

Original Research Article

## To Assess the Knowledge and Attitude of Nurses Regarding Legal Responsibilities towards Patient Care at Selected Hospital, Bangalore

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### ABSTRACT

Legal responsibility in nursing practice is the way in which the nurses are obligated to obey the law in professional activities. The objective of the present study is: to assess the level of knowledge of nurses regarding legal responsibilities towards patient care, to assess the attitude of nurses regarding legal responsibilities towards patient care, to find correlation between knowledge and attitude of nurses regarding legal responsibilities towards patient care, to find association between the knowledge of nurses regarding legal responsibilities towards patient care with socio-demographic variables, to find association between the attitude of nurses regarding legal responsibilities towards patient care with socio-demographic variables. The study was conducted in tertiary care hospital in Bangalore. The structured Knowledge Questionnaire with 30 questions was used to assess knowledge and likert scale with 10 statements was used to assess attitude on legal responsibilities of staff nurses on patient care. The findings of this study revealed that 33.33% (10) nurses have adequate knowledge and 66.67% (20) have good knowledge on legal responsibilities towards patient care. It also showed that 70% (21) of nurses have moderately favourable attitude and 30% (9) have highly favourable attitude on legal responsibilities towards patient care. There is moderate positive correlation ( $r=0.452$ ) between knowledge and attitude of nurses towards legal responsibilities of patient care at  $p<0.05$  (by using karl pearson correlation coefficient). There is no statistical significant association between the selected variables with knowledge and attitude of nurses. The finding of the present study reveals that most of the nurses have adequate knowledge and favourable attitude on legal responsibilities towards patient care.

**Keywords:** Knowledge and attitude of nurses, legal responsibilities, patient care.

### INTRODUCTION

Nursing is an integral part of the health care system and nurse's direct energies towards the promotion, maintenance and restoration of health. [1] Regardless of the health care setting, professional nurses are morally, ethically, and legally accountable for their nursing judgments and actions. [2] Legal responsibilities of nurses are guided by constitutional laws, professional laws, institutional policies, rules and regulations,

standing orders and precedents. Nurses have to abide by laws and regulations when practicing nursing. Safe nursing practice includes an understanding of the legal boundaries within which nurses must function. [3] Nurses are practicing in an increasingly litigious environment & the law of negligence cannot be ignored. If a patient dies as a result of nurse administering the wrong drug under the orders of a doctor, the nurse could be liable for civil action since he/ she failed to deliver

a reasonable standard of care expected of a nurse. Such nurses could also face disciplinary proceedings before the nursing council. [4] The errors that are being committed by the nurses are increasing especially medication errors. A study conducted in a busy pediatric ward in New Delhi found that the medication error rate was 1 per 15.5 admissions (64%). [5]

Only the nurses will be able to protect themselves, nursing staffs and nursing faculty from legal risk. Legal responsibility in nursing practice is becoming of greater importance as each year passes. [6] Changes have occurred over the past decade in legal responsibilities of nurses. These reforms have led to attitude changes toward nurses by the legal, medical, and public realms. To avoid legal charges of negligence, nurses must keep abreast of the rapidly changing areas of instrumentation, documentation, and patient care. [7] As staff nurses are providing comprehensive care to patients, they should have knowledge regarding legal terms, legal liability, legal responsibilities and basic rights in nursing; it would result in delivery of safe and competent care to the client. [8]

#### **Objectives of the study**

1. To assess the level of knowledge of nurses regarding legal responsibilities towards patient care.
2. To assess the attitude of nurses regarding legal responsibilities towards patient care.
3. To find correlation between knowledge and attitude of nurses regarding legal responsibilities towards patient care.
4. To find association between the knowledge of nurses regarding legal responsibilities towards patient care with socio-demographic variables.
5. To find association between the attitudes of nurses regarding legal responsibilities towards patient care with socio-demographic variables.

#### **Hypotheses of the study**

All hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance

- **H<sub>1</sub>**-There is a significant correlation between the knowledge and attitude among the nurses.
- **H<sub>2</sub>**-There is a significant association between the knowledge and their selected baseline variables.
- **H<sub>3</sub>**-There is a significant association between attitude and their selected baseline variables.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A quantitative research approach, non experimental research design, descriptive design was adopted for the present study. Present study was conducted in selected tertiary care hospital at Bangalore. The study was approved by Institution Ethics Committee and Informed Consent was obtained from eligible staffs. A total sample size of 30 was selected on the basis of inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria.

