



Evaluation of Nursing Students' Nursing Undergraduate Program and Determination of Their Opinions on Education

Hemşirelik Öğrencilerinin Hemşirelik Lisans Programını Değerlendirmeleri ve Eğitime İlişkin Görüşlerinin Belirlenmesi

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Abstract

Objective: This study was conducted to evaluate the nursing undergraduate program of fourth grade nursing students and to determine their opinions on education.

Material and Method: The sample of the descriptive and cross-sectional study consisted of 131 fourth grade nursing students who agreed to participate in the study in the 2018-2019 academic year. The data of the research were collected with The Introductory Information Form and the Bachelor's Degree Nursing Program Assessment Scale. The total score of Bachelor's degree nursing program assessment scale is 100, and the low score indicates that the program's effectiveness is negative and the high score is the program's effectiveness. Frequency, mean, percentage values, correlation analysis and Mann-Whitney U test were used to evaluate the data.

Results: It was found that 53,4% of the students thought to work as a clinician after graduation and 87% thought that there was a difference between theoretical education and clinical practices in the nursing education. The most common reason leading to difference is respectively; It was determined that the number of students was high (74.8%), insufficient application areas (63.4%), and the lack of teaching staff (47.3%). In order to overcome this difference of students; It has been determined that it makes suggestions such as strengthening the cooperation between clinical nurses and teaching staff (61.1%), establishment of simulation laboratories in schools (58,8%) and ensuring that the teaching staff deficit is in clinics (55%). The mean score of the students to evaluate the undergraduate program in nursing was 61.1±19.8.

Conclusion: It was determined that the majority of students stated that there was a difference between theoretical education and clinical practices in nursing and they evaluated the undergraduate program in nursing as close to positive.

Keywords: Nursing education, nursing students, bachelor program, theory

Öz

Amaç: Bu araştırma, hemşirelik dördüncü sınıf öğrencilerinin hemşirelik lisans programını değerlendirmeleri ve eğitime ilişkin görüşlerinin belirlenmesi amacıyla yapıldı.

Gereç ve Yöntem: Tanımlayıcı ve kesitsel tipte olan çalışmanın örneklemini 2018-2019 eğitim-öğretim yılında araştırmaya katılmayı kabul eden 131 dördüncü sınıf hemşirelik öğrencisi oluşturdu. Araştırmanın verileri "Tanıtıcı Bilgi Formu" ve "Hemşirelikte Lisans Programını Değerlendirme Ölçeği" ile toplandı. Hemşirelikte lisans programını değerlendirme ölçeğinin toplam puanı 100 olup, düşük puan programın etkinliğinin olumsuz, yüksek puan ise program etkinliğinin olumlu olduğunu göstermektedir. Verilerin değerlendirilmesinde frekans, ortalama, yüzde değerleri, korelasyon analizi ve Mann-Whitney U testi kullanıldı.

Bulgular: Öğrencilerin %53,4'ünün mezuniyet sonrası klinisyen olarak çalışmayı düşündüğü ve %87'sinin hemşirelik eğitiminde teorik eğitim ve klinik uygulamalar arasında farklılık olduğunu düşündüğü saptandı. Farklılığa yol açan en sık nedenin sırasıyla; öğrenci sayısının fazlalığı (%74,8), uygulama alanlarının yetersizliği (%63,4) ve öğretim elemanlarının öğrencilerin yanında olamaması (%47,3) şeklinde olduğu tespit edildi. Öğrencilerin bu farklılığın giderilmesi için; klinik hemşireleri ile öğretim elemanları arasındaki iş birliğinin güçlendirilmesi (%61,1), okullarda simülasyon laboratuvarlarının kurulması (%58,8) ve öğretim elemanı açığının giderilerek kliniklerde olmalarının sağlanması (%55) şeklinde önerilerde bulunduğu belirlendi. Öğrencilerin Hemşirelikte Lisans Programını Değerlendirme Ölçeği toplam puan ortalamasının ise 61,1±19,8 olduğu saptandı.

