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ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE REGARDING LEGAL ASPECTS IN PSYCHIATRIC CARE AMONG STAFF NURSES OF MENTAL HOSPITAL RESIDING IN A LOCALITY IN VADODARA: QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Legislation forms an important component in the implementation of mental healthcare. It has long been known that there is a dynamic relationship between the concept of mental illness, the treatment of the mentally ill and the Law. Therefore, adequate education is necessary for staff nurses regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care to enable them to be aware of the legal issues, acts under legal aspects and to protect the rights of clients under their care. **Aim**: The main aim of the study is to assess the effectiveness of self-instructional module on knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses of mental hospital. **Material and method**: The modified conceptual framework for the present study was based on Wiedenbach's Clinical Nursing Practice-A Helping Art Theory. Quasi experimental- one group pretest post-test design was adopted for the present study. The Structured Knowledge Questionnaire was developed to collect the data. Pilot study was conducted among 3staff nurses and samples were selected by using simple random sampling to find the feasibility of the study. The main study was conducted at Dhiraj and Lady Pillar Hospital, Vadodara among 30 staff nurses and the data collected was analysed and interpreted based on descriptive and inferential statistics. **Results:** Out of 30 samples the pre-test and post-test level of knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses. Results revealed that in pre-test majority 23(76.7%) had poor knowledge and

7(23.3%) had average knowledge, whereas in post-test majority 26(86.7%) had good knowledge and 4(13.3%) had average knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses. Hence the research hypothesis was accepted. **Conclusion:** The present study attempted to assess the effectiveness of SIM on knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care and found that the SIM was effective in improving the knowledge of staff nurses.

Keywords: Knowledge, Effectiveness, Self Instructional Module, Psychiatric care, Staff Nurse, Legal Aspects

INTRODUCTION

Legal aspects in psychiatric care encompass various facets, including admission and discharge procedures, the Mental Health Act, the Indian Lunacy Act, the rights of mentally ill individuals, civil and criminal responsibilities **[1]**. Nursing practice in the field of psychiatric care is laden with legal responsibilities, as nurses are answerable for their professional decisions and actions. In psychiatric nursing, the role primarily involves providing protective, therapeutic, supportive, physical, and social care to individuals who may be incapable of managing their own activities due to their mental health condition **[2-6]**. Consequently, legal issues often arise in these sensitive areas. A solid grasp of the legal aspects of healthcare is imperative to ensure high-quality nursing practice, especially in the ever-evolving landscape of medical technology. Nurses, who are intimately involved in pivotal human events such as birth, death, and the management of suffering, frequently encounter legal challenges in their roles. For instance, in psychiatric hospitals and institutions,

psychiatric nurses serve as the primary healthcare providers, functioning as primary mental health nurses **[7, 8]**. They deliver a wide range of services to patients, and this can bring about considerable legal complexities, particularly concerning mental health.

Research has revealed the alarming statistic that medication errors result in 7,000 deaths and 77,000 patient injuries each year, with administration errors constituting a significant portion of these errors, and nurses typically responsible for medication administration. Legal actions are initiated in 59% of such cases, underscoring the dynamic relationship between mental illness, its treatment, and the law **[9, 10]**.

The legal and ethical context of care is of paramount importance for all psychiatric nurses as it revolves around patient rights and the quality of care provided. In a democratic society, it is crucial for mental health professionals, particularly nurses, to have a sound understanding of the fundamental legal and ethical aspects of forensic psychiatry when working in the

field of mental health. For psychiatric nurses dealing primarily with individuals affected by mental illness, adherence to rules and regulations governing laws and ethics is mandatory. The responsibilities related to legal matters are heightened in this context. Psychiatric mental health nurses, often referred to as PMHNs, are registered nurses with specialized training. They play a crucial role in assessing, addressing, and monitoring mental health and behavioural conditions in individuals, families, groups, or communities. They typically collaborate with other licensed mental healthcare professionals to design and implement comprehensive care plans aimed at improving the overall well-being and functioning of individuals with mental health issues **[11, 12]**. Mental health legislation is instrumental in safeguarding the rights of those with mental illnesses. Its core objective is to protect, promote, and enhance the mental well-being of citizens. Just as any society requires laws to achieve its goals, mental health legislation is essential to ensure the welfare and rights of individuals dealing with mental health issues. The role of a psychiatric nurse involves providing physical and mental healthcare to individuals, families, and communities affected by mental health conditions. This profession requires a broad skill set, including neurobiological, psychosocial, and nursing expertise. Mental

