The Relationship Between Counseling and Communication Skills of Pediatric Nurses and Their Self-Efficacy

Pediatri Hemşirelerinin Danışmanlık ve İletişim Becerileri ile Mesleki Öz Yeterlilikleri Arasındaki İlişki

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COUNSELING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF PEDIATRIC NURSES AND THEIR SELF-EFFICACY

ABSTRACT:

Aim: This study was carried out to determine the relationship between counseling and communication skills of the pediatric nurses working in the northern region of Turkey and their professional self-efficacy.

Method: This was a descriptive and cross-sectional study. 178 Nurses with working in the field of pediatrics who approved of participating in this research constituted the sample of the study. Data were collected by using Personal Information Form, Counseling Skills in Nurses Scale, Communication Skills Inventory and The Nursing Profession Self-Efficacy Scale.

Results: Mean score of the nurses from counseling skills scale was found to be 40.60±7.43 and mean total score from communication skills was 155.39±13.05, mean total score of the Nursing Profession Self-Efficacy scale was 67.31±7.89. It was determined that there was a positive and moderate relationship between the total scores of counseling and communication skills and the subscale scores (cognitive, emotional and behavioral). In addition, a positive and moderate relationship was found between the total self-efficacy and subscale scores (the quality of care and the tasks to provide professionalism subscales).

Conclusion and Suggestions: Based on the result of this study, it was determined that individuals with a good counseling and communication skills had higher professional self-efficacy.

Keywords: Pediatric Nursing; Communication; Self Efficacy; Counseling.

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PEDİATRİ HEMŞİRELERİNİN DANIŞMANLIK VE İLETİŞİM BECERİLERİ İLE MESLEKİ ÖZ YETERLİLİKLERİ ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ

ÖZ:

Amaç: Türkiye'nin Kuzey Bölgesinde çalışan pediatri hemşirelerinin danışmanlık ve iletişim becerileri ile mesleki öz yeterlilikleri arasındaki ilişkinin belirlenmesi amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Yöntem: Tanımlayıcı ve kesitsel tipte bir çalışmadır. Pediatri alanında en az bir yıl çalışan ve çalışmaya katılmayı kabul eden 178 hemşire örneklemi oluşturmak-

tadır. Veriler Kişisel Bilgi Formu, Hemşirelerde Danışmanlık Becerileri Ölçeği, İletişim Becerileri Envanteri ve Hemşirelik Mesleği Öz Yeterlilik Ölçeği kullanılarak toplanmıştır.

Bulgular: Hemşirelerin danışmanlık becerileri ölçeği toplam puan ortalamaları 40.60±7.43, iletişim becerileri toplam puan ortalamaları 155.39±13.05 ve Mesleki Öz Yeterlilik Ölçeği toplam puan ortalamaları ise 67.31±7.89'dır. Hemşirelerin danışmanlık, İletişim becerileri toplam puanları ve zihinsel, duygusal, davranışsal alt boyutları ile hemşirelik mesleği öz yeterlilik toplam puanı, hasta bakımının niteliği ve mesleki durumlar alt boyutlar puanları arasında pozitif yönde ilişki olduğu saptanmıştır.

Sonuç ve Öneriler: Çalışma sonucuna göre danışmanlık ve iletişim becerileri iyi olan kişilerin mesleki öz yeterliliklerinin yüksek olduğu belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Pediatri Hemşireliği, İletişim, Öz Yeterlilik; Danışmanlık.*

