

# Determining the Image of Nursing Profession in the Society During Covid-19 Pandemia Process

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**Received:** 06.09.2021

**Accepted:** 19.06.2023

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to descriptively determine the image of the nursing profession in the society during the Covid-19 pandemic process.

**Methods:** The study was carried out in a district between November 2020 and February 2021. The sample of the study consisted of 1285 individuals. While collecting the data, a "Questionnaire Form" containing personal characteristics and "Image Scale for Nursing Profession" were used. Data were collected by snowball sampling method. The data were collected through an online survey.

**Results:** The mean score of the participants' Image Scale for Nursing Profession was found to be  $150.68 \pm 9.75$ . It was determined that the sub-dimensions of the scale, the professional qualification sub-dimension, had the highest mean score of  $45.80 \pm 4.45$ , and the other appearance sub-dimension had the lowest mean score of  $11.10 \pm 2.73$ . A significant difference was determined between the Image Scale for Nursing Profession and gender, profession, and the status of having the received care from nurses before ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** It was determined that the professional qualifications and professionalism of nurses came to the fore during the Covid-19 pandemic process.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, nursing image, pandemic, nursing

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nursing is a profession that undertakes important responsibilities, such as protecting and improving the health of the individuals, family and the society, curing diseases, and preventing disabilities/rehabilitation. The evaluation of a profession by the society and the widespread acceptance of this assessment are related to the professional image and is of great importance for members of the profession (1-3). The nursing image in the society has been changed over the years in terms of political, socio-economic, cultural, and technological, aspects, etc. It is a dynamic structure that changes over time by being affected by the social, environmental or the human factors (4,5).

The perception of the nursing image in the society positively or negatively affects the members of the nursing profession and the professional quality of the profession (6). The nursing image states that it is effective in the development of the professional identity feelings of nurses, professionalization, job satisfaction, ensuring continuity to work, advising others and individuals in choosing the nursing profession (7-10). One of the important factors in determining the nursing image is gender stereotypes, whereby the nursing profession suffers from these gender stereotypes. It is stated that this situation prevents nurses' social image and professional image from being matched, thus preventing nursing from being seen as

an autonomous, scientific profession and negatively affecting their legal, organizational, social and economic rights (3,11).

In addition to one of the factors affecting the nursing image in the society is the public health problems and the epidemic diseases (12). As a matter of fact, in the flu epidemic in 1918, Nightingale made great contributions to the epidemic with good hand washing, proper sanitation and regulation of the physical environment. In the following years, it has been reported that the nurses are at the forefront of some of the world's newly introduced infectious disease outbreaks, including H1N1 Swine Flu, Ebola, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and Middle East respiratory syndrome (12). It has been reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) that 6.722.949 deaths and 664.618.938 cases have been detected so far with the Covid-19 epidemic that started in Wuhan, China and was declared as a pandemic in March, 2020 (13).

During the Covid-19 pandemic process, nurses are at the center of the fight against the epidemic, meeting the patients' care needs, working 24 hours with limited resources, pushing their own limits, and managing the patients' care at the expense of their lives (14-17). In the current crisis, it is stated that the nursing profession focuses on providing the highest quality, evidence-based, and the compassionate, individualized nursing care (18). During the pandemic, it

is seen that the altruistic work of nurses and their active participation in the fight against the disease are reflected in the media. As a matter of fact, Bennett (2020) states that during the pandemic process there was a 3-fold increase in the number of news about nurses in the media (18).

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the year 2020, which coincides with the 200th birthday of Florence Nightingale, as the “Year of Nurses and Midwives” in order to raise the nursing profile and increase the global nurse workforce. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is observed that the importance of nurses and the profession automatically comes to the fore. Considering that there are very few studies on the socially image of nurses and the dynamic nature of the nursing image, it is important to determine how this pandemic affects the image of the nursing profession. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the image of the nursing profession in the society during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 2. METHODS

This study was conducted in a descriptive district in the Western Black Sea Region between November 2020 and February 2021. The population of this study included 67245 individuals. In a study by Yazicioğlu and Erdoğan (2004), it is stated that the population size of 50.00-100.000 should be taken as 381-383 since the sample size is calculated with 0.05 margin of error (19). The sample of this study consisted of 1285 individuals aged 18 and over who accepted to participate in the study. Fifty-six people who filled in the survey questions incompletely were not included in the study. Data were collected by snowball sampling method. Therefore, the sample size was above the expected number. The data were collected through an online survey. After the participants gave their consent, they reached the data collection form.

