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## A study to assess the knowledge on legal and ethical aspects among maternity staff nurses at Saveetha medical college and hospital, Chennai

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### Abstract

Nursing is a caring profession which has its relevance and direct impact on the life, health and well-being of individuals, families and communities. Ethics and the law are closely related in concepts, such as rights and justice, have both ethical and legal significance, they are both instruments of regulation and prescriptions on how people ought to act in response to one another. Nursing ethics and law are necessary in nursing because nursing is concerned with providing services that impact on human life and health and some of the situations the nurse encounters in practice pose dilemma that if not well handled, may impact negatively on the client and all who are concerned. Standards must therefore be set to guide the nurse to conduct herself properly, make adequate decisions and carry out actions that are appropriate and safe for the client and thus protect herself from litigation.

**Objectives:** To assess the level of knowledge on legal and ethical aspects among maternity staff nurses. To associate the level of knowledge on legal and ethical aspects with selected demographic variables among maternity staff nurses.

**Methodology:** Research approach: quantitative approach, Non- experimental descriptive design was used for 60 samples by Non- probability convenient sampling technique.

**Results:** The above table 2 shows that 32(64%) had moderately adequate knowledge, 15(30%) had adequate knowledge and only 3(6%) had adequate knowledge regarding legal and ethical aspects among maternity staff nurses. The table 4 depicts that the demographic variables total years of experience and total years of experience in obstetrics and gynaecology unit had shown statistically significant association with level of knowledge regarding legal and ethical aspects among maternity staff nurses at  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$  level respectively and the other demographic variables had not shown statistically significant association with level of knowledge regarding legal and ethical aspects among maternity staff nurses.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, legal, ethical aspects, maternity staff nurses

### Introduction

Nursing is a caring profession which has its relevance and direct impact on the life, health and well-being of individuals, families and communities. Ethics and the law are closely related in concepts, such as rights and justice, have both ethical and legal significance, they are both instruments of regulation and prescriptions on how people ought to act in response to one another. Nursing ethics and law are necessary in nursing because nursing is concerned with providing services that impact on human life and health and some of the situations the nurse encounters in practice pose dilemma that if not well handled, may impact negatively on the client and all who are concerned. Standards must therefore be set to guide the nurse to conduct herself properly, make adequate decisions and carry out actions that are appropriate and safe for the client and thus protect herself from litigation.

Today status of morality is the center of many developments in the current world. Human beings, in the course of various periods, go to a rational and ethical approach to meet their material and spiritual needs. Hence, ethics can be considered the focal point of developments in the future world. This approach affects most of the disciplines that lead in providing services to humans. The profession of nursing is one of the sciences in the past, present and future with many moral aspects and examples. Nursing ethics is a branch of medical ethics that has been influenced by developments in this field. The developments in the current world embrace the features that necessitate an ethical approach to medical-related

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professions. Nurses are increasingly facing complex challenges and ethical riddles that should be protected and guided against them. These situations require education and research in the field of ethics and the use of ethical codes. Globally, various professional bodies have stressed the need for incorporating ethical and legal issues into medical education curriculum. In India, the ethical practices focus on mainly four principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficance and justice

**Need for the study**

Maternity nursing is an exciting and dynamic area of nursing practice. With that excitement come issues related to ethical challenges, high rates of litigation in obstetrics, and the challenge of practicing safe and evidence-based nursing care that is responsive to the needs of women and families. Ethics involves determining what is good, right and fair. Ethical issues arise every day in healthcare and everyone has a role to play in ensuring the ethical delivery of care. Health care givers, particularly midwives, perinatal and neonatal nurses, face ethical issues possibly because of their interactions with patients and clients in the reproductive age groups.

Maternal mortality remains a major challenge to health systems worldwide. Ethical-legal problems in Obstetric practice are raising both in the developed and in the developing countries. In developing countries like India with worst maternal mortality rate at 250-300 per lakh.

The specific legal and ethical aspects in OBG Nursing: Negligence, Malpractice, consent, confidentiality, decision making, legal penalties, unsafe abortions, skilled attendants, screening and fetal rights.

Negligence of the nurses is the main cause for high maternal mortality rate due to unsafe deliveries and lack of health awareness.

The main aim is to reduce maternal deaths by providing high quality delivery care to the women includes skilled care. So there is a need to plan to launch a campaign and

suggesting legislations for legal action against quacks.

Legal issues can occur anytime during the service period of the nurses in the working field because of any negligence, malpractices or any violation of the code of the ethics standardized care is very important and also all the nurses should follow all the standards of care in order to provide competent care and avoid any kind of problems during their work period

**Statement of the problem**

A study to assess the knowledge on legal and ethical aspects among maternity staff nurses at Saveetha medical college and hospital, Chennai.

**Objectives**

1. To assess the level of knowledge on legal and ethical aspects among maternity staff nurses
2. To associate the level of knowledge on legal and ethical aspects with selected demographic variables among maternity staff nurses.

**Methods and materials used**

The investigator obtained formal permission from the management authorities of the hospital. The 50 samples who met the inclusion criteria were selected by convenience sampling technique. The investigator introduced and explained the purposes of the study to the samples and obtains the written informed consent. A questionnaire was used to collect the demographical variables and legal and ethical aspects was assessed by using multiple choice questionnaire and the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

**Results**

The above table 2 shows that 32(64%) had moderately adequate knowledge, 15(30%) had adequate knowledge and only 3(6%) had adequate knowledge regarding legal and ethical aspects among maternity staff nurses.

**Table 1:** It shows that 32(64%) had moderately adequate knowledge, 15(30%) had adequate knowledge and only 3(6%) had adequate knowledge regarding legal and ethical aspects among maternity staff nurses

Level of Knowledge	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Inadequate (≤50%)	15	30.0
Moderate adequate (51 – 75%)	32	64.0
Adequate (>75%)	3	6.0

The finding show that the depicts that the demographic variables total years of experience and total years of experience in obstetrics and gynaecology unit had shown statistically significant association with level of knowledge regarding legal and ethical aspects among maternity staff nurses at  $p<0.01$  and  $p<0.05$  level respectively and the other demographic variables had not shown statistically significant association with level of knowledge regarding legal and ethical aspects among maternity staff nurses.

**Conclusion**

This study findings indicates that there was a moderate knowledge regarding legal and ethical aspects among maternity staff nurses. This is a major challenge for nurses to achieve reputed positions in health care system. Quality of nursing work life is an important factor that should be considered to improve the working standards of nurses.

**Recommendation**

The similar study can be done for the larger samples

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