NURSING STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TO POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION: A PROSPECTIVE CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this study is to determine the attitudes of nursing students studying at the Faculty of Nursing towards postgraduate education in terms of gender, family income and school success variables.

Method: The sample of the study consisted of 348 nurse candidates studying at Akdeniz University Nursing Faculty in the Spring Semester of the 2018-2019 Academic Year. The data of the study consisted of a personal information form and an attitude scale towards graduate education. Data were analyzed using frequency, arithmetic mean and percentage distribution techniques in SPSS 22.0 package program.

Results: In the study, it was found that as the students' success in school increased, there was a significant increase in the dimensions of desire and function for graduate education (p =, 03). It was found that female students had significantly higher demand and function scores (p =, 04) compared to male students. It was determined that there is a significant difference between the family income levels of the students and the mean scores of the graduate education request dimension.

Discussion and Conclusions: Although it is seen that the students in the study have the opinion that graduate education is beneficial (function dimension) at a high rate, I agree that the desire towards graduate education (request dimension) is not at the same level. Undergraduate students should be encouraged and supported for academic activities and programs during their education outside of social programs.

1. Introduction

Education has a very important function in shaping the social structure. This fulfills this function through schools. Today, countries that are strong in every subject such as education, technology, economy, art, culture, and politics are those who have knowledge. In this direction, the education system; is of great importance in the production, teaching and dissemination of knowledge (1).

Postgraduate education; is defined as the education consisting of master's and doctorate education based on undergraduate education and proficiency in art and expertise in medicine and the education, training, scientific research and application activities that they require (2). The main purpose of postgraduate education is; to train a human power that can solve problems with a thinking system that produces, uses, criticizes and produces information. In order to instill academic career planning in undergraduate students studying at universities, it should be aimed to gain cognitive skills such as accessing information by conducting scientific research, gaining deep perspective, orientation and participation in projects (3).

The main purpose of nursing education, which includes theoretical and practical learning and teaching experiences; To train students in accordance with their future professional life by providing them with professional nursing qualifications, and to raise

good quality nurses who are aware of their duties and responsibilities towards their country, who understand the importance of protecting and improving health, and who can respond to existing health problems (4). Postgraduate nursing education offers more opportunities for nurses to conduct research, work in nursing management or health systems leadership, work academically or in informatics, and provide a higher level of direct patient care (5). Postgraduate education; aims to ensure that the information in the chosen field is learned in-depth and comprehensively, to gain positive attitudes, values and analytical thinking habits, to understand the importance of research for nursing practices and to use evidence-based data in their studies, to be able to choose appropriate scientific principles that will be useful in solving nursing problems, and to develop new hypotheses (6,7). It is stated that as the quality and quantity of postgraduate education improves, nurses' roles such as knowledge and skills, leadership and advocacy will come to the fore. With this knowledge and skills, nurses can apply professional philosophy, scientific approach and various care models in the clinical field; to take the role of the leading health professional for change in the service field (7,8).

There are limited studies that involve determining the factors affecting the attitudes and beliefs of students studying in our country about graduate education (9). It has also been determined that studies examining attitudes towards postgraduate education are at a limited level (3,10,11,12). As the factors determining the attitudes of nursing candidates towards postgraduate education; professional field expertise, participation in scientific activities, and the desire to be an academic staff. Every nurse candidate should have sufficient professional and academic equipment to look towards their future safely. Postgraduate education programs given after undergraduate programs are very effective for individuals to reach the top both professionally and academically (13). For this reason, it is important to reveal how and to what extent the pre-professional postgraduate education attitudes of nursing students are.

The aim of this study is to determine the attitudes of nursing candidates studying at the Faculty of Nursing towards graduate education.

In line with the main purpose of this research, answers will be sought to the following sub-questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in the attitudes of students towards graduate education according to their gender?

2. Is there a significant difference in the attitudes of students towards graduate education according to the variable of undergraduate success?

3. Is there a significant difference in the attitudes of students towards graduate education according to the family income variable?

2. Method

2.1. Study desing

A cross-sectional and descriptive design was conducted. To determine the attitudes of the nursing candidates who are studying at the education faculty towards graduate education in terms of the determined variables, the situation was determined with the screening method. According to Karasar (2005), the screening model is a research approach that purposes to describe a present or past situation as it exists (14).

2.2. Participants

Nursing students studying at 3rd and 4th grades of Akdeniz University Nursing Faculty in Antalya province in the 2018-2019 academic year were included in this study. In the study, it was aimed to reach the entire universe without choosing a sample. The sample included those who come forwarded to take part in the study. The inclusion criteria for participants were a person who willingly accepted participation in the research was literate in the Turkish language and was 18 years and upper. The study sample consisted of 348 students. Fifty-two students

did not agree to participate in the study. The data was acquired by the researcher between March and May 2019.

