



DETERMINING THE ATTITUDES OF NURSING STUDENTS TOWARDS THE NURSING PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

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Objectives: This descriptive study was aimed at determining nursing students' attitudes towards nursing.

Materials and method: The study included 337 students. In the collection of data, the "Descriptive Information Form", which questions the students' socio-demographic characteristics, and the "Attitude Scale for Nursing Profession (ASNP)" were used.

Results: While 65.3% of the students chose the nursing profession willingly, 26.7% did not. As for the reasons for choosing nursing, 38.6% chose it because they wanted to help people and 32.3% chose it because it provides security. The mean score the participating students obtained from the Attitude Scale for Nursing Profession was 159.59 ± 17.48. The analysis of participating students' attitudes towards the nursing profession demonstrated that 98.52% of the students displayed a positive attitude towards the Characteristics of the Nursing Profession sub-dimension, 81.3% towards the Preference for the Nursing Profession sub-dimension and 97.3% towards the General Situation of the Nursing Profession sub-dimension.

Conclusion: The nursing students' attitudes towards the nursing profession were positive in all sub-dimensions. Of the students, those who were women, chose nursing willingly, chose nursing to help people and perceived nursing as an ideal profession displayed more positive attitudes towards nursing.

Key Words: Nursing profession, attitude, nursing students

1. INTRODUCTION

Choosing a profession is one of the most important decisions an individual makes in his or her life. When people choose a profession, they are affected by the society' and their own attitudes towards that profession (1,2). As in all other professions, it is important how nurses perceive their profession. How nurses perceive the profession affects their developing perspectives of nursing, and understanding the importance of being knowledgeable in nursing practices (3). The review of studies conducted on nursing students' choice of profession demonstrated that the majority of the students chose the profession willingly and were satisfied with the profession they chose. Factors

such as the thought that they would not be unemployed in nursing, the feeling of willingness to help people and the belief that nursing would provide them with a good career opportunity affected their choosing the nursing profession (2-6). Among the reasons why students chose the nursing profession in studies conducted in different countries were the desire to help people and to provide care for them, greater employment opportunities, being passionate about the nursing profession, the effect of family and people close to them, the need of the society for nursing, its being related to the field of health, perceiving the nursing profession suitable for oneself, high salary opportunity, enjoying being in the hospital

environment, and ease of being able to work in the nursing department (7,8).

In order for nursing students to behave as required by the profession and to provide quality health care services, they should be knowledgeable about their profession, love it and choose this profession consciously (5). Professional consciousness, whose foundations are laid during school years, continues throughout one's professional life and ensures the formation of the professional philosophy of the member of the profession (3,9,10). Gaining students professional consciousness and equipping them with adequate professional knowledge before they start out their professional career contribute to the development of their professional behaviors and to the improvement of nursing education (3,9,10). This descriptive study was aimed at determining nursing students' attitudes towards nursing.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Type of Research

This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted with the students of the Department of Nursing in the Faculty of Health Sciences of a state university in the spring semester of the 2020-2021 academic year.

2.2. Sample of the Research

The study population comprised 593 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade students attending the Nursing Department. No sampling method was implemented in the present study. All the students who volunteered to participate in the study were included in the sample group. The study data were collected after 366 students who volunteered to participate in the study gave their written consent. During the data coding process, 29 data collection forms with missing data or filled in incorrectly were excluded. Therefore, the study was completed with 337 students.

2.3. Data Collection Forms

In the collection of data, the "Descriptive Information Form", which questions the students' socio-demographic characteristics, and the "Attitude Scale for Nursing Profession (ASNP)" were used.

Descriptive Information Form

The form has 13 items. Some of the items question the participating students' year at school, age, sex, marital status, monthly income level, place of residence, and place of accommodation. The remaining items question the high school they graduated from, whether they work, whether they have social security, whether they have a nurse in the family, whether they choose the nursing profession willingly, and why they choose the nursing profession.

