A Descriptive Study to Assess the Knowledge, Attitude and Expressed Practices Regarding Legal and Ethical Responsibilities Among Staff Nurses Working in Selected Hospitals of Ambala, Haryana

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Abstract- Nurses are one of the largest professionals working in the health care system. Nursing ethics refers to the ethical standards that governs and guide nurses in every day practice such as "being truthful with client" "Respecting client confidentiality" And "advocating on behalf of the client. Legal aspects is defined as the activity of the nurse that legally permitted while taking care of the sick patient. The knowledge of legal and ethical responsibilities is integral with the expanding clinical role and logical application of the planned, systematic and focused care, which should be the goal of Modern Nursing. Objectives of the study is to assess the knowledge, attitude and expressed practices regarding legal and ethical responsibilities among staff nurses working in selected hospital Ambala, Haryana. To determine the correlation and association between knowledge, attitude and expressed practices regarding legal and ethical responsibilities with selected sample characteristics. Method: Quantitative research approach and non experimental descriptive research design was used and 266 nurses were selected by convenience sampling technique. The study includes sample characteristics, knowledge questionnaire, and attitude Likert scale and expressed practices checklist. Results: The result shows that the majority 43.6% of staff nurses had below average level of knowledge while 33.4% had average knowledge and 15.03% of staff nurses had good knowledge. Furthermore, the majority of staff nurses 83.8% had unfavourable attitude and 30% had moderately favourable attitude regarding legal and ethical responsibilities. While the majority of staff nurses 57.51% had fair practices and 39.8% had bad practices regarding legal and ethical responsibilities. With the help of Karl Pearson's formula, coefficient of correlation was (r=0.123), which depicts that there was a positive correlation between knowledge attitude and expressed practices scores. The study conclude that if nurses apply knowledge regarding legal and ethical responsibilities during their clinical practices it will help them to prevent themselves from legal and ethical issues and provide quality care to the patient.

Key words: Legal responsibilities, Ethical responsibilities, Nurses

I. INTRODUCTION

Nurses are one of the largest professionals working in the health care system. Their presence in the health care system plays a very important role and helps in the speedy recovery from the illnesses. A staff nurse plays a very important role from the time of admission to discharge in which orientation, meeting all type of needs especially biological and emotional needs, explaining rights to patient, maintaining confidentiality, taking informed consent and following so many roles when patient goes to parole, all comes under legal responsibilities of a staff nurse. 1

Nurses are responsible for the well-being and quality of life of many people, and therefore must meet high standards of technical and ethical competence. Values are the belief and attitude that influence individual behavior and process of decision making.2 Different patient have different value and belief and nurses have to think about their value and belief while providing care to them. If not so then dilemmas may occur when different value conflict3. For example client's right to refuse treatment may be in conflict and carry out treatment.2 Every nurse and patient contact can produce a legal or ethical situation.3 Ethics deal with standards of conduct and moral judgement. Everyday nurses require to make ethical decision making during patient care. They should have good knowledge and adequate practice of ethics to make ethical decision.4

Nursing ethics refers to the ethical standards that governs and guide nurses in every day practice such

as "being truthful with client" "Respecting client confidentiality" And "advocating on behalf of the client etc. In order to conduct their appropriate function to manage situation and to give safe and proper legal and ethical care in today's changing world nurses need ethical knowledge (chitty&kittrell,2007).5 Whereas legal responsibilities are defined as those which a nurse must obey as a law in a professional manner. Legal aspects are defined as the activity of the nurse that legally permitted while taking care of the sick patient. Nursing profession is facing many challenges due to various reasons such as globalization, lacking professional empowerment, privatization of nursing education, lacking nursing sector policies, poor monitoring in health institution, consumer demand for quality care etc. These challenges have been associated with incumbent ethical and moral dilemma which are born out in the daily practices of nurse (NHRC, 2010)5.

