

# A Descriptive Study to Assess Knowledge Regarding POSH Act Among Staff of Chirayu Medical College and Hospital, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Sexual harassment is a significant health issue with severe effects on employees' self-respect, physical mental health, and dignity. This descriptive study aimed to assess knowledge scores regarding the POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) Act among staff of Chirayu Medical College and Hospital. A convenience sampling method was employed, and data were gathered using a self-designed knowledge questionnaire. The findings indicated that 41% of the staff had poor knowledge, while 59% had average knowledge about the POSH Act. No significant correlation was found between knowledge levels and socio-demographic factors. The study concluded that there is a lack of knowledge among staff regarding the POSH Act, which needs to be addressed and make them aware of this Act to ensure employees' safety and well-being. **Methodology:** This descriptive study was conducted with the employees of Chirayu Medical College and Hospital. A convenience sampling method was employed, and data were gathered using a self-designed knowledge questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items on knowledge about the POSH Act. **Results:** The results showed that 41% of staff had poor knowledge, and 59% had average knowledge regarding the POSH Act. No significant relationship was found between knowledge and socio-demographic variables. **Discussion:** The study's results indicate a knowledge gap among the staff concerning the POSH Act. This lack of awareness can be linked to several factors, such as insufficient training and awareness initiatives. **Conclusion:** The study concluded that enhancing staff knowledge about the POSH Act is essential. This can be accomplished by implementing regular training sessions and awareness programs. The study's findings have implications for nursing research, education, administration, and practice.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, assess, Harassment, Sexual, POSH Act.

## INTRODUCTION

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Sexual harassment is a form of gender discrimination that infringes upon a woman's fundamental rights to equality and life, and it also impacts men. The POSH Act, enacted in 2013, was created to prevent and protect women from sexual harassment in the workplace. Despite the law, many women in various workplaces are unaware of the POSH Act and its implications [1, 2].

## Objectives

1. To assess the knowledge scores regarding POSH Act among staff.
2. To find out the association between level of knowledge and selected socio demographic variables

## Background of the Study

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) defines sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature in the workplace or educational environment. Several factors contribute to this issue, including society's patriarchal structure, sexual misconduct, jealousy in the workplace, and male dominance, among others. The effects of sexual harassment are far-reaching, impacting not only the victims physically but also their mental and emotional well-being. Workplace sexual harassment is a type of gender discrimination that infringes on a woman's basic rights to equality and life, as guaranteed by Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Indian Constitution. It creates a hostile and unsafe work environment for women, hindering their ability to perform effectively in today's competitive world. Beyond affecting their job performance, it also hampers their social and economic progress and causes both physical and emotional distress. *Global statistics:* Around 8.2% of women and 5.0% of men worldwide report experiencing sexual harassment at work. The Americas have the highest reported rates, with 17.7% of women and 7.2% of men experiencing workplace sexual harassment [3].

*India's situation:* In 2022, India recorded over 419 cases of sexual harassment at work. The highest number of incidents were reported in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. During the fiscal year 2023, a total of 1,160 sexual harassment complaints were filed in companies, marking the highest figure in the past decade. According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), India has witnessed over 400 workplace sexual harassment cases annually since 2018, with an average of 445 cases reported each year. In 2022, approximately 35 cases were reported monthly, totalling 419 incidents.

*Regional breakdown in India:* In 2022, Himachal Pradesh recorded the highest number of workplace sexual harassment cases at 97, followed by Kerala with 83 cases, Maharashtra with 46, and Karnataka with 43.

*Legislative framework:* India's first law specifically targeting workplace sexual harassment is the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 ("POSH Act"), enacted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. This legislation is designed to prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace. Additionally, the government introduced the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Rules, 2013, under the POSH Act. Moreover, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, was passed, making offenses like sexual harassment, stalking, and voyeurism criminal acts.

The POSH Act was established to prevent and protect women from sexual harassment at the workplace and ensure effective resolution of complaints. Despite being in effect since 2013, many women across different workplaces are still unaware of the POSH Act and the criminal consequences of sexual harassment. It is essential for individuals to be informed about the Act so they can take the necessary steps to address harassment in their workplaces.

