Choosing Nursing As a Profession During The Covid-19 Pandemic

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History Received: 30.09.2021 Accepted: 03.01.2022 Published: 25.04.2022 **Keywords:** Covid 19, Nursing, Nursing Students	**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that affect students' choice of the nursing profession during the Covid-19 pandemic. **Method:** The study was planned in the correlational descriptive design type.The sample group consisted of 262 students who voluntarily participated and studied in the first year of the Nursing Department, Faculty of Health Sciences. The data were collected using the "Introductory Information Form" and the "Nursing Profession Choice Scale (NPCS)". For analysis of the data; frequency, average, standard deviation, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used. **Results:** It was determined that 57.3% of the participants preferred nursing because of their personal interest in the profession, 85.1% found themselves suitable for the nursing profession and 67.6% felt ready for nursing. 74.4% of the students stated that nursing was their first choice. As a result of the research, the total score average of the scale was found to be 45.82 ± 6.73. Vocational suitability and life-related reasons sub-scale mean scores were determined as 32.90 ± 5.49 and 12.90 ± 2.98, respectively. **Conclusions and Suggestions:** It was determined that most of the students chose the nursing profession willingly with their personal interests and found themselves suitable for the profession. Comprehensive and comparative studies are needed in this research area.

Covid-19 Pandemi Döneminde Hemşireliği Meslek Olarak Seçmek

Makale Bilgileri	ÖZ
Makale Geçmişi Geliş: 30.09.2021 Kabul: 03.01.2022 Yayın: 25.04.2022 **Anahtar Kelimeler:** Covid 19, Hemşirelik, Hemşirelik Öğrencileri	**Amaç:** Bu çalışmada, öğrencilerin Covid-19 pandemi döneminde hemşirelik mesleğini tercih etmelerinde etkili olan faktörlerin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. **Yöntem:** Bu çalışma tanımlayıcı-ilişki arayıcı tasarım tipinde planlanmıştır. Örneklem grubunu; bir vakıf üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi Hemşirelik Bölümü 1. sınıfında öğrenim gören ve araştırmaya gönüllü katılım sağlayan 262 öğrenci oluşturmuştur. Araştırmanın verileri "Tanıtıcı Bilgi Formu" ve "Hemşirelikte Meslek Seçimi Ölçeği" kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde frekans, ortalama, standart sapma, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Mann-Whitney U ve Kruskal-Wallis testi kullanılmıştır. **Bulgular:** Araştırma katılımcılarının %57.3'ünün mesleğe olan kişisel ilgiden dolayı hemşireliği tercih ettiği, %85.1'inin kendisini hemşirelik mesleğine uygun bulduğu ve %67.6'sının kendisini hemşireliğe hazır hissettiği saptanmıştır. Öğrencilerin %74.4'ü hemşireliğin ilk tercihleri olduğunu ifade etmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda ölçeğin toplam puan ortalaması 45.82±6.73 bulunmuştur. Mesleki uygunluk ve yaşamsal nedenler alt boyut ölçek puan ortalamaları ise sırasıyla 32.90±5.49 ve 12.90±2.98 olarak saptanmıştır. **Sonuç ve Öneriler:** Öğrencilerin çoğunun hemşirelik mesleğini kişisel ilgi alanları doğrultusunda isteyerek seçtiği ve kendilerini mesleğe uygun buldukları saptanmıştır. Bu araştırma alanında, kapsamlı ve karşılaştırmalı çalışmalara ihtiyaç vardır.

INTRODUCTION

The selection of profession is the most important stage that affects the life of the individual. With the choice of profession, the living standards of the individual are also determined. (Ozkol Kilinc et al., 2020). In adolescence and young adulthood, choosing a profession is a very critical process. Young people, in this process, while trying to find their identity and personality, also choose a profession (Ozkol Kilinc et al., 2020; Messineo et al., 2019).

Young people, in this period, prioritize professions where they will not have a fear of being unemployed. Nursing, which is one of the prominent professions considering job opportunities, economic and social conditions, continues to maintain its popularity from past to present (Ozkol Kilinc et al., 2020).

In choosing the nursing profession, features such as interest, desire and ability should be prioritized. Because the nursing profession is a discipline that deals with human health, it has certain difficulties and professional professionalism is important. Therefore, it is extremely significant to be aware while choosing a profession (Ozkol Kilinc et al., 2020; Islam et al., 2020; Milton, 2020; Swift et al., 2020).

Students who will select the nursing profession should have the necessary knowledge and skills, adopt the profession, be aware of their professional obligations and responsibilities, and be able to direct professional practices in order to perform the profession in the best way and to provide professional satisfaction (Islam et al., 2020; Santos, 2020a; Jung, 2019).