Clinical errors and malpractice claims are increasingly important aspects of medical practice. There is concern that the risk of acquiring disabling illness due to medical interventions during hospitalization is contributing to the cost of care adding to the burden of the patient and as a result of malpractice claims causing mounting and spalling costs to health care system6. The report also estimated that there were 7000 additional death per annum due to medical errors. The report listed adverse drug events, improper transfusion, surgical injuries, wrong site surgery suicidal restrain related injuries or death falls, burns, pressure ulcers and mistaken patient identities are the examples of clinical errors. It is commented that high error rates with serious consequences are most likely to occur in intensive care unit, operating room and emergency department. Nurses must maintain a competent practice level to avoid causing injury or suffering to client. The principle of non - malfeasance also covers reporting suspected abuse to prevent further victimization and protecting client from chemically impaired nurses and other health care practitioners6.

Nursing profession is facing many challenges due to various reasons such as globalization lacking professional, empowerment, privatization of nursing education, lacking nursing section policies, poor monitoring in health institutions, consumer demand for quality care etc. These challenges have been associated with incumbent ethical and moral dilemma which are born out in the daily practice of nurses (NHR 2010). Within a health care team nurses have the major responsibilities of including provision of care of making decision and maintaining confidentiality of the patient with advanced technology, nurses can be confronted with the legal and ethical issues during their work10.

This study have shown that the climate and knowledge about legal aspects in health care have led to the improvement in practice. Leaders in nursing professional know that we are legally responsible for what we do but there have been very little specifically stated by the profession to serve as a guide11. Though the legal aspects of nursing care included early in the syllabus very little emphasis is given on its use. Nurses must know the laws that govern her profession to avoid lawsuit against them. Law is a system composed of general rules governing conduct and the procedures for solving disputes when rules are not followed. When laws are broken it is Punishable by authority. Laws are those rules made by humans which regulate social conduct in a formally prescribed and legally binding manner[12].

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 follow as the foundation for understanding what is expected by our society from professional nursing care provider. Nurses familiar with the laws enhance the ability to be client advocates.13 To provide quality care and avoid liability, the nurses needs to be familiar with various consumer rights in health care system. It is vital to know the laws protecting the patient and health care deliverer in this regard and also be aware of the legal status as staff nurses frequently are those working at intensive care unit, emergency department and community field where the patient health decision are taken by the patient himself/herself or spouse or guardian[14].

Government of India has made many acts in which various provision related to patients safety, admission, discharge, confidentiality of information, protection of properly are made apart of this no. Of acts such consumer protection Act (1986), Indian evidence act (1925), person with disabilities Act

(1996) have come to protect patient's right during treatment and hospitalization.[15]

While dealing with professional ethics, it is important to focus on the nurse's knowledge and practice. The current study attempts to answer the question of how much the nurses are knowledgeable on patients care ethics focusing on ethical principles, to what extent they are practicing in clinical practice, and whether their knowledge and practice are correlated and influenced by their socio-demographic and job related variables. The study rationale evolved from the increasing concern of patients care professional ethics.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

A descriptive study to assess the knowledge, attitude and expressed practices regarding legal and ethical responsibilities among staff nurses working in hospital Ambala, Haryana.

II.   OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the level of knowledge, attitude and expressed practices regarding legal and ethical responsibilities among staff nurses of Ambala, Haryana.
2. To determine the correlation between knowledge, attitude, and expressed practices regarding legal and ethical responsibilities among staff nurses of Ambala, Haryana.
3. To determine the association between levels of knowledge regarding legal and ethical responsibilities with selected sample variables.
4. To determine the association between levels of attitude regarding legal and ethical responsibilities with selected sample variables.
5. To determine the association between levels of expressed practices regarding legal and ethical responsibilities with selected sample variables.

HYPOTHESES

Following hypotheses were tested at 0.5 level of significant.
H1- There will be a significant relationship between the knowledge attitude and expressed practices regarding legal and ethical responsibilities.
H2-There will be significant association of knowledge score regarding legal and ethical responsibilities with selected variable.

H3-There will be significant association of attitude score regarding legal and ethical responsibilities with selected variable.
H4-There will be significant association of practice score regarding legal and ethical responsibilities with selected variable.

DELIMITATIONS

The study delimited to the 266 staff nurses of selected hospitals of Ambala, Haryana

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Staff nurses may have some knowledge regarding legal and ethical responsibilities.
2. Staff nurse's knowledge can be measured by structured knowledge questionnaire.
3. Staff nurse's attitude can be measured by structured attitude Likert scale.
4. Staff nurse's expressed practices can be measured by structured expressed practices checklist.

