Araştırma Makalesi/ Research Article

The Effect of a Geriatric Nursing Course on the Attitudes of Students towards the Elderly Discrimination: A Quasi- Experimental Study

Geriatri Hemşireliği Dersinin Öğrencilerin Yaşlı Ayrımcılığına Yönelik Tutumlarına Etkisi: Yarı-Deneysel Bir Çalışma

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ÖZ
Amaç: Bu çalışma, geriatri hemşireliği dersinin öğrencilerin yaşlı ayrımcılığına yönelik tutumlarına etkisini belirlemek amacıyla yapıldı.
Yöntem: Yarı-deneysel nitelikte yapılan bu araştırma, 20 Şubat-20 Mayıs 2019 tarihleri arasında geriatri hemşireliği dersi alan ve araştırmanın ön test-son test uygulamasında yer alan 43 hemşirelik son sınıf öğrencisi ile tamamlandı. Veriler, öğrenci bilgi formu ve Yaşlı Ayrımcılığı Tutum Ölçeği aracılığıyla toplandı. Veriler, tanımlayıcı istatistikler, Student t testi ve Pearson Korelasyon testi kullanılarak analiz edildi.
Bulgular: Araştırmada yer alan öğrencilerin % 51.2'si 22-25 yaş aralığında ve % 60.5'i kadındır. Öğrencilerin eğitim öncesi Yaşlı Ayrımcılığı Tutum Ölçeği toplam puan ortalamasının 67.86±6.22'den, eğitim sonrası 70.41±6.48'e yükseldiği ve aralarındaki farkın istatistiksel olarak anlamlı olduğu tespit edildi (p<0.05). Mezuniyet sonrası yaşlılar ile ilgili bir bölümde görev almak isteyen öğrencilerin, yaşlı yaşamını sınırlama alt boyutu arasında anlamlı pozitif yönde bir ilişki, yaşlıya yönelik pozitif ayrımcılık alt boyut puan ortalaması arasında anlamlı negatif yönde bir ilişki tespit edildi (p<0.05).
Sonuç: Geriatri hemşireliği dersi sayesinde öğrencilerin yaşlı ayrımcılığına ilişkin bilgilerden yararlandıkları ve bilgilendikleri, yaşlı ayrımcılığına yönelik tutumlarında da olumlu yönde gelişme olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Hemşirelik öğrencilerinin yaşlı ayrımcılığına yönelik düşüncelerinin olumlu yönde geliştirilmesinde eğitim müfredatları içerisinde geriatri hemşireliği gibi özel dal hemşireliği derslerine yer verilmesi ve yaşlılara yönelik seminerler, konferans ve kurslara katılmalarının desteklenmesi önerilebilir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Geriatri hemşireliği, öğrenci, tutum, yaşlı ayrımcılığı.

ABSTRACT
Objective: This study was conducted to determine the effect of geriatric nursing course on the attitudes of students towards the elderly discrimination.
Methods: The quasi-experimental study was completed with 43 senior nursing students who received geriatric nursing lesson between February 20th-May 20th 2019, and took part in the pretest-posttest application of the study. The data were collected via the student information form and Elderly Discrimination Attitude Scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Paired Sample t-Test and Pearson's Correlation Analysis.
Results: Among students who participated in the study; 51.2% were in the age range of 22-25 years and 60.5% were female. It was stated that students' total score average of the Elderly Discrimination Attitude Scale was 67.86 ± 6.22 pre-test and increased to 70.41 ± 6.48 post-test and the difference between was statistically significant (p<0.05). It was determined that there was a positively significant correlation between the elderly life limitation lower dimensions of students intending to work in geriatric departments after graduating and a negatively significant correlation between positive discrimination against the elderly lower dimensions (p<0.05).
Conclusion: It was concluded that due to geriatric nursing course, students were able to utilize knowledge regarding elderly discrimination and their attitudes toward elderly discrimination developed positively. In order to develop nursing students' thoughts about elderly discrimination positively, it can be recommended to include special branch nursing lessons like geriatric nursing in the curricula and to encourage students to participate in seminars, conferences and courses concerning the elderly.
Keywords: Geriatric nursing, student, attitude, elderly discrimination