Sexual harassment can occur in a variety of environments, including workplaces and educational settings such as schools and universities. It can happen in numerous situations, such as casual conversations after hours, interactions in hallways, and informal settings outside of office spaces. In India, up to 80% of women are reported to experience workplace sexual harassment at some point in their careers, with 57% experiencing it within the past year. A report from 300 companies documented 586 sexual harassment cases, a decrease from 961 the previous year. However, this number increased to 767 in fiscal year 2021–22 and surged by 51.2% to 1,160 cases in the following year. In the healthcare sector, sexual harassment is 4.64 times more likely to affect unmarried female nurses compared to married nurses. Additionally, female nurses in the 20–25 age group are approximately 4.7 times more likely to experience harassment than those over 40 [4–6].

A cross-sectional online study conducted explored the prevalence and factors influencing workplace sexual harassment against nurses in Ghana's Central Region. The study involved 1,494 male and female nurses from different healthcare facilities in the region. The results showed that the primary perpetrators of sexual harassment were male physicians (20.2%), male nurses (15.4%), male relatives of patients (15.1%), and male patients (11.6%). Unfortunately, only a small percentage of victims reported the harassment. Female nurses were more likely to experience harassment than their male counterparts. Nurses with more work experience, married nurses, and those working in private or mission-based healthcare facilities were less likely to face sexual harassment.

A study focused on the prevalence and factors associated with sexual harassment in professional service firms. The study surveyed 321 employees (155 women and 166 men) from global accounting and law firms. The results showed that 88.5% of women and 83.3% of men had encountered some form of sexual harassment at work at least once. Verbal gender harassment was the most commonly reported form, with traditional harassment experienced equally by both men and women, while non-man harassment was more frequently reported by women. Physical sexual harassment was reported less frequently. The study also revealed that workplace sexual harassment was positively linked to the perceived acceptance of harassment by colleagues and negatively associated with job level [7].

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out with staff at Chirayu Medical College and Hospital, using a descriptive research design and a convenience sampling method. The gathered data were organized and analysed according to the study's objectives, employing both descriptive and inferential statistics. The schematic representation of research methodology is discussed in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Schematic representation of research methodology.

**RESULTS**

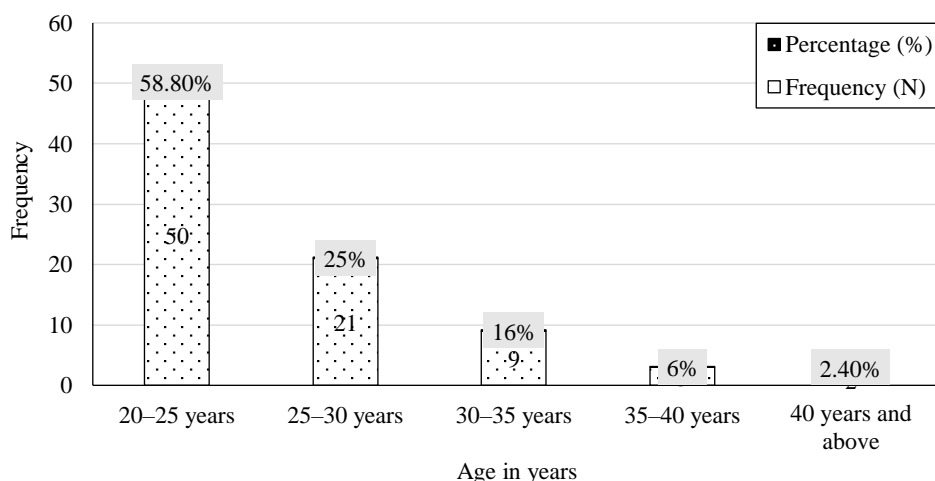
The study’s findings revealed that among the 85 staff members surveyed: 41% (n=35) had poor knowledge regarding the POSH Act. 59% (n=50) had average knowledge. None of the respondents demonstrated good or excellent knowledge. The total mean percentage was 78.4, with a mean percentage of 9.22 and a standard deviation of 3.47. demographic analysis of age shows that the majority of respondents (58.3%) fell within the 20-25 years of age group, followed by 25–30 years (25%), 30–35 years (10%), 35–40 years (3.6%), and 40 years and above (2.4%). Regarding gender, the samples consisted of 33.3% males and 66.7% females. Marital status of samples shows that majority were single (72.6%), followed by married (26.2%), separated (0.6%), divorced (0.6%), and widowed (0%). Cutting-edge association with education, the majority of respondent held a graduate degree (61.9%), followed by post-graduate (32.1%) and 12<sup>th</sup> pass (7%), occupation shows that staff nurses comprised the largest group (78.6%), followed by computer operators (2.4%), doctors (1%), receptionist (1.7%), technicians (1%) and teaching staff (3.6%). Association with source of knowledge reveals 38.1% of respondents reported gaining knowledge about POSH Act from media sources, 29.8% cited personal experience, 16.7% mentioned other sources, 13.1% reported learning from newspaper and 3.5% cited television as a source. The Chi-square test showed no significant relationship between knowledge and socio-demographic variables at  $p < 0.05$ .

**Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Sample Based on Demographic Characteristics**

Frequency and percentage distribution of sample based on age, gender, marital status, level of education, post in institution, Source of knowledge, and Knowledge score is discussed and observed in details in Tables 1–7 and Figures 2–8.

**Table 1.** Distribution of subjects according to age.

S.N.	Age in years	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1.	20–25 years	50	58.8%
2.	25–30 years	21	24.7%
3.	30–35 years	9	10.5%
4.	35–40 years	3	3.5%
5.	40 years and above	2	2.5%



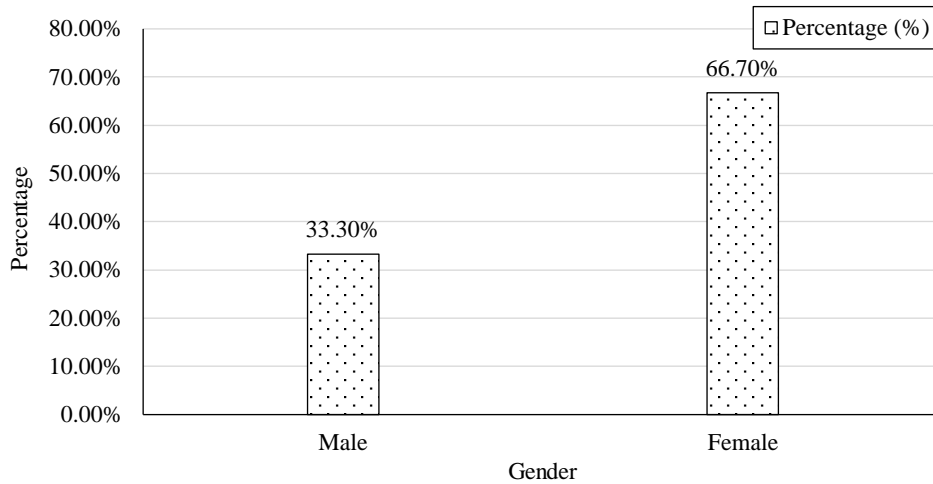
**Figure 2.** Column diagram showing distribution of subjects according to age.

**Table 2.** Distribution of subjects according to gender.

S.N.	Gender	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1.	Male	57	33.3%
2.	Female	28	66.7%

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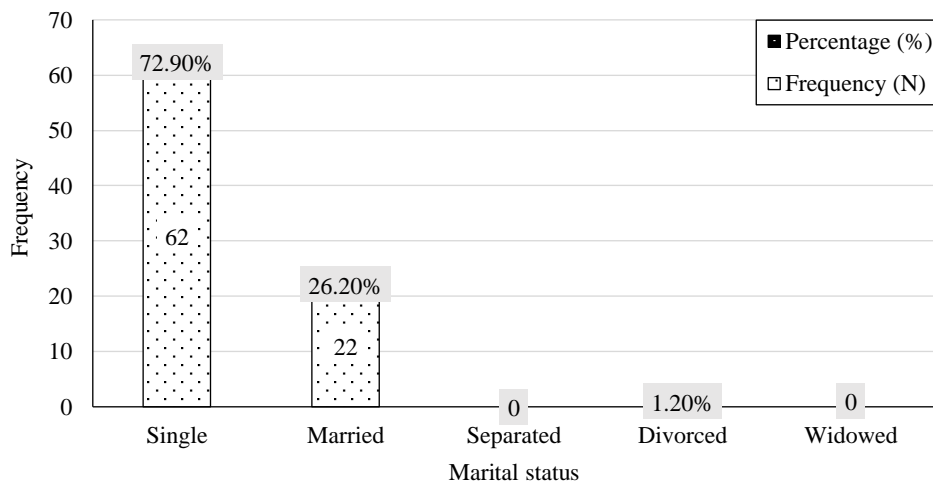
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**Figure 3.** Column diagram showing distribution of subjects according to gender.

