Original Article / Araştırma Makalesi

COMPARISON OF THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM FOR NURSING EDUCATION OF TWO DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES IN THE EAST AND WEST OF TURKIYE

Türkiye'nin Doğusundaki ve Batısındaki İki Farklı Üniversitenin Hemşirelik Eğitimine Yönelik Örtük Programlarının Karşılaştırılması

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to determine and compare the hidden curriculum of two institutions that provide undergraduate nursing education in two different regions of Türkiye. The descriptive and cross-sectional research was conducted with 319 nursing students. Data were collected with the Introductory Information Form and Hidden Curriculum Evaluation Scale in Nursing Education (HCES-N). While the mean score of the HCES-N total score of the nursing students attending the university in the West of Türkiye was 163.31 ± 21.69. The HCES-N total mean score of the nursing students attending in the East of Türkiye was calculated as 145.50 ± 25.81. While the HCES-N total score, school atmosphere, and professional achievement scores of the nursing students attending the university in the West of Türkiye were statistically higher than the nursing students attending the university in the east, the student-teacher-school interaction score was statistically lower. It was determined that the perceptions of the students participating in the study towards the hidden curriculum were moderate, while the perceptions of the students studying in the West of Türkiye were better. In line with these results, it is important to improve the physical conditions of schools in improving the hidden curriculum.

Keywords: Hidden curriculum, Nursing, Nursing education.

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada, Türkiye'nin iki farklı bölgesinde lisans düzeyinde hemşirelik eğitimi veren iki kurumun hemşirelik eğitiminde örtük programlarının belirlenmesi ve karşılaştırılması amaçlanmıştır. Tanımlayıcı ve kesitsel tipteki araştırma, 319 hemşirelik öğrencisi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler Tanıtıcı Bilgi Formu, Hemşirelik Eğitiminde Örtük Program Değerlendirme Ölçeği (HEÖPDÖ) kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Türkiye' nin batısındaki üniversiteye devam eden hemşirelik öğrencilerinin HEÖPDÖ toplam puan ortalaması 163.31±21.69; Türkiye'nin doğusundaki üniversiteye devam eden hemşirelik öğrencilerinin HEÖPDÖ toplam puan ortalaması ise 145.50 ± 25.81 olarak hesaplanmıştır. Türkiye' nin batısındaki üniversiteye devam eden hemşirelik öğrencilerinin HEÖPDÖ toplam puanı, okul atmosferi ve mesleki kazanımlar puanları doğuda üniversiteye devam eden hemşirelik öğrencilerine göre istatistiksel olarak daha yüksek bulunurken, öğrenci-öğretmen-okul etkileşim puanı ise istatistiksel olarak daha düşük bulunmuştur. Çalışmaya katılan öğrencilerin örtük programa yönelik algılarının orta düzeyde olduğu, batıdaki üniversitenin örtük programa yönelik algılarının daha iyi olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu sonuçlar doğrultusunda okulların fiziksel koşullarının iyileştirilmesinin örtük programı iyileştirilmesinde önem arz etmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Hemşirelik, Hemşirelik eğitimi, Örtük program.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the act of liberating and maturing individuals, which covers and develops all of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning areas. Higher education is the system which works to train high quality human power in line with the needs of the society and aims to produce new knowledge by conducting research and scientific studies. Universities, which are higher education institutions, do not only provide theoretical knowledge to students, but also aim to educate students who can solve problems by scientific methods through teaching them the skills to think freely, scientifically and critically (Bingöl, 2012).

Students are not only influenced by the official curriculum of these institutions, they are also influenced by another unwritten and unplanned curriculum. This curriculum is an informal, unspecified, unplanned, and unwritten implicit program. The hidden curriculum can be defined as knowledge, views, perceptions, practices and values that naturally persist within the school atmosphere. It conveys strong messages about political socialization, instilling values, maintaining traditional class structure, authority, control, obedience, and hierarchy. Students gain exposure to these aspects beyond the purposes and activities specified in the official curriculum (Baydilek & Türkoğlu, 2015; Bolat, 2014; Brammer, 2006; Kavgaoğlu & Seval, 2020; Orgun et al., 2019; Takala et al., 2001).