Students should be certain of what factors influence their choice when they want to choose the nursing profession, because the nursing profession is too valuable and important to be done reluctantly on the basis of fear of being unemployed and financial reasons (Messineo et al., 2019; Jung, 2019).

The nursing profession has a great role in the health care system which encounter with the Covid-19 pandemic. Nurses are performing nursing care at different level with great sacrifice and dedication, and have to maintain the health of themselves and their families (Milton, 2020; Jackson et al., 2020). In this situation, if the candidates do not have sufficient and correct perceptions about the nursing profession, or if their criteria for choosing the profession are insufficient, they may experience job dissatisfaction and this will be a great obstacle to perform their roles effectively, and a major reason for leaving the job (Jung, 2019; Santos, 2020a; Nie et al., 2021).

It is very important to determine and evaluate the reasons for choosing nursing as a profession, which demands great effort, positive guidance, scientific contribution, and sacrifice for protecting human health and maintaining well-being (Buheji and Buhaid, 2020). It was determined that the candidates choose nursing based on the advice of their educators, family members, and their social and cultural expectations. However, they do not want to work as a nurse after graduation due to their inability to adapt to the educational process and differences in their personal goals (Santos, 2020b; Rainbow and Steege, 2018). Similarly, it was observed that students who cannot understand and adopt to the nature, responsibilities, and workload of the nursing profession tend to quit nursing education (Salmi, 2019). Although the candidates mostly prefer the nursing profession for social and economic reasons, they have great difficulties due to the differences between the education process and their expectations, lack of interest and desire for the profession, and having different personality traits (Santos, 2020b).

Current studies have shown that the Covid-19 pandemic causes psychological stress, anxiety, and concerns in nursing students about their future career lives (Aslan and Pekince, 2021; Huang et al., 2020; Savitsky, 2020). Identifying the reasons why candidates prefer the nursing profession during the Covid-19 pandemic will give important clues about career choices in the future.

So, this study aimed to define the reasons for choosing nursing as a profession during the Covid-19 pandemic period.

METHOD

Research Design

This was a correlational descriptive study that was conducted on 1-15 March 2021.

Research Sample

The participants consisted of 284 junior students studying in the first year in the nursing department of the Faculty of Health Sciences. The whole population was selected. Finally, the study was conducted on 262 nursing students who agreed to participate in the study and completed the data collection forms completely. 22 nursing students could not participate in the study due to their busy schedules.

Research Instruments and Processes

The data were collected using the "Introductory Information Form" prepared by the researchers regarding the individual characteristics of the students and their choice of profession and the "Nursing Profession Choice Scale (NPCS)". This tools was developed by Zysberg and Berry in 2005 and the Turkish validity and reliability of this scale was assessed by Onler and Saracoglu in 2010. The 0%-100% points was considered for each question, consisting of 17 items. Each item was rated between 0% (was not effective in choosing a profession) and 100% (it was the most important factor in choosing a profession). The scale has Vocational Suitability (1,2,3,4,5,7,9,14,15,16,17) and Life-related Reasons (6,8,10,11,12,13) sub-scales.

The total Cronbach Alpha value of the scale was found to be 0.79. In this study, the Cronbach Alpha value was found to be 0.80. The data were collected by sharing the online questionnaire form on WhatsApp groups. The students were informed about the objective, scope and ethical aspects of the study. Those who agreed to provide data were able to move onto the other pages which includes the personal information and the Nursing Profession Choice Scale (NPCS).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed via SPSS version 21.0 using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Mann- Whitney U Test and Kruskal-Wallis Test. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was performed on the data to determine which test was appropriate. As a result of Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, the p value was found to be less than 0.05 and it was determined that the data were not suitable for normal distribution. For this reason, Mann Whitney U and Kruskall Wallis tests, which are nonparametric tests, were used in comparisons.The statistical significance level was accepted as $p < 0.05$ in the study.

Ethic

The ethical approval was obtained from the Istanbul Gelisim University Ethics Committee (dated 25.02.2021 and numbered 2021/06). Each student who accepted to participate in the study was informed about the purpose of the study and an informed consent form was obtained. The permission was obtained from the author (dated 24.09.2020) for the use of the scale.

RESULTS

The analysis showed that 67.9% of the students were female, 51.5% of them graduated from Anatolian-Science High School, 57.3% lived in the city. Moreover, 74.4% of students preferred nursing as their first choice (Table 1).

The students' total score average of NPCS was 45.82 ± 6.73. Vocational suitability and Life-related reasons sub-scale mean scores were determined as 32.90 ± 5.49 and 12.90 ± 2.98, respectively.

Table 1 indicated that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of NPCS and gender, school graduated, mother's and father's education level, income level, place of residence, and nursing department preference order (p> 0.05) (Table 1).