Sonuç: Öğrencilerin çoğunluğunun hemşirelikte teorik eğitim ve klinik uygulamalar arasında farklılık olduğunu ifade ettiği ve hemşirelikte lisans programını olumluya yakın olarak değerlendirdikleri tespit edildi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hemşirelik eğitimi, hemşirelik öğrencileri, lisans programı, teori



INTRODUCTION

Nursing with its independent and collaborative roles is a professional occupational group providing care to every healthy or sick individual, family and society.^[1] In recent years nursing profession not only has taken important responsibilities such as protecting and promoting health and healing diseases, but also has played a key role in solving healthcare system problems in the world and in Turkey.^[2] Accordingly, it stands out to conduct nursing services effectively. Nursing services ground on nursing education. Education is defined as a process of creating terminal changes in an individual's behaviors. When considering the nursing education process in the world, it is seen that three-or-four-year undergraduate education is provided after 10-12 years of education. The Munich Declaration, which was published in the Second European Conference on Nursing and Midwifery and includes also the approval of Turkey, discussed conducting nursing education in undergraduate and postgraduate programs. In this context, the minimum period of education in nursing undergraduate programs is four years and it is required to complete 4600 hours of theoretical and practical training in order to graduate from this program.^[3-5] As is known, nursing education comprises of theoretical and clinical teaching related to nursing profession.^[6] For that purpose, theoretical courses are taught in schools, while clinical teaching is conducted in skill or simulation laboratories and clinical practice fields. With clinical teaching, it is aimed to enable students to transfer knowledge into clinical practice and transit from studentship to professionalism.^[7] Clinical teaching, which is an important process for training an equipped nurse, comprises the half of nursing education. The most important educational goals of clinical teaching include enabling students to integrate the basic scientific knowledge they have acquired previously into the skills in practice and become competent in diagnosis, treatment and patient care.^[8] In order to achieve these goals, students expect support, guidance and assistance especially in applications that require skills in clinical practice fields.^[9,10] In order to ensure competence in processes that require skill, it is particularly required that students are supported by both instructors and clinic nurses in the practice field and theoretical training and clinical training substantially coincide.^[11-13] However, sometimes theoretical training and clinical practice do not coincide and they even diverge completely at some points. In order to solve these differences, it is crucial that theoretical training and clinical practice are parallel. In this sense, the importance of school and hospital collaboration comes into prominence. This is because the clinical teaching process covers not only students, but also instructors and clinic nurses. In addition to the problems faced by students, determining the problems experienced by instructors and clinic nurses in the clinical teaching process will be effective on generating solutions to the problems.^[13] In the literature, studies, examining the problems faced by students in the clinical teaching process, are remarkable.^[7,8,14-18] In these studies, the students stated that they tried to give holistic care to patients in clinical practice as taught in theoretical courses;

however, the unconformity between theory and practice was confusing, thus resulting in created a dilemma.^[19-21] In similar studies examining the first clinical practice experience of nursing students, the students usually stated that there was no connection between theory and practice, the real setting in the clinic was highly different from what was taught in theoretical training, they experienced a gap between theory and practice and because of this gap they were not able to conduct evidence-based applications in the clinics.^[20-23] Upon literature review, it has been seen that various problems are faced in nursing education in Turkey; however, the number of studies on the views and recommendations of final year nursing students regarding the differences between theoretical training and clinical practice, is limited.^[13,15] Thus, in this study it was aimed to have fourth-year students receiving education in nursing department in a Faculty of Health Sciences assess the nursing undergraduate program and to examine their views on education.

Study Questions

1. Is there any difference between theoretical training and clinical practice in nursing education? If yes, what are the reasons of this difference?
2. What are the recommendations of students to eliminate the differences between theoretical training and clinical practice?
3. How do students assess the effectiveness of the nursing undergraduate program that they are about to graduate from?

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Type of the Study

This is a descriptive study.

Population/Sample

The study was conducted in the nursing department of faculty of health sciences at a university in Turkey. The population of the study consisted of fourth-year students from the nursing department in the aforementioned faculty (N=250). No sample selection was not used for this study and it was aimed to reach the entire population. However, the study was completed with 131 students who agreed to participate in the study and whose verbal consent was obtained. It was determined that participation rate for the study was 52.4%.

Data Collection Tools

The researchers collected the data through face-to-face interview via the "Introductory Information Form" and "Bachelor's Degree Nursing Program Assessment Scale" when the students were available.

Introductory Information Form: Prepared by the researchers in line with the literature, the form has a total of eight questions regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of students such as age and gender as well as nursing education.^[24,25]

Bachelor's Degree Nursing Program Assessment Scale

(BNPAS): Developed by Demiralp et al.^[26] (2014) to evaluate the effectiveness of undergraduate program in nursing, the scale has a total of 40 items. The scale comprises four subscales as; "Assessment of Professional Development and Competence" (11 items), "Assessment of Teaching Process" (8 items), "Assessment of Individual Development" (11 items), "Gaining Universal, National and Professional Values" (10 items). When applying the scale, participants are asked to rate each item from 1 to 10. BNPAS is a tool which can be completed in about 15-20 minutes and has a total score ranging from 40 to 400. When the score obtained is divided into four, the total score given for the program is assessed over 100. The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency value was found to be 0.97 for the original scale and range from 0.91 to 0.95 for the four subscales. In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha value was found to be 0.64 for the scale and range from 0.61 to 0.80 for the four subscales. Lower scores indicate a negative effectiveness for the program, while higher scores indicate a positive effectiveness.

