, and E of the Mental Health Act.

This study excludes other mental health institutions, NCMH's Camarin Extension, and non-nursing staff such as doctors and therapists. It will focus only on selected nursing personnel from NCMH's 1,392 staff as of August 2024. Broader economic impacts will not be covered. By concentrating on NCMH's nursing personnel, this study aims to provide insights for policymakers, healthcare administrators, and nursing professionals on how effective the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act is to the job satisfaction among nursing personnel at NCMH.

METHODS

Research Methods/Design

A mixed-method research design was used for this study to provide an in-depth context and comprehensive understanding of the effective implementation of Section 7 by integrating quantitative data with qualitative insights from the experiences of nursing personnel. The quantitative aspect of the study was focused on the measurable components of job satisfaction; this includes the level of awareness and the hygiene and motivation factors. Meanwhile, the qualitative component provided a deeper exploration of the personal experiences, perceptions and sentiments of the nursing personnel regarding their work environment following the enactment of the Mental Health Act.

The study used an explanatory-sequential design under the mixed-methods approach. The reason behind the use of this design is to first gather broad numeric data regarding the effectiveness of the Mental Health Act's implementation which will be followed up with in-depth qualitative data to explain or elaborate on the quantitative findings. As further explained by **Creswell & Plano Clark (2011)**, results of the quantitative data will provide a general picture of the research problem while the results of the qualitative data are needed to refine, extend or explain the general picture which the researchers aim to achieve in this study.

Population and Sample Scheme

The target population of this study consists of the nursing personnel employed at the National Center for Mental Health, the biggest mental health institution in the Philippines. This population is chosen for the reason of their exposure to the operational and administrative aspects of the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act, which focuses on the rights of mental health professionals. Nursing personnel are considered the frontliner providers in the mental health services in the institution and therefore have greater understanding and in-depth perspectives on how government policies, such as Section 7, impact their work environment, job satisfaction and overall morale. The experiences of the nursing personnel are central to evaluating the effectiveness of the policy in achieving the objectives of this study. The population will include Nursing Attendants I and II, Midwife I and II, and Nurse I to Nurse VII working across 33 pavilions of the NCMH. As of August 31, 2024 the institution employs 1,392 individuals in its nursing services division.

To determine the sample size, the study used Cochran formula to calculate the number of respondents needed. The Cochran formula is calculated as n=z2 x p x (1-p) over E2 where n is the sample size, Z is the Z-score or standard score, p is the proportion of the population, and E is the margin of error. This ensures that the sample size is large enough to yield reliable and accurate results, with a 95% confidence level which corresponds to a z-value of approximately 1.96, an estimated proportion of 0.5, and a 5% margin of error, the answer will be 384.16 as n. This will be then adjusted to finite population using the Cochran's finite population correction formula wherein n is 384.16 and N is 1,392, resulting in a sample size of 301 respondents.

The sampling method to be used in this study is stratified random sampling for quantitative approach. This technique is chosen to ensure that all subgroups within the nursing personnel such as nursing attendant, midwives, and nurses are represented in the sample. By dividing the nursing staff into these strata based on their job titles and responsibilities, the study ensures that the perspectives of nurses at different hierarchical levels are considered since job satisfaction levels may vary depending on one's role and position within the institution.

After the stratification process, random sampling was conducted within each stratum to select respondents. Purposive sampling was used for the qualitative approach of the study wherein this non-probability sampling technique enables the researcher to intentionally select participants who have in-depth knowledge or experience related to the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act. In this study, key informants such as nursing personnel who have been in service before the enactment and implementation of the Mental Health Act and had significantly impacted by the policy will be targeted. This ensures that the data collected is rich, relevant, and provides important insights into their perceptions, experiences, and the policy's effect on job satisfaction.

Description of the Respondents

This study was conducted at the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH) in Barangay Mauway, Mandaluyong City, that as of August 31, 2024 employed 1,392 nursing personnel. The respondents were comprised of Nursing Attendants I and II, Midwives I and II, and Nurses I, II, III, IV, V, VI, and VII. These wide range of roles provided a comprehensive view of the study's impact across different roles in frontline mental healthcare services. To ensure respondents are familiar with the institution's internal policies and strategies in accordance with Section 7 of the Mental Health Act, only those who have been employed at NCMH for at least one year will be included.

Instruments To Be Used

A combination of both quantitative and qualitative instruments were used in the study as it ensured a comprehensive evaluation of both the policy's effectiveness and its impact on job satisfaction among nursing personnel. The primary instrument for this study was a structured survey questionnaire designed to gather quantitative data from nursing personnel. The survey is divided into sections which are the demographic profile, awareness and understanding of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act, and effective implementation of Section 7, relationship between Section 7 and job satisfaction, and overall perception of the implementation with additional feedback. Cronbach's alpha will be calculated to assess the internal consistency of the scaled items to ensure the reliability of the survey instrument, with a score above 0.7 will indicate that the survey is reliable.