Although the education programs applied at universities, the courses given to students and the contents of the courses are similar to a great extent, some universities stand out in terms of their place in the society and the quality of their graduates. The reason for this difference is the hidden curriculum, in other words factors such as the standards of the university, academic staff, social classes of students and their academic achievement levels, social and academic life in university (Skelton, 1997; Wilkinson, 2016). An unwritten system that guides all these practices is hidden under all these practices in universities, and this system is carried out with a hidden curriculum that students are affected at least as much as the formal education program (Aksu et al., 2008; Ercan et al., 2009).

Nursing undergraduate curriculum aims to educate and train nurses who are sensitive to all kinds of development and change that can affect health, who can accurately determine the nursing care needs of individuals and provide these needs, who are active members of the health team, who consider professional ethical principles and who adapt life-long learning (Akçakoca & Orgun, 2021).

Nurses are influenced by the education they receive and the atmosphere of the institution they work in and they socialize with the beliefs, values, justice and, practices of the institutions.

This effect has a great influence on nurses' approaches to patients and communication (Allan et al., 2011).

Qualified nursing care takes place with nurses who are caring, close, encouraging, cheerful, polite, compassionate, sympathetic, empathetic and respectful. This is not possible only through professional knowledge and practices; it also requires having intellectual and analytical skills. The acquisition of these skills requires the contribution of hidden curriculum in addition to formal curriculum. The hidden curriculum can sometimes be more effective than formal curriculum in teaching these competencies in a profession such as nursing, where it is important to have skills which focus on the human and which has affective skills (Allan et al, 2011; Brammer, 2006). In their study, Salehi (2006) stated that the hidden curriculum that midwifery and nursing students experienced was as important as the formal curriculum. In another study, it was stated that nursing students learn factors of professionalism through the hidden curriculum (Karimi et al., 2014). When looking at nursing education, formal education is generally taken into consideration. In addition to formal education, the hidden curriculum of institutions needs to be evaluated and awareness must be gained. Therefore, this study was carried out.

The questions of the research are as follows;

What are the hidden programs of universities in nursing education?

Are there any differences between these universities?

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Research Aim

The aim of this study is to determine and compare the implicit curriculum of nursing education in two different institutions that provide nursing undergraduate education in the East and West of Türkiye. As a result of the study, the hidden curriculum of both institutions will be determined and, if there is a difference, the reason will be investigated.

Research Design

The study was planned as a descriptive study. Volunteering nursing department students (n=319) who were studying in the spring term of 2022 academic year in two universities, in the East and West of Türkiye, and who had received at least one term of nursing education were included in the study.

Population and Sample

Population of the study consisted of nursing students attending a state university in the East of Türkiye (n=1000) and a foundation university in the West of Türkiye (n=206). In both universities, the nursing department is affiliated to the Faculty of Health Sciences and has not yet been accredited in both institutions. At the same time, the number of teaching staff is similar to each other, and both institutions provide education with the same curriculum. Sample of the study was determined with "snowball sampling method", one of the non-random sampling methods. Data collection forms, which were prepared with GoogleDocs program in line with this sampling method, were sent online (e-mail, whatsapp) to students on the dates of the study and the students were asked to fill in the forms. The forms were delivered to the faculty members of the relevant universities, and they were also made available to the students. 90% of the students were reached. The study was completed with 319 students who filled in the data collection forms completely. Power analysis worked in GPower 3.1 program was calculated. As a result of the power analysis, the sample was found to be sufficient with 0.181 effect size, 95% power and 0.05 margin of error.

Data Collection

The data were collected with Google Forms. Descriptive Information Form prepared by the researchers and Hidden Curriculum Evaluation Scale in Nursing Education were used in data collection.