The average age of the individuals participating in our study is quite young. The young average age may affect its generalizability to the whole population. This also may be a limitation of the study.

### 2.1. Data Collection Tools:

The data were collected using the “Questionnaire Form” developed by the researchers in line with the literature (13,15,18,20). The questionnaire form consisted of 3 parts.

2.1.1. The first part consisted of 4 questions including the individual characteristics of the individuals (age, gender, profession, and the presence of nurses in the family).

2.1.2. The second part consisted of 4 questions, including the status of individuals’ benefiting from the healthcare services (previous hospitalization, the state of having received care from a nurse before, status of getting service from a nurse during the Covid-19 pandemic, status of staying as a companion in the hospital before). In the third part, “Image Scale for Nursing Profession” was used.

2.1.3. In the third part, “Image Scale for Nursing Profession” was used. The scale was developed by Dost and Bahçecik that is a Likert-type scale scored between 1 and 5, consisting of 42 items. The scale includes 6 sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions consist of professional qualification (11 items), working conditions (10 items), gender (8 items), education (5 items), professional status (5 items) and external appearance (3 items). The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.97 (20), and a total of 15 items were scored negatively in the evaluation of the scale. The lowest score that can be obtained from the scale is 42 and the highest score is 210, 42-75 which indicate very poor image, 76-109 poor, 110-143 medium, 144-177 good, and 178-210 indicate a very good image perception. The higher is the score obtained from the scale, the higher is the positive image perception (20). In this study Cronbach alpha was found to be 0.64.

### 2.2. Ethical Consideration

Before conducting the study, the approval was obtained from the Karabuk University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (date: 10.11.2020, number: E-78977401-050.02.04-46388). The consent was obtained from the individuals participating in the study by explaining the purpose, duration, and process of the study.

### 2.3. Statistical analysis:

The data were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) 24 package program. The descriptive statistical methods, such as number, mean, standard deviation and percentage were used to evaluate the data. Mann Whitney-U and Kruskal Wallis tests were used to compare the independent group’s average in distributions that did not show a normal distribution.

## 3. RESULTS

It was determined that the average age of the participants was  $27.28 \pm 11.35$  (min=18, max=75), 71.5% of them were women, 77.8% had a university or a higher education level, and 33.3% were university students. Besides, 33.3% of the participants were nurses in their families, 49.8% were hospitalized before, 82.1% received services from nurses before, and 15.3% received services from nurses during the Covid-19 pandemic (Table 1).

The average Image Scale for Nursing Profession score of the participants was  $150.68 \pm 9.75$ . When the subscale dimensions of the scale were examined,  $45.80 \pm 4.45$  (min 15 – max 52) were from the professional qualification sub-dimension,  $28.25 \pm 3.45$  (min 18 – max 47) were from the working conditions sub-dimension,  $27.03 \pm 4.81$  (min 12 – max 58) were from the gender sub-dimension, education sub-dimension was  $19.15 \pm 2.28$  (min 9 – max 25) points from the dimension,  $19.32 \pm 3.89$  (min 5-max 25) points from the professional status sub-dimension, and  $11.10 \pm 2.73$  (min 3 – max 15) points from the outer appearance sub-dimension (Table 2).