Lastly, interviews were conducted with selected nursing personnel at NCMH. These interviews were aimed to capture a in-depth perspective on the challenges and successes on implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act. The interviews are structured and guided by questions focused on the overall satisfaction and recommendations on the implementation of the policy; and, the responses from these individuals will provide valuable insights into the factors that influence policy's impact on job satisfaction.

Data Gathering Procedure

A structured survey questionnaire will be the main tool for gathering the data. The questionnaire will be designed to enable to capture the different dimensions of job satisfaction, such as compensation, work-life balance, professional growth, working conditions and the perceived impact of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act. The questions will be a mix of Likert scale items and multiple-choice questions for the quantitative data and open-ended questions

for the qualitative part of the questionnaire. Before distributing the survey to the target sample, the questionnaire will be pilot-tested within a small group of nursing personnel from NCMH. This step verifies the clarity and relevance of the questions, it also identifies any possible issues that need revision. Feedbacks from the pilot testing will be used to improve the survey instrument for the final data collection process. An official request for permission to conduct the research will be submitted to the management of the NCMH while informed consents will also be prepared, ensuring that participants are fully aware of the study's purpose and the confidentiality of their response.

In ensuring that all nursing personnel population at NCMH is adequately represented, a stratified random sampling method will be utilized as explained in the sampling scheme. The participants will be selected based on their roles such as nursing attendants, midwives and nurses to capture a wide range of perspectives on job satisfaction and the implementation of Section 7 once the sample size of approximately 301 nurses has been finalized. Once the sample has been identified and permissions have been granted, the survey questionnaire will be distributed to the selected nursing personnel. Survey questionnaires through Google Forms will be distributed face to face during the agreed data gathering time with the administration. This method ensured the respondents can conveniently participate and provided them a secure way to digitally collect and manage responses.

The survey will be administered anonymously to ensure confidentiality with no names nor personal identifiers will be provided by the participant and requested on the questionnaire, and guaranteeing that all responses will be stored securely. Participants will be priorly informed that their participation is voluntary and have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions. And, ensuring that individual responses cannot be traced back to specific participants, the results will be presented in a collected and summarize form. And, once the questionnaires are collected, the data will be reviewed for completeness and consistency and any incomplete or invalid responses will be excluded from the analysis.

An interview using purposive sampling will be implemented as well to further understand the satisfaction and recommendations of selected nursing personnel. The interview will be held during the agreed time with the respondents and is estimated to last for 2 to 3 hours for a target number of 4 to 6 interview respondents.

The data that was gathered will go through a statistical analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of Section 7 of Mental Health Act in relation to job satisfaction. While the qualitative responses that was gathered from the open-ended questions and interview sessions will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The said method will allow a deeper analysis of the participant's thoughts and experiences regarding the impact of the Mental Health Act on their working environment. After the data has been analyzed, the findings will be combined into a detailed report. A summary of the results will be shared to the participants and will also have the option to receive a copy of the results, if desired and upon request. The results of the study will also be used to formulate policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the implementation of Section 7 and improving the job satisfaction of nursing personnel.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers obtained informed consent from all respondents of the study. The survey questionnaire explained clearly the purpose of the study, how the data will be used, and the rights of the respondents. The respondents had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. Also, to ensure that the responses of participants are kept confidential and that their identities are protected. Data were collected and stored in a way that prevents the identification of individual participants that respects the privacy of the respondents.

The results of this study should be used to inform decisions and actions that can improve the overall welfare of nursing personnel of NCMH. The researchers should treat all participants fairly and without discrimination. The study should not discriminate against or stigmatize any particular group or individual. And, the researchers should be honest and accurate in reporting the findings and avoid misrepresentation of data.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Statistical Treatment of Data

Frequency and Descriptive Statistics was used to describe the effectiveness of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act in enforcing the rights of Nursing Personnel at NCMH. Frequency and Descriptive Statistics was used to describe the satisfaction level of the nursing personnel with their work and profession at NCMH in accordance with Section 7 of the Mental Health Act. Spearman Rank Correlation was used to examine the relationship between Section 7 of the Mental Health Act and the level of job satisfaction of the nursing personnel at NCMH.

Table 1

Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			**Shapiro-Wilk**		
	Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**
Awareness and Understanding of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act	.113	325	< 0.001	.938	325	< 0.001
Impact on Job Satisfaction - Hygiene and Motivation Factors	.098	325	< 0.001	.939	325	< 0.001
Relationship between Section 7 of the Mental Health Act and Job Satisfaction	.207	325	< 0.001	.891	325	< 0.001

Note. [a]Lilliefors Significance Correction

The Shapiro-Wilk test for normality indicates that the data for all three variables deviate significantly from a normal distribution, therefore do not follow a normal distribution. **The significance values (Sig.) are less than 0.001** in "***Awareness and Understanding of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act***", "***Impact on Job Satisfaction – Hygiene and Motivation Factors***", and "***Relationship between Section 7 of the Mental Health Act and Job Satisfaction***." As a result, nonparametric statistical tests are recommended for further analysis involving these variables to ensure accurate and reliable results.