Introduction

Growing older is a process starting with fertilization and continuing until death, in the course of which physical, mental, and social developments occur, which then gradually decrease over time (Akdemir and Birol, 2015). The number of individuals aged 65 and over – those who are considered elderly by the World Health Organization (WHO) – is increasing each year, and the elderly population constituted 9.1% of the global population in 2018. According to the 2018 TURKSTAT data, Turkey ranks 66th among 167 countries in the world, with the percentage of elderly at 8.8% (7.7% men and 9.8% women). It is estimated that the percentage of elderly will be 10.2% in 2023, 12.9% in 2030, 16.3% in 2040, 22.6% in 2060 and 25.6% in 2080 (TSI 2020).

As a result of prolonged life expectancy, becoming elderly affects many areas of life, including family life, social security, job opportunities, social and cultural activities, and it can lead to physiological, psychological, and social problems (Arun and Çakıroglu Çevik, 2013; Komşu 2014). Generally, the productivity of aging individuals decreases due to chronic diseases and health problems, and they are often considered a burden on society; this affects the attitudes and behaviors of society towards the elderly. Social support, adapting to the aging process and economic and housing issues are all areas in which elderly individuals may experience problems in how they are treated. As a consequence of these problems encountered by elderly individuals, the concept of "elderly discrimination" has risen in prominence (Altay and Aydın, 2015; Ünsar et al., 2015).

Elderly discrimination describes a social situation that involves positive or negative behaviors, attitudes, and biases towards the elderly (Bozdogan Yeşilot et al., 2020). Palmore has defined elderly discrimination as "attitudes and behaviors expressing bias towards older individuals" (Palmore 2004). Elderly discrimination also includes the systematically negative and biased behaviors of younger individuals towards those of more advanced age. One of the areas in which elderly discrimination is most frequently encountered is healthcare (Köse et al., 2015). The biases, values, perceptions, and beliefs that health professionals hold about aging individuals are the main causes of elderly discrimination and are reflected in behaviors such as not paying elderly people enough attention, demonstrating biased behaviors and attitudes, avoiding providing services and information to the elderly, and neglecting their treatment (Palmore 2004; Karadag et al., 2012).

Nursing students will become members of the health teams which seek to meet the care needs of elderly individuals. Determining the nursing students' approaches to the elderly, and ensuring that they develop more positive, respectful, and tolerant attitudes and behaviors will thus be useful in improving the quality of the health care provided to elderly individuals in the future (Zaybak et al., 2017; Bozdogan Yeşilot et al., 2020). Some studies have revealed that nursing students do not want to be assigned to the units related to the elderly because of their prejudice against them; (Altay and Aydın, 2015; Türgay et al., 2015; Ünsar et al., 2015; Danış and Kara, 2017) however, some students are more willing to work with aging individuals (Adıbelli et al., 2013; Köse et al., 2015; Ayaz Alkaya and Birimoglu Okuyan, 2017; Çilingir et al., 2017; Demiray and Dal Yılmaz, 2017; Salman et al., 2018).

In light of these studies, the attitudes of nursing students towards the elderly need to be examined to understand what measures should be taken and which practices should be put in place in the future. For these reasons, the current study was conducted to determine the effect of a Geriatric Nursing course on the attitudes of final-year nursing students towards elderly individuals.

Research questions

1. What were the attitudes of nursing students towards the elderly before the Geriatric Nursing course?

2. What were the attitudes of nursing students towards the elderly after the Geriatric Nursing course?

3. Did the Geriatric Nursing course affect the attitudes of nursing students towards the elderly?

Methods

Research type: A quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design was used.