According to table 2, 57.3% of the students preferred nursing because of their personal interest in the profession, 62.2% were effective in choosing the profession rather than external factors. Moreover, student's 85.1% found themselves suitable for the nursing profession and 67.6% felt ready for the nursing profession (Table 2). Considering the students' feelings about nursing; 64.1% of them considered that "I chose the profession willingly and I believe that I can do it fondly."

Major of the students (95.8%) stated that they considered nursing as a professional occupation, understood how valuable the profession was during the pandemic, and that their perspective on the nursing profession was positive. Moreover, 63% of students stated that the pandemic did not change their perspective on the nursing profession (Table 2).

No significant relationship was observed between the NPCS scale score mean and some features such as "reason for choosing nursing" (p=0.24), "person who is effective in choosing a profession"(p=0.58), "change on students' perception of the nursing profession during the pandemic" (p=0.71) (p> 0.05) (Table 2).

A statistically significant difference was found when the mean score of NPCS was compared with the students' status of "finding the nursing profession suitable for yourself (p <0.05). Those who find the nursing profession suitable for themselves had higher overall score average of NPCS (Table 2).

When the mean scores of NPCS was compared with the students' "feeling ready for the profession", there was significant relationship (p <0.05). Students who felt ready for the profession had higher mean score on the scale (Table 2).

Table 2 indicated that there was significant differences between "seeing nursing as a professional occupation" and NPCS general score mean (p <0.05). It was determined that the overall average score of NPCS for those who consider nursing as a professional occupation was higher (Table 2). Moreover, the Kruskal–Wallis test showed a statistically significant relationship between the total NPCS score and some features such as students' understanding of how valuable the profession is during the pandemic" and "students' perception of nursing profession" (p = 0.00) (p <0.05). Students who understood the importance of nursing during the pandemic process and students with a positive perception of the nursing profession had a higher mean score on the scale.

Table 1. *Distribution and Comparison of NPCS General Score Averages According to Students' Individual Characteristics (n=262)*

Individual Characteristics	n	%	Mean Rank	χ^2 / Z	p
Gender					
Female	178	67.9	129.32		
Male	84	32.1	136.11	Z=-0.36	0.49
School Graduated					
Health Vocational High School	27	10.3	118.02		
Normal Highschool	62	23.7	129.91		
Anatolian-Science High School	135	51.5	135.54		
Other	38	14.5	129.30	χ^2=1.30	0.72
Education Level of Mother	22	8.4	141.73		
Illiterate	23	8.8	132.43		
Literate only	92	35.1	139.14		
Primary education	78	29.8	132.00		
Secondary Education High education	47	17.9	110.47	χ^2=4.97	0.29

Educational Level of Father					
Illiterate	4	1.5	124.63		
Literate only	11	4.2	171.27		
Primary education	78	29.8	145.44		
Secondary Education	93	35.5	117.10		
High education	76	29.0	129.41	χ^2=9.14	0.06
Income level					
Good	39	14.9	134.69		
Medium	198	75.6	130.93		
Low	25	9.5	131.06	χ^2=0.96	0.82
Residence					
Province	150	57.3	127.61		
District	92	35.1	136.39		
Village	20	7.6	138.20	χ^2=0.93	0.62
Nursing Department Preference Order					
1st Choice	195	74.4	131.14		
2nd Choice	27	10.3	142.33		
3rd Choice	12	4.6	113.92		
4th Choice	4	1.5	161.88		
Other	24	9.2	125.94	χ^2=1.97	0.74

p*<0.05 (Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis test were used)

Table 2. *NPCS Total Score Average According to the Knowledge of Nursing Students Regarding the Choice of Profession and Comparison of Them (n=262)*

Features	n	%	Mean Rank	χ^2 / Z	P
Reason for Choosing Nursing					
Social reputation	2	0.8	91.50		
Family request	18	6.9	102.22		
Occupation guarantee	69	26.3	126.92		
Academic career	17	6.5	118.24		
Score eligibility	6	2.3	106.67		
Personal interest in the profession	150	57.3	140.15	χ^2=6.63	0.24
The Person Effective in Choosing a Profession					
Myself					
My family	163	62.2	136.04		
My teachers	75	28.6	126.07		
My friends	10	3.8	119.55		
Having acquaintances who are healthcare	1	0.4	42.00		
professionals	13	5.0	122.04	χ^2=2.82	0.58
Finding Yourself Suitable for the Profession					
Yes	223	85.1	139.80		
No	4	1.5	22.88		
Hesitant	35	13.4	91.03	χ^2=20.92	**0.00***
Feeling Ready for the Profession					
Yes	177	67.6	139.93		
No	35	13.4	107.89	χ^2=7.14	**0.02***
Hesitant	50	19.0	118.20		
Seeing Nursing as a Professional Occupation					
Yes	251	95.8	134.40		
No	6	2.3	67.33	χ^2=8.80	**0.01***
Hesitant	5	1.9	62.80		
Understanding the Importance of Nursing is During Pandemic					
Yes	251	95.8	134.37		
No	5	1.9	27.90	χ^2=10.93	**0.00***
Hesitant	6	2.3	97.58		
Perception of Nursing Profession					
Positive	251	95.8	135.49		
Negative	4	1.5	14.13	χ^2=17.38	**0.00***
Hesitant	7	2.7	55.43		

