

Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Regarding Forensic Nursing Among Nursing Professionals: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract:

Background: Forensic nursing is a specialized field that integrates nursing science with forensic principles to provide care to victims and perpetrators of violence, abuse, trauma, and criminal activities. Nursing professionals play a crucial role in recognizing forensic cases, preserving evidence, and collaborating with legal authorities. However, limited awareness and training may affect their effectiveness in forensic situations.

Materials and Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 100 nursing professionals working in selected healthcare institutions. A structured questionnaire was used to assess knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to forensic nursing. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Results: Among the participants, 58% demonstrated adequate knowledge regarding forensic nursing, 82% exhibited a positive attitude, and only 46% reported good forensic nursing practices. Most participants (76%) expressed a need for formal forensic nursing training.

Conclusion: Although nursing professionals demonstrated positive attitudes toward forensic nursing, deficiencies were observed in knowledge and practical application. Structured educational programs and continuing professional development initiatives are recommended to strengthen forensic nursing competencies.

Keywords: Forensic nursing, nursing professionals, knowledge, attitude, practice, evidence preservation, medico-legal cases

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INTRODUCTION

Forensic nursing is a specialized area of nursing practice that combines healthcare and forensic science to provide comprehensive care to individuals involved in legal and criminal investigations. It focuses on the identification, collection, preservation, and documentation of evidence while ensuring patient-centered care.¹

The increasing incidence of violence, sexual assault, child abuse, domestic violence, and trauma-

related crimes has highlighted the importance of forensic nursing services worldwide.² Nurses are often the first healthcare professionals to encounter victims of crime, making their role crucial in recognizing forensic indicators and maintaining the integrity of evidence.³

Effective forensic nursing practice requires adequate knowledge regarding legal procedures, chain of custody, evidence collection, and documentation standards.⁴ Previous studies have reported varying levels of awareness and preparedness among nursing professionals concerning forensic responsibilities.⁵

Attitudes toward forensic nursing significantly influence the willingness of nurses to participate in medico-legal investigations and interdisciplinary collaboration.⁶ Positive attitudes can contribute to improved patient outcomes and judicial processes.⁷

Despite the growing recognition of forensic nursing globally, forensic content remains limited in many nursing curricula, particularly in developing countries.⁸ Therefore, assessing the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of nursing professionals regarding forensic nursing is essential for identifying educational needs and improving forensic healthcare services.^{9,10}

Objectives

1. To assess the knowledge regarding forensic nursing among nursing professionals.
2. To assess attitudes regarding forensic nursing among nursing professionals.
3. To assess practices related to forensic nursing among nursing professionals.
4. To identify the need for forensic nursing education and training.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

Descriptive cross-sectional study.

Study Setting

Selected hospitals and healthcare institutions.

Study Population

Registered nursing professionals working in clinical settings.

Sample Size

100 nursing professionals.

Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling technique.

Inclusion Criteria

- Registered nursing professionals.
- Willing to participate.
- Available during data collection.

Exclusion Criteria

- Nursing interns and students.
- Participants absent during data collection.

Data Collection Tool

A structured self-administered questionnaire consisting of:

- Section A: Demographic variables.

- Section B: Knowledge assessment.
- Section C: Attitude assessment.
- Section D: Practice assessment.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Institutional permission was obtained prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained.

RESULTS

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=100)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	21–30 years	52	52
	31–40 years	33	33
	>40 years	15	15
Gender	Male	28	28
	Female	72	72
Qualification	GNM	38	38
	B.Sc. Nursing	50	50
	M.Sc. Nursing	12	12
Experience	<5 years	45	45
	5–10 years	35	35
	>10 years	20	20

Table 2. Knowledge Regarding Forensic Nursing (N=100)

Knowledge Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Adequate	58	58
Moderate	30	30
Inadequate	12	12

