

## Forensic nursing: A heuristic field of nursing

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### Abstract

In 2024, the crime rate in India stood at 445.9 per 100,000 people, marking a notable decrease from 487.8 in 2020. The prevalent crimes in India continue to be theft, robbery, and assault. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the crime rate per lakh population dropped from 445.9 in 2021 to 422.2 in 2022. This decline is considered a more reliable indicator, accounting for the impact of population growth on absolute crime numbers. However, amidst this overall decline, crimes against women saw a troubling increase by 4%. The NCRB reports a 4% rise in such crimes in 2022 compared to 2021. Majority of these crimes were related to cruelty by husbands or relatives, kidnapping, assault and rape. Crime impacts society and the economy through fear, healthcare costs, and hindering investments, necessitating effective prevention strategies and community engagement. This underscores the need for continued efforts in law enforcement, public awareness, and community engagement to address crime and ensure the safety and security of citizens nationwide. The purpose of forensic nursing science is to assist in the creation of positive change in the inappropriate medico-legal management of detainees, asylum seekers, mentally disordered offenders, living and deceased persons, to prevent victimization and reduce the fear of crime.

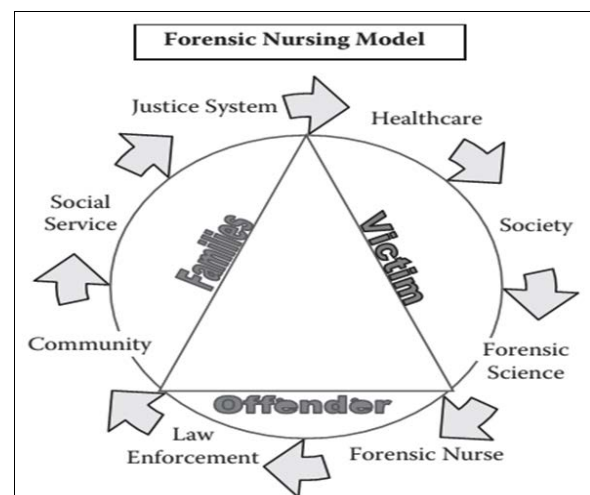
**Keywords:** Forensic nursing, heuristic, field

### Introduction

#### Key Highlights of NCRB's Crime in India 2022 Report

A total of over 58,00,000 cognizable crimes were registered, comprising both the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special & Local Laws (SLL) crimes. The registration of cases witnessed a 4.5% decline compared to 2021. In 2022, India witnessed a significant surge in suicides, totalling over 1.7 Lakh cases, reflecting a concerning increase of 4.2% compared to 2021. The suicide rate also rose by 3.3%, calculated as the number of suicides per lakh of the population. Major causes included 'Family Problems,' 'Marriage Related Problems,' Bankruptcy and indebtedness, 'Unemployment and Professional Issues and Illness'. Maharashtra reported the highest number of suicides, followed closely by Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Telangana. Daily wage earners constituted a significant portion, accounting for 26.4% of the total suicides. Agricultural workers and farmers were also disproportionately affected, forming a substantial part of the suicide statistics. This was followed by unemployed persons, who comprise 9.2% of all suicides reported in India in 2022. Among all suicides reported in the year, over 12,000 were of students. Crimes against Women: A total of 4, 45, 256 cases of crime against women were reported in 2022, marking a 4% increase from 2021. Dominant categories included 'Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives,' 'Kidnapping & Abduction of Women,' and 'Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage Her Modesty.' Crimes against Children: Cases of crimes against children showed

an increase of 8.7% compared to 2021. Majority of these cases, related to kidnapping and abduction (45.7%) and 39.7% were filed under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. Crime against Senior Citizens: Cases of crimes against senior citizens rose by 9.3% to 28,545 cases compared to 26,110 cases in 2021. A bulk of these cases (27.3%) related to hurt followed by theft (13.8%) and forgery, cheating, and fraud (11.2%).



### Forensic Nursing - Responsibilities

- The safety of the living victim and the deceased victim's body remains *the first priority*.

- b) Collecting and preserving evidence from the victim should *never compromise the safety or integrity of the body*.
- c) The forensic nurse performs a forensic examination -
  - The purpose is to identify and collect evidence that has transferred from the perpetrator to the victim.
  - Law enforcement personnel may collect evidence from the crime scene; however, forensic nurses and other health care providers collect evidence from the *victim*.