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants

Characteristics	n	%
Age ( $\bar{x} \pm SD$ )	27.28 $\pm$ 11.35 (min=18-max=75)	
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	919	71.5
Male	366	28.5
<b>Educational level</b>		
Primary education	76	5.9
High school	209	16.3
University and above	1000	77.8
<b>Profession</b>		
Gendarme	11	0.9
Retired	18	1.4
Engineer	28	2.2
Artisan	51	4.0
Worker	54	4.2
HealthTechnician	67	5.2
Officer	69	5.4
Teacher	72	5.6
Nurse	114	8.9
Housewife	373	29.0
Student	428	33.3
<b>Presence of a nurse in the family</b>		
Yes	428	33.3
No	857	66.7
<b>Previous hospital stay</b>		
Yes	640	49.8
No	645	50.2
<b>Status of receiving service from a nurse before</b>		
Yes	1055	82.1
No	230	17.9
<b>Status of receiving service from a nurse in the Covid-19 pandemic</b>		
Yes	196	15.3
No	1089	84.7
<b>Previous companion ship status</b>		
Yes	778	60.5
No	507	39.5

**Table 2.** Distribution of the participants' mean scores for the image scale and sub-dimensions of the nursing profession (n=1285)

Scale and sub-dimensions	Min-Max	Mean score ( $\bar{x} \pm SD$ )
Professional qualification	11-55	45.80 $\pm$ 4.45
Working conditions	10-50	28,25 $\pm$ 3.45
Gender	8-40	27,03 $\pm$ 4.81
Education	5-25	19,15 $\pm$ 2.28
Professional status	5-25	19,32 $\pm$ 3.89
Outther appearance	3-15	11,10 $\pm$ 2.73
<b>Total</b>	<b>42-210</b>	<b>150.68<math>\pm</math>9.75</b>

In Table 3, the comparison of the participants' Image Scale for Nursing Profession and sub-dimension mean scores (n = 1285) are presented. Accordingly, a significant difference was identified between the median of the Image Scale for Nursing Profession general score and gender, profession, and

previous care received from the nurses. It was revealed that the female participants had higher mean scores than men, those who had a profession other than nurses, and those who received services from nurses before compared to those who did not (p < 0.05).

**Table 3.** Comparison of participants' image scale sub-dimension mean scores for the nursing profession according to descriptive features (n=1285)

