

A Study to Assess Knowledge Regarding Ethical Legal Issues among Staff Nurses Working In Hospitals, Mangalore

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Abstract: Background: Ethics, often known as moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that examines moral questions, such as the concepts of good and evil, right and wrong, virtue, and justice. Ethics consists of two things. First, when we talk about ethics, we're talking about firmly established standards of what is morally right and bad. These laws typically refer to rights, duties, and advantages for society, justice, or particular qualities. A typical characteristic of an ethical dilemma is the seeming conflict between two moral obligations, whereby abiding by one would imply violating the other. Staff nurses make moral decisions every day. The ethical rights of their patients must be respected in these circumstances, and nurses must know how to address them without compromising their own moral principles. **Materials and methods:** A descriptive study was conducted among 112 staff nurses. Subject was selected using purposive sampling techniques. The information was collected using a demographic Proforma and a self - administered questionnaire. The overall knowledge among ethical legal issues was graded as very good, good, average, poor. **Results:** The highest percentages (62.5%) of the respondents were in the age of 20-25 years, most (87.5%) of the samples were females. 27.7% samples working in surgical departments and majority (66.1%) had 0-2 years work experience. Majority (54.5%) of the staff nurses had good knowledge in ethical - legal issues. The mean knowledge score was 15 ± 3.54 Mean percentages was 65. Significant association found between knowledge and gender ($p=0.04$) and year of experience ($p=0.02$). **Conclusion:** The ethical behavior of healthcare workers has become a subject of significant public concern. This study proved that most of the staff nurses have good knowledge regarding ethical legal issues

Key words: knowledge, ethical, legal issues, staff nurses

1. Introduction

An area of philosophy called ethics, usually referred to as moral philosophy, deals with morality-related issues, including those involving the conceptions of good and evil, right and wrong, virtue, and justice¹. Two things make up ethics. First, ethics refers to established rules of right and wrong that outline what people should do. Typically, these rules are expressed in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, justice, or certain qualities². Legal element is defined as a nurse's activity that is allowed by law when caring for a sick patient. The law is the ultimate authority to control how all citizens behave. Since nurses are responsible for their actions in these areas as part of their professional roles, they need to be aware of this standard as well as legal and ethical concepts and principles. Depending on each country's law and code of ethics, the legal system may vary from one to the next³. Modern nursing practice involves dealing with ethical and legal issues related to things like organ donation, end-of-life care, euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, genetic engineering, and maintaining patient confidentiality in the age of electronic data management. When faced with these choices, many nurses feel helpless, which frequently results in inaction; as a result, they withdraw from the situation and nothing changes⁴.

An international study conducted by Bijani M *et al* reveals significantly higher score in codes on relationship with the treatment team ($P= 0.04$). Despite having a higher score than nurses overall compared to the treatment team, nursing students lacked the technical proficiency required to uphold ethical standards. They advise nursing educators and educational managers to focus more on teaching nursing ethics and oversee their application and applicability in clinical settings⁵. Another study conducted in Jaipur reveals that majority (90%) of the samples had moderate knowledge regarding legal and ethical aspects where as there was association ($p<0.05$) found between the experience and qualification. The significance of including legal education was highlighted at the conclusion⁶

A study was conducted to assess Knowledge, attitude and practice of nursing ethics and law among nurses at Federal Medical Centre, Bida. A total of 149 questionnaires were administered using simple random sampling technique. The result revealed that the participating nurses possess considerably good knowledge, attitude and practice of nursing ethics and law. Majority (82.6%) of the participants obtained knowledge about ethical dilemma mostly (36%) through seminar/workshops followed by those (31%) who knew about it right from their respective schools of training. It is concluded that there is a need for the nurses to understand the relationship and limitations between ethics, hospital policy and legal issues as they relate to nursing practice. Study recommends,

continues nursing education along with periodic morality review and introduction of new equipment's to improve the practice⁷.

Methodology

Research Design:

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design to assess the knowledge of undergraduate students on ethical and legal issues.

Development and Validation of the Questionnaire:

A structured knowledge questionnaire comprising 25 items was developed, with 50% of questions focusing on ethical issues and the remaining 50% on legal issues. Content validity of the questionnaire was ensured by submitting the draft to five experts in the field for evaluation and modification. Modifications were made based on expert suggestions, resulting in a finalized questionnaire with 24 items.

Data Collection Procedure:

Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional ethics committee prior to data collection.

Permission was sought from the relevant authority to conduct the study. Subjects were approached for participation after a self-introduction by the investigators. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained. Confidentiality of participants' information was assured throughout the study.

Data Collection Instruments:

Baseline Performa: Assessed demographic characteristics of undergraduate students including age, gender, department, and experience. Knowledge Questionnaire: Comprised 24 items focusing on ethical and legal issues.

Data Analysis:

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and their responses to the knowledge questionnaire. Inferential statistics were employed to explore relationships and associations between demographic variables and knowledge scores.

Result:

The baseline characteristics of the study population reveal that the majority (62.5%) of the respondents were in the age of 20-25 years, most (87.5%) of the samples were

females. 27.7% samples working in surgical departments and majority (66.1%) had 0-2 years' work experience.

The findings of the study reveal that majority (54.5%) of the staff nurses had good knowledge, 23.2% had average knowledge and 22.3% of the staff nurses had very good knowledge regarding ethical legal issues. The mean and standard deviation of knowledge regarding ethical legal issues among staff nurse was found to be 15.61 ± 3.54 with mean percentage of 65%. While analyzing the ethical aspect individually it was identified that nearly half (40%) had good knowledge, 33% had very good, 24.1% had average and small number (2.7%) had poor knowledge. Legal aspects majority (62.5%) had good knowledge, 20.5% had average and 16.1% had very good knowledge regarding legal issues. There is a significant association between knowledge score with gender ($p= 0.04$) and year of experience ($p= 0.02$).