2.3. Instruments

2.3.1. Demographic Characteristics

This form is included of questions regarding nursing students' sociodemographic characteristics. Such as gender, age, monthly income, family income, level of parent education, undergraduate success average.

2.3.2. The scale of Values Reflecting the Factor Analysis of Students' Attitudes towards Graduate Education

The "Values Reflecting the Factor Analysis of Students' Attitudes towards Graduate Education" scale was used as the data collection tool (1).

This scale is a 5-point Likert type attitude scale. It consists of 23 items. Likert type scale includes words such as "agree", "partially agree", "disagree" opposite the items. As a result of the factor analysis performed by İlter and Ünal (2010), it was revealed that this scale consists of two dimensions as "function" and "desire". In the study conducted by İlter and Ünal (2010), the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of all items of the scale was 0.95 and the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value was 0.92 (1).

The alpha coefficient method, developed by Cronbach (1951), is an internal consistency estimation method that is appropriate to use when the items are not scored as true or false, but scored as 1-3, 1-4, 1-5. The KMO test is used to test the suitability of the sample size in factor analysis. If the KMO value is lower than 0.50, the factor analysis cannot be continued. A KMO value between 0.80 and 0.90 shows that the sample is good. The fact that the KMO value was 0.844 as a result of the factor analysis in our study shows that the sample is good. For the attitude items in the data collection tool, the levels of "totally agree", "agree", "partially agree", "disagree" and "totally disagree" were used. Statistical techniques were used in the analysis of these items. While interpreting the items, 5.00-4.21 for completely agree option, 4.20-3.41 for agree option, 3.40-2.61 for partially agree option, 2.60-1.81 for disagree option, and 1.80-1.00 for disagree option Scores were given (1).

Factor analysis of the data was calculated as a result of applying the scale in the sample of Faculty of Nursing. The items were likewise divided into two dimensions as "function" and "request". The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient calculated as a result of the factor analysis of the item "I think postgraduate education is necessary after undergraduate education" in the request dimension of the scale was found to be .529 in function length and .413 in the request dimension. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were calculated for all items' function and desire sub-dimensions and for all items (Table 1).

Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient takes a value between 0 and +1. This reliability coefficient approaching +1 indicates that the test is reliable. If there is a negative correlation between items, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient is negative. This situation leads to the deterioration of reliability. In our study, the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of all items was calculated as 0.89 as a result of statistical calculations, and it turned out to be reliable.

Table 1. Item Numbers and Reliability Coefficients of Scale Dimensions

	Size	
	Functional Dimension	Willingness Dimension
Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient for Sub-Dimensions	.88	.901
Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient for All Items	.89	

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection was conducted before class hours. The questionnaires were collected by the author after they were completed. The data was acquired by the researcher.

2.5. Data Analysis

Frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, t test for independent groups, analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) for comparisons between groups were used in the analysis of the data. Advanced statistical analysis was used to determine among which groups significant differences occurred. For the interpretation of the results, $p = 0.05$ significance level was taken as basis. SPSS 23 package program was used.

2.6. Ethical consideration

Written and verbal informed consent was obtained from the students participating in the study, explaining the aim of this study. Approval from Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Ethics Committee (Approval Number: GO 2018/68) and written permission from the Akdeniz University Nursing faculty where the research conducted was obtained.

3. Results

The answers to the research questions were obtained as a result of statistical analysis. Each sub-problem included in this study was examined separately and each table is located under the related sub-problem. Below are the differences between students' attitudes towards variables.

Distributions of Students' Attitudes towards Postgraduate Education

Since the research is aimed at determining the attitudes of students towards graduate education, gender, the type of high school graduated from, family income and school success are considered as variables. Below are the differences between students' attitudes towards variables (Table 2).