Awareness and Understanding of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act

Table 2

The Effectiveness of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act in enforcing the Rights of Nursing Personnel at NCMH (Statement of the Problem 1)

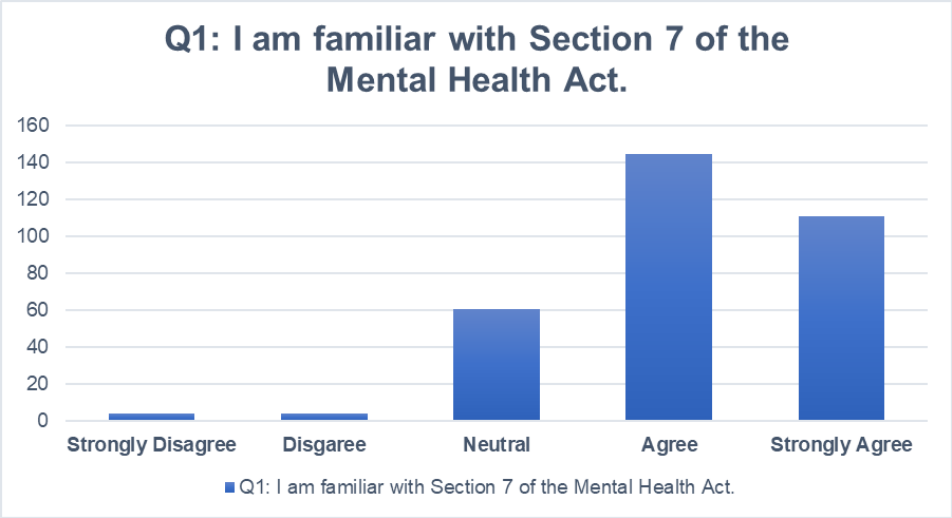
CC BY SA

		Q1: I am familiar with Section 7 of the Mental Health Act.	Q2a: I became aware of the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act through: Orientation or Training provided by NCMH.	Q2b: I became aware of the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act through: Hospital meetings or discussions.	Q2c: I became aware of the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act through: Self-directed Learning or Reading.	Q2d: I became aware of the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act through: Discussions with Colleagues.	Q3: I have a clear understanding of the objectives of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act.
N	Valid	325	325	325	325	325	325
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.0923	4.1323	4.0215	3.8092	3.8492	4.0185
Median		4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
Mode		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Std. Deviation		.82632	.82273	.85138	.95931	.94217	.79716

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for survey items related to the respondents' familiarity and awareness of the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act. In the table above it is seen that the respondents are aware and understand section 7 of the Mental Health Act and the implementation of the act in NCMH. The results appear to be similar in a study by **Fontanilla, et al. (2023)** that the employees from the International School of Asia and the Pacific show a significant level of knowledge about the Philippine Labor Code with the majority answering knowledgeable or very knowledgeable about the labor code implementation in their workplace as well.

Graph 1

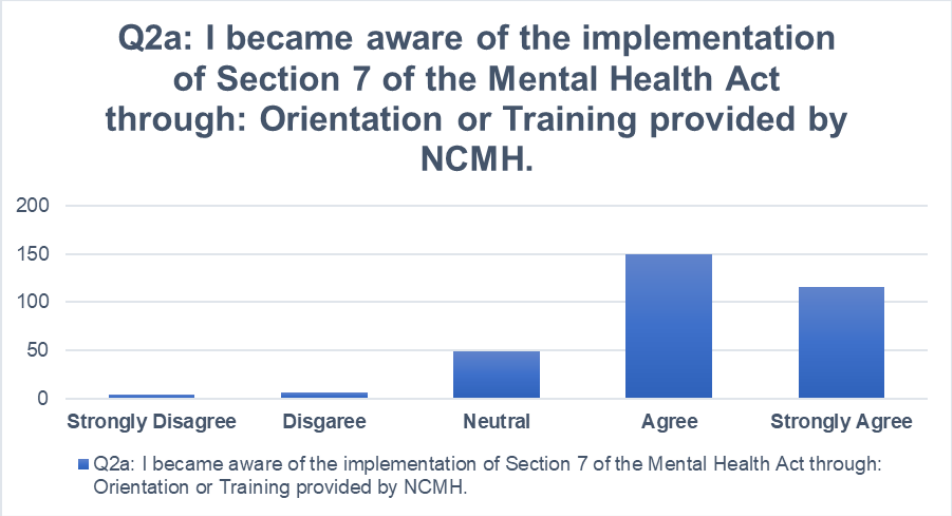
Familiarity with Section 7 of the Mental Health Act



Graph 1 illustrates the level of familiarity among nursing personnel with Section 7 of the Mental Health Act. **With a mean score of 4.0923**, majority of the respondents answered "***(approximately) agree***" at Question 1 "***I am familiar with Section 7 of the Mental Health Act.***" This result indicates that most respondents are familiar with Section 7, indicating a high level of awareness among nursing personnel. There is a notable number of respondents answered neutral, suggesting some level of uncertainty or incomplete understanding; and, only a small percentage selected disagree and strongly disagree, implying that very few nursing staff are unfamiliar with the policy. These findings highlights that the nursing personnel at NCMH are familiar with Section 7 of the Mental Health Act.