III.   METHODOLOGY

The methodology of research indicates a general pattern for organizing the procedure of gathering valid and reliable data for investigations. his includes research approach, research design, description of research setting, population, sample and sampling technique, data collection technique, development and description of tools, data collection procedure and plan of the data analysis for the present study.
In view the nature of the problem and to accomplish objectives of the present study"
``Non Experimental Research Approach" was considered most appropriate to accomplish objectives of the study
The research design selected for the study was ``Descriptive Survey Design" by keeping the objectives of the study in mind
Variables under the study were:
• Sample characteristics : In this study, demographic variables are Staff nurse's age, gender, religion, place of residence, professional qualification, working experience (years),area of work, legal issue ,education program attended and source of information.
• Research variables: Knowledge, attitude and expressed practices

The study was conducted in hospital of Ambala, Haryana. The data was collected from the nurses

working in hospital of Ambala, Haryana Convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample of 266 nurses for the present study. The criterion for selection of sample was as follows:
1. Nurses who were involved in direct care of patients.
2. Who were available at the time of data collection.
3. Nurses who were willing to participate in the study

IV. CONTENT VALIDITY OF TOOL

the blue print of tools were submitted the to nine experts (2 Nursing Superintendents, 1from Community Health Nursing department, 2 from Child Health Nursing department, 2 from Gynaecological & Obstetrics Nursing department and 1 from Nursing foundation department and 1 from Mental health nursing)

Reliability of tool
- Structured knowledge questionnaire measured by Kuder Richardson 20 calculated value was 1.0 and acceptable range was 0.7-1
- Attitude likert scale questionnaire measured by Cronbach alpha calculated value was 0.82and acceptable range was 0.7-1
- Expressed practices checklist measured by Cronbach alpha calculated value was 0.83 and acceptable range was 0.7-1

Steps of data collection
Ethical approval was taken from the ethical committee of Maharishi Markandeshwar (Deemed to be) University for conducting the study. Further permission was taken from Nursing Superintendent of MMIMS&R Hospital. The pilot study was conducted on 22 February 2020 and 23 February 2020 to find out the feasibility of the study and to decide the plan of statistical analysis.
The data was collected in the month of 8 May 2020 to 4 June 2020 from 266 nurses who are working in MMIMS&R Hospital, Mullana and Civil Hospital, Ambala, Haryana. Staff nurses were selected for the final study by using Convenience sampling technique Self introduction was given and the purpose of the study was explained to the staff nurses. They were assured about the confidentiality of their response. The tool was administered to the nurses. The average time was taken by the staff nurses to complete the structured knowledge questionnaire, attitude scale and expressed practices checklist was 30-40 minutes.