Research population and sample: This research was conducted between 20 February and 20 May, 2019, with final-year nursing students who were taking the Geriatric Nursing course at the Faculty of Health Sciences at XXX University in the spring semester of the 2018-2019 academic year. The universe of the research consisted of 43 students who were in their final year of study in the Department of Nursing. The research included nursing students (a) who were receiving nursing education in the spring term of the 2018-2019

academic year, (b) who were taking the Geriatric Nursing course, (c) who agreed to participate in the study, (d) who participated in the pre-test and post-test application of the study, and (e) who filled in the questionnaires fully. Since all students who took the course participated in the research, 100% of the universe was reached and the study was completed with 43 students.

Data collection tools: The data were obtained by using the Student Information Form and the Elderly Discrimination Attitude Scale (EDAS).

Student Information Form: The data were collected using this form, which was prepared after the current sources were scanned by the researchers (Altay and Aydın, 2015; Ayaz Alkaya and Birimoglu Okuyan, 2017; Çilingir et al., 2017; Demiray and Dal Yılmaz, 2017; Karadag et al., 2012; Köse et al., 2015; Salman et al., 2018; Ünsar et al., 2015; Zaybak et al., 2017). The first part of the form was made up of questions 1 to 10, which were designed to gather data about the participants' sociodemographic information, while the second part, questions 11 to 20, asked about living with and giving care to elderly individuals.

Elderly Discrimination Attitude Scale (EDAS): This scale was developed by Vefikuluçay Yılmaz and Terzioglu and consists of 23 items and three subdimensions (Vefikuluçay Yılmaz and Terzioglu, 2011). As the score obtained from the scale increases, so the positive attitude towards the elderly increases. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale including both positive and negative statements of attitude which can be ranked as "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Undecided", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree". Statements expressing a positive attitude are scored as follows: Strongly agree = 5; Agree = 4; Undecided = 3; Disagree = 2; Strongly Disagree = 1. Statements expressing a negative attitude are reverse-scored as the opposite. The maximum score obtainable from the scale is 115 and the minimum score is 23. The EDAS consists of the subdimensions of "restricting the life of the elder" (items 1, 5, 12, 14, 17, 19, 21, 22, and 23), "positive discrimination towards the elderly" (items 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, and 20), and "negative discrimination towards the elderly" (items 3, 10, 11, 15, 16, and 18). The subdimension of "restricting the life of the elder" includes the beliefs and perceptions about limiting an elderly person's social life. The score ranges between 9 and 45 points, and a score close to 9 points is considered negative while a score close to 45 points is considered positive. The subdimension of "positive discrimination towards

the elderly" includes positive beliefs and perceptions about elderly individuals. The score ranges between 8 and 40 points, and a score close to 8 points is considered negative while a score close to 40 points is considered positive. The subdimension of "negative discrimination towards the elderly" includes negative beliefs and perceptions about elderly individuals. It is scored between 6 and 30 points, and a score close to 6 points is considered negative while a score close to 30 points is considered positive. As the score obtained from the scale and its subdimensions increases, so the positive attitude towards the elderly also increases. In the study conducted by Vefikuluçay Yılmaz and Terzioğlu (2011), the Cronbach's alpha value of the scale was found to be 0.80. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha value of the EDAS was found to be 0.78.

Content of the Geriatric Nursing Course: The Geriatric Nursing course is a 14-week and 2-credit elective course in the final-year nursing curricula and is given by a faculty member in the Department of Nursing at the Faculty of Health Sciences. This course includes the definition of elderliness, physiological changes experienced in old age, systematic evaluation of the elderly individual, polypharmacy in the elderly, neglect and abuse of the elderly, geriatric emergencies, institutions and organizations providing elderly care services, palliative care, intensive care problems in elderly patients, and death. The course topics are presented as a slide show using a barcovision device. During the 14-week course, the interactive participation of the students was ensured by using the question-answer method. A variety of scenarios that might be encountered by students within geriatric nursing, how they could behave, and how they could react to some cases were discussed.