#### **Evidence must be collected in an organized and comprehensive manner**

- Without bias and without inducing any physical or psychological harm to the victim
- Without bias and without producing any physical injury or damage to the deceased victim
- Examination and evidence identification and collection require a careful search of the entire body.
- Meticulous documentation requires identification of all evidence, preservation method, and retention (chain of custody).

#### **The forensic nurse must develop interviewing techniques**

- To interview the victim
- To interview the suspected perpetrator
- To interview the convicted perpetrator
- To interview family, friends, and all those who may add to the investigation

#### **Evidence includes the following**

- All clothing
- All jewellery
- Any items in pockets

#### **Any items removed from the body**

- Dirt (physical evidence)
- Saliva (biological evidence)
- Paint chips (physical evidence)
- Semen (biological evidence)
- Insects (biological evidence)
- Plant material (biological evidence)
- Dried or fresh blood (biological evidence)
- Fabric (physical material)
- Additional physical and biological material

Preservation of evidence is dependent on the type of material, whether physical or biological.

#### **Documentation**

- Documentation should be objective, legible, clear, timely, and descriptive.
- *Documentation does not provide a diagnosis* (e.g., blunt force, sharp force, entry wound, exit wound, and cause of death).
- State boards of nursing scope and standards of nursing practice outline and define nursing practice based on the individual nurse's status as an advanced practice practitioner; advanced practice status is defined in the individual state nurse practice act.

Emami Somayeh Zare, Lynch Virginia A., Banazadeh Marjan (2024) <sup>[2]</sup>. A cross-sectional correlational descriptive study using non-observational survey method was used to investigate the frequency of performance and perception of

the importance of forensic nursing role behaviors among 274 emergency department nurses as well as the correlation between mean scores of performances and perception. The total mean scores for frequency of performed behaviors and their perceived importance were  $2.36 \pm 0.65$  and  $4.23 \pm 0.64$  respectively. The overall mean scores of importance were significantly higher than frequency. There was a significant correlation between the frequency of performance and perception of the importance of twenty-eight items (twenty-four positive correlations and 4 negative correlations) ( $p < 0.05$ ). The frequency of performed behaviors positively correlated with participants' type of shift worked and their personal experiences of legal and judicial claims. The female gender of respondents positively correlated with behaviors' perceived importance. The study revealed a significant discrepancy between the frequency of forensic nursing role behaviors performed and their perceived importance in the emergency department. This gap emphasizes the pressing requirement for forensic nursing subjects to be incorporated into graduate and undergraduate nursing curricula, as well as ongoing training programs and courses. It is crucial to establish and implement forensic nursing protocols for the care of trauma victims, and to foster collaboration between healthcare systems, law enforcement, and forensic investigators to streamline the process.

Kumar DR, Christopher AF, Thakur A, *et al.* (2023) <sup>[3]</sup>. The study was conducted to improve the knowledge regarding forensic nursing among the nursing students of selected nursing colleges of District, Mohali. A quantitative approach and pre-experimental, one group pre-test post-test design with convenient sampling technique was used to select 100 nursing students to improve their knowledge regarding forensic nursing through the socio-demographic profile, self-structured questionnaire, and structured teaching programme. The findings of the study showed that a was significant difference between the pre-test and post-test knowledge score of nursing students, the mean comparison of knowledge scores in pre-test and post-test demonstrates the effectiveness of structured teaching programme the mean knowledge score increased from  $12.76 \pm 2.978$  in the pre-test to  $26.90 \pm 1.992$  in post- test marking a mean difference of 14.140. The result of the intervention proved that statistically significantly higher knowledge was acquired by nursing students of Mohali regarding forensic nursing. The study showed that structured teaching programme was effective in improving knowledge regarding forensic nursing. Therefore, motivation and information were the felt need of nursing students. Our findings highlight the need for more intensive efforts to promote proper and effective knowledge.

Karlekar Tejal Mukesh, Thomas Sindhu (2022) <sup>[4]</sup>. A study was conducted to assess the knowledge regarding Forensic Nursing among Undergraduate Nursing Students using cross sectional design using purposive sampling technique from 134 Undergraduate students from selected setting. Majority of students (64.17%) average knowledge regarding forensic Nursing even through 98.50% did not have any previous training on forensic nursing. Forensic Nursing has good scope in clinical practice and most of them are instructed in this area.