#### **Inclusion criteria**

- Registered nurses GNM, B.sc, PcB.sc who are working in clinical areas.
- Nurses who are willing to participate.

#### **Exclusion criteria**

- Registered nurses who have less than 6 months of experiences
- Nurses who have attended any in service education regarding legal responsibilities in last 6 months

#### **Description of tool**

**TOOL:** Tools used for data collection by the investigator consist of 3 sections namely.

**Part 1:** Socio demographic variables

**Part 2:** A questionnaire to assess the knowledge of nurses on legal responsibilities.

**Part 3:** Likert scale to assess the attitude of nurses on legal responsibilities.

**Part 1:** Demographic variables of nurses includes age, sex, religion, marital status, educational status, years of experience

**Part 2:** This consisted of 30 objective type questionnaires prepared by the researchers to assess the knowledge of nurses regarding legal responsibilities towards patient care.

Content validity of the questionnaire was given by the experts.

**Part 3:** This consists of 10 statements of which 5 are positive and 5 are negative statements to assess attitude of nurses towards legal responsibilities for patient care.

### Study procedure

- Permission was obtained from concerned authority of hospital management.
- Informed consent was taken from the nurses.
- The registered nurse who met the inclusion criteria were selected by using random sampling technique.
- Data was collected using the tools of the study.
- The obtained data were subjected for statistical analysis.

### Statistical methods:

The data collected was analyzed by means of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Significance is assessed at the 5% level of significance.

### Descriptive statistics:

- Frequency, mean and standard deviation are used to assess the demographic data, knowledge and attitude.

### Inferential statistics:

- Correlation between the knowledge and attitude of staff nurses using chi square
- Association of knowledge with their selected demographic variables by using chi-square.

- Association of attitude with their selected demographic variables by using chi-square.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of staff nurses according to their demographic characteristics N= 30**

S. no	Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	<b>Age</b>		
	a) < 30 years	22	73.3
	b) > 30 years	8	26.7
2.	<b>Gender</b>		
	a) Male	4	13.3
	b) Female	26	86.7
3.	<b>Religion</b>		
	a) Hindu	17	56.7
	b) Christian	9	30
	c) Others	4	13.3
4.	<b>Marital status</b>		
	a) Unmarried	24	80
	b) Married	6	20
5.	<b>Educational status</b>		
	a) GNM	8	26.7
	b) BSc Nursing	19	63.3
	c) PC Bsc Nursing	3	10
6.	<b>Duration of clinical experience</b>		
	a) < 2 years	12	40
	b) 2-5 years	16	53.3
	c) > 5 years	2	6.7
7.	<b>Area of working</b>		
	a) ICU	16	53.3
	b) Ward	14	46.7

**Table 2: Correlation between knowledge and attitude of nurses; N= 30**

KNOWLEDGE	ATTITUDE
	Pearson Correlation 0.452

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. Strength of association is moderate (0.3 -0.5). Hence, H<sub>1</sub> there is a significant correlation between the knowledge and attitude among the nurses is accepted at 0.05 level of significance.

**Table 3: Association between the level of knowledge of nurses regarding legal responsibilities and their selected demographic variable N = 30**

Sl. No.	Demographic variables	Knowledge levels		Df	Chi-square value	Inference
		10-20 adequate	21-30 good			
1	<b>Age</b>					
	a) < 20 years	9	13	1	2.13	>0.05
	b) > 30 years	1	7			NS
2	<b>Gender</b>					
	a) Male	-	4	1	2.30	>0.05
	b) Female	10	16			NS
3.	<b>Marital status</b>					
	a) Married	10	14	1	3.75	>0.05
	b) Unmarried	-	6			NS
4.	<b>Religion</b>					
	a) Hindu	7	10	2	1.09	>0.05 NS
	b) Christian	2	7			
	c) Others	1	3			