Graph 2

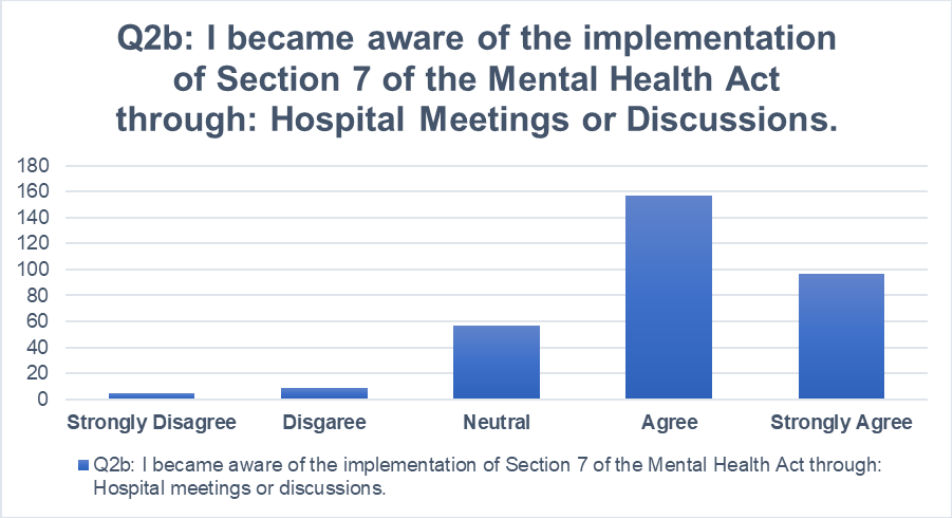
Awareness of the Implementation Section 7 of the Mental Health Act through Orientation or Training provided by NCMH



Graph 2 visualize the quantitative findings on the nursing personnel's awareness of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act, specifically through orientation or training provided by NCMH. **With a mean score of 4.1323**, majority of the respondents answered "***(approximately) agree***" at Question 2a "***I became aware of the implementation of Section 7 through Orientation or Training provided by NCMH***." These results exhibit that the majority of respondents aligned themselves agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, suggesting a high level of awareness. Moreover, a smaller number of respondents considered themselves as neutral, suggesting uncertainty with all the rights prescribed in the provision; while a very few strongly disagreed or disagreed, reflecting a minimal lack of awareness. These results suggest that orientation and training programs were effective in increasing knowledge and understanding of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act.

Graph 3

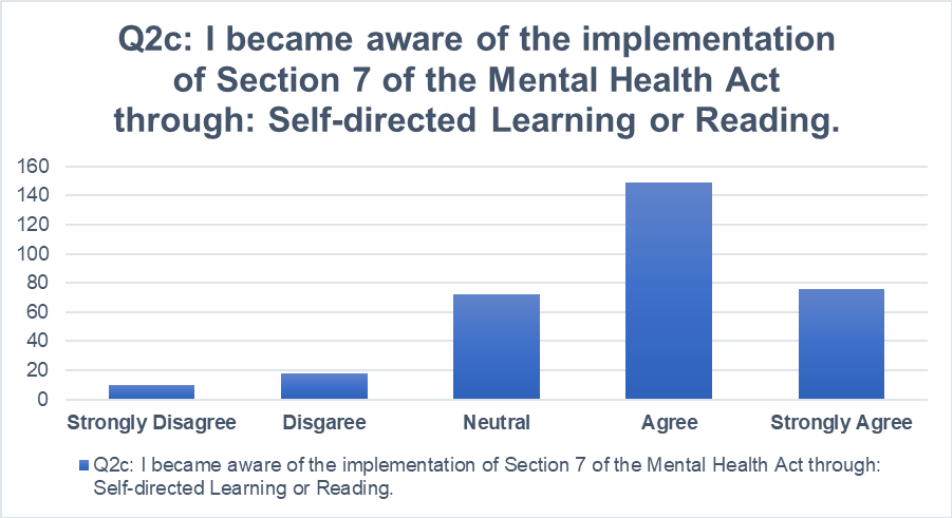
Awareness of the Implementation Section 7 of the Mental Health Act through Hospital meetings or discussions



With a mean score of 4.0215, majority of the respondents answered "***(approximately) agree***" at Question 2b "***I became aware of the implementation of Section 7 through Hospital Meetings or Discussions***." Graph 3 illustrates that hospital meetings and discussions played a significant role in raising awareness of their rights. It is noteworthy to point that there is a smaller group of respondents who considered themselves as neutral, reflecting no strong opinion; while a very few answered disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting minimal lack of awareness. The findings emphasize the importance of hospital-led discussions in effectively disseminating information about Section 7 of the Mental Health Act.