Attitude Scale for Nursing Profession (ASNP)

The scale developed by İpek Çoban and Kaşıkçı (11) has 40 items and the following 3 subscales: Characteristics of the Nursing Profession, Preference for the Nursing Profession and General Situation of the Nursing Profession. Responses given to the items are rated on 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5. Positively keyed items are rated as follows: 1: strongly disagree, 2: agree little, 3: agree moderately, 4: strongly agree, and 5: totally agree. Of the 40 items of the final version of the ASNP, 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30, 34 and 38 are reverse scored. The higher the score obtained from the scale is, the more positive the attitude displayed towards the nursing profession is. The minimum and maximum possible scores to be obtained from the ASNP are 40 and 200 respectively. If the total score a person obtains from the ASNP is over 120, he or she is said to display a positive attitude towards nursing. If a person obtains ≥ 54 points from the Characteristics of the Nursing Profession, ≥ 39 points from the Preference for the Nursing Profession, and ≥ 27 points from the General Situation of the Nursing Profession, he or she is said to display a positive attitude towards the relevant sub-dimension. The validity and reliability study of the ASNP demonstrated that the scale was highly valid and reliable. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.91 (11). In our study, the cronbah alpha value of the scale was determined as 0.81.

2.4. Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed in the SPSS package

program and P-values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant. Descriptive statistics were used to present the data related to the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants as arithmetic mean, standard deviation and percentage. The T test and ANOVA were used to analyze the relationship between dependent variable and independent variable.

2.5. Ethical Issues in Research

The Human Rights Declaration of Helsinki conducted the study process. In order to conduct the study, written permissions were obtained from the Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Non-Interventional Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval Number: GO 2021/294, Date: 07.07.2021). and the Head of the Nursing Department of the Faculty of Health Sciences where the study was to

be conducted. Written informed consent was obtained from the students who volunteered to participate in the study.

2.6. Limitations of the Study

The most important limitation of the present study is that the study included only the students of the Faculty of Health Sciences Nursing Department in a single province. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized.

3. RESULTS

The study included 337 students. The mean age of the students was 20.50±1.88 years. Of the students, 32% were in the 1st grade, 24.3% in the 2nd grade, 21.4% in the 3rd grade and 22.3% in the 4th grade, 76.9% were female (Table 1).

While 65.3% of the students chose the nursing profession willingly, 26.7% did not. As for the reasons

Table 1. Demographic Information of Students

| | Mean ± SD | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|----------|
| Age | 20.44±2.13 | |
| | n | % |
| Sex | | |
| Woman | 259 | 76.9 |
| Man | 78 | 23.1 |
| Year at school | | |
| 1 | 108 | 32 |
| 2 | 82 | 24.3 |
| 3 | 72 | 21.4 |
| 4 | 75 | 22.3 |
| Graduated high school | | |
| General High School | 87 | 25.8 |
| Anatolian High School | 175 | 51.9 |
| Science High School | 7 | 2.1 |
| Other | 68 | 20.2 |
| Employment status | | |
| Yes | 21 | 6.2 |
| No | 316 | 93.8 |
| Having a nurse family member | | |
| Yes | 74 | 22 |
| No | 263 | 78 |

Table 2. Students' Attitudes Towards Nursing Profession

| Sub-dimensions of the ASPN | Students' Attitude | | | |
|---|--------------------|------|----------|------|
| | Positive | | Negative | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Characteristics of the Nursing Profession | 332 | 98.5 | 5 | 1.5 |
| Preference for the Nursing Profession | 274 | 81.3 | 63 | 18.7 |
| General Situation of the Nursing Profession | 328 | 97.3 | 9 | 2.7 |