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INTRODUCTION

The reflection of the innovations in medicine and technological field to the health of children requires pediatric nurses to have independent and specialized roles today (Geduk, 2018; Toruner&Buyukgonenc, 2017). One of the important roles of pediatric nurses is counseling. Nurses provide counseling to healthy individuals/ patients for promoting and improving health, enhancing life quality, teaching the course of disease by creating an awareness on it, informing about the sources that will help to cope with the problems created by the disease and learning to recognize their own possibilities (Mohammadi et al., 2020; Toruner&Buyukgonenc, 2017). With these roles, nurses develop their skills for protecting and improving child and family health by helping them to cope with fear, discomfort and stress associated with diseases. Pediatric nurses care deeply about patients' feelings, understand their thoughts and emotions, accept the situation unconditionally, empathize and help them to solve the problems by using effective communication skills while realizing their counseling roles (Kucukoglu et al., 2018; Meydan, 2014; Mohammadi et al, 2020). Moreover, the efficiency of the nursing care process is associated with the communication skill of the nurse with the child and family (Karadag et al, 2015). Communication skills enable the perception of messages accurately in interpersonal exchange of thoughts and feelings (Kucukoglu et al., 2018; Mohammadi et al., 2020).

Professional self-efficacy is the belief of an individual that he/she can fulfill his/

her duties and behaviors towards his/her profession (Fukada, 2018; Fulleman et al., 2015). Professional self-efficacy is an important characteristic in nursing profession (Leal-Costa et al., 2020; Tsai et al., 2014). In the previous studies, professional self-efficacy has been reported to be affected by the knowledge, skills, attitudes, education level, working year, work position, employment status and working environment of the nurses (Karami et al., 2017; Rizany et al., 2018). Some studies have shown that nurses with a high level of professional self-efficacy can focus on their jobs more, have more problem-solving skills and better quality of care compared to the ones who have a lower self-efficacy (Jeeza et al., 2015; Logsdon et al., 2010; Tsai et al., 2014) In their study, Leal- Costa et al. (2020) reported that nurses with a sufficient level of communication skills felt themselves more self-confident and more qualified by developing good interpersonal relationships with their patients and thus, their perceived general and specific self-efficacy were also improved. In recent years, many studies have been carried out reporting that communication skills are important especially in the field of paediatrics (Sahin & Ozdemir, 2015; Atasayi & Yildiz, 2018; Leal-Costa et al., 2020). It is thought that counseling and communication skills of pediatric nurses, who work in a physically and psychologically difficult and complicated field, may affect their professional self-efficacy.

This study was carried out to determine the relationship between counseling and communication skills of the pediatric nurses working in the northern region of Turkey and their professional self-efficacy.

• What are counseling, communication skills and professional self-efficacy levels of the nurses?

• Are there any relationships between some sociodemographic and professional characteristics of the nurses and their counseling, communication skills and professional self-efficacy levels?

• Are there any relationships between counseling and communication skill levels of the nurses and their professional self-efficacy levels?

METHOD

Study Design: This was a descriptive and cross-sectional study.

Study Setting and Sample: The study was conducted with the nurses working in pediatric clinics of a university hospital and a research and training hospital located in a big city in the northern part of Turkey between March-May, 2021. The nurses with children working in the field of pediatrics for at least one year who approved of participating in this research. The sample was determined with the sample calculation formula from the known population (http://etikarastirma.com/tr/icerik/bilgi-merkezi/10). The population consists of 312 nurses, and the sample

was determined as 169 nurses in this direction. Whole universe was tried to attain, but the study was completed with 178 nurses.

Data Collection Instruments: Data were collected by using "Personal Information Form" which was developed by the researchers in line with the literature and included some sociodemographic and professional characteristics of the nurses, "Counseling Skills in Nurses Scale (CSNS)", "Communication Skills Inventory (CSI)" and "The Nursing Profession Self-Efficacy Scale (NPSES).

Personal Information Form: It was composed of a total of 11 questions including sociodemographic characteristics of the nurses (age, sex, marital status, education level, number of children) and professional characteristics (working style, professional experience, working unit, position, willingness to choose profession and status of considering communication education during in-service training as sufficient) (Aydogan & Ozkan, 2020; Erci et al., 2017; Karadag et al., 2015).