**Table 3.** Distribution of subjects according to marital status.

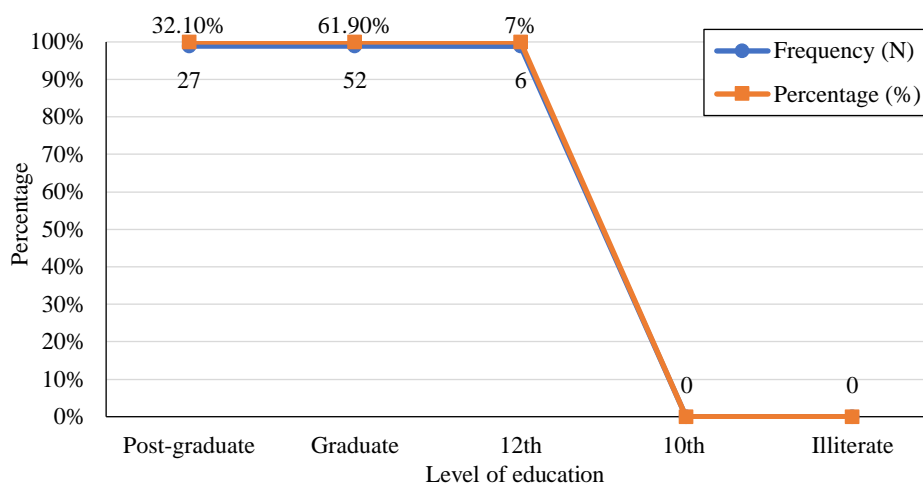
S.N.	Marital status	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1.	Single	62	72.9%
2.	Married	22	26.2%
3.	Separated	0	0
4.	Divorced	1	1.2%
5.	Widowed	0	0



**Figure 4.** Column diagram showing distribution of subjects according to marital status.

**Table 4.** Distribution of subjects according to highest degree of level of education.

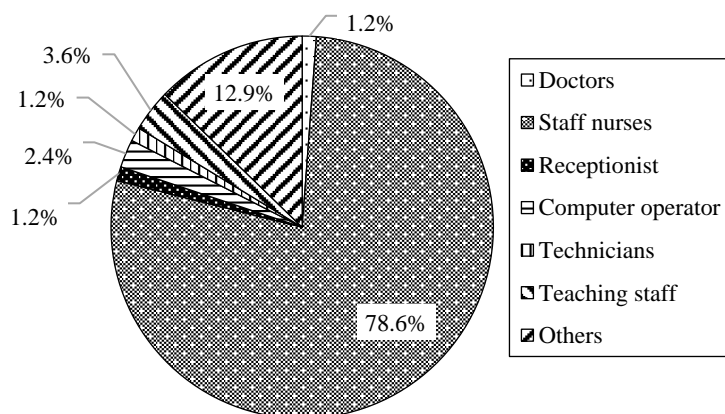
S.N.	Highest degree of education	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1.	Post-graduate	27	32.1%
2.	Graduate	52	61.9%
3.	12th	6	7%
4.	10th	0	0
5.	Illiterate	0	0



**Figure 5.** Line diagram showing distribution of subjects according to highest degree of level of education

**Table 5.** Distribution of subjects according to post in institution

S.N.	Post in institution	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1.	Doctors	1	1.2%
2.	Staff nurses	66	78.6%
3.	Receptionist	1	1.2%
4.	Computer operator	2	2.4%
5.	Technicians	1	1.2%
6.	Teaching staff	3	3.6%
7.	Others	11	12.9%