Descriptive Characteristics	Sub-Dimensions						Image Scale for Nursing Profession $\bar{x} \pm SD$
	Professional qualification $\bar{x} \pm SD$	Working conditions $\bar{x} \pm SD$	Gender $\bar{x} \pm SD$	Education $\bar{x} \pm SD$	Professional status $\bar{x} \pm SD$	Outher appearance $\bar{x} \pm SD$	
<b>Gender</b>							
Female	46.00±4.16	28.00±3.33	28.00±4.36	19.00±2.26	19.00±3.94	11.00±2.65	155.00±9.60
Male	47.00±5.09	28.00±3.72	26.00±5.58	19.00±2.30	20.00±3.73	12.00±2.89	153.00±10.06
Statistical test and p value	Z=-1.040 p=.299	Z=-.068 p=.946	Z=-6.499 p<.001	Z=-2.419 p=.016	Z=-2.176 p=.030	Z=-3.928 p<.001	Z=-2.831 p<.001
<b>Educational level</b>							
Primary education	49.00±5.41	27.00±3.11	24.00±5.98	19.00±2,28	22.00±2,68	14.00±2,57	156.00±8,94
High school	47.00±4.44	28.00±3.18	27.00±5.77	19.00±2,29	20.00±3,54	12.00±2,57	153.00±9.43
University and above	46.00±4.36	28.00±3.52	28.00±4.39	19.00±2.27	19.00±3.97	11.00±2.73	154.00±9.88
Statistical test and p value	KW=8,743 p=.013	KW=6,470 p=0.39	KW=42,945 p<.001	KW=7,152 p=.028	KW=32,985 p<.001	KW=42,487 p<.001	KW=1,794 p=.408
<b>Profession</b>							
Nurse	50.00±4.04	26.00±2.38	27.00±4.30	21.00±1.68	16.00±5.16	11.00±2.64	153.00±10.05
Other	46.00±4.41	28.00±3.46	28.00±4.86	19.00±2.30	20.00±3.60	11.00±2.74	154.00±9.71
Statistical test and p value	Z=-7.548 p<.001	Z=-7.577 p<.001	Z=-.855 p=.393	Z=-5.916 p<.001	Z=-7.278 p<.001	Z=-.736 p=.462	Z=-2.042 p=.041
<b>Presence of a nurse in the family</b>							
Yes	47.00±4.29	27.00±3.49	27.00±4.88	20.00±2.13	20.00±4.25	12.00±2.88	153.00±8.92
No	46.00±4.48	28.00±3.38	28.00±4.73	19.00±2.34	20.00±3.69	11.00±2.66	155.00±10.13
Statistical test and p value	Z=-4.514 p<.001	Z=-6.021 p<.001	Z=-4.381 p<.001	Z=-2.004 p=.045	Z=-.270 p=.787	Z=-1.698 p=.089	Z=-1.695 p=.090
<b>Previous hospital stay</b>							
Yes	47.00±4.32	27.00±3.39	27.00±4.95	20.00±2.22	20.00±4.01	11.00±2.82	154.00±9.51
No	46.00±4.42	28.00±3.50	28.00±4.59	19.00±2.31	19.00±3.77	11.00±2.64	154.00±9.99
Statistical test and p value	Z=-3,903 p<.005	Z=-2,348 p=.019	Z=-4,853 p<.005	Z=-3,119 p=.002	Z=-1,135 p=.256	Z=-.955 p=.339	Z=-.170 p=.865
<b>Status of receiving service from a nurse before</b>							
Yes	47.00±4.38	28.00±3.39	28.00±4.79	19.00±2.24	20.00±3.96	11.00±2.77	154.00±9.60
No	45.00±4.68	28.00±3.69	27.00±4.91	19.00±2.44	19.00±3.56	11.00±2.59	152.00±10.31
Statistical test and p value	Z=-3.145 p=.002	Z=-.868 p=.385	Z=-1.013 p=.311	Z=-1.810 p=.070	Z=-1.116 p=.264	Z=-1.083 p=.279	Z=-2.366 p=.018
<b>Status of receiving service from a nurse in the Covid-19 pandemic</b>							
Yes	47.00±4.24	27.00±3.32	27.00±4.80	20.00±2.28	20.00±3.87	12.00±2.88	155.00±9.33
No	46.00±4.47	28.00±3.47	28.00±4.81	19.00±2.27	20.00±3.89	11.00±2.71	154.00±9.83
Statistical test and p value	Z=-2.740 p=.006	Z=-1,408 p=.159	Z=-1,530 p=.126	Z=-1,801 p=.072	Z=-1,733 p=.083	Z=-1,366 p=.172	Z=-1,166 p=.243
<b>Previous companion ship status</b>							
Yes	47.00±4.48	28.00±3.42	27.00±4.85	19.00±2.26	20.00±3.98	11.00±2.84	154.00±9.49
No	46.00±4.37	28.00±3.48	28.00±4.74	19.00±2.29	20.00±3.75	12.00±2.56	154.00±10.15
Statistical test and p value	Z=-3.381 p=.001	Z=-.423 p=.673	Z=-2.292 p=.022	Z=-1.812 p=.070	Z=-.911 p=.362	Z=-1.470 p=.142	Z=-.336 p=.737

KW: Kruskal-Wallis, Z: Mann Whitney U p<0.05 was accepted.

\* The min and max scores that can be obtained from each sub-dimension; Professional qualification (Min 11-Max 55), Working conditions (Min 10-Max 50), Gender (Min 8-Max 40), Education (Min5 – Max 25), Professional status (Min 5-Max 25), Outher appearance (Min3-Max15)

In the Image Scale for Nursing Profession professional qualification sub-dimension, it was showed that the education level of the individuals in the society, their profession, being a nurse in the family, having been hospitalized before, receiving services from the nurse before, receiving services from the nurses during the Covid-19 pandemic, and those who were previously accompanying patients were affected by the professional qualifications of nurses. It was determined that the mean scores of the professional qualification sub-dimension were higher than those who received education at primary education level compared to those who received education at high school and university level ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was determined that the professional qualification sub-dimension mean scores of those who were professional nurses were higher than those who were not nurses, those who did not have a nurse in their family, and those who had been hospitalized before were higher than those who were not hospitalized ( $p < 0.05$ ). In the study, it was determined that those who received service from a nurse before, compared to those who did not receive service from a nurse in the Covid-19 pandemic, had higher mean scores in the professional qualification sub-dimension than those who did not receive service from a nurse ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was illustrated that the mean scores of those who had a companion before were higher than those who did not have a companion before ( $p < 0.05$ ).