Counseling Skills in Nurses Scale (CSNS): This scale, which was developed by Avci and Kumcagiz (2019) to measure counseling skills of nurses includes 10 items. It is a 5-point likert type scale which is graded as "Always (5)", "Generally (4)", "Sometimes (3)", "Rarely (2)" and "Never (1)". The scores obtained from the scale vary between 10 and 50. As the score of the scale increases, counseling skills are enhanced. Cronbach Alpha level of the scale is 0.88 (Avci&Kumcagiz, 2019). In this study, Cronbach Alpha value was found as 0.93.

Communication Skills Inventory (CSI): This 5-likert type inventory was developed by Ersanli and Balci (1998) to evaluate communication skill levels of the individuals; and includes 45 items. The scale is composed of three subscales including cognitive (1, 3, 6, 12, 15, 17, 18, 20, 24, 28, 30, 33, 37, 43, 45), emotional (5, 9, 11, 26, 27, 29, 31, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 44) and behavioral (2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 32, 41). Some items of the scale (3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 16, 23, 24, 27, 29, 31, 32, 34, 35,37, 41, 42) are reverse scored. The highest score that can be taken from the scale is 225 and the lowest score is 45. The high scores obtained from the scale show that communication skill level of the individual is also high. Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the inventory is 0.72 (Ersanli&Balci, 1998). Cronbach alpha value obtained in this study was 0.80.

The Nursing Profession Self-Efficacy Scale (NPSES): The original scale is 5-point likert type and it was developed by Caruso et al. (2016) in order to assess self-efficacy for coping with professional challenges (Caruso et al., 2016). Validity and reliability study of the Turkish version of the scale was carried out by Vicdan and Tastekin in 2019 (Vicdan&Tastekin, 2019). The scale is composed of two subscales including "quality of care" and "tasks to ensure professionalism" and consists of 16 items. As the score obtained from the scale is increased, professional self-ef-

ficacy is also increased. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were found as 0.82 for both subscales and 0.87 for total scale. In this study, internal consistency coefficients were found to be 0.93 for total scale, 0.94 for quality of care and 0.88 for tasks to ensure professionalism.

Data Collection: The data of the study were collected online through Google forms, as the study was conducted during COVID-19 pandemic.

Statistical Analysis: The data obtained from the study were analyzed in SPSS 21.0 program (SPSS Inc, Chicago-II, ABD). During the analysis of the data, frequency and percentage values were used for sociodemographic characteristics, Shapiro-Wilk test was used for normality assumption and numbers, percentages, mean, standard deviation and median values were used for descriptive statistics. Mann Whitney-U test and Kruskal Wallis Test were used to analyze data which did not show normal distribution. The possible correlations of CSNS with CSI and NPSES were tested by Spearman correlation analysis. $p < 0.05$ was considered as statistically significant for all analyses.

Ethical Aspect of the Study: This study was conducted after taking official permissions from Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee (no: 2020/127, date: 02.28.2020). The nurses, who were volunteer to participate in the study, provided a written consent before starting to the study (by marking the consent box in the introduction part of the google form). The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki principles.

RESULTS

Mean age of the nurses included in the study was 40.60±7.42 years old. Among the nurses, 98.3% were females, 80.9% were married, 76.4% had children and 87.1% were undergraduates. 69.1% of them stated that they were willing to choose the profession, 97.8% declared that they were working as a clinical nurse and 96.1% were working in shifts. It was also determined that 38.8% of the nurses were working in pediatric clinics, 46.6% have been working in pediatric clinics for 21 years and more, 56.6% found their working conditions sufficient and 89.3% considered communication education they received during in-service trainings as sufficient (Table 1).