Table 2. Values reflecting the factor analysis of students' attitudes towards graduate education

Attitude Items of Postgraduate Education Functional Dimension (Factor 1)	Mean	SD
1. Postgraduate education is very important in terms of combining science and education.	4.10	1.17
2. Postgraduate education has an important role in the development of the country and in advancing in the technological field.	3.94	1.28
3. Postgraduate education is an important indicator of contemporary life.	3.87	1.09
4. Postgraduate education is an influential factor in the conduct of national science policy.	3.98	1.12
5. Postgraduate education provides economic and cultural benefits.	4.16	1.02
6. Postgraduate education provides high psycho-social benefit.	3.97	1.19
7. Postgraduate education provides more professional field knowledge.	3.88	1.31
8. Postgraduate education has an effective role in training qualified teachers.	4.06	1.26
9. Postgraduate education provides more scientific (academic) benefits.	4.01	1.29
Willingness Size (Factor 2)		
1. I think postgraduate education is necessary after undergraduate education.	3.40	1.01
2. I am thinking of getting a master's degree in my field after graduation.	3.61	1.06
3. I want to do a doctorate in my field after my master's degree.	3.34	1.14
4. I am thinking of graduate education to move up the teaching career ladder.	3.42	1.34
5. I think of postgraduate education in order to be an academic staff in the university.	3.58	1.04
6. I think of postgraduate education only to improve my professional field knowledge.	3.56	1,20

Table 3. The values of Factor-1 (Functional Dimension of Postgraduate Education) and Factor-2 (Willingness to Do Postgraduate Education Dimension) related to the variables

	n	**Mean**	**SD**
Functional	348	3.99	1.19
Willingness	348	3.49	1.13

As seen in Table-3, the average value of students' views on the function of graduate education was found to be 3.99. Considering that the maximum score that can be obtained from this scale is 5.00, it is understood that the attitude scores of the candidates towards the function of graduate education are not very high, but are close to the I agree on the level. In this case, it can be said that students' attitudes towards the function of graduate education are positive.

As seen in Table-4, the average value of the factor related to the students' willingness to do graduate education after graduation was found to be 3.49. Considering that the maximum score that can be obtained from this scale is 5.00, it is understood that the scores of the candidates for wanting to graduate education are still not so high, but they think of taking graduate education after graduation.

The first sub-problem expressed in our study is "Is there a relationship between the attitudes of nursing students studying at the nursing faculty towards graduate education and their gender?" is the question.

Findings obtained for this sub-problem are given in the tables below. When Table-4 is examined; It is seen that 62.6% of the students participating in the research are female students and 37.4% are male students. Independent t-test was used to determine which groups caused the difference between the students' attitude scores towards graduate education in the table. It is seen that there is a significant difference between the attitudes of students towards graduate education according to their gender (t = 1.12, p <0.05). From here, it was seen that the gender variable created a significant difference in students' attitudes towards graduate education.

10 items of the 15-item scale are function, and 5 items are request dimensions, and the maximum score that can be obtained when giving 5 points to the "totally agree" likertine in the total of all items including the function dimension is 50, while the maximum score is 25 in the request dimension.

When looking at the averages by gender in terms of function and desire in Table 4; It was determined that female students' attitudes towards graduate

Table 4. Attitudes Towards the Research Problem According to Gender

Size	Gender	Mean	SD	t	p
Function Total	Male	38.23	4.76	1.08	.042[*]
	Female	42.40	4.99		
Willingness Total	Male	15.69	5.57	1.12	.024[*]
	Female	19.70	5.30		
		Male	Female		
	n	218	130		
	%	62.6	37.4		

[*]p ≤ . 05 [*]

education were more positive than male students in terms of function and desire.

The second sub-problem expressed in our study is "What is the relationship between the attitudes of nursing students studying at the nursing faculty towards graduate education and their success?" sentence. Success in the scale consists of four parts: 0 -0.99, 1-1.99, 2-2.99, 3-4. As a result of the application of the scale, it has been determined that there are no students with 0-0.99 and 1-1.99 success. Findings of the Anova test conducted to determine the relationship between nursing candidates' attitudes towards graduate education and their success are given in table 5.

When Table 5 is examined, it has been determined that 348 nurse candidates reported their success. There are 168 nurse candidates with success in the range of 2-2.99 in both function and request dimensions, and 180 nurse candidates with a success level of 3-4. It has been observed that there is a significant difference in the attitudes towards postgraduate education of the nursing students studying at the nursing faculty in terms of achievement status variable ($p < 0.05$). Considering the averages, when the attitudes towards graduate education are examined in terms of success, the nursing candidates who are in the range of 3-4 have a higher tendency in function dimension than those in the range of 2-2.99; It was observed that those in the range of 3-4 were willing compared to those in the range of 2-2.99 (Table 5).