ASPN: Attitude Scale for Nursing Profession

Table 3. Sub-Dimensions of the ASPN According to Students' Willingly Choice of Profession

| | Sub-Dimensions of the ASPN | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|------|----------|-----|---------------------------------------|------|----------|------|---|------|----------|------|
| | Characteristics of the Nursing Profession | | | | Preference for the Nursing Profession | | | | General Situation of the Nursing Profession | | | |
| | Positive | | Negative | | Positive | | Negative | | Positive | | Negative | |
| Willingly Choice of Profession | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Willingly | 219 | 99.5 | 1 | 0.5 | 199 | 90.4 | 21 | 9.6 | 217 | 98.6 | 3 | 1.4 |
| Unwillingly | 87 | 96.6 | 3 | 3.4 | 58 | 64.4 | 32 | 35.6 | 87 | 96.6 | 3 | 3.4 |
| Hesitant | 56 | 96.2 | 1 | 3.8 | 17 | 62.9 | 10 | 37.1 | 24 | 88.8 | 3 | 11.4 |
| | P< 0.001 | | | | P< 0.001 | | | | P< 0.001 | | | |

p<0.05

ASPN: Attitude Scale for Nursing Profession

for choosing nursing, 38.6% chose it because they wanted to help people and 32.3% chose it because it provides security (Table 2). The mean score the participating students obtained from the Attitude Scale for Nursing Profession was 159.59 ± 17.48 . The analysis of the mean scores obtained from the ASPN in terms of the sex variable demonstrated that there were significant differences between the participants' scores, and that the female students obtained higher scores ($p < 0.001$, $t = 3.69$). The analysis in terms of the variables such as year at school, employment status and having a nurse family member also demonstrated that there were not significant differences between the participants' scores.

The mean scores the participants obtained from the Characteristics of the Nursing Profession, Preference for the Nursing Profession and General Situation of the Nursing Profession sub-dimensions were 79.47 ± 9.70 , 46.40 ± 8.84 , 33.71 ± 4.03 respectively.

The female participants obtained statistically significantly higher mean scores from the Characteristics of the Nursing Profession and Preference for the Nursing Profession sub-dimensions ($p < 0.05$). The analysis of the mean scores obtained from the sub-dimensions of the ASPN in terms of the variables such as year at school, marital status and having a nurse family member also demonstrated that there were not significant differences between the participants' scores.

The analysis of participating students' attitudes towards the nursing profession demonstrated that 98.52% of the students displayed a positive attitude towards the Characteristics of the Nursing Profession sub-dimension, 81.3% towards the Preference for the Nursing Profession sub-dimension and 97.3% towards the General Situation of the Nursing Profession sub-dimension (Table 3). A statistically significant correlation was determined between the variable "choosing the profession

Table 4. Sub-Dimensions of the ASNPN According to Students' Reasons for Choosing a Profession

| Reasons for Choosing a Profession | Sub-Dimensions of the ASNPN | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|------|----------|-----|---------------------------------------|------|----------|------|---|------|----------|-----|
| | Characteristics of the Nursing Profession | | | | Preference for the Nursing Profession | | | | General Situation of the Nursing Profession | | | |
| | Positive | | Negative | | Positive | | Negative | | Positive | | Negative | |
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| To help others | 128 | 98.4 | 2 | 1.6 | 112 | 86.1 | 18 | 13.9 | 128 | 98.4 | 2 | 1.4 |
| Ease of Employment | 108 | 99 | 1 | 1 | 80 | 73.3 | 29 | 26.7 | 106 | 97.2 | 3 | 2.8 |
| To realize their ideals | 72 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 64 | 88.8 | 8 | 11.2 | 69 | 95.8 | 3 | 4.2 |
| Family request | 24 | 92.3 | 2 | 7.7 | 18 | 69.2 | 8 | 30.8 | 25 | 96.1 | 1 | 3.9 |
| | P<0.05 | | | | P< 0.01 | | | | P<0.05 | | | |

p<0.05

ASNPN: Attitude Scale for Nursing Profession

willingly and the attitudes towards the nursing profession. Of the students, those who chose the nursing profession willingly obtained higher mean scores from all the three sub-dimensions of the ASNPN than did the students who did not choose the nursing profession willingly ($p < 0.001$). A statistically significant correlation was determined between the factors affecting their preference for the profession and their attitudes towards the nursing profession ($p < 0.05$). While of the participants, those who chose the profession to help others or to realize their ideals obtained higher mean scores from the Characteristics of the Nursing Profession and Preference for the Nursing Profession sub-dimensions, those who chose the profession to help others also obtained higher mean scores from the the General Situation of the Nursing Profession ($p < 0.05$)