Data Assessment

The data acquired as a result of the study were analyzed in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 24.0 package program. Compatibility of the data to normal distribution was performed with Shapiro-Wilk test. Also, the data were evaluated via frequency, percentage, minimum, maximum values, standard deviation, arithmetic mean, Pearson's correlation analysis and Mann-Whitney U test.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the study, written permissions were obtained from the institution where the study was conducted, Clinical Trials Ethics Committee (Date/Decree no: 2018/303), and the authors who conducted the validity and reliability for the use of the scale. Moreover, the students were informed about the study purpose and their verbal consent was obtained within the scope of voluntariness and willingness principles.

RESULTS

Descriptive Characteristics of the Students

It was determined that mean age of the students was 22.0 ± 1.3 years. Of the students, 65.6% were female and 51.9% were residing in a metropolis. 53.4% of the students considered to work as a clinician after graduation.

Views of the Students on Nursing Education

It was determined that 87% of the students thought that there was a difference between theoretical training and clinical practice in nursing education (**Table 1**).

Views of the Students on the Reasons of the Difference between Theoretical Training and Clinical Practice in Nursing Education

It was determined that the nursing students ordered the reasons of the difference between theoretical training and clinical practices respectively as follows; excessive number of students (74.8%), inadequacy of fields of practice (63.4%), lack of support by instructors for students (47.3%), inadequate number of instructors (44.3%), excessive work load of nurses (40.5%) and insufficiency of instructors and nurses as a role model in the clinic (38.2%) (**Table 1**). Also it was determined that not considering students as a member of the medical team in the clinic (37.4%), inadequate collaboration between clinic nurses and instructors (36.6%), and inability of reflecting works of instructors to clinical practices (36.6%) were among reasons of the difference between theoretical training and clinical practice in nursing education. Moreover, the students indicated that inadequate number of nurses (32.8%), inability of instructors to be assigned actively in the clinic because theoretical courses are taught in school and clinical practices are performed in many different institutions (32.1%) and intense content of theoretical courses (24.4%) were among other reasons of the difference between theoretical training and clinical practice in nursing education (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Views of the students on theoretical training and clinical practice in nursing (N=131)

	Yes	No
Is there any difference between theoretical training and clinical practice in nursing education?	87%	17%
Reasons of the difference	n*	%
Excessive number of students	98	74.8
Inadequacy of fields of application	83	63.4
Lack of support by instructors for students	62	47.3
Inadequate number of instructors	58	44.3
Excessive work load of nurses	53	40.5
Insufficiency of instructors and nurses as a role model in the clinic	50	38.2
Not considering students a member of the medical team in the clinic	49	37.4
Inadequate collaboration between clinic nurses and instructors	48	36.6
Inability of reflecting works of instructors to their studies in clinical practices	48	36.6
Inadequate number of nurses	43	32.8
Inability of instructors to be assigned actively in the clinic because theoretical courses are taught in school and clinical practices are performed in many different institutions	42	32.1
Intense content of theoretical courses	32	24.4

*n multiplied.

Recommendations of the Students to Eliminate the Difference between Theoretical Training and Clinical Practices in Nursing Education

It was determined that recommendations of the students to eliminate the difference between theoretical training and clinical practices were strengthening the collaboration between clinic nurses and instructors (61.1%), establishing simulation laboratories in schools (58.8%) and meeting the instructor deficit and having instructors be available in the clinic at all times (55%).

Other recommendations of the students to eliminate the difference between theoretical training and clinical practice in nursing education included having a guide nurse in every clinic, subjecting her to in-service training by instructors and updating her knowledge (48.9%), sharing the results of academic researches by instructors with clinic nurses and reflecting these results to care (42.7%), updating clinical training program and training objectives regularly (42%), and enabling instructors and clinic nurses to work in collaboration in studies related to nursing profession (38.2%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Recommendations of the students to eliminate the difference between theoretical training and clinical practice (N=131)

Recommendations	n*	%
Strengthening the collaboration between clinic nurses and instructors	80	61.1
Establishing simulation laboratories in schools	77	58.8
Meeting the instructor deficit and having instructors be available in the clinics at all times	72	55
Having a guide nurse in every clinic, subjecting her to in-service training by instructors and updating her knowledge	64	48.9
Sharing the results of own researches by instructors with clinic nurses and reflecting these results to care	56	42.7
Updating clinical training program and training objectives regularly	55	42
Enabling instructors and clinic nurses to work in collaboration in studies related to nursing profession	50	38.2

*n multiplied.