In the sub-dimension of the working conditions of the image scale for the nursing profession, it was determined that it affects the image perception in professional groups other than nurses, in the absence of a nurse in the family, and in individuals who have not been hospitalized before. In addition, it was demonstrated that the mean scores of those who were nurses were higher than those who were nurses in the family, and those who were not hospitalized before compared to those who were hospitalized ( $p < 0.05$ ).

In this study, the gender, the educational status, the presence of a nurse in the family, the previous hospitalization status, and the previous companionship made a significant difference in the perception of the image of the nursing profession, especially the perceptions of the women's image towards the nursing profession. Based on the results, the female gender was higher than males, higher than those who received university or higher education compared to those who received education at the high school and the primary school level, higher than those who were nurses in the family compared to those who were not hospitalized before, and those who did not have an accompanying person before were higher than those who stayed at the hospital ( $p < 0.05$ ).

In the Image Scale for Nursing Profession education sub-dimension, a significant difference was found in the gender, the education level, the presence of a nurse in the family, and the previous hospitalization. More specifically, it was found that the average educational scores of those who were nurses were higher than those who were nurses and were higher than those who were nurses in their family, and those

who were hospitalized before were higher than those who were not hospitalized ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Further, a significant difference was found in the gender, the education level, and the profession in the image scale professional status sub-dimension for the nursing profession. Professional status means scores of men compared to women, primary school graduates and high school and university levels were found to be higher ( $p < 0.05$ ). In the study, it was determined that the other professions had higher professional status mean scores than nurses ( $p < 0.05$ ).

It was revealed that the image scale outer appearance sub-dimension of the nursing had the lowest average score in the image of the nursing profession, and the gender and educational status were effective on the image of nurses. It was found that the male gender, the female gender, and the graduates of the primary education level were higher than the high school scores and the university graduates scores ( $p < 0.05$ ).

#### 4. DISCUSSION

In this study, the mean total score of the participants' image scale for the nursing profession was determined as  $150.68 \pm 9.75$ . Since the score range that can be obtained from the scale is 42-210 and 144-177 is considered good, it can be stated that the image perception of the society towards the nursing profession is at a good level. In their study conducted during Covid – 19 pandemia, Elmorshedy et al. (2020) reported that the public image of nurses is negative in Saudi Arabia due to the impact of the socio-cultural factors (21). In the studies in which the image of the nursing profession in the society is examined, it is reported that the image of the nurse is moderately positive. In literature reported that the social image of nursing is seen as positive, and the society respects the nursing profession, but people do not have sufficient knowledge about the nursing profession and individuals do not recommend nursing as a career choice (3,22,23). In another study, Morris-Thompson et al. (2011) state that unlike the nursing image that is influenced by prejudices, ignorance and stereotypes in the eyes of the society, the nursing image of healthcare workers is positive (24). Further, Yilmaz et al. (2019) reported that 43% of nurses, 72% of physicians, and 46% of the patients evaluated the social image of nursing at a moderate level (23). In this study, it can be argued that by determining that the social image towards the nursing profession is good, the image perception towards the nursing profession has increased during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the "professional qualification" sub-dimension of the scale, it was observed that the mean score was  $45.80 \pm 4.45$  and it had the highest mean score. In the image of the nursing profession, it was determined that the education level of the individuals in the society, their profession, being a nurse in the family, having been hospitalized before, receiving a service from the nurse before, receiving a service from the nurse during the Covid-19 process, and those who were previously

