



Knowledge regarding ethical and legal issues in nursing among staff nurses - A cross-sectional survey

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ABSTRACT

Nurses deal with the most fundamental human events like birth, death and suffering, they encounter many legal issues surrounding these sensitive areas. "A study on knowledge regarding ethical and legal issues nursing among staff nurses"

The objectives of the study were to; (i) assess the level of knowledge of staff nurses regarding ethical and legal issues in nursing. (ii) determine the association between knowledge regarding ethical and legal issues and selected variables. The researcher used a quantitative approach and non experimental descriptive design. Ninety staff nurses were selected using simple random sampling. The data was collected by using structured knowledge questionnaire. The major findings of the study were: (i) the data showed that majority of staff nurses i.e. 48.9% (n=90) were belongs to 20-25 yrs of age, 87.8% were females, 65.6% were acquired BSc nursing, 60% had <3 year experience and 38.9% has experienced in general ward. (ii) The level of knowledge of staff nurses regarding ethical and legal issues in nursing showed that majority 41 (45.6%) had above average knowledge, whereas 27 (30.0%) had below average knowledge. (iii) Chi-Square test showed that there is no significant association between knowledge level of staff nurses and the demographic variables.

KEYWORDS : knowledge, ethical, legal, staff nurses, descriptive study

1. Introduction

Safe nursing practice includes an understanding of legal boundaries within which nurses must function. As well all aspect of nursing today involve an understanding of the implication of the law supports and critical thinking on the nurse's part. Nurses must understand the law to protect them from liability to protect their client's right. Nurses need not fear the law be rather should view the information that follows as the foundation for understanding what is expected by our society from professional nursing care provider. Nurses familiarity with the laws enhance the ability to be client advocates.

The advances in medicine and a more demanding healthcare environment have given rise to various complex ethical issues. Together, they have caused increasing pressure to healthcare professionals, of which nurses are of no exception. A survey by the American Nurses Association (ANA) Center for Ethics and Human Rights at the ANA Convention in 1994 reported that as high as 79% of their members were confronted with ethical issues on daily to weekly basis.

To provide quality care and avoid liability, the nurse needs to be familiar with various consumer rights in health care system. It is vital to know the laws protecting the patient and the health care deliverer in this regard and also to be aware of the legal status as registered nurses. The most vulnerable group of nurses to meet the legal issues frequently are those working at intensive care unit, emergency department and at community field, where the patients' health decisions are taken by the patient himself or spouse or guardian. Hence, nurses need more critical thinking and judgment skill to handle the situations which calls for more judicial knowledge

1.1 Statement of the problem

A study on knowledge regarding ethical and legal issues nursing among staff nurses

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study are to;

- assess the level of knowledge of staff nurses regarding ethical and legal issues in nursing.
- determine the association between knowledge regarding ethical and legal issues and selected variables.

1.3 Hypothesis

H₁ - There will be a significant association between knowledge and demographic factors.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research design

In this study the researcher used a quantitative approach and non experimental descriptive design. The setting of the study was Sree Gokulam Medical College and Hospital, Venjaramoodu Trivandrum. The population of the study was registered nurses who are working in hospital. Subjects were staff nurses who are working in the hospital and those who satisfy the inclusion criteria. Sample size was 90 staff nurses who are working in selected hospital.

2.2 Tools and Technique

The tool consists of following section.

2.2.1 Section 1: Demographic Performa

The tool consisted of total 5 items such as age, gender, professional qualification, Clinical experience (yrs) and area of practice.

2.2 Section 2: Structured knowledge questionnaire

It consist of 20 items, all the items were multiple choice questions. Each question has 4 optional answers and score of 1 was allotted for each correct answer.

2.3 Data collection process

To conduct research study in selected hospital formal permission was obtained from the hospital authority and the ethical committee.

The investigators introduced themselves to the subjects, topic was explained to them and confidentiality was assured. An informed consent was taken from all subjects individually after explaining the objectives and purpose of the study. After obtaining permission from the subjects, socio-demographic Performa & structured knowledge questionnaire were administered and data were collected. The overall experience was good.

Results

3.1 Section - 1: Description of sample characteristics

The major findings of the study were: the data showed that majority of staff nurses i.e. 48.9% (n=90) were belongs to 20-25 yrs of age, 41.1% belongs to 26-30yrs of age and the least 10% were 31-35 yrs of age. The data revealed that most of the staff nurses i.e. 87.8% were females and remaining 12.2% were males. The data showed that majority 65.6% were acquired BSc nursing, remaining 34.4% were completed GNM and none of them had PBBSC or MSc qualification. The data showed that majority 60% had <3 year experience, 34.4% had 4-6years, 4.5% had 7-9yrs and the least 1.1% had >10yrs of experience. The data showed that majority 38.9% has experienced in gener-

al ward, 26.7% from ICU, 18.9% have emergency unit experience and the least 15.6% had OT experience.

3.2 Distribution of knowledge score of staff nurses

Score range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent (16-20)	16	18
Good (11-15)	47	52
Average (6-10)	27	30
Poor (≤ 5)	00	00
Total	90	100

Table 1: Distribution of knowledge score of staff nurses regarding ethical and legal issues in nursing

The level of knowledge of staff nurses regarding ethical and legal issues in nursing showed that majority 41 (45.6%) had above average knowledge, whereas 27 (30.0%) had below average knowledge, followed by 19 (21.1%) had good knowledge and the least 3 (3.3%) had excellent knowledge.

3.3 Section-3: Association between level of knowledge and selected socio demographic variables.

Sl. No	Demographic variables	Median (<11)	Median (≥ 11)	χ^2	df	p-Value	Inference
1	Age						
	20-25yrs	25	19				
	26-30yrs/ >30yrs	17	29	3.564	1	0.059	NS
2	Gender						
	Male	6	5	0.313	1	0.576	NS
	Female	36	43				
3	Professional qualification						
	GNM	16	15	0.465	1	0.495	NS
	BSc	26	33				
4.	Clinical experience (yrs)						
	≤ 3 yrs	28	26				
	4-6yrs/ >6yrs	14	22	1.458	1	0.227	NS
5.	Area of practice						
	ICU	11	13				
	Emergency unit	4	13	5.269	3	0.153	NS
	Ward	20	15				
	OT	7	7				

Table 2: Association between knowledge of staff nurses regarding ethical and legal issues in nursing and demographic factors

Chi-Square test showed that there is no significant association between knowledge level of staff nurses and the demographic variables like age, gender, professional qualification, clinical experience and area of practice.

4. Discussion

In the present study majority of staff nurses i.e. 48.9% (n=90) were belongs to 20-25 yrs of age, 87.8% were females, 65.6% were acquired BSc nursing, 60% had <3 year experience and 38.9% has experienced in general ward. The level of knowledge of staff nurses regarding ethical and legal issues in nursing showed that majority 41 (45.6%) had above average knowledge, whereas 27 (30.0%) had below average knowledge. Chi-Square test showed that there is no significant association between knowledge level of staff nurses and the demographic variables.

A study was conducted in G.T.B.S Hospital, Ludhiana and which showed that maximum 56% had average knowledge, followed by 42% good knowledge and least 2% of staff nurses had below average knowledge and which showed that there was no significant association between nurses' knowledge and age, gender, duration of clinical experience and in service education.

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