The Bachelor’s Degree Nursing Program Assessment Scale Mean Score of the Students and Their Score Distribution According to Some Characteristics

It was seen that the Bachelor’s Degree Nursing Program Assessment Scale total mean score of the students was 246.18±79.08. As a result of assessing the scale score on the basis of 100 points, it was determined that the BNPAS mean score of the students was 61.1±19.8 (Table 3). It was determined that there was no significant correlation between the age of the students and total scale score (r=0.105, p=0.232). Also, there was no significant correlation between the age of the students and the division of the total scale score into four (r=0.105, p=0.234). It was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between the gender of the students (p=0.346), the field they intended to work in after graduation (p=0.894) and the total scale score and the division of the total scale score into four (Table 3).

Table 3. The Bachelor’s Degree Nursing Program Assessment Scale total mean score of the Students and Their Score Distribution According to Some Characteristics (N=131)

Characteristics	The Bachelor’s Degree Nursing Program Assessment Scale Total Score		The Bachelor’s Degree Nursing Program Assessment Scale Total Score/4	
	Test statistics	p	Test statistics	p
Age*	0.105	0.232	0.105	0.234
Gender**	-0.943	0.346	-0.943	0.346
Field intended to work in after graduation**	-0.134	0.894	-0.143	0.886

*Correlation analysis **Mann-Whitney U test

DISCUSSION

Nursing education is an educational process in which theoretical training and clinical practice coexist. Main objectives of this education are to add professional nursing skills to students and prepare them to their professional life after graduation.^[4,27-30] In this study, most of the final-year nursing students indicated that there was a difference between theoretical training and clinical practice of nursing education. In the national and international studies, nursing students have stated that there is an unconformity and a gap between theoretical training and clinical practices of nursing profession.^[20,22,23] The results obtained from this study are compatible with the literature.

Most of the students who were included in the study associated the reasons of the difference between theoretical training and clinical practice in nursing education with excessive number of students and thus inadequacy of fields of practice. Today, most hospitals are unable to accept students for clinical practice within the scope of the Law of Occupational Health and Safety numbered 6331. Limitation of the number of hospitals to conduct clinical practice, which forms the basis of nursing education, brings the problem of students doing practice with more crowded groups into prominence. Despite nursing departments which gradually extend their quota every year, limitation of clinical practice areas affects the quality of nursing education negatively.^[4] Also in the studies, practice-related problems included being unable to receive adequate feedback due to overcrowded groups in clinical practice and thus making mistakes more frequently.^[17,20] In this study, it was determined that more than half of the students recommended “establishing simulation laboratories in schools” to eliminate the difference between theoretical training and clinical practices. Simulation training, which is a different teaching strategy in nursing education, is among modern techniques in which students take part in education actively and experience nearly the most realistic clinic experience, the trainer is a role model, students have the opportunity of considering and evaluating the knowledge learned, reabsorbing the knowledge and comparing it with the previous knowledge.^[31,32]

In the present study, the students indicated that inadequate number of instructors, their lack of support for students, and their inability of being assigned actively in the clinic because theoretical courses are taught in school and clinical practices are performed in many different institutions were among the reasons of the difference between theoretical training and clinical practice. According to the Report of Workshop of Undergraduate Education in Nursing, the number of students per instructor in Turkey is 45 and the number of students per lecturer is 113 by 2017.^[33] Moreover in the literature, it is recommended that instructors be integrated into the clinic and the instructor deficit be fulfilled in order to increase the quality in nursing education.^[3,34]

The students who were included in the study stated that excessive work load of nurses (40.5%) and inadequate number of nurses (32.8%) were the reasons of the difference between theoretical training and clinical practice. According to the sixth article of the Nursing Regulations (2010), it is stated that nurses conduct training, counseling and research activities related to nursing. They participate in scientific activities related to their profession. They support and contribute to the education of society, student nurses, healthcare professionals and healthcare professional candidates.^[35] Accordingly, it can be asserted that clinic nurses play a key role in student education. Morrison and Brennaman^[36] (2016) stated that nurses have many responsibilities in the clinic and they need extra time and effort for the professional development of students. In contradistinction to the results of this study, Hanson et al.^[37] (2018) stressed in their study that as the time spent by students in the clinic increased, nurses became more ambitious to teach, considered students a burden at a lower rate and spent more time especially with fourth-year students because they would think that these students were closer to the profession. Accordingly, it is believed that factors such as individual characteristics arising from students and nurses, different conditions of the field of application and patient needs may affect the nurse-student collaboration and thus these factors should be taken into consideration.