Continued Table No. 3						
5.	<b>Educational status</b>					
	a) GNM	2	6			
	b) BSc	7	12	2	.355	-
6.	<b>Duration of clinical experience</b>					
	a) < 2 years	7	5			
	b) 2- 5 years	3	13	14	-	-
7.	<b>Area of working</b>					
	a) ICU	4	12	-	1.07	-
	b) Ward	6	8			

\* Some cells have expected count less than 5 so could not find chi-square value

Table 4: Association between attitude of nurses regarding legal responsibilities and their selected demographic variable N = 30

Sl. No.	Demographic variables	Attitude		Df	Chi-square value	Inference
		31-40 Moderately Favourable attitude	41-50 Highly Favourable attitude			
1	<b>Age</b>					
	a) < 20 years	16	6	1	.29	>0.05
	b) > 30 years	5	3			NS
2	<b>Gender</b>					
	a) Male	4	-	1	1.97	>0.05
	b) female	17	9			NS
3.	<b>Marital status</b>					
	a) Married	16	5	1	.635	>0.05
	b) Unmarried	8	1			NS
4.	<b>Religion</b>					
	a) Hindu	12	5			>0.05
	b) Christian	5	4	2	2.61	NS
	c) others	4	-			
5.	<b>Educational status</b>					
	a) GNM	7	1			
	b) BSc	13	6	2	3.11	
	c) PC Bsc	1	2			
6.	<b>Duration of clinical experience</b>					
	a) < 2 years	10	2			
	b) 2- 5 years	10	6	-	-	
	c) > 5 years	2	-			
7.	<b>Area of working</b>					
	a) ICU	11	5	-	-	
	b) Ward	11	3			

\* Some cells have expected count less than 5 so could not find chi-square value

Data presented in the table 3, 4 depicts that there is no statistical significant association between the selected variables with knowledge and attitude of nurses. Since there is no association of selected variables with knowledge and attitude of nurses H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub> was rejected and null hypothesis was accepted.

## DISCUSSION

Nurses who fit the inclusion criteria were selected for the study using random sampling technique. The data was collected from 30 staff nurses. It is noted that the 33.33% (10) nurses have adequate knowledge and 66.67% (20) have good knowledge on legal responsibilities towards patient care. This indicates that the majority of the staff nurses are having good knowledge on legal responsibilities of

patient care and none of the nurses are having excellent or poor knowledge.

It is noted that 70% (21) of nurses have moderately favourable attitude and 30% (9) have highly favourable attitude towards legal responsibilities towards patient care.

This indicates that the majority of the staff nurses have moderately favourable attitude towards legal responsibility of nurses towards patient care and none of them are having unfavourable attitude towards legal responsibilities towards patient care.

Correlation was significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Strength of association was moderate (0.3-0.5). There was no statistical significant association between the selected variables with knowledge and attitude of nurses.

## **NURSING IMPLICATION**

The results of this study have implication on nursing practice, nursing administration, nursing education and nursing research.

### **Nursing practice**

The study findings showed there is need to improve knowledge and attitude in legal responsibility towards patient care among staff nurses, these areas can be focused for giving in service education for nurses.

The staff nurses can implement their knowledge on legal responsibilities towards patient care.

### **Nursing administrators**

Nursing administrators should take initiative in conducting in service education on legal responsibilities towards patient care for improving knowledge and attitude of staff nurses.

Nurse administrator can also use the study tool for effective performance appraisal.

### **Nursing research**

The findings of the present study can be utilized by the nurse researchers in the future to conduct extensive studies to assess the knowledge and attitude of staff nurses on legal responsibilities towards patient care.

Based upon the study findings, the nurse researcher can conduct workshops, seminars and presentations to communicate the finding to the nursing professional.

### **Nursing education**

The continuing nursing education programs regarding legal responsibilities of patient care can be organized in coordination with the authorities of the nursing service.

The nurse educators can make use of planned teaching program and self

instructional module to orient their newly joined staff nurses.

## **CONCLUSION**

Study revealed that the nurses have adequate to good knowledge on legal responsibilities towards patient care. It also showed that nurses have moderately favourable to highly favourable attitude on legal responsibilities towards patient care. There is need to improve knowledge and attitude in legal responsibility towards patient care among staff nurses, these areas can be focused for giving in service education for nurses.

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