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REVIEWER'S REPORT

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Date: 20/02/2025

Title: "The Use of Physical Restraints in Critical Care Units: Physicians' and Nurses' Perspectives and Ethical Considerations"

Recommendation:

- ✓ Accept as it is
- Accept after minor revision.....
- Accept after major revision
- Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity		✓		
Significance	✓			

Reviewer Name: Dr. S. K. Nath

Date: 21/02/2025

Reviewer's Comment for Publication.

This paper is well-structured research with a relevant and ethically significant focus. Strong methodology and thorough data analysis provide valuable insights. Practical recommendations are applicable for improving ICU practices and patient care ethics. Requires language and grammar refinements for better readability. Clearer articulation of research hypothesis and study limitations is needed. Could benefit from enhanced visual data representation and deeper analysis of psychological and cultural factors.

Reviewer's Comment / Report

Strengths of the Paper:

1. **Timely and Relevant Research Focus:** The paper addresses an important and ethically sensitive topic: the use of physical restraints (PR) in critical care units (ICUs). The study highlights the complex ethical, psychological, and clinical implications of restraint use, especially in settings with limited alternatives and high patient risk.
2. **Clear Research Objectives and Methodology:** The paper clearly outlines its objective to analyze healthcare professionals' perceptions, justifications, observed complications, and ethical dilemmas related to physical restraints. A mixed-methods approach combining questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and observational data provides a comprehensive perspective on the issue. The sample size (100 healthcare professionals from two Moroccan university hospitals) adds validity to the findings.
3. **Thorough Data Analysis and Results Presentation:** The paper presents clear and well-structured results, dividing findings into categories:
 - Criteria for using restraints
 - Training and knowledge gaps
 - Complications (physical, psychological, and clinical risks)
 - Ethical and legal considerations
 - Family communication issues
 - Inclusion of real-life examples and case studies adds depth to the analysis.

4. **Ethical Considerations and Legal Framework:** The study effectively explores the ethical dilemmas surrounding the use of restraints, such as patient autonomy, dignity, and informed consent. Highlights the

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lack of formal training and legal frameworks regulating PR use in Morocco, which contributes to over-reliance on restraints.

5. Global Perspective and Literature Comparison: The paper compares findings with international research from the U.S., South Korea, and Scandinavian countries, providing a global context. The discussion on international best practices (such as mandatory training and alternative interventions) is highly informative and relevant.

6. Practical Recommendations for Improvement: The authors suggest actionable solutions, including:

- Mandatory training programs on ethical restraint use and alternative de-escalation strategies
- Policy reform to regulate PR use with clear guidelines
- Increased adoption of alternative methods such as sensory modulation therapy and mild sedation
- Enhanced communication with patients' families to reduce distress and improve acceptance

Areas for Improvement:

1. Language and Grammar Refinement: The manuscript contains grammatical errors, awkward phrasing, and occasional typos that hinder readability.

Example: *“Physical restraint is defined as any method, device, or material designed to limit a patient’s movement to prevent harm to themselves or others.”*

Correction: *“Physical restraint refers to any method, device, or material used to restrict a patient’s movement to prevent harm to themselves or others.”*

Recommendation: A thorough language review and professional editing are necessary for improved clarity and flow.

2. Hypothesis and Research Questions Not Clearly Stated: While the paper outlines its objectives, a clear **research hypothesis** is missing.

Suggestion: Add a statement such as: *“This study hypothesizes that healthcare providers’ reliance on physical restraints is influenced by insufficient training, lack of alternatives, and ethical dilemmas.”*

3. Sample Representation and Limitations: The paper lacks a detailed discussion of the sample demographics (age, years of experience, specialization). The study also does not acknowledge limitations such as:

- Single-country data limiting generalizability
- Potential response bias from self-reported data

Suggestion: Add a section discussing the study’s limitations and suggest future research directions.

4. Data Visualization and Formatting: The paper could benefit from clearer visual aids such as graphs, tables, and charts to present data trends effectively. Some figures (e.g., Figure 3 and Figure 5) lack proper captions and detailed explanations.

Suggestion: Include well-labeled charts summarizing key findings, such as percentages of healthcare professionals reporting specific complications.

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5. In-depth Exploration of Psychological Effects: The study briefly mentions psychological complications but does not delve deeply into the long-term psychological impact on patients and caregivers.

Suggestion: Expand on the mental health implications and include references to studies on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and patient anxiety linked to PR use.

6. Discussion on Cultural and Institutional Factors: While the study focuses on Morocco, the impact of cultural attitudes toward patient autonomy and authority in healthcare is not thoroughly explored.

Suggestion: Provide a deeper discussion of how cultural and institutional factors influence the frequency and acceptance of PR use.