Table 1: The distribution of sociodemographic and professional characteristics of the nurses (n:178)

Characteristics		n	%
Age X±SD (Min-Max): 40.60±7.42 (23-57)			
Sex	Female	175	98.3
	Male	3	1.7
Marital status	Married	144	80.9
	Single	34	19.1
Status of having a child	Yes	136	76.4
	No	42	23.6
Education level	High school+ associate degree	5	2.8
	Undergraduate	155	87.1
	Graduate	18	10.1
Status of choosing the profession willingly	Yes	123	69.1
	No	55	30.9
Status of working in shifts	Yes	171	96.1
	No	7	3.9
Position at work	Clinical nurse	174	97.8
	Supervisor nurse	4	2.2
Working unit	Pediatric clinics	69	38.8
	Neonatal and Pediatric intensive care units	63	35.4
	Pediatric Emergency unit	46	25.8
Duration of experience in the field of pediatrics	1-10 years	34	19.1
	11-20 years	61	34.3
	21 years and more	83	46.6
Status of considering working conditions as sufficient	Yes	100	56.6
	No	78	43.8
Considering communication education received during in-service trainings as sufficient	Yes	159	89.3
	No	19	10.7

The mean score of the CSNS was found to be 40.60±7.43 and mean total score from CSI was 155.39±13.05. Their mean scores from the subscales of CSI were 53.59±4.81 for cognitive, 48.69±5.65 for emotional and 53.11±4.78 for behavioral subscales. In addition, the mean total score of the NPSES was 67.31±7.89; and the mean scores of its subscales were as 39.39±4.55 for quality of care and 27.93±4.36 for the tasks to ensure professionalism (Table 2).

Table 2: Mean Scores of the Nurses from Counseling Skills in Nurses Scale (CSNS), Communication Skills Inventory (CSI) and The Nursing Profession Self-Efficacy Scale (NPSES)

Scales and subscales	X̄±SD	Min-Max.	Median
CSNS	40.60±7.42	10-50	44
CSI	155.39±13.05	130-225	154
Cognitive subscale	53.59±4.81	43-75	53
Emotional subscale	48.69±5.65	37-75	48
Behavioral subscale	53,11±4,78	40-75	53
NPSES	67.31±7.89	37-80	66
Quality of care	39.39±4.55	21-45	39
Tasks to ensure professionalism	27.93±4.36	16-35	28

No statistically significant differences were found between CSNS scores of the nurses based on their marital status, status of having a child and duration of work experience (p>0.05). However, statistically significant differences were detected between CSI total score and behavioral subscale score based on marital status of the nurses and their status of having a child (p<0.05). Also, a significant difference was found between tasks to ensure professionalism subscale of NPSES based on marital status of the nurses and the duration of their work experience (p<0.05) (Table 3).

Table 3: Mean CSNS, CSI, NPSES and subscale scores of the Nurses based on their Descriptive Characteristics

		CSNS	CSI	Cognitive subscale	Emotional subscale	Behavioral subscale	NPSES	Quality of care subscale	Tasks to ensure professionalism subscale
		X̄±SD	X̄±SD	X̄±SD	X̄±SD	X̄±SD	X̄±SD	X̄±SD	X̄±SD
Marital Status	Married	44.71±4.62	154.61±13.44	53.50±4.94	48.38±5.78	52.74±4.86	67.33±0.55	39.51±0.46	27.83±0.10
	Single	42.91±7.04	158.68±10.78	53.97±4.26	50.03±4.88	54.68±4.11	67.24±9.32	38.88±4.94	28.35±5.38
p		0.196	0.022	0.405	0.071	0.010	0.572	0.420	0.006
Status of having a child	Yes	44.44±4.63	154.01±12.80	53.32±4.87	48.13±5.63	52.56±4.68	67.04±7.49	39.24±4.448	27.79±3.937
	No	44.12±6.67	159.86±12.76	54.45±4.57	50.52±5.37	54.88±4.72	68.21±9.13	39.86±4.92	28.36±5.57
p		0.717	0.050	0.124	0.005	0.005	0.195	0.220	0.319
Duration of professional experience	1-10 years	45.71±4.01	157.79±12.30	54.12 ±4.31	49.00±0.14	54.68±0.99	70.03±8.23	40.68±4.59	29.35±4.61
	11-20 years	43.84±6.14	154.95±12.60	53.57±4.88	48.16±0.84	53.21±0.39	67.69±7.28	39.30±4.29	28.39±3.90
	21 years and more	44.20±4.81	154.72±13.69	53.39±4.99	48.95±0.74	52.39±0.86	65.93±7.96	38.93±4.68	27.00±0.41
p		0.201	0.394	0.669	0.688	0.054	0.051	0.156	0.033