Data Collection: The students were informed about the content and purpose of the study and the data were collected between February 20 and May 20, 2019. It was emphasized that participation in the research was voluntary and confidential. The consent form was read and the data collection forms were distributed to those who agreed to participate in the study. The data collection forms were given to the students twice: at the beginning of the semester and the end of the semester. The students were asked to write their student numbers on the questionnaires to avoid confusion. Data collection took approximately 20-25 minutes.

Data Analysis: The data were evaluated using the SPSS 24.0 program. The data obtained from the

first 20 questions about the socio-demographic characteristics of the students and information about the elderly were evaluated as percentages. The paired sample's t-test was used to compare the attitude scores of the students before and after the course, and to calculate the difference; Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the correlation between the mean attitude scores before and after the course. The statistical significance level was accepted as $p<0.05$.

Results

Of the students who participated in the research, 51.2% were in the 22-25-year-old age range; 60.5% were female; 60.5% lived in the city center; 90.7% lived in a nuclear family (Table 1).

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Nursing Students

Variables	(n=43)	%
Age		
18-21 years	21	48.8
22-25 years	22	51.2
Gender		
Female	26	60.5
Male	17	39.5
Graduated school		
Normal high school	11	25.6
Anatolian high school	32	74.4
Mothers' education level		
Below primary education	33	76.8
Primary education or a higher	10	23.2
Mothers' profession		
Employed	9	20.9
Unemployed	34	79.1
Fathers' education level		
Below primary education	29	67.5
Primary education or a higher	14	32.5
Fathers' profession		
Employed	41	95.3
Unemployed	2	4.7
Family income level		
Income below expenditure	7	16.3
Income equal to expenditure	33	76.7
Income above expenditure	3	7.0
Residence place of family		
City center	26	60.5
Countryside	12	27.9
Village	5	11.6
Family type		
Nuclear family	39	90.7
Expanded family	4	9.3

55.8% of the students stated that they lived with an elderly person at home, 54.4% stated that they had lived with an elderly person for less than two years and the mean duration of living with an elderly person was found to be 1.72±0.84 years. Half of the students stated that they lived with their grandmother or grandfather; 60.4% wanted to live with the elderly individual; 71.4% stated that their reason for this was in order to support their parents. Of the students who participated in the research, 34.6% stated that they did not want to live with the elderly/elderly individual because they thought that their spouses did not want their parents present. It was found that 97.7% of the students had provided care to elderly individuals during their internships. The percentage of those who wanted to work with the elderly after graduation was 81.4% and 68.5% stated that they wanted to work in a geriatric department because they believed that elderly individuals needed more support. 62.5% of the students stated that they did not want to work in a geriatric department because they believed that elderly individuals were stubborn and grumpy (Table 2).

When the mean total EDAS scores before and after the course were examined, it was seen that the score increased from 67.86±6.22 to 70.41±6.48, and that this increase was statistically significant (p=0.022) (Table 3).When the pre- and post-course mean EDAS subdimension scores were compared, it was determined that all the post-course subdimension mean scores were higher than the pre-course subdimension mean scores. Among the subdimensions, there was a significant difference between the "positive discrimination towards the elderly" subdimension mean scores before and after the course (p=0.005).

There was a significant negative correlation found between students' wanting to work in a geriatric department and sex (p=0.033, r=-0.326). A positive correlation was found between the mean total pre-course EDAS score and the mean total post-course score (p=0.011, r=0.382). There was a strong correlation between the mean total pre-course EDAS score and the mean pre-course "restricting the life of the elder" subdimension score (p=0.002, r=0.468); the mean pre-course "positive discrimination" subdimension score (p=0.000, r=0.519); and the mean pre-course "negative discrimination" subdimension score (p=0.000, r=0.709). There was a significant, positive, weak correlation between the mean total pre-course EDAS score and the mean post-course "positive

discrimination" subdimension score (p=0.022, r=0.348). A significant, positive, weak correlation was found between the mean total post-course EDAS score and the mean pre-course "restricting the life of the elder" subdimension score (p=0.014, r=0.373). There was a significant, positive, strong correlation between the mean total post-course EDAS score and the mean pre-course "negative discrimination" subdimension score (p=0.006, r=0.414), and between the mean total post-course EDAS score and the mean post-course "negative discrimination" subdimension score (p=0.000, r=0.804) (Table 4).