companions were affected by the professional qualifications of nurses. In Arthur's (1998) study, the professional nurse qualifications are expressed as a communication, job satisfaction, leadership, responsibility, flexibility, creativity, and professional practice (25). In another study, Dost (2015) mentions the ethical principles and responsibilities of nurses published by International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the Turkish Nurses Association as professional qualifications (20). Nonetheless, Hoever et al. (2014) states that although the ethical and professional definitions of nursing have been made and there is extensive knowledge of treatment protocols and guidelines as a part of the development of nursing professionalism, nursing activities are still not sufficiently recognized by the society (26). In the systematic review conducted by Girvin et al. (2016) by examining the research articles published between 2010 and 2015, it is emphasized that although the society trusts nurses, the duties and effects of the nursing profession are not realized by the public (27). Besides, Morris-Thompson et al. (2011) stated in his study that the society's knowledge about the nursing profession is insufficient and the nursing image formed in the society is based on legends, misunderstandings and stereotypes more than professional qualifications (24). Similar to the study conducted by Girvin et al. (2016), Şimşek and Alpar (2019) showed that the duties and responsibilities of nurses are not fully understood by the society, and it is stated that the nursing profession is still perceived as an auxiliary profession by the society (27, 28). In their study Li, Z et al. (2020) emphasized that the pandemic was in the forefront of nurses using their professional qualifications and professionalism during the Covid-19 epidemic, and this situation led to the understanding of the importance of the professional qualifications of nurses (29). In the news on media, Bennett et al. (2020) states that in addition to the appreciation for nurses, the nursing image reflected in the 21st century is used more than ever before with roles based on female gender, heroes and angelic images (18). It is stated that this will negatively affect the image towards the nursing profession. However, the findings of the current study showed that the visibility of the nursing profession has increased during the Covid-19 pandemic and the professional qualifications are better realized by the society.

In the working conditions sub-dimension of the image scale for the nursing profession, it was illustrated that it affected the image perception in the professional groups other than nurses, in the absence of a nurse in the family and in individuals who were not hospitalized before. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Celik et al. (2013) reported that individuals who are self-employed and have a relative of a nurse in their family have a higher level of positive image towards the nursing profession (22). It is known that the media are an effective factor in the formation of the nursing image in the society (26). After the pandemic, Bennett et al. (2020) reported that the visibility of nurses in the media increased three times compared to 2019. It is stated that the publications in the media during the Covid-19 pandemic focus on the troubles caused by the pandemic, some realities

and difficulties the nursing workforce is faced with today, as well as the publications expressing appreciation, gratitude and even love for nurses due to their contributions to the provision of healthcare services (18). During the Covid – 19 pandemic, it is stated that the wounds on their faces and the exhausted nurses' images after wearing protective masks for hours while looking after sick people during the Covid – 19 pandemic reveal the difficulties of nurses' working conditions (18). It can be argued that individuals, who do not have a nurse in their family or who have not been hospitalized before, have witnessed the working conditions of nurses during the pandemic, increased their awareness and have positively affected the image of the society towards the nursing profession. However, Garcia (2020) states that people or their relatives who were not treated at the hospital before have limited ideas about what the nurses are doing, but during the pandemic, the society have realized that the nurses are educated and qualified professional practitioners (29).

In this study, it was determined that the gender sub-dimensions of the image scale for the nursing profession, the gender, the education status, the presence of a nurse in the family, the previous hospitalization, and the previous accompanying status made a significant difference in the image perception of the nursing profession, especially the perception of women towards the nursing profession. In their study, Elmorshedy et al. (2020) state that the nursing profession is made by women, women and men work together, female nurses marry late, care regardless of gender, and other socio-cultural barriers cause the nursing profession to be negatively affected in the society (21). In another study, Bennett et al. (2020) emphasized that gender-based roles and angelic images take place on media more than ever with nursing during the pandemic process (18). Anette Kennedy, the President of the ICN during the Covid-19 pandemic conditions, states that nurses, governments and politicians are ignored by the nurses, governments and politicians in the nursing profession, which consists of 90% women, and that women and especially nurses are subjected to violence, disrespect, abuse, low salaries and are not valued (30). In another study, it was reported that this situation in which nurses were shown as heroes and angels during the Covid-19 pandemic, weakened the professionalism of the nursing workforce, strengthened the perception that nursing was an innate feminine and nurturing role, and this situation negatively reflected on the image of the profession (31).