Graph 4

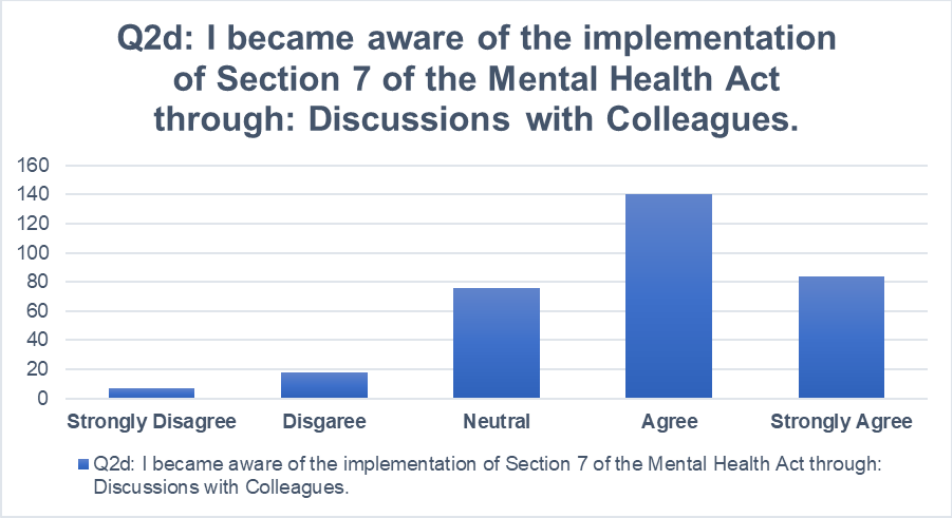
Awareness of the Implementation Section 7 of the Mental Health Act through Self-directed Learning or Reading



With a mean score is 3.8092, majority of the respondents answered "***(close to) agree***" at Question 2c "***I became aware of the implementation of Section 7 through Self-directed Learning or Reading***." Graph 4 indicates that self-directed efforts were effective for many in gaining awareness. Significantly, there are a handful number of respondents answered strongly agreed, emphasizing the impact of personal learning. On the other hand, there is a group of respondents who were neutral, reflecting no strong stance; while a few respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting limited reliance on or success from self-directed methods for awareness. Self-directed learning is essential for better understanding of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act.

Graph 5

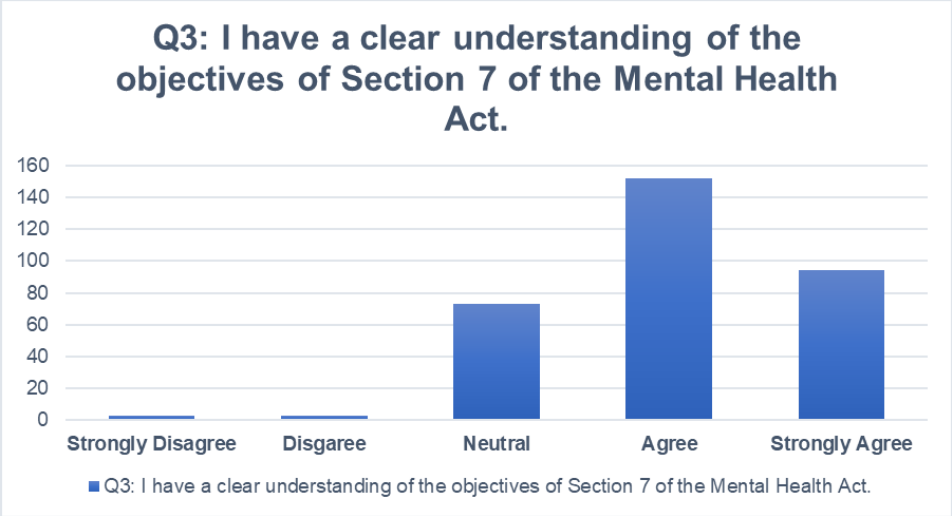
Awareness of the Implementation Section 7 of the Mental Health Act through Discussions with Colleagues



Graph 5 represents the level of awareness among nursing personnel at NCMH through discussions with colleagues about Section 7 of the Mental Health Act. **With a mean score of 3.8492**, majority of the respondents answered "***(closely to) agree***" at Question 2d "***I became aware of the implementation of Section 7 through Discussions with Colleagues***." This suggests that discussions with colleagues were also a significant source of awareness, followed by those who strongly agree. Meanwhile, a considerable number of respondents remain neutral and only a small percentage disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that very few did not perceive discussions with colleagues as a source of awareness. These findings suggest that workplace communication plays a significant role in informing nursing personnel about policy changes.