Table 2. Distribution of Nursing Students According to Some Variables of the Elderly

Variables	(n=43)	%
Living with elderly people		
Yes	24	55.8
No	19	44.2
Duration living with the elderly person (n=24)		
Less than two years	13	54.2
3-5 years	6	25.0
6 years and over	5	20.8
Elderly who have lived together so far (n=24)		
Grandmother and grandfather	12	50.0
Only grandmother	8	33.4
Only grandfather	4	16.6
Mean duration of living with an elderly person (years)	**1.72±0.84**	
Wanted to live with the elderly person		
Yes	14	32.5
No	26	60.4
Unstable	3	7.1
* Reasons want to live with the elderly person (n=14)		
In order to support their parents	10	71.4
Benefiting parental experience	4	28.6
* Reasons did not want to live with the elderly person (n=26)		
Loving to live alone		
Their spouses did not want their parents	8	30.7
Thinking it is appropriate to live separately	9	34.6
Disruption of the order in the house	2	7.6
Didn't want to interfere with her/him	3	11.5
	4	15.6
Provided care to elderly individuals during their internships		
Yes	42	97.7
No	1	2.3
Wanted to work with the elderly after graduation (n=35)		
Yes	35	81.4
No	8	18.6
* Wanted to work in a geriatric department (n=35)		
Getting used to taking care of the elderly	2	5.9
Feeling valuable when caring for the elderly	5	14.2
Elderly individuals needed more support	24	68.5
Empathizing with their relatives	4	11.4
* Didn't wanted to work in a geriatric department (n=8)		
Physical and mental fatigue	2	25.0
Elderly individuals were stubborn and grumpy	5	62.5
Continuous working with the elderly leads to burnout	4	50.0
It is difficult to communicate with the elderly	3	37.5

**Multiple options are marked in the answer to the questions. For this reason, percentages are calculated over the value of n.*

Table 3. Comparison of Students' EDAS and Sub-Dimension Scores Pretest and Post-Test

Instrument	Mean±Sd		Min-Max		t	p*
	Pretest Score	Post-test Score	Pretest	Post-test		
Restricting the life of the elder	19.76±3.51	20.06±4.42	11-29	13-33	-0.512	0.611
Positive discrimination towards the elderly	30.65±4.66	32.37±3.90	14-38	24-40	-2.931	**0.005**
Negative discrimination towards the elderly	17.44±3.04	17.97±3.33	12-25	9-25	-1.093	0.281
EDAS total score	67.86±6.22	70.41±6.48	56-80	56-82	-2.373	**0.022**

* Paired Sample t testi, EDAS: Elderly Discrimination Attitude Scale
Pretest, baseline measurement beginning of the semester; post-test, ending of the semester

Table 4. Correlations Between the Pre- and Post-Test EDAS and Sub-Dimension Scores With Some Variables

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Gender	-	.03*	.73	.55	.96	.71	.11	.29	.50	.21
2.	Wanted to work in a geriatric department		-	.03*	.00**	.36	.18	.10	.18	.43	.52
3.	Pretest restricting the life of the elder			-	.00**	.00**	.00**	.08	.04*	.00**	.01*
4.	Pretest positive discrimination towards the elderly				-	.92	.00**	.00**	.20	.00**	.79
5.	Pretest negative discrimination towards the elderly					-	.31	.58	.00**	.00**	.00**
6.	Post-test restricting the life of the elder						-	.00**	.00**	.75	.00**
7.	Post-test positive discrimination towards the elderly							-	.54	.02*	.13
8.	Post-test negative discrimination towards the elderly								-	.07	.00**
9.	Pretest EDAS total mean score									-	.01*
10.	Post-test EDAS total mean score										-

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, EDAS: Elderly Discrimination Attitude Scale
Pretest, baseline measurement beginning of the semester; post-test, ending of the semester

There was a strong, negative correlation between the mean pre-course "restricting the life of the elder" subdimension score and the mean pre-course "positive discrimination" subdimension score (p=0.009, r=-0.396), and a positive, strong correlation between the mean pre-course "restricting the life of the elder" subdimension score and the mean pre-course "negative discrimination" subdimension score (p=0.006, r=0.411). There was a positive, weak correlation between the mean pre-course "restricting the life of the elder" subdimension score and the mean post-course "negative discrimination" subdimension score (p=0.040, r=0.315) (Table 4).