In the education sub-dimension of the image scale for the nursing profession, a significant difference was determined in terms of gender, education level, presence of a nurse in the family, and previous hospitalization. It was revealed that the education and the professional qualification dimensions were important in the image perception towards the nursing profession for those who are nurses. This situation can be interpreted as the nurses are aware of the importance of their professional identity and professionalism. In the Chinese context, Zhuyue et al. (2020), states that a difference exists in the nursing's education levels, whereby the most common

education is at the undergraduate level, and undergraduate nurses may be more successful in combating an epidemic, probably because of their stronger abilities (31). Besides, Özsoy (2000) reveals in her study that a great majority of the participants think that nursing is a knowledge-based profession, and the nursing education should be at the university level, as well as the nursing care is vital for the recovery of patients (3). Similarly, in Yılmaz's (2019) study, it is reported that healthcare professionals believe that nursing education should be at the undergraduate level and nurses should pursue an academic career (23).

A significant difference was found in the gender, the educational status, and the profession in the professional status sub-dimension of the image scale for the nursing profession. In Celik's (2013) study, it is emphasized that the current status of a profession is closely related to the image of that profession members in the society and it is of great importance for the members of the profession (22). In addition, 58.2% of the participants think that the nursing profession has an important status in the society. Further, Tanrıverdi et al. (2014) reported that gender, education, marital status, socio-economic status, patriarchal structure and organizational levels affect the social status of the nursing profession (32). In their study, Çınar and Demir (2009) demonstrated that the lack of autonomy, the professional risks, the wages paid to nurses, and the working conditions are the reasons affecting the nursing image and the social (6). In their study, Yılmaz et al. (2019) reported that patients, nurses and physicians moderately agreed with the statement that "men's entry into the nursing profession increases their nursing status/respect". In the same study, it is stated that although the number of male nurses has increased in Turkey, women remain in a dominant position (23).

However, it was determined that the external appearance sub-dimension of the image scale for the nursing profession had the lowest average score in the image of the nursing profession, and the gender and educational status were effective on the image of nurses. In a study conducted by Celik et al. (2013), it was found that 63.2% of the participants agreed with the statement that the nurses were well-groomed and clean (22). During the Covid-19 pandemic, the nurses are mostly seen in protective equipment and this appearance can be interpreted as reflecting the difficulty of the working conditions of nurses in the society rather than being clean and well-groomed.

## 5.CONCLUSION

Regarding the image perception towards the nursing profession during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was found that the professional qualifications of the nurses were important. In the study, it was determined that the professional image was at a good level. In addition, it was determined that the difficulty of the working conditions of the nurses affected their nursing image by the individuals who were not nurses, the individuals who do not have nurses in their family, and individuals who were not hospitalized before. In addition,

it was illustrated that the education and the professional qualification dimension are important for the image perception of the nursing profession for those who are nurses in the profession, and during the Covid-19 pandemic, the professional qualifications of nurses are affected by the nursing image of nurses. As a result, the professional qualifications and professionalism of nurses came to the fore during the Covid-19 pandemic. During this critical period, it can be argued that the working conditions of nurses are also realized by the individuals who have not received health services before, and the visibility of the nursing profession has increased.

**Funding:** The author(s) received no financial support for the research.

**Conflicts of interest:** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

**Ethics Committee Approval:** This study was approved by Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Karabük University (approval date 04/11/2020 and number 2020/12-9)

**Peer-review:** Externally peer-reviewed.

**Author Contributions:**

Research idea: DYG, ŞŞ

Design of the study: DYG

Acquisition of data for the study: DYG

Analysis of data for the study: ŞŞ

Interpretation of data for the study: DYG, ŞŞ

Drafting the manuscript: DYG

Revising it critically for important intellectual content: DYG, ŞŞ

Final approval of the version to be published: DYG

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**How to cite this article:** Yılmaz Güven D, Şener Ş. Determining the Image of Nursing Profession in the Society During Covid-19 Pandemia Process. *Clin Exp Health Sci* 2023; 13: 470-477. DOI: 10.33808/clinexphealthsci.991804