Descriptive Information Form

The form includes questions on age, gender, period of nursing education received, information on the hidden curriculum, views on academic achievement, and reasons for choosing the profession.

Hidden Curriculum Evaluation Scale in Nursing Education

The scale was developed in 2018 by Akçakoca and Orgun. The scale, which was developed to determine and evaluate the the hidden curriculum in nursing education of institutions providing nursing education, includes 43 items. There are 13 reversely scored items in the measurement scale. The scale consists of 3 factors as school atmosphere, professional acquisitions, and student-teacher-school interaction. The minimum possible total score of the scale is 43, while the maximum possible total score is 215, and Cronbach α = 0.912 (13). For this study, Cronbach's α = 0.924.

Data Analysis

Descriptive data were analyzed in SPSS program. Normality distributions of the data were evaluated according to Skewness and Kurtosis values. Mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, number-percentage distributions, Chi-square, t-test, one-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation analysis were used in data analysis.

Limitations

The study had some limitations. Since snowball sampling method was used instead of random sampling while determining the study sample, this may have caused sample bias. The fact that some sociodemographic (class level, gender) characteristics of students were not homogeneously distributed among institutions may have affected the results of the study. In addition, the data were obtained cross-sectional and they were obtained from nursing department of health sciences faculties in two universities in Türkiye. For this reason, the results may not represent the Turkish nursing students.

Ethical Considerations

The present study was carried out in line with the ethical principles of Helsinki Declaration of Human Rights. Before starting the study, ethics approval was obtained from University Non-interventional Ethics Committee (E-67888467-204.01.07-7870/2022) and written permission was taken from the institutions where the study was conducted. The form including the required explanations about the aim and method of the study was sent online to students who participated in the study and their approval was taken.

RESULTS

67.1% of the students who participated in the study were female and 54.5% were first year students. Most of the students (72.1%) stated that they did not have information about hidden curriculum, while most (53.9%) stated that they chose nursing willingly. Mean age of the students was 20.95±2.04. When the sociodemographic information of students attending the two universities was compared, statistically significant difference was found in terms of gender, year of study and the areas participants lived in (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Students

	Foundation University		State university		Test Values	Total	
Gender	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**		**n**	**%**
Female	108	77.7	106	59	x^2= 12.56	214	67.1
Male	31	22.3	74	41	**p= 0.000**	105	32.9
Year of study							
1st	62	44.6	112	62.2		174	54.5
2nd	57	41	28	15.6	x^2= 34.34	85	26.6
3rd	20	14.4	26	14.4	**p= 0.00**	46	14.4
4th	0	0	14	7.8		14	4.5
Place of residence							
Village/district	14	10	24	13.3	x^2= 0.79	38	11.9
Town/city	125	90	156	86.7	p= 0.238	281	88.1
The region most lived in							
Marmara Region	87	62.6	6	3.3		93	29.2
Mediterranean Region	5	3.6	6	3.3		11	3.4
Eastern Anatolia Region	2	1.4	13	7.3		15	4.7
Aegean Region	5	3.6	1	0.6	x^2= 180.66	6	1.9
Southeast Anatolia Region	25	18	152	84.4	**p= 0.000**	177	55.5
Central Anatolia Region	4	2.8	0	0		4	1.3
Black Sea Region	9	6.4	2	1.1		11	3.4
Abroad	2	1.4	0	0		2	0.6
Having knowledge about hidden curriculum							
Yes	7	5	11	6.1		18	5.6
Partly	33	23.8	38	21.1	x^2= 0.431	71	22.3
No	99	71.2	131	72.8	p= 0.806	230	72.1
Academic achievement							
Very good	11	8	12	6.6		23	7.2
Good	70	50.3	71	39.5	x^2= 4.92	141	44.2
Moderate	54	38.9	88	48.9	p= 0.177	142	44.5
Poor	4	2.8	9	5		13	4.1
Reason to choose nursing							
Willingly	83	59.8	89	49.5		172	53.9
By chance	4	2.9	18	10		22	6.9
Upon recommendation	39	28	51	28.3		80	28.2
To be appointed	7	5	7	3.9	x^2=10.82	14	4.4
Because the family wanted so	5	3.6	8	4.4	p=0.55	13	4.1
Because of university exam result	1	0.7	7	3.9		8	2.5
Age	20.77±1.69		21.10±2.27		t= - 1401 p= 0.162	20.95 ± 2.04	