health nursing is a complex field dealing with patients with various psychiatric illnesses, and it involves significant ethical and legal considerations. An experienced registered nurse in psychiatric nursing should possess a comprehensive understanding of the legal rights and responsibilities in their role, be well-versed in the legal and ethical issues affecting patient care and have a strong grasp of the laws regulating their practice, all guided by ethical nursing principles **[13, 14]**.

Mental health nurses play a pivotal role in ensuring their interventions are founded on ethical and human rights principles. They often grapple with the ethical complexities in mental health, frequently contending with paternalistic actions and the justifications for such acts **[15]**.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

A Quasi-Experimental study on to assess the effectiveness of self-instructional module on knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses at Dhiraj and Lady of Pillar hospital, Vadodara. Quantitative Research approach has been used in this study. The design has use in this research is Pre experimental one group pre-test post-test research design. Staff nurses had been source of data for this study. The total number of participants in the study was 30. In this study nonprobability purposive sampling technique was used. After describing the goal of the study, data was

obtained from staff nurses with the help of structured questionnaire consisted of 2 sections. Improved the knowledge of staff nurses regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care.

RESULTS:

All the data collected was coded and put into Microsoft Excel. To summarize the questionnaire results, descriptive statistics were employed. The results in terms of percentages were then derived using the statistical analysis of the completed questionnaire.

Table 1 depicts the frequency and percentage distribution of socio-demographic variables of staff nurses. According to their age, majority 12(40%) were in 21-30 years of age, 9(30%) were in 31-40 years of age, 5(16.7%) were in above 50 years of age and 4(13.3%) were in 41-50 years of age.

Table 2 depicts the pre-test and post-test level of knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses. Results revealed that in pretest majority 23(76.7%) had poor knowledge and 7(23.3%) had average knowledge where as in posttest majority 26(86.7%) had good knowledge and 4(13.3%) had average knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses.

Table 3 depicts the effectiveness of self instructional module on knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses which was tested by using paired t test. Mean pretest knowledge score was 9.30 ± 1.705 and in posttest mean knowledge score was 23.90 ± 2.249 with mean difference of 14.60 and obtained (t value=27.72, df=29, p=0.001) was found statistically highly significant at $p<0.05$ level. Findings indicate that self instructional module was effective in improving the knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses.

Table 4 depicts the association between post-test knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses with their selected demographic variables which was tested by using chi-square test. Result revealed that previous source of knowledge was found significant association at $p<0.05$ level but other demographic variables such as age, gender, religion, professional qualification, clinical experience and monthly income were not found any significant association at $p<0.05$ level with post-test knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Demographic Variables (N=30)

S. No.	Demographic Variables	frequency	Percentage
1	**Age in years**		
	a. 21-30 years	12	40
	b. 31-40 years	9	30
	c. 41-50 years	4	13.3
	d. Above 50 years	5	16.7
2	**Gender**		
	a. Male	1	3.3
	b. Female	29	96.7
3	**Religion**		
	a. Hindu	18	60
	b. Muslim	0	0
	c. Christian	12	40
	d. Others	0	0
4	**Professional qualification**		
	a. GNM	23	76.7
	b. Post Basic B.Sc Nursing	4	13.3
	c. B.Sc Nursing	3	10
5	**Clinical experience in years**		
	a. 1-5 years	10	33.3
	b. 6-10 years	14	46.7
	c. 11-15 years	6	20
	d. Above 15 years	0	0
6	**Monthly income (in Rupees)**		
	a. 5,000 – 10,000	1	3.3
	b. 10,001 – 15,000	20	66.7
	c. 15,001 – 20,000	8	26.7
	d. Above 20,000	1	3.3
7	**Previous source of knowledge**		
	a. Worked in psychiatric hospital	3	10
	b. In service education	2	6.7
	c. Through peer group	1	3.3
	d. Mass media	4	13.3
	e. During nursing course	20	66.7