Graph 6

Level of Understanding of the objectives of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act through Self-directed Learning or Reading



Graph 6 interpreted the level of understanding among nursing personnel at NCMH through self-directed learning or reading of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act. **With a mean score of 4.0185**, majority of the respondents answered "***(approximately) agree***" at Question 3 "***I have a clear understanding of the objectives of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act***." This indicate that the respondents generally felt they had a clear understanding of the objectives. This was followed by those who strongly agreed. A notable number of participants remained neutral, indicating a lack of strong opinion or confidence in their understanding. Moreover, a very few respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting minimal uncertainty or lack of knowledge about the objectives. These findings highlighted the significant role of self-directed learning in policy awareness among nursing personnel and suggest that independent study can contribute significantly to understanding workplace policies.

Impact on Job Satisfaction - Hygiene and Motivation Factors

Table 3

The Relationship between Section 7 of the Mental Health Act and Job Satisfaction (Statement of the Problem 2)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Relationship between Section 7 of the Mental Health Act and Job Satisfaction	325	2.00	10.00	7.8831	1.57484
Valid N (listwise)	325				

Table 3 revealed the results of the satisfaction level of nursing personnel with their work and profession at the NCMH. The minimum and maximum scores are determined by combining the responses from Questions 14 and 15. With "***2.00***" being the minimum score from the respondents, it served as the basis for the 5-level of satisfaction by adding the standard deviation up to 9.85, rounded-up to 10.00.

Table 4

The Level of Job Satisfaction of the Nursing Personnel with their Work and Profession at NCMH in accordance with Section 7 of the Mental Health Act (Statement of the Problem 2)

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	**Very Satisfied (8.28 to 10.00)**	91	28.00%	28.00%	28.00%
	Satisfied (6.71 to 8.28)	165	50.77%	50.77%	50.77%
	Neutral (5.14 to 6.71)	55	16.92%	16.92%	16.92%
	Dissatisfied (3.57 to 5.14)	11	3.38%	3.38%	3.38%
	Very Dissatisfied (2.00 to 3.57)	3	0.92%	0.92%	0.92%
	TOTAL	**325**	**100.00%**	**100.00%**	

The results in Table 4 showed the satisfaction level of nursing personnel with their work and profession at NCMH. As previously shown in Table 3, a mean satisfaction score of 7.88, majority of the respondents are "***Satisfied***," reflecting a generally positive perception of their roles and the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act, with the analysis that they likely feel that their rights as professionals are being upheld and their working conditions are reasonably favorable.

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A smaller but a notable number respondents are "***Very Satisfied***" with their work suggesting that these individuals experience an even greater level of fulfillment in their work, possibly with the reason that there is a strong alignment between their expectations and the workplace environment, or additional support provided by the provisions of the Mental Health Act.

Moreover, there is a portion of respondents who identified themselves as "***Neutral***" with their satisfaction at work. This suggests that this group of respondents may not be entirely dissatisfied yet their experiences also do not have a positive satisfaction either. This group could represent the nursing personnel who perceive room for improvement in enforcing their rights or addressing certain workplace challenges.

Lastly, a very small percentage of respondents are on the "***Dissatisfied***" or "***Very Dissatisfied***" categories. These group of respondents may likely face challenges in their work environment, contributing to their negative perception of their work and professional satisfaction. This includes insufficient implementation of their rights or unmet expectations.

Relationship between Section 7 of the Mental Health Act and Job Satisfaction

Table 5

Relationship between Section 7 of the Mental Health Act and the Level of Job Satisfaction of the Nursing Personnel at NCMH (Statement of the Problem 3)

			Awareness and Understanding of Section 7 of Mental Health Act	**Impact on Job Satisfaction Total**
Spearman's rho	**Awareness and Understanding of Section 7 of Mental Health Act**	**Correlation Coefficient**	1.000	.723**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001
		N	325	325
	Impact on Job Satisfaction – Hygiene and Motivational Factors	**Correlation Coefficient**	.723**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.
		N	325	325

Note. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It was discovered through the Spearman's rank-order (nonparametric) correlation that **there is a significant positive correlation** between the "*Awareness and Understanding of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act*" and "*Impact on Job Satisfaction – Hygiene and Motivational Factors.*" **With a correlation coefficient of 0.723 and a p-value of < 0.001**, this suggests that higher levels of awareness and understanding of Section 7 are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction among the respondents. The strong correlation (above 0.70) signifies a substantial relationship

between the two variables, implying that in order to positively influence job satisfaction, there should be an enhancement on the awareness and understanding of Section 7.

