A nurse is supposed to have some degree of qualification and competent enough to provide services to a patient. Nurses are expected to be efficient and should stand-up to the legitimate expectations in maintaining the required standards of care and limitations. As the public and profession become more and more aware of the practicing law, both the patient and nurse are in need to protect themselves from legal actions. Hence, understanding and practicing of legal responsibilities has become greater importance.

The object of the present study is to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of staff nurses towards their legal responsibilities in patient care in relation with their personal variables (viz., age, religion, professional education, work experience, exposure to in-service education programme), etc. The present study is a maiden attempt by the researcher on exploration of knowledge, attitude, practice of legal responsibilities among staff nurses in India. The sample of staff nurses were drawn from the IVth zone of Andhra Pradesh consisting of four districts namely Anantapur, Chittoor, Kurnool & Kadapa. The total sample size is 330 staff nurses from the Govt. Hospitals from the said above districts. An interview schedule was developed and utilized for the collection of data.

There are number of research studies on legal aspects of nursing profession. Most of them are organized in other countries. This study may be the 1st one of that sort in India.

With the help of Quartiles (statistics) the actual scores (data) of staff nurses, regarding knowledge, attitude, and practice of legal responsibilities in nursing profession, total staff nurses were categories into three groups for analysis and understanding purpose. The 3rd chapter discussed on the knowledge components of legal aspects in nursing profession in relation with the certain personal factors of nurses. These factors are districts (residence), age, religion, professional education, job experience, job satisfaction, monthly income, medical background of family, etc.
Based on knowledge score the total 330 staff nurses are categorized into three groups as low, moderate and high knowledgeable. In this study, knowledge on various aspects of legal responsibilities is observed as high (48.2%) followed by low (31.8%) and moderate (20.0%). From the study results it is observed that high proportion of staff nurses from Chittoor district (53.0%) are knowledgeable followed by Anantapur (52.4%), Kurnool (48.2%) and Kadapa (39.0%) on various aspects of legal responsibilities in nursing profession.

With regarding to religious aspects in relation to knowledge, high proportion of Hindus (75.47%) are knowledgeable followed by Christians and Muslims.

Majority of the staff nurse in the age group 30-40 years (48.5%). But, among the total staff nurses with high levels of knowledge (159), high proportion belongs to 30-40 years only (49.7%).

With regarding to marital status and knowledge levels, majority of the staff nurses are married (78.5%). Among the staff nurses with high levels of knowledge (159), married are knowledgeable (75.47%) in total. About 80 percent of the staff nurses are General Nursing and Midwifery Diploma holders (GNMs) compared to B.Sc., Nursing and Post Certificate B.Sc., Nursing. But, the knowledge on various aspects of legal responsibilities in nursing profession is observed highly among Post Certificate B.Sc., Nursing holders. This association between professional education and knowledge is found as statistically significant. But, among the total staff nurses who are with high knowledge (159) high proportion belongs to General Nursing and Midwifery Diploma holders (117).

With regarding to job experience and awareness on legal aspects of Nursing Profession which is highly associated higher proportion of knowledgeable staff nurses are with longer duration of nursing practice. That is staff nurses with 10 years and above experience are with high awareness on various aspects of legal responsibilities.

With regarding to in-service training and status of knowledge, high proportion (82%) of staff nurses have not attended any in-service education. But, among the staff nurses with in-service training, high proportion of them (54.2%) are knowledgeable.
Similarly, majority of staff nurses (275) under study are not having any family member with medical background – Doctor / nurses in their families. But, among the staff nurses who are having a family number with a medical person, high proportion (58.2%) of nurses are observed with high levels of knowledge on various aspects of legal responsibilities in nursing profession.

But, there is no much difference found among the staff nurses between their knowledge levels and motivation behind choosing the profession ‘nursing’ in the present study.

But, high proportion of staff nurses are found as knowledgeable in higher income levels in the present study.

Similarly, among the staff nurses who are with satisfaction in their profession are with high levels of knowledge on various aspects of legal responsibilities in nursing profession.

Here in the present study, the researcher tried to analyse the attitude aspects of staff nurses under study on various aspects of legal responsibilities of nursing profession.

Based on statistical process of calculation of Quartiles by considering the actual scores of respondents (staff nurses) attitude on various aspects of legal responsibilities under study, the status of attitude is divided into three categories as ‘positive’ ‘neutral’ and ‘negative’ in the present study. These categories are studied and analysed in relation with other characteristics of staff nurses.