Table 2: Pre-test and post-test level of knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses (N=30)

LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	f	%	f	%
Poor knowledge	23	76.7	0	0
Good knowledge	7	23.3	4	13.3
Excellent knowledge	0	0	26	86.7

Table 3: Effectiveness of self instructional module on knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses (N=30)

Level of Knowledge	Mean	SD	Mean D	t value	df	P value
Pre-test	9.30	1.705	14.60	27.72	29	0.001*
Post-test	23.90	2.249				

*p<0.05 level of significance

Table 4: Association between post-test knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses with their selected demographic variables (N=30)

S. No.	Demographic Variables	Average knowledge	Good knowledge	χ2 value	df	p value
1	**Age in years**					
	a. 21-30 years	1	11	0.962	3	0.811[NS]
	b. 31-40 years	1	8			
	c. 41-50 years	1	3			
	d. Above 50 years	1	4			
2	**Gender**					
	a. Male	0	1	0.159	1	0.690[NS]
	b. Female	4	25			
3	**Religion**					
	a. Hindu	2	16	0.192	1	0.661[NS]
	b. Muslim	--	--			

	c. Christian d. Others	2 --	10 --			
4	**Professional qualification** a. GNM b. Post Basic B.Sc Nursing c. B.Sc Nursing	3 1 0	20 3 3	0.934	2	0.627[NS]
5	**Clinical experience in years** a. 1-5 years b. 6-10 years c. 11-15 years d. Above 15 years	1 1 2 --	9 13 4 --	2.637	2	0.267[NS]
6	**Monthly income (in Rupees)** a. 5,000 – 10,000 b. 10,001 – 15,000 c. 15,001 – 20,000 d. Above 20,000	0 3 1 0	1 17 7 1	0.361	3	0.948[NS]
7	**Previous source of knowledge** Worked in psychiatric hospital b. In service education c. Through peer group d. Mass media e. During nursing course	1 0 1 1 1	2 2 0 3 19	9.519	4	0.49[NS]

*p value < 0.05 level of significance; NS-Non-Significant

DISCUSSION:

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of a self-instructional module in enhancing the knowledge of legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses. To achieve the study's objectives, a quasi-experimental design, specifically a one-group pre-test and post-test design, was utilized. The sample was selected through a simple random sampling technique, and data was collected from 30 respondents before and after providing them with a self-instructional booklet. The study's results were discussed in relation to its objectives, hypotheses, and in comparison to findings from other studies.

The analysis revealed that the overall mean knowledge score of 9.30 obtained by the subjects in the post-test was significantly higher than the mean knowledge score of 23.90 in the pre-test, showing an improvement with a mean score difference of 14.60. This improvement was statistically significant, with a 't' value of 27.72 and significance at the $p < 0.05$ level. This suggests that the self-instructional module effectively improved the knowledge of staff nurses regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care, confirming the research hypothesis (H1) that there would be a significant difference between the mean pre-test and post-test knowledge scores of the subjects in this regard. The study's findings were consistent with research conducted at the School of Nursing in Dundee, UK, titled "Expanding Role within Mental Health Legislation: An Opportunity for Professional Growth or a Missed Opportunity?" This study aimed to emphasize the need for mental health nursing to incorporate proposed legislative roles into practice. The results indicated the

necessity for multidisciplinary training to prepare psychiatric nurses for new and demanding roles. The framework of this study explored issues related to power, ethics, legislative themes, and their application to contemporary service structures.

CONCLUSION:

In the current study, the participants knowledge regarding legal aspects in psychiatric care was not good and un satisfactory. There are particular areas where they require proper knowledge and attention ,such as how to protect the patient's right and avoid in giving poor advice or innocently involving herself in legal issues. Staff nurses must be informed about legal aspects in psychiatric care and associated issues in order for the enhancement to continue. Based on the study's findings, there is a clear need to enhance the understanding of legal aspects in psychiatric care among staff nurses. It is essential for nurses to possess a thorough awareness of the legal dimensions of psychiatry. This awareness is crucial for safeguarding the rights of patients and preventing inadvertent involvement in legal matters or the unintentional provision of inadequate guidance.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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