It was found that there was a positive correlation between CSNS score and CSI total score (Table 4). In addition, it was observed that there was a positive relationship between NPSES score and CSNS score and CSI total scores. It has been determined that the sub-dimensions of professional self-efficacy have a positive correlation with counseling skills, communication skills (Table 4).

Table 4: Correlations Between CSNS, CSI, NPSES and Subscales (n=178)

		CSNS	CSI	Cognitive subscale	Emotional subscale	Behavioral subscale
CSNS	r	1	.298**	.362**	.093	.339**
	p	-	.000	.000	.219	.000
NPSES	r	.484**	.347**	.393**	.138	.388**
	p	.000	.000	.000	.066	.000
Quality of Care subscale	r	.532**	.229**	.285**	.063	.263**
	p	.000	.002	.000	.403	.000
Tasks to ensure professionalism subscale	r	.321**	.389**	.413**	.184*	.427**
	p	.000	.000	.000	.014	.000

(*) p<0.05 (**) p<0.001   r=0.00-0.25 very weak, r=0.26-0.49 weak, r=0.50-0.69 moderate, r=0.70-0.89 high, r=0.90-1.00 very high

DISCUSSION

In this study, counseling skills of the nurses were found to be at a high level. There are a limited number of studies performed in our country on the counseling skills of nurses. In the study by Akcan et al. (2006), it was reported that midwives and nurses had a high frequency of performing their counseling skills and they were competent to find their counseling skills suitable for them. Moreover, Bahceci and Celebioglu (2017) reported in their study that planned and regular renewal education given to the pediatric nurses increased their awareness on the practices for many roles and functions including counseling.

In the study, it was seen that communication skills of the nurses were above the moderate. In the study by Aydogan and Ozkan (2020), mean CSI total and subscale scores were found to be at a moderate level. Similarly, communication skills of the nurses were reported to be above the moderate or high also in many other studies (Caliskan & Ozkan, 2020; Karaman et al., 2016). In the study by Cetiner (2017), communication skills and subscale scores of the supervisor nurses were determined to be at a moderate level. Also in their study, Sahin and Ozdemir (2015) found communication and empathy skill levels of the nurses as high. Atasayi and Yildiz (2018) also found in their study that nurses working in pimary care had moderate scores for professional satisfaction and communication skills. Caliskan and Ozkan (2020) detected communication skills of the nurses working at hematology as above the average. Moreover, the pediatric nurses were reported to have a moderate level of effective speaking skills in the study by Kucukoglu et al. in 2018. Although communication skills are considered as a professional experience, some personal

characteristics of the nurses for early maladaptive schemas such as childhood attachment and temperament were found to affect their communication skills (Mohammadi et al., 2020). In this study, the communication skills of the nurses were found as above the average and this may be associated with the facts that most of the nurses were undergraduates, they had a long duration of professional experience in the field of pediatrics and the subject of communication has been included in the in-service trainings regularly.

In the current study, the mean communication skills of the nurses, who were single and who did not have a child, was found to be higher. In the study by Erci et al. (2017) that evaluated communication skills of the midwives and nurses working in family health centers, it was indicated that communication skills were higher among the ones who were single, undergraduate and midwives. In another previous study, sociodemographic characteristics of the nurses did not seem to affect communication skills (Karaman et al., 2016). In the study by Kumcagiz et al. (2011), age, marital status and status of having a child were not determined to affect communication skill levels of the nurses. Also in the study by Atasayi and Yildiz (2018), sociodemographic characteristics of the nurses working at primary care did not affect communication skill levels.

