



Description of Ethical and Legal Dental Knowledge Level Among Students in Dentistry

Nadya Restu Ryendra^{1*}, Erdianto Setya Wardhana², and Grahita Aditya²

¹Student Faculty of Dentistry Sultan Agung Islamic University, Semarang, Indonesia.

²Departement of Dental Public Health of Dentistry Sultan Agung Islamic University, Semarang, Indonesia.

*Corresponding author: nadyaryendra325@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: The practice of dentists must appropriate with the standards and ethics of the dental profession. Lack of understanding of the Kode Etik Kedokteran Gigi and lack of professional discipline have led to many cases of legal and ethical violations committed by doctors. Knowledge will affect a person's actions or practices, knowledge of dental law and ethics will influence students to act in accordance with dental ethics and law to prevent ethical and legal violations. Basically, the level of one's knowledge of professional ethics and dental law can be influenced by several factors. The aim to this study to determine the level of dental law and ethics knowledge. **Method:** The research was conducted by filling out questionnaires directly by the subject. The level of knowledge is classified into 3 levels, low, sufficient and high. **Result:** The results showed that students in the second year of preclinical, fourth year of preclinic, first year of clinic, second year of clinic, and third year of clinic had a good level of dental ethical and legal knowledge with an overall percentage in the range of 76-100%, while third year preclinical students have a sufficient level of knowledge. **Conclusion:** Sultan Agung Islamic University dental students have a good level of knowledge regarding the ethics and laws of dentistry.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dentists must have a professional attitude in dealing with issues related to ethics, law, and legislation.¹ In 2012, there was a case of negligence committed by a dentist that resulted in patient injury in decision number 257/Pid.B/2015/PN.Dps. In this case, a dentist extracted a tooth without proper procedures. The defendant's actions met the material nature of violating the standards or provisions in the profession and standard operating procedures.²

Health services provided by dentists are a service to the community accompanied by material and formal legal requirements, in accordance with competence and professionalism at work.³ Medical ethics regulates the attitude of doctors towards their colleagues, society, and the government, as well as regulates attitudes and behavior towards patients as responsible doctors. Currently, ethical standards in modern dentistry are progressing rapidly. Learning to deal with practical ethical issues and developing one's professional identity are important steps to becoming a good dentist.⁴

In carrying out their practice, doctors have an obligation to fulfill the rights of patients, such as receiving proper health services. Health care efforts by doctors are required to comply with medical practice standards, as this guarantees quality health services for patients.⁵ With legal certainty and protection, doctors and dentists who have the authority to provide health practices/services and comply with professional standards will feel secure in their practice.⁶

There is growing public concern about the ethical behavior of healthcare professionals. This is often reflected in complaints about poor ethical behavior and the increasing use of litigation against health practitioners. The public is becoming increasingly aware of their human rights, including those related to health.⁴ This awareness can be influenced by the level of public knowledge, obtained from various media sources. Patient awareness regarding health encourages dentists to conduct holistic examinations and adhere to existing standards. Dentists are also encouraged to communicate clearly with both patients and their families.¹ When a doctor or dentist's actions contradict the professional code of ethics, they can be considered to have committed an ethical violation.⁶

Although the professional code of ethics is taught to prospective doctors and dentists during preclinical education, there are still many dentists who violate ethical principles.⁷ This is often due to a lack of understanding of the Medical Code of Ethics and a lack of professional discipline. As a result, there has been an increase in cases of legal and ethical violations committed by doctors.⁷ Therefore, it is crucial for doctors and other healthcare professionals to have a strong awareness of professional ethics and to practice their profession while considering various legal aspects. The education of medical ethics and law plays a vital role in shaping the behavior of students who will have direct contact with patients. A person's behavior is influenced by a fundamental aspect, namely knowledge. Knowledge is categorized into three levels: insufficient knowledge (<56%), sufficient knowledge (56-75%), and good knowledge (76-100%).¹⁰

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The type of research used in this study is quantitative descriptive research with an observational research design, specifically a cross-sectional study. The population of this research consists of active preclinical and clinical students from the Faculty of Dentistry, Sultan Agung Islamic University, Semarang. The respondents were selected using accidental sampling, with a total sample size of 84 participants, including preclinical students (second, third, and fourth year) and clinical students (first, second, and third year). The data collected in this study are primary data, obtained directly from the respondents through structured questionnaires. The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire consisting of 14 questions related to the level of knowledge of dental medical ethics and law. This knowledge level questionnaire is an adapted translation of previous research questionnaires titled "Awareness and Knowledge of Medical Law and Ethics Among Clinical Students in Dentistry" and "Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practice of Healthcare Ethics and Law Among Dental Graduates at the RV Dental College, Bengaluru".⁴