Padmakumari S.V.L. (2022) <sup>[5]</sup> A descriptive study was carried out to determine the knowledge of staff nurses

regarding the need of forensic nursing in emergency department in a selected hospital of Visakhapatnam. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 60 staff nurses who were present at the time of data collection. The data was collected in the month of April 2011 from 60 samples. The incidence was that majority (39%) of staff nurses were in the age group of 20-30 years and minimum of 23% (14) were in the age group of 41-50 years, were participated in the study. The knowledge level of staff nurses was 53.3% had inadequate knowledge, 46.6% were having moderate knowledge and none of the staff nurses had adequate knowledge on forensic nursing. There was no significant association between the knowledge levels and selected demographic variables. The study findings show that the knowledge levels of the staff nurses were inadequate regarding the forensic nursing. Awareness regarding the forensic nursing will help in improving their knowledge and it will extend the role of nursing with a new trend.

P.N. Murkey, B.H. Tirpude, Alope Mazumder et. al. (2009) [6] A study on 200 candidates (Nurses of 4 institutes) were questioned regarding Forensic Nursing. All the candidates either had come from rural background or in direct touch with rural scenario. 83% agree that forensic training is required for trainee nurse. While more or less half of them feel helpless (during work) due to lack of medico-legal knowledge properly, 81% of them agreed that forensic knowledge may help the society. About 68% wanted forensic nursing to be included in course curriculum and about 83% wanted forensic nursing as a separate subject and feel it is necessary in day-to-day nursing work. In day-to-day practice, nursing students, trainee nurses are facing practical problems of society, mainly in health care delivery area, most of the time they feel helpless with shallow medico-legal ideas that is extremely necessary in today's practice. This is also very much encouraging that majority of nursing professionals are not taking forensic nursing as a new burden on existing course curriculum and they are ready to consider the sub discipline with sincerity. The enthusiastic approach to know the subject in detail shows a real zeal and courage to face problems associated to law even that shows the requirement of a deep thought to implement such branches vividly at courses in near future. The application of nursing knowledge in a spreaded scenario is very much required especially for country like India where a major percent of population try to get nursing jobs at Middle East countries mainly. India is already traumatized by violence- crime and litigations. Any country with such huge population and difficulty in health care delivery system, more trained professional nurses must be there to counteract the affected scenario and here lies the immediate requirement to give a mind to make one forensic nurse, who at a time may become an extreme help for a medico or a tremendous support for a victim. A sincere forensic nurse can be a best link between living forensic (clinical forensic medicine) and forensic after death of a deceased.

Gorea R.K, Lynch Virginia (2003) [7]. Forensic nursing is recognized as the most contemporary concept in forensic services, only recently introduced in India. This concept brings together resources from forensic science, health care and criminal justice in a common concern for the plight of

victims of crime, the accused and the families of both. Currently, nursing students are resonating with enthusiasm to work as forensic nurse examiners. Direct beneficiaries of this development will be the experts in forensic medicine as well as police agencies. Forensic medical examiners (FME) and forensic pathologists will be able to better perform their professional duties with skilled forensic nurse associates. Society will benefit from direct services provided by forensic nurse professionals who are specifically trained to interact with those who are tormented by crime or who have been accused of crimes they did not commit. Forensic nurse examiners excel in establishing a rapport with these specific clients and can explain various technicalities and legal requirements with ease. Forensic nurses that can interview clients in their own language and in a compassionate manner, are better prepared to care for the emotional aspects of social trauma. The investigation of crime will also receive a fillip, as forensic nurses help law enforcement officers attain a more precise interpretation of the medical aspects of case investigation and preservation of biological evidence. Ultimately, it is the social order of India that will benefit through the integration of forensic nursing science into our health and justice systems.

### Discussion

Forensic nursing services offer direct forensic care to victims, suspects, perpetrators, and those who witness violence. The clinical forensic nurse investigator documents, secures and preserves evidence while providing forensic consulting services to clients and interdisciplinary partners in healthcare and law-related agencies. Comprehensive forensic healthcare education should offer professionals current tools and knowledge that will make a difference in their practice, promote collaborative community responses to violence and design strategies for violence prevention.

### Conclusion

The forensic nursing practice model integrates sociology (sociopolitical impact), criminology (crime, violence, criminal justice, social sanctions, and human rights), clinical and criminal investigation (forensic science), and education (nursing and medico-legal knowledge, education of staff and forensic patient/clients). The cyclic nature of the model speaks to continuance, perpetuation, and balance. The scales of justice are balanced when justice is served to those who have been victimized, to those accused of a crime, and to society as a whole. Justice is served when truth is identified, verified, and demonstrated. Thus, the forensic nurse becomes an advocate for justice and an advocate for truth. Truth and justice perpetuate holistic health in its biological, psychological, sociological, spiritual, and cultural dimensions.

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