

Determining Attitudes of Nursing Students on Premarital Sex Hemşirelik Öğrencilerinin Evlilik Öncesi Cinselliğe Bakışının Belirlenmesi

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Sexual attitudes and behaviors are mainly affected by parents at early ages, and then peer influence becomes more important. During college years, less parental control and cultural environment of universities have significant effect on sexual attitudes and behaviors. It was aimed in this study to determine nursing students' attitudes of premarital sex and to reveal the factors affecting it.

Method: The descriptive study was conducted between December 2018 and December 2019 with the Nursing Department students attending a foundation university providing education in the Anatolian side of Istanbul. The population of the study consisted of 284 nursing students who were attending the school on the specified dates. No sample selection was made in the study and it was aimed to reach the whole population. However, the study was completed with 260 students due to the fact that there were students who did not want to participate in the study and the incomplete surveys were not included in the study. An introductory survey form and Premarital Sex Attitude Scale (PMSAS) were used to obtain the data.

Results: The students' mean score of PMSAS was found to be 52.44±14.32. It was determined that those between the ages of 18-20 and those whose hometown was in the eastern region had a more negative attitude towards premarital sex ($p<0.05$).

Usage in Practice: During the education of nursing students, it is important to include premarital sex subjects within the scope of courses such as sexual health/reproductive health and gender in the curriculum.

Keywords: Sexual Behavior, Nursing, Students.

ÖZET

Amaç: Cinsel tutum ve davranışlar erken yaşlarda temel olarak aileden etkilenirken, sonrasında akran etkileri daha önemli hale gelmektedir. Üniversite döneminde, ailenin denetiminin azalması ve üniversite ortamının kendi içindeki kültürü cinselliğe yönelik tutum ve davranışları etkileyen önemli faktörler olmaktadır. Bu çalışma ile, hemşirelik öğrencilerinin evlilik öncesi cinselliğe bakışını belirlemek ve etkileyen faktörleri ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır.

Yöntem: Tanımlayıcı tipteki araştırma, İstanbul İli Anadolu yakasında öğrenim veren bir vakıf üniversitesine devam eden Hemşirelik bölümü öğrencileri ile Aralık 2018- Aralık 2019 tarihleri arasında gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın evrenini belirleyen tarihlerde okula devam eden 284 hemşirelik öğrencisi oluşturmuştur. Araştırmada örneklem seçimi yapılmamış ve evrenin tamamına ulaşılması hedeflenmiştir. Ancak araştırmaya katılmak istemeyen öğrencilerin olması ve eksik anketlerin çalışmaya dahil edilmemesi nedeniyle çalışma 260 öğrenci ile tamamlanmıştır. Veriler tanıtıcı soru formu ve Evlilik Öncesi Cinselliğe Bakış Ölçeği (EÖCBÖ) ile elde edilmiştir.

Bulgular: Öğrencilerin EÖCBÖ puan ortalaması 52,44 ± 14,32 olarak bulunmuştur. Öğrencilerden 18-20 yaş arasında olanların ve memleketi doğu bölgesi illeri olanların evlilik öncesi cinselliğe bakışlarının daha olumsuz olduğu belirlenmiştir ($p<0,05$).

Uygulamada Kullanım: Öğrencilerin eğitimleri sırasında müfredatta yer alan cinsel sağlık / üreme sağlığı, toplumsal cinsiyet vb. gibi dersler kapsamında evlilik öncesi cinsellik konularına yer verilmesi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cinsel Davranış, Hemşirelik, Öğrenciler.

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GİRİŞ

Sexuality is related to biological reproduction and the continuation of generations, psychological satisfaction of sexual intercourse, satisfaction of the basic needs of the person such as love and being loved. Socially, sexuality is related to society's standard of judgments and legal rules, life styles of individuals, the roles they attribute to the opposite sex, their attitude on sexuality, partner choice and marriage preferences (Zeren & Gürsoy, 2018).

Sexuality is a phenomenon that includes the whole body and mind and is not limited to the sexual organs. Sexuality of individuals is influenced by their standard of judgments, emotions, beliefs, personality traits, likes and dislikes, attitudes, behaviors, physical appearance and the society they live in. Briefly, the meaning individuals attribute to sexuality varies depending on how they perceive sexuality, how they express it and their attitudes (Aşçı, 2017; Gölbaşı & Turgut, 2013). It is also a determinant about the preference to have a sexual intercourse in the society we live in. In modern societies, there is an assent that individuals can live without considering the limitations of family and society when experiencing sexuality and choosing a partner (Vural & Körpe, 2018). On the other hand, in male-dominated society, genders encumber different responsibilities to men and women regarding sexual experience. Hence, it reveals with whom, how and under what conditions sexuality should be experienced. In this context, while the man is more flexible about sexual intercourse, in traditional societies such as our country, women are taught to maintain their virginity for socialization. Although the fact of not having premarital sexual intercourse in today's young people, that is, preserving the virginity, is not widely accepted, it is still effective on young people. The phenomenon of virginity is also a phenomenon that causes women to be subjected to social pressure and to be grouped as individuals with or without premarital sexual experiences. In this context, it is thought that the phenomenon of virginity, which is directly related to male-dominated values, still maintains its importance as it is the

most important indicator of the oppression exerted on women through sexuality (Savaş, 2019). However, in male-dominated societies, sexual intercourse is legitimized by marriage. In these societies, while there is no obligation to marry for men to experience sexuality, the situation changes for women and sexuality is seen as a phenomenon that must be experienced together with marriage. In fact, for men, premarital intercourse is considered as an experience to be acquired, while it can be seen as a forbidden, sin and even an act that must be punished for women (Karakaya, 2017).