There was a strong, positive correlation between the mean pre-course and post-course "positive discrimination" subdimension scores (p=0.000, r=0.609), and between the mean pre-course "positive discrimination" subdimension scores, and the mean post-course "restricting the life of the elder" subdimension score (p=0.003, r=-0.447). There was a significant positive strong correlation between the mean pre-course and post-course "negative discrimination" subdimension scores (p=0.001, r=0.496) (Table 4).

Discussion
Today, life expectancy has increased, leading to a gradually increasing elderly population. Therefore, chronic diseases and health care needs have also increased in aging individuals. This means that health professionals, especially nurses, will frequently encounter elderly individuals throughout their professional lives. This situation obliges all health professionals to have sufficient and accurate information about elderly discrimination and to demonstrate a professional attitude that does not involve misunderstanding, fear or, stigma towards either illnesses or patients (Karadag et al., 2012; Özdemir and Bilgili, 2014; Baysal et al., 2019;

Subba et al., 2019). For this reason, nursing students need to have adequate information about the problems that arise during the aging process, how to treat these problems, and to maintain positive attitudes towards the elderly. This will help contribute to the general social awareness of about elderly discrimination. In the current study, the results regarding the effect of the Geriatric Nursing course on the attitudes of nursing students towards elderly discrimination were assessed in light of the literature. The study found that the mean elderly discrimination score of the nursing students was 67.86±6.22 before the course, that it increased to 70.41±26.48 after the course, and that the difference between them was statistically significant. In studies in which the attitudes of nursing students towards the elderly were measured, the mean elderly discrimination scores ranged between 68.82±8.54 and 85.75±10.35 (Karadag et al., 2012; Altay and Aydın, 2015; Ünsar et al., 2015; Çilingir et al., 2017; Zaybak et al., 2017; Olak and Tümer, 2018; Yardımcı Gürel, 2019; Bozdogan Yeşilot et al., 2020). The different results in the literature for the elderly discrimination attitude scores may be due to the different sociodemographic characteristics of the sample groups, the different content in applied and theoretical courses related to aging and elderly care, and cultural differences.

In the study conducted by Akpınar et al., it was determined that the students who took a geriatric nursing elective course had more positive attitudes towards the elderly than the students who took the emergency and surgical nursing elective courses, and that the Geriatric Nursing course was effective in reducing negative attitudes (Akpınar Söylemez et al., 2018). In the study conducted by Sum et al. a 10-week workshop on elderliness was given to 186 university students in different health-related areas, and to a group consisting of 187 primary, secondary, and high school students using techniques such as lectures, watching films, reading booklets and sharing experiences. It was determined that elderly discrimination was high in the group consisting of primary, secondary, and high school students before the training, and that their negative attitudes decreased after the training program (Sum et al., 2016). In the multi-center study conducted by Tufan et al. it was determined that medical faculty students who took a geriatrics course had more positive attitudes towards the elderly, and that the geriatric rotation provided made the attitudes of the students more positive (Tufan et al., 2015). The current study is consistent with the literature, and it was concluded

that the Geriatric Nursing course given to the students had changed their attitudes towards the elderly in a positive way.