Mean Knowledge Score = 17.8 ± 4.2

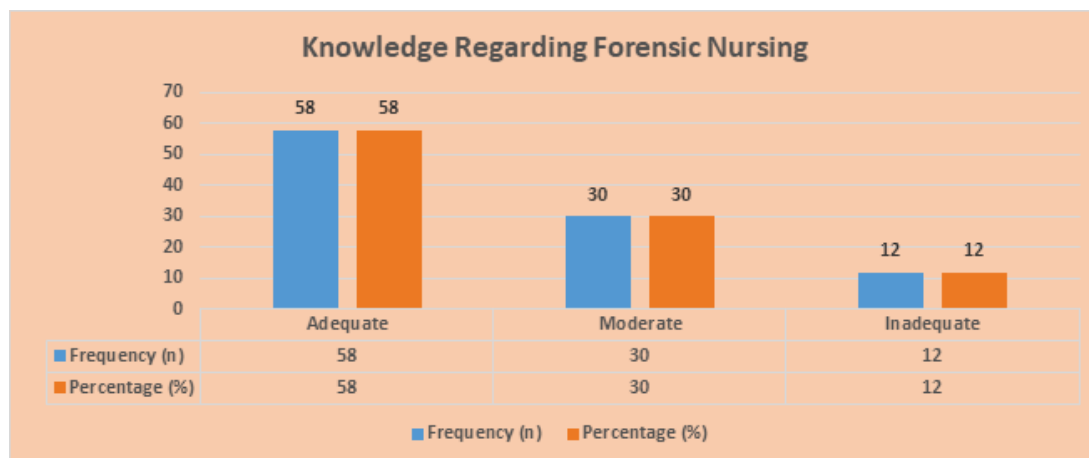


Figure 01: Knowledge Regarding Forensic Nursing
Table 3. Attitudes Regarding Forensic Nursing (N=100)

Attitude Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Positive	82	82
Neutral	14	14
Negative	4	4

Mean Attitude Score = 42.6 ± 5.8

Table 4. Practices Regarding Forensic Nursing (N=100)

Practice Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Good	46	46
Fair	39	39
Poor	15	15

Mean Practice Score = 14.2 ± 3.9

Table 5. Training Needs Related to Forensic Nursing (N=100)

Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	76	76
No	24	24

DISCUSSION

The present study assessed knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding forensic nursing among nursing professionals. More than half of the participants (58%) demonstrated adequate knowledge regarding forensic nursing. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating moderate awareness levels among nurses concerning forensic responsibilities and evidence preservation.^{5,8}

A substantial proportion of participants (82%) exhibited positive attitudes toward forensic nursing. Positive attitudes may facilitate greater engagement in forensic case management and interdisciplinary collaboration with legal authorities.⁶

Despite favorable attitudes, only 46% of participants reported good forensic nursing practices. This discrepancy suggests that knowledge and attitudes do not always translate into clinical application. Similar findings have been reported in previous research highlighting insufficient practical training and limited exposure to forensic procedures.⁹

The majority of participants (76%) expressed a need for formal forensic nursing education,

emphasizing the necessity of incorporating forensic content into nursing curricula and continuing education programs.¹⁰

FINDINGS

1. Most participants (52%) were aged between 21–30 years.
2. Female nurses constituted 72% of the sample.
3. Adequate knowledge regarding forensic nursing was observed among 58% of participants.
4. Positive attitudes were reported by 82% of participants.
5. Good forensic nursing practices were observed among only 46% of participants.
6. A majority (76%) expressed a need for formal forensic nursing training.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that nursing professionals possess generally positive attitudes toward forensic nursing; however, gaps exist in knowledge and practical implementation. Strengthening forensic nursing education through curricular integration, workshops, simulation training, and continuing professional development programs may improve nurses' competence in handling medico-legal cases and preserving forensic evidence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Introduce forensic nursing modules in undergraduate and postgraduate nursing curricula.
2. Conduct regular continuing nursing education programs on forensic nursing.
3. Organize workshops focusing on evidence collection and preservation.
4. Develop institutional protocols for handling forensic cases.
5. Conduct larger multicenter studies to validate findings.

LIMITATIONS

1. The study was limited to a sample size of 100 participants.
2. Convenience sampling may limit generalizability.
3. Self-reported practices may be subject to reporting bias.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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