When Table-6 is examined; in the attitudes of students towards graduate education according to family income level; It is seen that there is a significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level. According to the result, 15.5% of the students (n=54) had a monthly family income under the minimum wage application, 30.7% (n=107) had a monthly family income between the minimum wage and 2500 TL, and 34.8% (n=121) monthly family income is between 2501-3500 TL, 19% (n=66) of them is between 3501-5000 TL per month. It is seen that 37.5% of the values accumulate between 2500 TL with the minimum wage and 34% between 2501 TL-3500 TL more. According to the results of the Scheffe test, the students whose monthly family income is under the minimum wage application (3.36±1.18) is at the level of "partially agree", the students whose monthly family income is between the minimum wage and 2500 TL (3.55±1.26) are at the level of "agree". Students with a monthly family income between 2501 TL and 3500 TL (4.18±1.24) stated at the level of "I agree" and finally the students with a monthly family income between 3501 TL and 5000 TL (4.23±1.01) at the level of "agree". In the table, it is understood that students with higher monthly family income generally have more positive attitudes towards graduate education than students with other family income.

4. Discussion

The results of international students' healthy living behaviors will be discussed in light of the literature in this section. The average value of the factor related to

Table 5. Anova Test Results by Achievement Status of Attitudes Regarding Research Problem

Size	Success Status	n	Mean	SD	p
Function Total	2-2.99	168	39.38	6.12	.027*
	3-4	180	43.19	4.90	
Willingness Total	2-2.99	168	15.50	5.87	.020*
	3-4	180	19.90	5.40	

* $p < 0.05$

Table 6. Findings reflecting the students' attitudes towards graduate education according to the family income variable

Size	Family Income Status	n	Mean	SD	p
Function Total	Lower than the minimum wage*	54	3.36	1.18	.023**
	Minimum wage-2500	107	3.55	1.26	
	2501-3500	121	4.18	1.24	
	3501-5000	66	4.23	1.01	
Willingness Total	Lower than the minimum wage*	54	3.16	1.11	.002*
	Minimum wage-2500	107	3.59	1.04	
	2501-3500	121	4.01	1.16	
	3501-5000	66	4.20	1.08	

* Year 2019 (01.01.2019 - 31.12.2019) Minimum wage amount for 16 year olds:: Gross Wage: 2.558,40 TL   Net wage: 2.020,59 TL Avaiable from: https://www.sakaryasmmmo.org.tr/)

** p <0.05

the willingness of nurse candidates to pursue postgraduate education after graduation was determined as 3.49. According to this result, it is understood that the scores of the candidates for wanting to graduate education are not very high, but they are at a sufficient level. This result is similar to another study conducted on pre-service students. In a study conducted by Erkılıç (2007), the average value of students who will graduate from the department of classroom teaching in the education dimension of willingness to graduate education is 4.03; In the socioeconomic dimension, it was found to be 3.99. Accordingly, students' willingness to pursue graduate education is positive; It can be interpreted that they will receive postgraduate education in their field after graduation and this will bring positive contributions to individuals professionally and academically (15).

It is seen that there is a significant difference between students' attitudes towards graduate education according to their gender (t=1.34, p <0.05). From here, it was seen that the gender variable created a significant difference in students' attitudes towards graduate education. In a result, it is understood that the attitudes of both female and male students towards graduate education are at the level of I agree and are positive. However, looking at the averages in the table, it is seen that the attitude of female students to graduate education is higher than that of boys. In this context, it can be said that the high attitude of female

students to graduate education is that they think about academic education more after graduation. When Konak (2018) examined the Attitude Scale towards Graduate Education in her study, she determined that there was no significant difference between the genders of the students (16).

"Is there a difference between the attitudes of nursing students studying at the nursing faculty towards graduate education and their success?" The result of the question's findings; It was observed that as the success level increased, the attitudes of the students towards graduate education increased significantly. This result is consistent with the literature (1).

Karaman and Bakırcı (2010) reported in their study that postgraduate education is related to financial opportunities (17). In our research results, it was determined that students with good financial status have more willingness and functional perspective to graduate education than students with poor financial status. It is thought that the main reason for this is that the primary purpose of the students whose economic situation is not good is that they want to have a regular income. It is understood that these results are similar to the literature.

5. Conclusion

This research was conducted to determine the attitudes of prospective nursing students towards

graduate education. When the findings related to the sub-problems of the study were examined, the following results were obtained.

It has been determined that female students are more enthusiastic about graduate education than male students, students with good school success have more positive perspectives and wishes on graduate education, and students who are financially better off have a higher desire for graduate education.

To adapt to rapidly changing social reforms, to reach the age of science and technology, to train qualified people who can solve the problem situations encountered; Today, apart from training academic staff for universities, postgraduate education is needed as a prerequisite for obtaining a job in various interdisciplinary sectors. It should be ensured that nursing candidates have a positive attitude towards postgraduate education and have a positive desire towards postgraduate education.

Qualitative analysis and research that much more participant have been suggested to have in-depth knowledge in determining the attitudes of nurse candidates towards graduate education.

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