The data and findings have been organized and presented under the following section.
Section I: Description of sample variables
Section II: Findings of the assessment of level of knowledge, attitude and expressed practices of staff nurses regarding ethical and legal responsibilities.
Section III: Finding regarding the correlation between the knowledge, attitude and expressed practices scores of staff nurses regarding legal and ethical responsibilities.
Section IV: Findings regarding the association of knowledge scores of staff nurses regarding legal and ethical responsibilities with selected sample variables.
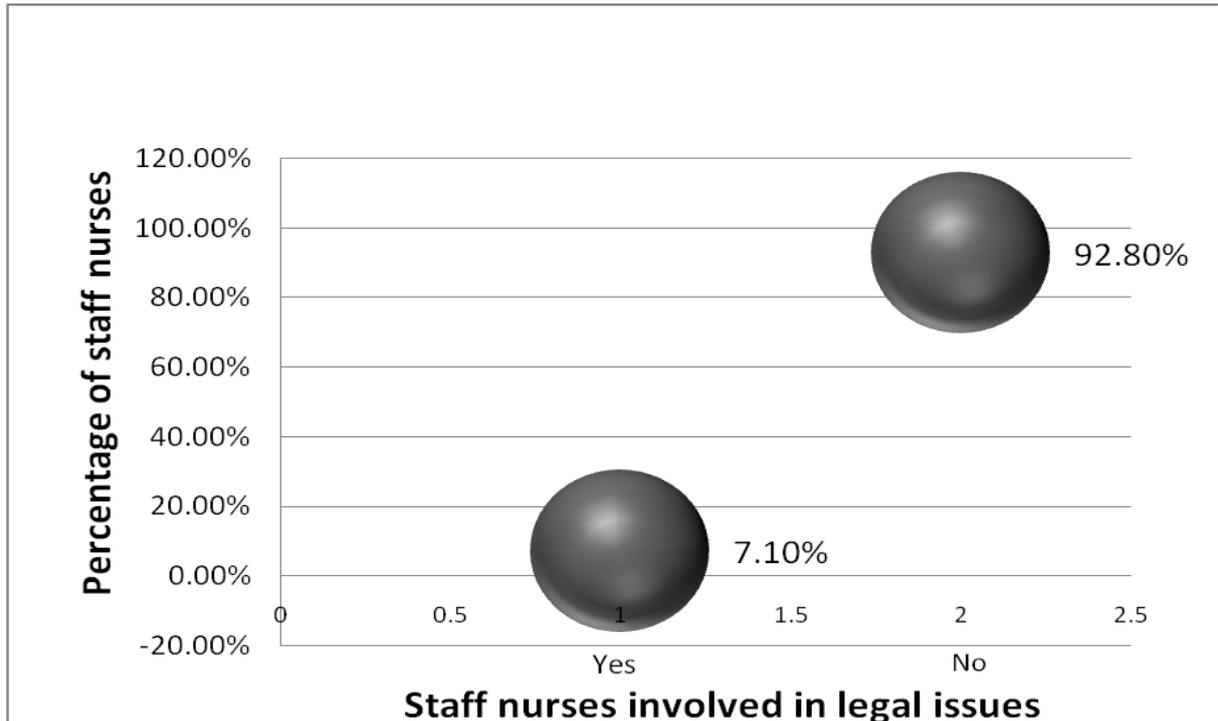Section V: Findings regarding the association between attitude scores of staff nurses regarding legal and ethical responsibilities with selected sample variables.
Section VI: Findings regarding the association of expressed practice scores of staff nurses regarding legal and ethical responsibilities with selected sample variables.

V. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Section I- Description of sample characteristics
The study showed that hat majority of the staff nurses(39.4%) were in the age group of 23-25 years, were females (88.7%) , from Hindu religion(73.6%), from rural area(53.3%), having professional education up to GNM (53%), have 1-3 years of experience (52.6%), were posted in other wards (60.5%), did not involve in any legal & ethical issue(92.8%) , did not attend any service education program related to legal & ethical responsibilities of Nurse(78.9%) and having source of information was social media(52.2%). that majority of staff nurses (83.8%) had unfavourable attitude and (30%) had moderately favourable attitude.

Bubble chart showing frequency percentage of staff nurses involved in legal issue

Section II- Description of level of level of knowledge, attitude and expressed practices of staff nurses regarding legal and ethical responsibilities.

Frequency and percentage distribution of staff nurses according to level of knowledge

N=266

Level of knowledge	Scores	Percentage	Frequency	%
Very good	>22.5	>75%	21	7.8%
Good	18.1-22.5	61%-75%	40	15.03%
Average	15-18	51%-60%	89	33.4%
Below average	<15	<50%	116	43.6%

Maximum score=30   Minimum score=0

The findings shows that the majority (43.6%) of staff nurses had below average level of knowledge while (33.4%) had average knowledge and (15.03%) of staff nurses had good knowledge Range, mean, median and SD of staff nurse's knowledge regarding legal and ethical responsibilities

N=266

Test	Range	Mean± SD	Median	SD
Knowledge Score	30-4=26	15.59	15	4.81

Maximum score=30   Minimum score=0

The data presented in table 4.3, shows that mean (15.59), median (15) and standard deviation (4.81) of the staff nurses regarding legal and ethical responsibilities.