The questionnaire used in this research has undergone validity and reliability testing. The data analysis of the questionnaire results will use the formula for determining the percentage of the knowledge level, which is calculated as follows:

$$Presentase = \frac{\text{Correct value sum}}{\text{Number of questions}} \times 100\%$$

The percentage of overall correct answers is calculated for each year of education and the results are retrieved.

3. RESULTS

A total of 84 students participated and answered 14 questions related to dental ethics and law

- a. Questions number 1 and 2 → related to the doctor's obligation to his patient,
- b. Questions number 3 and 6 → related to the rights of the patient,
- c. Question number 4 → related to the doctor's responsibility to the patient,
- d. Questions number 5 and 9 → related to the rights of doctors,
- e. Question number 7 → related to the doctor's obligations to colleagues,
- f. Question number 8 → related to symbol abuse,
- g. Question number 10 → related to patient confidentiality,
- h. Question number 11 → related to the legality of treating patients,
- i. Question number 12 → related to medical record law,
- j. Question number 13 → related to the nature of medical records, and
- k. Question number 14 → related to the nature of informed consent

The percentage of all correct answers given by each year of education is shown in table 1 and figure .

TABLE 1. Level Knowledge of Students

Educational Year	Overall percentage (%)	Knowledge level
Second year (preclinical)	80,6	Good
Third year (preclinic)	70,9	Moderate
Fourth year (preclinic)	81,3	Good
First year (clinic)	80,1	Good
Second Year (clinic)	79,6	Good
Third year (Clinical)	80,0	Good
All dentistry students	78,7	Good

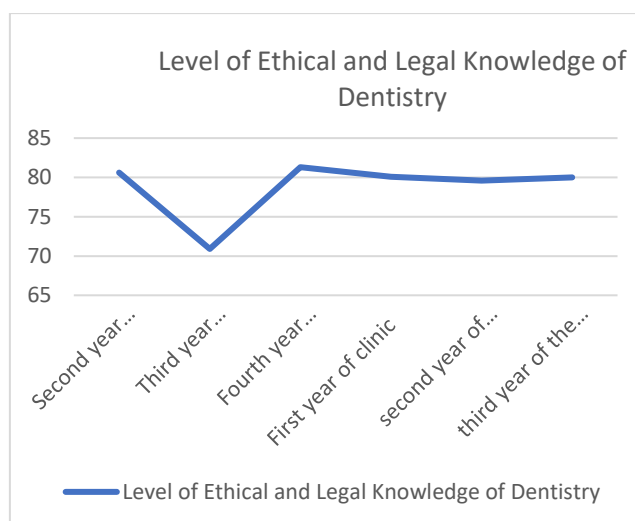


FIGURE 1. Level Knowledge of Students

4. DISCUSSION

The results showed that students in the second year of preclinical, fourth year of preclinic, first year of clinic, second year of clinic, and third year of clinic had a good level of dental ethical and legal knowledge with an overall percentage in the range of 76-100%, while third year preclinical students have a sufficient level of knowledge related to dental ethics and law with an overall percentage range of 56-75%. The average level of knowledge of dental ethics and law for all students is good. Knowledge related to ethics and law among dental students can be increased by participating in seminars and training.¹¹ Similar to previous research which concluded that most dentistry practitioners know dental ethics but their knowledge of jurisprudence and COPRA needs to be enriched. Although recommendations can be given to the dental profession to change their behavior, real improvement is unlikely without changes in legislation and social policies.¹² Ethics is an important part of a profession. Codes of ethics laid down by regulatory bodies as well as professional associations act as a guiding light in distinguishing between right and wrong, observing one's duties and maintaining good interpersonal relations.¹³ Dental jurisprudence is the set of laws passed by individual state legislatures that define the legal and regulatory boundaries related to the practice of dentistry.^{14,15}

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of this study it can be concluded that medical students at the Sultan Agung Islamic University have a good level of knowledge regarding dental ethics and law.

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