As presented in the correlation table, it indicated a strong positive relationship between awareness and understanding of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act and job satisfaction among nursing personnel at the NCMH. This correlation is statistically significant at 0.01 level, suggesting that an increase awareness and understanding of the policy, so does in job satisfaction. Moreover, these findings were aligned with the previous study by Dela Rosa (2024) where a positive correlation was found between the company's initiatives and job satisfaction. Therefore, as observed in this study, the stronger the correlation suggests that policy awareness may have an even greater impact on job satisfaction than the awareness, emphasizing the important role of these kinds of policies in shaping employee perceptions and well-being.

These findings support the **rejection of the null hypothesis and reinforcing the applicability of Two Factor Theory by Frederick Herzberg (1959)**, which suggests that employees who received both hygiene and motivation factors perceived organizational efforts as supportive of their roles and well-being are more satisfied and committed to their work.

Basis for a Proposed Policy Recommendation

After the statistical treatment of the data, it was revealed that most of the respondents are familiar with Section 7 (*as shown in Graph 1*) and most of them became aware of the implementation of Section 7 through Orientation or Training provided by NCMH (*as shown in Graph 2*) and through Hospital Meetings or Discussions (*as shown in Graph 3*). Moreover, some of the respondents became aware through Self-directed Learning or Reading (*as shown in Graph 4*) and through Discussions with Colleagues (*as shown in Graph 5*). Furthermore, most of the respondents generally felt they had a clear understanding of the objectives of Section 7 (*as shown in Graph 6*) and most of the respondents also stated that they are satisfied with their work and profession at NCMH (*as shown in Table 4*). It was later revealed that there was a strong correlation between the awareness and understanding of Section 7 among nursing personnel at NCMH with their job satisfaction.

Despite this, a handful of respondents shared their insights on how their rights, physical and social working environment and benefits as nursing personnel were taken into account by the policy and supervision of the NCMH administration. The researchers have determined six key areas for improvement of the implementation of Section 7 of the Mental Health Act: *Clarity on "To have a safe and supportive working environment" provision; Inadequate Manpower and Unhealthy Workloads; Lack and Unsafe Infrastructure; Salaries, Benefits and Privileges, and Management Support; Professional Development;* and, *Communication and Feedback Channels.*

Based on the Key Informant Interviews, the data revealed that the nursing personnel are still confused on the meaning and coverage of Section 7, Paragraph A of the Mental Health Act. High nurse-to-patient ratio and doing physically demanding workloads—that sometimes that are out of the nursing personnel's job descriptions contributed due to the inadequate manpower and unhealthy workloads. The nursing personnels also pointed out the lack and unsafe infrastructure at NCMH; where some areas of the patient wards are blind spots from the nurse's station, improper drainage system in comfort rooms, inadequate working space for nursing personnel, and insufficient facilities to accommodate the increasing number of patients. Moreover, nursing personnel are found to be undermotivated due

to uncompetitive salaries compared to neighboring ASEAN countries, low benefits despite the workload, always on duty in times of calamities and national emergencies resulting from high tax deductions, and inadequate resting time of nursing personnel resulting to poor work-life balance. Improper scheduling of seminars resulting to some nursing personnel going back to NCMH to attend seminars even in their day-offs and some nursing personnel receive more training and seminar due to work specialization hindered the professional development of all nursing personnel. Furthermore, low staff participation in voicing their queries and concerns to higher officials prevents the efficient process of communication and feedback channels between the nursing personnel and the hospital administration.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, the researchers concluded that: **Firstly, Section 7 of the Mental Health Act is effective in enforcing the rights of the nursing personnel at NCMH.** The data highlighted that the nursing personnel at NCMH are familiar, aware, and understand the context and objectives of Section 7. The NCMH took necessary steps to effectively enforce the rights of the nursing personnel through orientations and trainings provided by the institution and hospital meetings or discussions. **Secondly, the nursing personnel are satisfied with their work and profession at NCMH in accordance with Section 7 of the Mental Health Act.** Nursing personnel are relatively satisfied with their work and profession at NCMH as their rights as professionals are being upheld in the institution and their working conditions are reasonably favorable. Moreover, it also emphasizes that there should be room for improvement in enforcing their rights and addressing certain workplace challenges – including manpower and infrastructure. **Lastly, there is a significant relationship between Section 7 of the Mental Health Act and the level of job satisfaction of the nursing personnel at NCMH.** The data proved that effective implementation of Section 7 affects the level of job satisfaction and overall professional experience of the nursing personnel at NCMH. The strong correlation between Section 7 of the Mental Health Act and the level of job satisfaction of the nursing personnel at NCMH suggested that efforts to increase the awareness level and understanding of Section 7 positively influence job satisfaction. **Furthermore, the researchers proposed six policy recommendations to improve the level of job satisfaction of the nursing personnel at NCMH while safeguarding their rights as professionals.**

Clarity on "*to have a safe and supportive working environment*" provision.