Professional self-efficacy levels of the pediatric nurses were found to be high in this study. Also, Kocak and Buyukyilmaz (2019) reported that self-efficacy perception of the nurses were at a good level. In their study in which self-efficacy perception levels of the nurses and the effect of these on their performance were examined, Sezgin and Dusukcan (2020) found that self-efficacy perception levels and performance of the nurses were high and self-efficacy perception levels had a positive effect on the performance of the employees (Sezgin & Dusukcan, 2020). Also in the previous studies, professional self-efficacy was found to affect professional satisfaction and performance in a positive way (Cho & Sung, 2018; Han & Kwon, 2016). This may be derived from the fact that pediatric nurses feel competent for the performance of work done in an error-free and qualified manner due to the sensitive nature of their working field and the group including infants and children. Moreover, the graduation of almost all of the study sample was thought to be effective in having a high professional consciousness.

It was seen in the study that the nurses, who were single and had a clinical experience of 1-10 years, had higher scores from tasks to ensure professionalism subscale of NPSES in the study. This subscale of NPSES measures self-confidence of the nurse towards coping with the most challenging situtations among the tasks to ensure professionalism. In the study by Kocak and Buyukyilmaz (2019) , it was determined that self-efficacy perception of the nurses reached the highest level as their age and professional experience increased.

In the study, self-efficacy scores of the nurses were found to have a moderate and positive correlation with their counseling and communication skills. Also, Leal-Costa et al. (2020) detected a positive and statistically significant correlation between communication skills of the nurses and their general and specific self-efficacy; and they indicated that nurses with sufficient communication skills felt themselves more self-confident and competent by developing a good interpersonal relationship with their patients and thus, they could improve their perceived self-efficacy. In another study, Atasayi and Yildiz (2018) found a positive and significant correlation between professional satisfaction and communication skills of the nurses. Moreover, positive correlations were found between communication skills and empathetic tendencies of the nurses working in the emergency service in the study by Ozlu et al. (2016) and between communication skills and emotional intelligence levels of the nurses working in the psychiatric clinic by Tuncer and Demiralp in 2016. Kocak and Buyukyilmaz (2019) also reported that problem solving skills of the nurses increased as their self-efficacy was enhanced. It has been indicated that professional self-efficacy has a vital role for the nurses to be successful and productive in their profession and those with a high level of self-efficacy are more open to professional and personal developments (Vicdan & Tastekin, 2019; Alavi et al., 2017). Together with this, factors such as knowledge, skills and professional commitment have been reported to affect the quality of communication skills of the nurses in the clinical environment (Tuncer & Demiralp, 2016). It is also thought that counseling and communication skills of the nurses may affect their professional self-efficacy in a positive way.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Pediatric nurses are the individuals who are closest to the children and their families in the context of healthcare services. Therefore, they should have good counseling and communication skills in order to promote and improve health and enhance life quality of the children and their families during the course of disease. Counseling and communication skills are a field to be specialized. Throughout the period starting from undergraduate education to professional life, nurses should be given education that will improve their counseling and communication skills during in-service trainings. Based on the result of this study, it was determined that individuals with a good counseling and communication skills had higher professional self-efficacy. Since professional self-efficacy affects job satisfaction and professional performance, these skills need to be supported by early training as well as professional experience. It is recommended to conduct new studies about the effects of counseling, communication skills and professional self-efficacy states of the pediatric nurses on children's health in this field.

Acknowledgments and Comments

Conflict of interest statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Author Contribution

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Data Acquisition: ETB (%30), MK (%30), NUB (%20), EO (%20)

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Writing Up: ETB (%40), NUB (% 30), MK (%30)

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