

**LEGAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS OF MIDWIFERY NURSING: DESCRIPTIVE  
APPROACH TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE OF MATERNITY NURSES**

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**Introduction:** Protecting individual rights is a prime responsibility of Nurses which depicts their professionalism, each nurse who is practicing nursing and midwifery is accountable for their own practice in whatever environment they practice.

**Objectives:** Objectives of the study were to assess the level of knowledge on legal and ethical aspects on midwifery nursing among maternity nurses and to find out the association between knowledge score and selected demographic variable.

**Methodology:** A quantitative approach with descriptive research design is used in the present research study. 60 maternity nurses from tertiary care hospitals, Vadodara were selected for present study by using non probability convenient sampling. Data was collected by using demographic proforma and structured knowledge questionnaire on knowledge regarding legal and ethical aspects of midwifery nursing among maternity nurses. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse and interpret the data.

**Result:** Result of the present study shows, majority of maternity nurses 40(80%) has moderately adequate knowledge and 20 (20%) had adequate knowledge regarding on legal and ethical aspects on midwifery. Socio demographic variables including age, course and year of experience were significantly associated with the level of knowledge on legal and ethical aspects on midwifery nursing.

**Key words:** Legal and ethical aspect, Midwifery Nursing, Assess, knowledge, Maternity Nurses.

### **Introduction:**

Legal and ethical aspects show the standard of care provided by health care professionals which determine the right actions.<sup>1</sup> Midwifery nursing has its unique system of principles which governing the conduct of midwives in order to provide maternal and child health care services. Ethical considerations are vital in any area dealing with human beings because they respect values, rights and relationships.<sup>2</sup> Nurses are committed to provide ethical and legal client care that signifies respect for others. Nurses are facing challenging situation every day with difficulties and decision must be made based on the right and wrong.<sup>3</sup> It is not sufficient for the health care provider to hold knowledge and skill at clinical site but they should also follow the standard principles and professional ethics, which referred as bioethics. It's mostly deals with nurse- patients relationship. Confidentiality, moral issues and informed consent.<sup>4</sup>

### **Need of the study:**

Ethical decision making is framed by professional codes of ethics, including the ANA (ANA, 2001) Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements and the International Council of Nurses (2006) Code of Ethics for Nurses.<sup>5</sup>“Ethical dilemmas for maternal–child nurses are complex and merit careful consideration. Nurses can overcome the moral distress associated with such challenges through demonstrating moral courage and advocacy for women and children.”A midwife is responsible to provide woman-centred care, child-centred care, and family-centred approach which facilitates collaborative decision making and respect and valuing. Utilizing ethical principles and standards in care delivery is essential in midwifery nursing.<sup>6</sup>

One of the major problems that maternity nurses are facing in the workplace is legal and ethical issues. With the technological advancement in the field of midwifery nursing, including advancement in the midwifery science, abortion practices, contraception, and infertility related legal and ethical concern has escalated.<sup>7</sup> In many cases, midwives are the real decision-makers and being unaware of legal and ethical aspects and if the nursing personnel is unaware about the rights, principles, and professionalism can create self-harming situation due to poor decision making.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the first step in preventing entanglement in legal issues is awareness of the law, ethics and principles of professionalism which can be promoted by providing continuous nursing education programme about updated legal issues of

medical profession to improve their knowledge once entered into the job.<sup>9</sup> Thus, midwives must have knowledge regarding legal and ethical issues obstetrics and gynaecology.

### **Objectives:**

1. To assess the knowledge of maternity nurses on legal and ethical aspects of midwifery nursing.
2. To find out the association between knowledge score and Selected demographic variable.

### **Methodology**

A descriptive research design with quantitative approach used for the present design. 60 maternity nurses were selected from the tertiary care hospitals, Vadodaraby using non probability purposive sampling. After obtaining institutional ethical clearance, Informed consent was taken from the maternity nurses. Data was collected by using structured knowledge questionnaire to assess the level of knowledge on legal and ethical aspects on midwifery nursing, Demographic checklist is used to find out the demographic characteristics of respondents. Data was entered in Microsoft excel and analysed by SPSS software. Descriptive statistics like mean, mean percentage is used to analyse and interpret the data.

**Description of the research tool:** Tool used for present research study is divided into two parts.

**Section-1:** It consists of 3 items related to demographic variables which includes, Age, Course of study, year of experience.

**Section-2:** It consist of self-structured questionnaire with 30 multiple choice questions related to legal and ethical issues of midwifery nursing. Which has divided into inadequateknowledge (<50%), moderately adequate (51-75%) and adequate knowledge(<75%)

**Data collection procedure:** Ethical permission was obtained from the institutional committee; Informed consent was taken from the samples. The samples were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of the information that was provided to the investigator.

### **Results**

The result of above study shows that 40(80%) moderately adequate knowledge, 20(20%) adequate knowledge regarding legal and ethical aspects of midwifery nursing among maternity staff nurses.

Findings related to association shows that, all the socio demographic variable including age, course of study and year of experience is significantly associated with knowledge score  $p < 0.05$  level respectively.

## **Discussion**

In all circumstance's midwives are expected to protect human dignity, to provide care with respect, and support women and their families in their decision making. A descriptive cross-sectional survey conducted to assess the knowledge of nursing ethics and laws which shows it is necessary to have well known ethics of professionalism to have decision making about right and wrong.<sup>10</sup>

Quasi experimental study conducted to find the effectiveness of seminar which shows that (55.4%) of the nurses had inadequate knowledge on legal and ethical responsibility which is the matter of concern and nurses need to be educated regarding ethics and legal responsibilities.<sup>11</sup>

One of the major projects started among the students and midwives in exploration phase to investigate how students and midwives are supported in increasing their ethical competence in the educational program and in clinical practice, students seem to have good at theoretical knowledge. However, they have problems in transferring and applying that knowledge in clinical situations.<sup>13</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This study findings indicates that majority of maternity nurses have moderate knowledge regarding legal and ethical aspects of midwifery nursing. It is major challenge to have reputation and decision making at clinical site in health care system. "Quality and standard of nursing work life is an important factor that should be considered to improve the reputation standards of nurses in health care system"

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