Mean total HCES-N score of the students was found as 153.26 ± 25.64. Mean total scale score of the students in foundation university was found as 163.31 ± 21.69; while mean total

scale score of the students in state university was found as 145.50±25.81 and statistically significant difference was found between the two groups (p<0.05). When the factors of the scale were examined, mean school atmosphere and professional acquisitions scores of the students in foundation university were found to be higher than those of the students in state university, while their mean student-teacher-school interaction scores were lower than those of the students in state university. Statistically significant difference was found between mean factor scores of the students in two universities (p<0.05) (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of HCES-N Scores in Terms of Schools

Scale total and factor scores	Foundation university (n=139)	State university (n=180)	Test Values	Total (N= 319)
Total	163.31 ±21.69	145.50 ±25.81	t = 6.689 **p= 0.000**	153.26 ±25.64
School environment	75.99 ±10.16	62.33 ±12.89	t= 10.578 **p= 0.000**	68.28 ±13.58
Professional acquisitions	50.97 ±8.07	44.22 ±12.10	t= 5.953 **p= 0.000**	47.16 ±11.04
Student-teacher-school Interaction	36.35 ±12.46	38.94 ±9.35	t= -2.121 **p= 0.042**	37.81 ±10.88

When mean scale scores of the students were examined in terms of sociodemographic characteristics, no statistically significant difference was found between the scores (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of Students' Sociodemographic Characteristics and HCES-N Mean Scores

Characteristics	HCES-N	Test Values
Gender		t= 1.541 p= 0.124
Female	154.81 ±25.30	
Male	150.11 ±26.16	
Year of study		F= 1.028 p= 0.417
1st year	154.60 ±27.06	
2nd year	154.37 ±27.78	
3rd year	143.80 ±18.24	
4th year	160.92 ±21.90	
Place of residence		t= - 1.156 p= 0.254
Village/district	147.64 ±32.73	
Town/city	154.02 ±24.50	
The region most lived in		
Marmara Region	165.92 ±24.18	
Mediterranean Region	137.039 ±26.66	
Eastern Anatolia Region	150.40 ±22.09	
Aegean Region	174.66 ±18.42	F= 1.230 p= 0.107
Southeast Anatolia Region	146.31 ±24.27	
Central Anatolia Region	161.25 ±13.37	
Black Sea Region	162.36 ±22.26	
Abroad	160.50 ±0.70	
Having knowledge about hidden curriculum		F= 1.237 p= 0.107
Yes	154.27 ±31.31	
Partly	151.76 ±23.38	
No	153.65 ±25.93	
Academic achievement		

Very good	155.86 ±33.13	
Good	156.95 ±24.41	F=2.805
Moderate	150.37 ±24.99	p= 0.058
Poor	140.30 ±25.80	
Reason to choose nursing		
Willingly	158.01 ±24.79	
By chance	152.18 ±24.35	
Upon recommendation	147.58 ±26.68	F= 1.028
To be appointed	147.78 ±17.19	p= 0.427
Because the family wanted so	144.61 ±29.44	
Because of university exam result	141.75 ±25.90	
Age	r= .334 p= 0.054	

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study in which nursing education the hidden curriculum of two institutions providing undergraduate nursing education in two different regions of Türkiye were determined and compared were discussed below in line with the literature.