Frequency and percentage distribution of staff nurses according to expressed practices score regarding legal and ethical responsibilities

N=266

Level of practice	Scores	Percentage	Frequency	Frequency%
Good	>50	>75%	7	2.63%
Fair	34-50	51%-75%	153	57.5%
Bad	<34	<50%	106	39.8%

Maximum score=66   Minimum score=22

Data in table 1.8 shows that majority of staff nurses (57.5%) had fair practices and (2.63%) had good practices conditions.

Range, mean, median and SD of expressed practice scores among staff nurses regarding legal and ethical responsibilities.

N=266

Test	Range	Mean ± SD	Median	SD
Practice score	66-22	35.47	36	7.30

Maximum score= 66   Minimum score=22

The data presented in table shows that mean (35.47), median (36) and standard deviation (7.3) of staff nurse's level of practice scores regarding legal and ethical responsibilities.

Section III: Correlation between the knowledge, attitude and expressed practices scores of staff nurses regarding legal and ethical responsibilities.
coefficient of correlation between the knowledge, attitude and expressed practices score regarding legal and ethical responsibilities. It shows that there was moderately positive correlation between knowledge, attitude and expressed practices scores. Hence, the research hypothesis (H1) is accepted and null hypothesis (H 01) rejected.

Section IV: Description of the association of knowledge scores of staff nurses regarding legal and ethical responsibilities with selected sample variables.
There was a significant association of knowledge scores with nurse's age (0.002), gender (0.001), religion of nurses (0.004), residence (0.001), area of work (0.0011), experience of work (0.003), qualification (0.0006), program attended (0.006) and source of information (0.001) at 0.05 level of significance.

Section V: Description of the association between attitude scores of staff nurses regarding legal and ethical responsibilities with selected sample variables.
There was a significant association of attitude scores with nurse's age (0.002), gender (0.001), religion of nurses (0.0009), qualification (0.006), area of work (0.001), experience of work (0.003), program attended (0.002) and source of information (0.009) at 0.05 level of significance.

VI. DISCUSSION

In the present study the majority of staff nurses were female (88.7%) and from Hindu religion (73.6%) which are consistent with another study result which show that majority of staff nurses were female (100%) and (74.4%) were Hindu.[7]
Present study findings revealed that majority of staff nurses i.e (43.6%) of staff nurse had below average level of knowledge while (33.4%) had average knowledge, (15.03%) of staff nurses had good knowledge and (7.8%) had very good knowledge which is inconsistent with another study result found that majority of nurses i.e (11%) had good level of knowledge and (27%) had low average level of knowledge regarding legal and ethical responsibilities.[7]In comparison another studies also

revealed that (29%)had average knowledge.[8] In present study the average level of knowledge is more than the previous study's average level of knowledge.

Finding of present study revealed that (15.41%) nurses have moderately favourable attitude. which is inconsistent with another study result which found that measure of nurses had moderately favourable attitude ie (50%) regarding legal and ethical responsibilities.

Finding of present study revealed that (57.5%) nurses have fair practices regarding legal and ethical responsibilities which is inconsistent with another study result which found that measure of nurse had fair practices i.e (31.6%) regarding legal and ethical responsibilities. In present study nurses have more fair practices as compared to previous study.

VII. IMPLICATION

The implications for nursing education, nursing practice, mass media and nursing administration have been stated. This chapter ends with suggestion and recommendations for each research in future.

- Nurses can increase the awareness among Medical and paramedical staff regarding legal and ethical responsibilities.
- Nurses should be made aware of the type and the use of legal and ethical responsibilities.
- Nurses can teach the nursing student through demonstration
- Nurses can provide guidance and counselling to the student as well as the staff regarding legal and ethical and there need during clinical duty.
- Nurses should focus on legal and ethical responsibilities to prevent legal issue

LIMITATIONS:

The study limited to:

- Total 266 staff nurses of selected hospitals of Ambala, Haryana
- The staff nurses who responded to tool (via google form)

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The study may be conducted on large scale in selected hospitals for generalization of the findings
- A study maybe conducted on nurses using structure teaching programme regarding legal and ethical responsibilities.

- A similar study can be conducted to assess the knowledge attitude and expressed practices regarding legal and ethical responsibilities among nursing students.

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