The "restricting the life of the elder" subdimension of the scale including limiting the elderly person's life to their home, ridiculing their appearance, not meeting the needs of the elderly for items such as goods and clothes, persuading them to move to a nursing home due to preserve the structure of the nuclear family, giving priority to young people in health care, and seeing them as weak (Vefikuluçay and Terzioglu, 2011; Yeşil et al., 2016; Erden and Boz, 2018). The "positive elderly discrimination" subdimension includes the idea that elderly individuals are more patient than young individuals, that the elderly should be given priority in various areas, that young individuals should benefit from the life experiences of elderly individuals, that the opinions of the elderly should be listened to when making decisions about household or economic issues, and that people should be tolerant towards the elderly (Vefikuluçay and Terzioglu, 2011). The "negative elderly discrimination" sub-dimension includes the idea that elderly individuals are hypochondriacs, that they should help their children in doing house and kitchen work and with child care, that they have difficulty adapting to circumstances, that young individuals should be given priority in employment opportunities, and that elderly individuals should not leave home by themselves (Vefikuluçay and Terzioglu, 2011; Yeşil et al., 2016; Erden and Boz, 2018). It was determined that the mean scores of the students who participated in the study increased for all three subdimensions of the EDAS after the course and that the increase in the "positive discrimination towards the elderly" subdimension was statistically significant. When the literature was examined, it was seen that the mean "restricting the life of the elder" subdimension scores ranged between 19.90±4.00 and 37.11±3.95; the mean "positive discrimination towards the elderly" subdimension score ranged between 29.56±4.88 and 31.35±4.80; and the mean "negative discrimination towards the elderly" sub-dimension score ranged between 16.70±3.27 and 22.18±3.49 (Karadag et al., 2012; Ünsar et al., 2015; Zaybak et al., 2017; Olak and Tümer, 2018; Yardımcı Gürel 2019; Bozdogan Yeşilot et al., 2020). Considering the correlation between the students' mean subdimension scores, it was concluded that the mean "restricting the life of the elder" and "negative discrimination towards the elderly" subdimension scores decreased as the mean

"positive discrimination towards the elderly" score increased, indicating that negative attitudes towards the elderly had decreased, and that the Geriatric Nursing course had been effective. It was noteworthy that the mean "positive discrimination towards the elderly" sub-dimension score was high and this can be seen as a positive result. In the current study, more than half of the students stated that they had lived with elderly individuals at some point in their lives. This may also have led to the high scores regarding positive attitudes towards the elderly. It is pleasing that students continued to respect elderly individuals and benefit from the knowledge and experience of the elderly in Turkish society and culture, even when the students living conditions had changed. It is thought that the courses about geriatric nursing are of great importance in ensuring that nursing students can start their professional lives free from biases and negative attitudes towards elderly individuals, and in order to increase the quality of the care provided.

The current study determined that there was a significant, negative correlation between the wanting to work in a geriatric department after graduation and sex. Some studies in which these variables were examined together have found that the mean EDAS scores of female students were higher, (Türgay et al., 2015; Ünsar et al., 2015; Demir et al., 2016; Yardımcı Gürel 2019; Bozdogan Yeşilot et al., 2020) while in others the mean EDAS score was higher in males (Köse et al., 2015; Altay and Aydın, 2015; Çilingir et al., 2017; Zaybak et al., 2017). The positive attitudes of the women in the current study may be associated with the traditional female roles and caregiving in Turkish culture and their negative attitudes may be associated with a change in the role of women and/or the perception that the elderly care is difficult and physically tiring.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The current study found that the attitudes of final-year nursing students who took the geriatric nursing elective courses towards the elderly were positive in all areas. The post-course scores of the students for the EDAS and its sub-dimensions were higher than their pre-course scores. It is thought that offering courses in specific nursing fields, such as geriatric nursing, and supporting students to participate in seminars and conferences about the elderly will have a positive impact on how students think about aging patients, prevent elderly discrimination and the quality of care given to the elderly will increase.

Limitations of Research

This research did not represent the entire body of nursing students in Turkey and was limited to final-year students who were receiving education at the university where the study was conducted and who were taking the Geriatric Nursing course.

What did the study add to the literature?

- The average score of the nursing students' "Elderly Discrimination Attitude Scale" increased after the education.
- It was concluded that the Geriatric Nursing course contributed to students' positive attitudes towards the elderly.

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