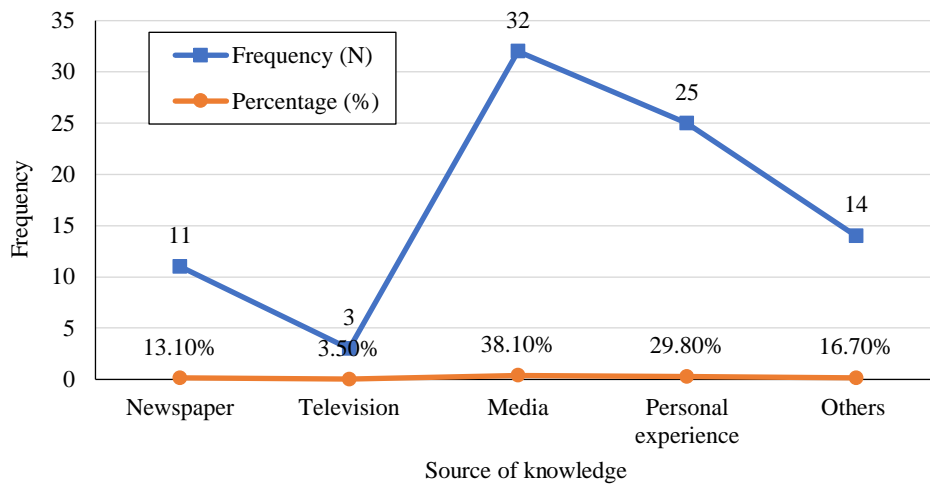
**Figure 6.** Pie diagram showing distribution of subjects according to post in institution.

**Table 6.** Distribution of subjects according to source of knowledge

S.N.	Source of knowledge	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1.	Newspaper	11	13.1%
2.	Television	3	3.5%
3.	Media	32	38.1%
4.	Personal experience	25	29.8%
5.	Others	14	16.7%

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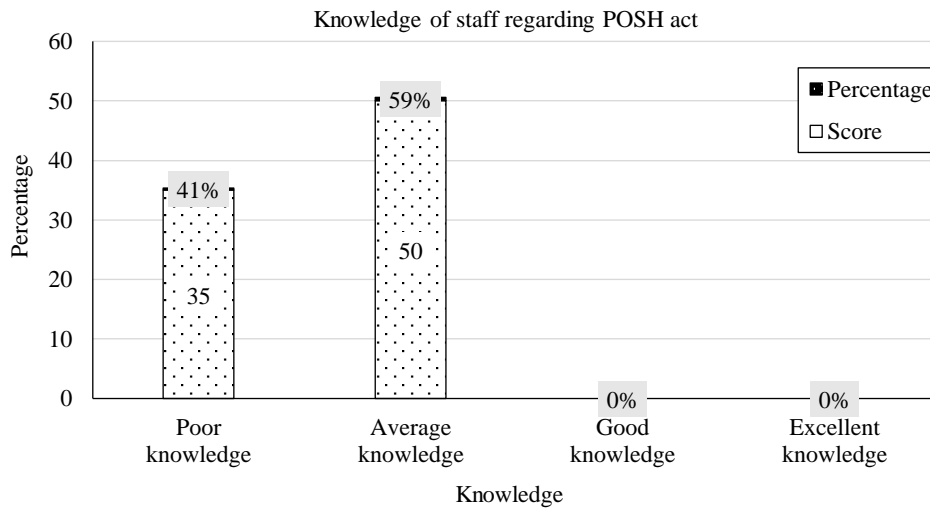
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**Figure 7.** Line diagram showing distribution of subjects according to post in institution.

**Table 7.** Frequency and percentage distribution of data related to knowledge scores.

S.N.	Knowledge level	Score	Percentage (%)
1.	Poor knowledge	35	41%
2.	Average knowledge	50	59%
3.	Good knowledge	0	0%
4.	Excellent knowledge	0	0%



**Figure 8.** The findings reveal that (35) 41% of staff had poor knowledge, (50) 59% of staff had average knowledge, 0% had good and excellent knowledge regarding POSH Act.

**Table 8.** Overall analysis of knowledge score using mean, mean percentage and standard deviation.

S.N.	Knowledge	Total score	Mean	Mean percentage	Standard deviation
1.	Regarding POSH Act	784	9.22	10.84%	3.47

The knowledge score of staff regarding POSH Act mean score is 9.22, mean percentage is 10.84 and standard deviation is 3.47 (Table 8).