In the present study, more than one third of the students indicated that instructors and nurses are not adequate in being a role model in the clinic and the collaboration between clinic nurses and instructors was insufficient. In parallel with these results, in the study conducted by Akgün Kostak et al.^[38] students stated that nurses were not a good role model, they did not participate in clinical training adequately and they did not take responsibility in clinical training. However, in another study conducted on this issue it was stressed that 77.6% of nurses considered themselves a role model.^[39] Clinical instructiveness also contains role modeling and is different from instructiveness. Everyone whom the person interacts with either directly or indirectly and who may affect his/her decisions and behaviors can be a role model.^[40,41] As a result of the studies conducted within this scope, it is thought that students will have a difficulty adapting to the clinic, to the profession and putting what they learn in theoretical trainings into practice. For the

solution to these problems, it can be recommended to create standards related to clinical teaching, strengthen the school-hospital, instructor and nurse collaboration within the frame of student-centered education and enhance communication. It is because the parameters increasing the quality of nursing education include a good communication between clinician and academician nurses, transfer of knowledge-skills to student nurses, generation of solutions in common problems together and doing collaboration.^[42,43] Another approach to increase this communication and collaboration is to reflect the scientific studies conducted by instructors to clinical practices.^[42,43]

In this study, more than one third of the students stated that there was a difference between theoretical training and clinical practice due to the inability of instructors to reflect their works to clinical practices. In parallel with this result, nearly half of the students stated that the difference between theoretical training and clinical practice could be fulfilled as long as instructors shared the results of their academic researches with clinic nurses and reflected these results to care. In the study by Özcan^[44] it was stressed that school-hospital collaboration could contribute to education. Also, it is indicated that reflecting the results of studies conducted by instructors to the clinic will affect student education and patient care positively.

Nearly one fourth of the students who were included in the study stated that intense content of theoretical courses created a difference between theoretical training and clinical practice. In the literature, it is stressed that curriculum is one of the most important factors affecting the quality of education.^[3,4,33] In a different study, the students were asked how a school-hospital correlation should be and a great majority of them (74.9%) explained that theoretical training should be provided adequately not only in school, but also in the hospital or clinic setting. A study conducted by Kayacan Keser et al.^[24] support these results.

In this study, it was determined that the students evaluated the effectiveness of undergraduate program in nursing as "close to positive". This result makes us think that theoretical and clinical knowledge, skills, communication, professional tasks and responsibilities in student trainings conducted by instructors and nurses are usually included in nursing education integrately. However, there are also different results on this issue. In a study, more than half of nursing students stated that the nursing education they received was not sufficient for the scope and processes of the profession, patient services and community services.^[45] In a study conducted by Dönmez and Karaöz Weller^[46] (2019) to evaluate the education of final year nursing students it was concluded that a limited number of students stated that the education they received in school was adequate for developing their clinical practice. Likewise, Yiğit et al.^[47] (2007) reported in their study that only one fifth of students found the education they received to be fully adequate for developing their skills. In the light of these results, it is believed that as long as differences between theoretical training and clinical practice in nursing education are minimized, the quality of nursing profession may increase.

Limitations of the Study: Limitations of the study were that it was conducted in only one institution and the entire population could not be reached. Also, the data acquired were dependent on the form created by the researchers and the scale used.

CONCLUSION

It was determined that most (87%) of the students preparing to graduate from the nursing department thought that there was a difference between theoretical training and clinical practice in nursing education and evaluated the effectiveness of undergraduate program in nursing as "close to positive". In the light of the data acquired, in order to eliminate the difference between theoretical training and clinical practice in nursing education, it can be recommended that;

- field of application and school collaboration be arranged with protocols before clinical practice,
- feedback be received from nurses and students before and after clinical practice,
- guide nurses be used in the application,
- a collaboration be ensured between instructors and clinic nurses and in-service trainings be arranged,
- standards be created for clinical practices.

ETHICAL DECLARATIONS

Ethics Committee Approval: The study was carried out with the permission of Clinical Trials Ethics Committee (Date/Decree no: 2018/303).

Informed Consent: All patients signed the free and informed consent form.

Referee Evaluation Process: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Financial Disclosure: The authors declared that this study has received no financial support.

Author Contributions: All of the authors declare that they have all participated in the design, execution, and analysis of the paper, and that they have approved the final version.

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