The hidden curriculum is of great importance in protecting and developing professional values (Abbaspour, Moonaghi, Kareshki & Esmaeili, 2022; Raso et al., 2019). In the study, mean HCES-N total score of all students was found as 153.26 ±25.64. When maximum possible score of the scale (215) was considered, it was found that students had moderate scores in general. In the study conducted by Yanmış and Özcan (2021) and Orgun, Özkütük, and Akçakoca (2019), nursing students' perceptions of formal education were at a moderate level. In a scoping study examining the hidden curriculum in nursing education in 2019, it has been stated that the hidden curriculum in nursing education is a largely overlooked issue (Raso et al., 2019).

It was found that nursing students in the foundation university had statistically higher views about the hidden curriculum than students in the state university. Students' perceptions about the hidden curriculum can be affected by factors such as the standards of the university, students' social class, culture, and social and academic life at university (Akçakoca & Orgun, 2021). In the present study, the finding that foundation university students had better perceptions about the hidden curriculum may have resulted from this situation.

It was stated that one of the factors affecting learning through the hidden curriculum is "educator behavior. The results of teacher-student interaction, their growth and formation were obtained in the literature (Öztürk & Taşpınar, 2021). Student-teacher-school interaction' factor questions whether teachers show attitudes forcing students to adapt their thoughts and whether discriminations are made between students' gender or race and hierarchical attitudes of the school management (Akçakoca & Orgun, 2021). In this factor, it was found that students in the foundation university had lower mean scores than state university students. This difference may

be resulting from the language used by academic staff, their attitudes towards students, different teaching strategies, and ideological structures.

"School atmosphere" factor examines whether there is cooperation between teachers and students, how the learning atmosphere in the classroom is, how the attitudes and behaviors of teachers are and how architectural characteristics of the school are (Akçakoca & Orgun, 2021). It was found that students at both universities had moderate mean scores in "school atmosphere" factor. However, it was found that students in the foundation university had higher scores than students in the state university. The reasons for this may be the fact that the foundation university had better architecture and more suitable laboratory and hospital practice atmosphere. It is also thought that as the students' year of study increases and they become more familiar with the institution and institution culture, they have more positive school atmosphere perception (Yanmış & Özcan, 2021). It is thought that the result that a great majority of students in state university were in their first year may have affected school atmosphere factor score negatively.

Although formal curricula are planned with certain goals, the hidden curriculum has a significant influence on forming the professional identities of nursing students (Hopkins et al, 2016). In the present study, participants were found to have moderate level of "professional acquisitions" factor mean score. Similar results were found in a study conducted by Yanmış and Özcan (2021). In the present study, nursing students in the foundation university were found to have higher professional acquisitions factor mean scores than students in the state university. It is also affected by clinical nurse students perceive as role models. These effects are mostly seen in professional behaviors, professional practices, positive and negative attitudes during education and practice, ways of perceiving the profession and professional socialization (Allan, Smith & O'Driscoll, 2011; Karimi et al., 2014; Wilkinson, 2016). In addition, professional education is more influenced by the dominant professional culture to which students are exposed during their training than the time spent in class (Allan, Smith & O'Driscoll, 2011). Different perceptions about professional acquisitions between the students at both universities may have resulted from the difference in practice areas of the hospitals.

CONCLUSION

It was found that the participants had moderate level of perceptions about the hidden curriculum of the university they were studying at. It was also found that while nursing students studying at the foundation university in the West of Türkiye had higher perceptions about the

hidden curriculum, school atmosphere, and professional acquisitions than the students studying at the state university, they had lower perceptions about student-teacher-school interaction.

In line with these results; Higher education institutions providing nursing education should aim to create and develop hidden curriculum to increase the quality of their graduates. It is recommended to increase the number of studies examining hidden curriculum and to conduct these studies with larger student groups with a multi-centred and experimental approach.

Only a good formal education is not enough to teach and train qualified nurses. In order to increase the quality of nursing education, hidden curriculum of educational institutions should be determined, developed, and organized in line with the objectives.

Note

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