Discussion:

The finding of the present study showed that majority (87.5%) of the samples were females, more than half (65.2%) were belongs to the age group of 20-25 years. 27.7% of the samples had experience in surgery department and 66.1% had work experience of 0-2 year.

A supporting study which was conducted by Thirunavukarasu M. R reveals that more than half (66%) of samples belongs to 21- 30 year of age and most (86%) were females. 42% of the samples had an experience of 1-3 years³¹. Another study by Joseph A *et al* shows that maximum (86.6%) of samples were females and 27.6% had one year of experience⁸.

The findings of the present study reveal that majority (54.5%) of the staff nurses had good knowledge, 23.2% had average knowledge and 22.3% of the staff nurses had very good knowledge regarding ethical legal issues. The mean and standard deviation of knowledge regarding ethical legal issues among staff nurse was found to be 15.61 ± 3.54 with mean percentage of 65%. The study found association between knowledge score with gender ($p= 0.04$) and year of experience ($p= 0.02$).

A Descriptive study which was conducted among staff nurses of Nigeria by Danjuma Aliyu *et al* showed that Majority of the participants 114 (82.6%) Possess good knowledge of ethical dilemma and found an association between legal knowledge with years of experience ($p=.000$).⁹ another study by Della Varghese *et al* reveals that 10% of nurses had good knowledge and 77% had average knowledge regarding ethical legal aspects of caring the patients.

Conclusion:

Dealing with moral and legal dilemmas involving euthanasia, end-of-life care, physician-assisted suicide, genetic engineering, and patient confidentiality in the era of electronic data management are all part of contemporary nursing practice. Healthcare workers are required by law, ethics, and regulations to have a thorough understanding of these topics in order to participate in ethical and legal decision-making. The present study concluded that staff nurses have good knowledge regarding ethical and legal issues.

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Conflict of interest: There are no conflict of interest

Acknowledgement:

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11.

Knowledge grading

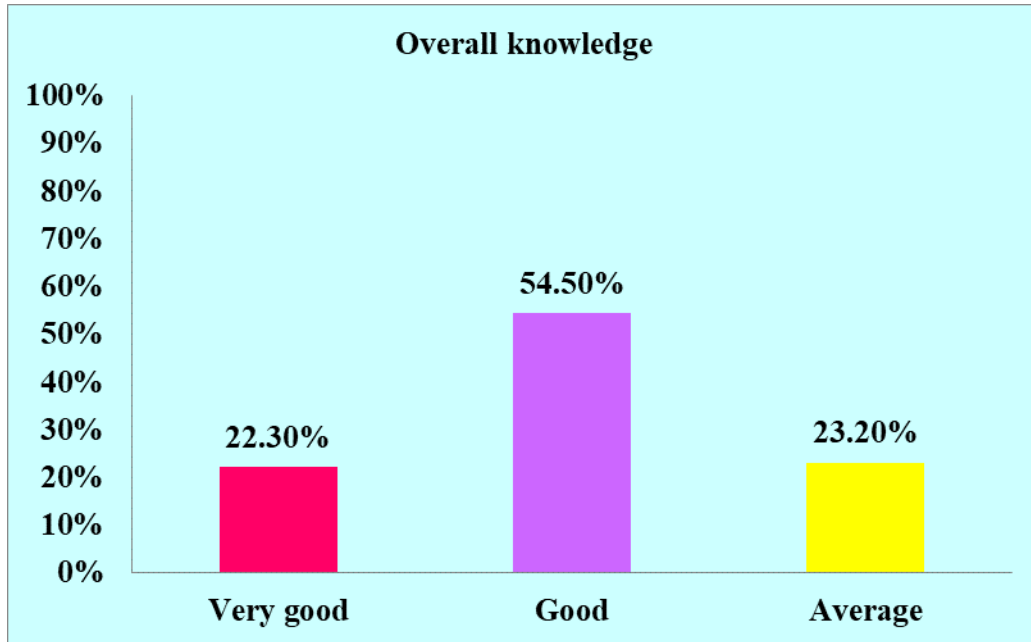


Figure 1: Bar diagram showing overall grading of knowledge score.

Table 1: Distribution of subjects according to their ethical knowledge score

n=112

Level of ethical knowledge	Grading percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very good	76-100	37	33
Good	51-75	45	40
Average	26-50	27	24.1
Poor	< 25	3	2.7

Table 2: Distribution of subjects according to their legal knowledge score

n=112

Level of legal knowledge	Grading percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very good	76-100	18	16.1
Good	51-75	70	62.5
Average	26-50	23	20.5
Poor	25	1	0.9

Table 3: Mean, median and standard deviation of knowledge score regarding ethical legal issues

n=112

Variable	mean	Median	SD	Mean%
Knowledge	15.61	16	3.54	65%

Table 4: Association of knowledge score with selected demographic variable

n=112

Sl no	Demographic variable	Median ≤ 16	Median >16	χ^2	df	p value
1	Age					
	20-25 year	46	27	1.83	2	0.40
	26-30 year	22	16			
	31-35 year	0	1			
2	Gender					
	Male	5	9	4.19	1	0.04*
	Female	63	35			
3	Department					
	Medicine	11	12			
	Surgery	20	11			
	Oncology	14	10	5.29	4	0.25
	Urology	19	6			
	Other	4	5			
4	Experience					
	0-2 years	48	26			
	2-4 years	11	16	7.10	2	0.02*
	>4 years	9	2			