The rights of nurses are the fundamental foundation that recognize the importance of nurses and their roles in the lives of many Filipinos. According to the Republic Act No. 7305, also known as the Magna Carta of Public Health Workers, became the foundation for nursing personnel to be protected with their rights in public hospitals **(Supreme Court E-Library, n.d.)**. Therefore, **to have clarity on "*to have a safe and supportive working environment*" provision**, the DOH should make a memorandum defining and outlining the scope and delimitations of Section 7, Paragraph A of the Mental Health Act and the NCMH should make a memorandum or order outlining the specific actions of the institution on the enforcement of Section 7, Paragraph A of the Mental Health Act.

Inadequate Manpower and Unhealthy Workloads

In Chapter 4 of the report made by the **Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2017)**, also known as OECD, one of the dimensions of the quality of the working environment are the physical and social environment and job tasks. Physical and social environment includes determining the physical risk factors,

physical work demands, intimidation and discrimination at the workplace and social support at work. As proven by **Phillips et al. (2021)**, it also emphasized that adequate nurse to patient ratios can improve safety and quality of care. **To resolve the inadequate manpower and unhealthy workloads**, the NCMH should strictly enforce the DOH's standard of the 1:12 nurse-to-patient ratio; hire more staff nurses, nursing attendants, and midwives to counterbalance the existing workload; propose to the DOH additional funding to cover the salaries and benefits of newly hired nursing personnel; should regularly monitor the distribution of workload among nursing personnel; and, the NCMH should make a memorandum or order to reorganize and decentralize the work of the administrative staff and personnel to do non-patient care responsibilities that are currently shouldered by the nursing personnel.

Lack and Unsafe Infrastructure

The physical working environment is the pavilions or buildings that the nurses are employed in and perform their responsibilities; that it includes the layout of the buildings, the equipment, design and condition of their workplace. This is part of the protection of the nurses for a safe building to work in and also provide complete equipment and technology to assist the nurses in patient care. As provided in Chapter 4 of the report made by the **Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2017)**, one of the dimensions of the quality of the working environment are the physical and social environment and job tasks. Physical and social environment includes determining the physical risk factors, physical work demands, intimidation and discrimination at the workplace and social support at work. **With the lack and unsafe infrastructure**, the NCMH should prioritize, through its Bids and Awards Committee, the items directed to improving the infrastructure and building additional facilities that addresses both patient and nurse safety and well-being; and, Congress should grant proposals of the DOH for NCMH to increase its budget allocation for proper and stable government funding to improve the infrastructure and to increase the number of facilities.

Salaries, Benefits and Privileges, and Management Support

Equal pay between local and national government workers ensures fair compensation **(Phillips et al., 2021)**. This study highlights the importance of several key benefits in nursing practice, including equal salary distribution, and employee benefits impact both the workload and safety of the nursing personnel as well as patient outcomes. Additional benefits such as overtime pay, hazard allowances, and remote assignment allowances further protect and support nursing personnel and ensuring a supportive work environment. **In an effort to increase the salaries, benefits and privileges, and strengthen management support**, Congress should take into consideration the pending House and Senate Bills on increasing the salary grades of nurses; the DOH should propose to Congress to increase the benefits and privileges currently enjoyed by the nursing personnel; the NCMH, together with DOH and in coordination with the Bureau of Internal Revenue, should review the tax policies affecting the salary and benefits of the nursing personnel; and, the NCMH should re-adopt its 12-hour shifts for its nursing personnel to give them enough days to recharge before a new week of responsibilities.

Professional Development

According to **Inayat et al. (2023)**, fostering this participation requires targeted strategies, such as introducing educational initiatives at the grassroots level, empowering nurses at the managerial level and enhancing the societal perception of the nursing profession. **With the purpose to effectively implement the professional development programs**, the NCMH should adopt a system that monitors the schedule of seminars and trainings that

are aligned to the schedule of nursing personnel for not to disrupt their personal lives; and the NCMH, alongside with DOH, should provide specialized trainings and seminars to non-specialized nursing personnel for their continuous professional development.

Communication and Feedback Channels

The World Health Organization (2021) emphasized in their report the significant role of nurses in shaping healthcare policies, for which it advocates for increased nursing participation in decision making to meet evolving healthcare goals. These measures are not only encouraging nurses to contribute to policy discussions at institutional and national levels but also strengthen the nursing profession and the overall healthcare system, resulting in policies that prioritize both nursing perspectives and patient centered care, as supported by Hassmiller (2013). That, to reinforce the existing communication and feedback channels, the NCMH should appoint administrative staffs in all pavilions to provide additional management-level personnel for nursing personnel to address and communicate their queries and concerns to higher officials; and the NCMH, through its Executive Committee, should conduct quarterly meetings with all Head of Pavilions to directly address the concerns of each and every pavilion to expedite the decision-making process.

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