Whether the Pandemic has Changed the Perception of Nursing Profession or not					
Changed	97	37.0	133.71		
Not Changed	165	63.0	130.20	Z=-0.36	0.71

p*<0.05 (Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis test were used)

DISCUSSION

The present study was aimed to determine the factors that affect students' choice of nursing profession during the Covid-19 pandemic. The total score mean of the scale was found to be 45.82 ± 6.73. In other studies, Bolukbas (2018) found the total mean score of the scale of the students to be 32.46±24.68. Ozdemir and Sahin (2016) were found out that the total scale score was found to be 50.56±15.07 (Bolukbas, 2018; Ozdemir and Sahin, 2016). As a result of the research, it was seen that the scores of the vocational suitability sub-scale were higher than the scores of the life-related reasons sub-scale. In similar studies conducted with nursing students, scores of the vocational suitability sub-scale were found higher (Bolukbas, 2018; Tosunoz et al., 2019).

It was observed that the ideal profession of 57.3% of the students participating in the study was nursing. 64.1 % of the students expressed their thoughts towards the profession as "I willingly chose the profession and I believe I can do it fondly". When the literature was examined, it was found that most of the students chose nursing voluntarily (Liaw et al., 2016; Liaw et al., 2017; Olgun and Adibelli, 2020). Students' choice of nursing consciously and willingnessly will be the most important step that will enable them to do the profession fondly, increase the quality of care and patient satisfaction, and provide success and professional satisfaction (Ciftci et al., 2021; Glerean et al., 2017; Sabanciogullari and Dogan, 2017).

In the present study, 78% of the students preferred nursing profession in the first and 67.6% of the students stated that they felt ready for the nursing profession. Similarly, in Guven and Unsal's (2020) study, 66.1% of the students conducted that they preferred nursing first and 53.7% felt themselves ready for the profession. (Guven and Unsal, 2020). As a result of this, It is predicted that the student who feels ready for the nursing profession will perform nursing profession in the best way and contribute to increasing the professional status.

Another factor affecting students' choice of nursing profession was job guarantee (26.3%). In other studies with students showed, one of the first three factors that are effective in choosing nursing is the guarantee of not being unemployed (Dragusheva et al., 2018; Haddad et al., 2021; Kahraman and Firat Kilic, 2021). With the results can be interpreted as nursing being perceived as a guaranteed profession, given that the need for nurses is high and the possibility of finding jobs in private and state sector is more accessible than other professions, and therefore families direct their children to this profession.

The NPCS scale score was found to be significantly higher in students who preferred nursing because of their interest in the profession, considered nursing as a suitable profession, felt ready for the profession, and considered nursing as a professional profession. Olgun and Adibelli (2020) found that 77% of the students adopted the nursing profession.

In the present study, students who understood the importance of nursing during the pandemic process and students with a positive perception of the nursing profession had a higher mean score on the scale. In a study conducted with student nurses in the Covid-19 pandemic, while the positive thoughts of students about the nursing profession were 63.4% before the pandemic, this rate decreased to 50.6% during the pandemic process (Cici and Yilmazel, 2021). Bahcecioglu Turan et al. (2021) stated that students who studied nursing in provinces where the epidemic was intense had more positive thoughts about the profession (Bahcecioglu Turan et al., 2021).The pandemic and

environmental conditions negatively affected the nurses psychologically who are struggling in the frontline. This situation may harm student nurses' point of view and their desire to perform the profession.

The pandemic process has once again revealed the importance and difficulties of the nursing profession. The pandemic process is effective in understanding the value of the profession and increasing their awareness in students who are suitable for the nursing profession.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In this study, it was determined that most of the students chose the nursing profession willingly with their personal interests and found themselves suitable for the profession. The fact that there are few studies on the choice of nursing profession during the pandemic process makes it difficult to compare and generalize the findings. Comprehensive and comparative studies are needed in this research area.

LIMITATIONS

Since the research was conducted with first-year students of a university, the findings cannot be generalized to the whole country. The limited number of studies on this subject is another limitation of the study.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Design: F.K., A.N.Y., S.C., Data Collection or Processing: A.N.Y., S.C., Analysis or Interpretation: F.K., Literature Search: A.N.Y., S.C., Writing: F.K., A.N.Y., S.C.

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