The positive attitude is observed highly among the staff nurses of Chittoor district (34.9%) followed by Kurnool district (25.3%), Anantapur district (24.4%), and Kadapa (17.1%). This association between attitude of the staff nurses in relation with their residence on legal responsibilities of nursing profession is statistically significant based on chi-square values.

This positive attitude is observed more among Hindus followed by Christians and Muslim in the present study.

The staff nurses between 30-40 years of age are found with positive attitude on legal aspects of nursing profession in this study.
Similarly, positive attitude is observed among married staff nurses highly.

With regarding to professional education and attitude levels, positive attitude is observed more (87%) among the staff nurses with General Nursing and Midwifery Diploma holders in total, in this study.

Similarly, the staff nurses with longer period of Job experience are found with positive attitude on various aspects of legal responsibilities of nursing profession in the present study. This association is proved as significant statistically.

In this study, there is no differential attitude found among the staff nurses with their family background, whether there with a medical persons in the family or not and their attitude status.

But, positive attitude is observed more among staff nurses who have chosen the nursing profession with their personal interest.

Similarly, positive attitude is observed more among the staff nurses with high income group. The association with monthly income and attitude status is proved as significant statistically in the study.

High levels of positive attitude is observed more among the staff nurses who are satisfied with their profession in the present study.

Undoubtedly, practice of any profession/job would be influenced by the knowledge and attitude of that particular work/activity. Here also the researcher made an attempt to analyse and understand the practice status of Staff Nurses under study.

With the help of Quartiles (statistics) by considering the actual scores on various Legal aspects to be followed in Nursing Practice, the total Staff Nurses under study are categorised into three groups according to the practice status of their Nursing Profession as **Low, Moderate and High** levels of Practice.

The practicing of legal responsibilities in their regular job is observed as moderate by high proportion of staff nurses (37.7%). The practice status is observed as low (34.2%) in total, in the present study. Though the practice level is low in total, among the staff nurses with high practice (93), Ananthapur district (31; 33.3%) stood 1st, followed by Kurnool district (24; 28.9%). The reason for high practice in
Ananthapur district may be due to the establishment of teaching hospital recently, less than 5 years in Ananthapur district.

The association between practice status of legal responsibilities, in relation with their place of work is statistically significant at 1 percent level.

The high proportion of Staff Nurses of Hindu religion (71 ; 76.3%) are observed in high practice category. That is high proportion of Staff Nurses among Hindus are Practicing Nursing Profession by observing various Legal aspects /Legal Responsibilities of Nursing Profession in the present study.

The high proportion of Staff Nurses are in the age group 30- 40 years (160; 48.5%). Among the Staff Nurses who are practicing highly the Legal Responsibilities in their profession are also high (49 ; 52.7%) in the age group 30-40 years only.

Similarly, the practice status observed as high among married Staff Nurses (79; 85percent) though the total practice status is low in the study area.

Majority of the Staff Nurses under study are General Nursing and Midwifery diploma holders (264;80.0%). Among the sample under study, the practice of Legal Responsibilities in their regular nursing practice also observed as high among the G.N.Ms only (69;74.2%).

Though the overall practice of Legal Responsibilities in their Nursing Practice/job is low (28.2%) in the study, the practice levels are enhanced on par with the increase in duration of nursing practice. That is, among the staff nurses who are observing legal responsibilities as high, high proportion of them are with 10 and more years of nursing practice (34.4%).

Though practice of Legal Responsibilities is observed as moderate in the study, the Staff Nurses who are having family member with medical background are observed as highly practicing Legal Responsibilities in their Nursing Practice (41.8 percent).

In the present study it is observed as there is no much difference among the Staff Nurses who have chosen this Nursing profession with personal interest/job secure and by motivation with family member. In fact, Staff Nurses with high levels of practice of Legal Responsibilities are observed among them who have chosen this profession with personal interest (48; 51.6 percent out of the total 93).
Though practice levels of Legal Responsibilities are observed as moderate, high proportion of Staff Nurses are observed at high levels of practicing Legal Responsibilities with high income (34.4%; 32 out of 93) category.

Among the Staff Nurses under the categories of ‘satisfied’ with their job, high proportion (70 out of 93; 75.3 percent) are practicing high levels of Legal Responsibilities in exercising their job activities in the present study.

**Implications**

Based on this study findings, which are proved statistically in more than one way, in order to insist and practice of legal responsibilities among staff nurses, the following suggestions may be considered.

- Strengthening of infrastructure facilities at hospitals / clinics.
- Incorporation of content of legal responsibilities in the educational curricula of Nursing profession.
- Provision of reasonable monthly remunerations.
- Provision of in-service training / orientation / refresher programmes.
- Facilitation of job satisfaction for / among staff nurses.