**Table 9.** Chi square analysis for association between knowledge with sociodemographic variable.

S.N.	Socio demographic variable	Poor	Good	Average	Excellent	Total	X <sup>2</sup>	DF	Chi square tab value	P value	Inference
1.	<i>Age in years</i>						2.91	12	21.03	<0.05	NS
	20–25 years	21	27	0	0	48					
	25–30 years	07	14	0	0	21					
	30–35 years	02	07	0	0	9					
	35–40 years	02	02	0	0	4					
	40 years and above	02	01	0	0	3					
	<i>Total</i>	34	51	0	0	85					
2.	<i>Gender</i>						0.80	3	7.81	<0.05	NS
	Male	16	18	0	0	34					
	Female	19	32	0	0	51					
	<i>Total</i>	35	50	0	0	85					
3.	<i>Marital status</i>						1.52	12	21.03	<0.05	NS
	Single	25	37	0	0	62					
	Married	06	16	0	0	22					
	Separated	0	0	0	0	0					
	Divorced	01	0	0	0	01					
	Widowed	0	0	0	0	0					
	<i>Total</i>	32	53	0	0	85					
4.	<i>Highest degree of achievement</i>						0.95	12	21.03	<0.05	NS
	Post-graduate	13	14	0	0	27					
	Graduate	18	35	0	0	53					
	12 <sup>th</sup> Pass	03	02	0	0	05					
	10 <sup>th</sup> Pass	0	0	0	0	0					
	Illiterate	0	0	0	0	0					
	<i>Total</i>	34	51	0	0	85					
5.	<i>Post in institution</i>						2.17	18	28.8	<0.05	NS
	Doctors	0	01	0	0	01					
	Staff nurse	30	36	0	0	66					
	Receptionist	0	0	0	0	0					
	Computer operator	0	02	0	0	02					
	Technicians	01	0	0	0	01					
	Teaching Staff	0	03	0	0	03					
	Others	04	08	0	0	12					
	<i>Total</i>	35	50	0	0	85					
6.	<i>Source of previous knowledge</i>						2.33	12	21.03	<0.05	NS
	News paper	05	07	0	0	12					
	Television	0	02	0	0	02					
	Media	12	20	0	0	32					
	Personal experience	12	12	0	0	24					
	Others	06	09	0	0	15					
	<i>Total</i>	35	50	0	0	85					

Keys: NS: Non-significant, df: degree of freedom, x<sup>2</sup>: Chi Square

Association of knowledge with selected socio demographic variables reveals that age, gender, marital status, qualification, post in the institution and source of information doesn't influence knowledge level of samples (Table 9).

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The entire research proved that there is lack of knowledge regarding POSH Act among staff working in Chirayu Medical College and Hospital, which need to be improved, so that working people can maintain their safety with the help of POSH Act.

## DISCUSSION

The statement of the problem of this study is “A descriptive study to assess knowledge regarding POSH Act among staff of Chirayu Medical College and Hospital, Bhopal, M.P. The aim of this study was to evaluate the knowledge of the POSH Act among the staff at Chirayu Medical College and Hospital. A descriptive research design was used for this study, with participants selected through a convenience sampling method. The research instrument had two sections: Part I gathered demographic details from the staff, while Part II contained a structured knowledge questionnaire. The data were analysed and interpreted in line with the study’s objectives. The study was carried out over a five-month period, from July to November 2024. The sample consisted of staff members from Chirayu Medical College and Hospital who met the inclusion criteria, totalling 85 participants. A structured knowledge questionnaire was employed to evaluate their understanding of the POSH Act. The gathered data were analysed according to the study’s objectives and research hypotheses, utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistics [8–10].

## IMPLICATIONS

### Recommendations

1. Ongoing training and awareness sessions should be organized to enhance staff knowledge about the POSH Act.
2. The nursing curriculum should incorporate content related to the POSH Act and its consequences.
3. Nurse administrators should prioritize ensuring a safe and secure work environment for all employees.

### Limitations

1. The study was conducted among staff of Chirayu Medical College and Hospital, which may not be representative of all healthcare institutions.
2. The study used a convenient sampling technique, which may have introduced bias.

### Future Research

1. A comparative study can be conducted to assess knowledge regarding the POSH Act among staff of different healthcare institutions.
2. A qualitative study can be conducted to explore the experiences of employees who have faced sexual harassment in the workplace.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the major implication for nursing was that findings of study shows that there is lacking in the area of knowledge among staff regarding POSH Act, which is very important to know about and this Act is made for the safety of the employees working in different areas. The incident rate of sexual harassment at workplace is increasing day by day, as suggested by the Act internal committee should be formed in every institution. The study concluded that there is less knowledge among staff regarding POSH Act which should be taken care off.

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