4. DISCUSSION

In the present study, more than half of the students chose the nursing profession willingly. The review of the studies conducted on the issue revealed that the rate of choosing the profession willingly from the past to the present increased from 18% to 70% (6,9,12-15). Although the rate of those who choose the profession willingly is high in our country, this rate is low in some studies conducted abroad

(7,12,16). It should be kept in mind that the structural differences of societies may affect the level of willingness to choose the profession (17). One's being successful in the profession is closely related to his or her choosing the profession consciously and willingly (9). In addition, adapting to the profession and maintaining a productive working life are also affected by one's having positive opinions of and displaying positive attitudes towards the profession (7,12).

In the literature, the factors that affect the choice of profession are generally classified under two headings: external factors (employment opportunities, financial opportunities, family desire, pressure, exam score) and internal factors (being passionate about the profession, interest in the profession, having a healthcare professional in the family, love of people, personality traits) (2,6,18). In other studies, employment opportunities and financial opportunities were the decisive factors in choosing the nursing profession (7,12,14,18-24). Although the recent increase in unemployment rates affects the choice of profession due to economic concerns, in the present study, the factors which affected the participants' choice of nursing were their desire to help people and perceiving nursing as an ideal profession. In the present study,

the nursing students' attitudes towards the nursing profession were positive in all sub-dimensions. In their study conducted with 131 nursing students in 2016, Zencir and Eşer (6) obtained similar results. Findings of several studies conducted in different countries are consistent with those of our study (24-28). In their study conducted with nurses, Tarhan et al., (29) found that attitudes displayed towards the nursing profession by those who were passionate about the nursing profession were more positive. These positive attitudes of the students can be attributed to their willingness to choose the nursing profession, greater employment opportunities of nursing, and the increase in their awareness of nursing after they started their education life in nursing. In our study, the female students displayed more positive attitudes towards nursing. The fact that the nursing profession is perceived as a female profession in society can be said to affect female nurses' displaying positive attitudes towards nursing. In several studies, nursing has been stated as a profession suitable for women (30,31).

In the present study, the participants who chose the nursing profession willingly displayed more positive attitudes towards the profession in all sub-dimensions than did the students who chose it unwillingly or the students who were undecided about whether to choose nursing. The results of the studies conducted by Zencir and Eşer (6), and Seval and Sönmez (2) in our country, Turkey, are consistent with the results of our study. Similar results were also obtained in studies conducted abroad (24,27). It is known that displaying a positive attitude towards nursing affects a person's decision to choose the profession willingly (16,24). While of the participants, those who chose the profession to help others or to realize their ideals obtained higher mean scores from the Characteristics of the Nursing Profession and Preference for the Nursing Profession sub-dimensions, those who chose the profession to help others also obtained higher mean scores from the General Situation of the Nursing Profession ($p < 0.05$) in Zencir and Eşer's study (6),

those who chose nursing due to financial opportunities displayed a more positive attitude towards nursing. That the students who chose nursing to help people or perceived nursing as their ideal profession displayed a positive attitude towards nursing not only is an expected result but also is of importance for the development of nursing profession.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the nursing students' attitudes towards the nursing profession were positive in all sub-dimensions. Of the students, those who were women, chose nursing willingly, chose nursing to help people and perceived nursing as an ideal profession displayed more positive attitudes towards nursing. Determining the attitudes of the candidates of a profession towards the profession can provide the opportunity for the planning and implementing of educational goals aimed at changing students' negative attitudes towards the profession if they have any. Thus, enabling prospective nurses to gain positive attitudes towards nursing during nursing education can contribute to their having professional commitment and being nurses who are passionate about the nursing profession. The present study is expected to contribute to the development and improvement of the nursing profession.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Statement: The Human Rights Declaration of Helsinki conducted the study process. Ethical approval was obtained for this study from the Non-Interventional Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval Number: GO 2021/294, Date: 07.07.2021).

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