Sexual attitudes and behaviors, one of the most important elements of sexual health, are among the issues that affect the health of young people the most and can develop in interaction with the social environment and their age mates at an early age while forming in the family. Sexual behavior and quality sexuality are influenced by a complex network of factors ranging from biological risk and genetic predisposition to health inequalities that go beyond health. Since the transition from childhood to adulthood is a period when sexual behaviors begin to take shape, it should be handled with priority in the youth years (Can et al., 2018).

Nurses serving the community have roles such as ensuring the sexual safety of individuals and providing counseling regarding sexuality (Michaelson et al., 2021). In addition, nurses play an important role in providing information, counseling and rehabilitation in ensuring and increasing the quality of life (Alberts et al., 2020). In this context, sexuality was defined as an integral part of nursing care by the organizations covered by the American Nursing Association (ANA) (Minoia, 2017).

Purpose of the research

This study was planned to determine the attitudes, thoughts and values of nursing students regarding premarital sex.

METHODS

Research type

The study is a descriptive study.

Population and sampling of research

The population of the study consisted of 284

nursing students who were attending the school between December 2018 and December 2019 with the Nursing Department students attending a foundation university providing education in the Anatolian side of Istanbul. No sample selection was made in the study and it was aimed to reach the whole population. However, the study was completed with 260 students due to the fact that there were students who did not want to participate in the study and the incomplete surveys were not included in the study.

Data collection tools

Personal information form and Premarital Sex Attitude Scale were used to obtain the data.

Personal information form: There are seven questions regarding age, gender, class they attend, status of having a boyfriend/girlfriend, hometown, education level of the mother and father's education level of the students.

Premarital Sex Attitude Scale is a measurement tool based on 5-point Likert type grading developed by Karakurt (2001) to determine attitudes towards premarital sex. The questions on the scale are answered as 1: totally disagree, 5: totally agree. While 12 items of the scale consisting of 17 items measure attitudes towards premarital sexual intercourse, 5 items measure attitudes of women for having premarital sex. Some of the questions in the scale (1,2,5,8,9,12,13,14,15,16th questions) are scored reversely. High points scored on the scale mean having a positive attitude towards premarital sex (Sakallı et al., 2001). While the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be .95 in the study of Sakallı, Karakurt, and Uğurlu (2001), the Cronbach alpha value was calculated as .93 in this study.

Data collection

After obtaining the necessary permissions, the data collection forms were given to the students and they were asked to answer the questions. Afterwards, the forms were taken back from the students. Data collection took approximately 5 minutes. The research data were given to the students in the classroom environment and they were asked to answer the questions. The data collection process was applied in a way that

would not interrupt the students' lessons and by keeping an appropriate distance so that they were not affected by each other.

Ethical consideration

Permission to use the scale was obtained from the person who made the validity and reliability in Turkish. Approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of a university at the meeting number 93 on 16/04/2018 to conduct the study. In order for the answers to be given voluntarily. It was emphasized that the students were volunteers. After the purpose of the study and the purposes for which the results will be used were explained to the participants, the informed consent form was signed by the participants. No information was requested from the students who participated in the study to reveal their identities.

Data analysis

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows 22.0 program was used for the statistical analysis of the data obtained. Average values, standard deviation, median lowest, highest values, frequency and ratio values were used in the descriptive statistics of the data. t-test, Kruskal Wallis test, Mann Whitney U test were used in the distribution of variables.

RESULTS

The average age of the students included in the study is 20.80 ± 1.25 (min: 18, max: 24) and 64.2% of them are in the age group of 21 and over. It was determined that 74.6% of the students were girls, 26.9% were third grade students and 48.5% had date. It has been determined that 43.5% of the students had hometown of the western provinces, 44.2% of them are primary school graduates and 41.9% of their fathers was primary school graduate (Table 1).

The students' mean score of PMSAS was found to be 52.44 ± 14.32 (Table 2).

When the PMSAS score average is examined by the demographic characteristics of the students, no statistically significant difference was found between the gender of the students, the class they attended, their dating status, and the education level of their mothers and fathers and the scale score average ($p > 0.05$).

Table 1. Distribution of students by demographic characteristics

Parameters			
Age average 20.80±1.25 (min:18, max: 24)		n	%
Age Group	18-20 years	93	35.8
	21 years and upper	167	64.2
Gender	Female	194	74.6
	Male	66	25.4
Class attending	First grade	61	23.5
	Second grade	66	25.4
	Third grade	70	26.9
	Fourth grade	63	24.2
Dating status	Yes	119	45.8
	No	141	54.2
Homeland	Western region provinces	113	43.5
	Central region provinces	62	23.8
	Eastern region provinces	85	32.7
Education status of the mother	Primary education	115	44.2
	High school	108	41.5
	University	37	14.3
Education status of the father	Primary education	109	41.9
	High school	103	39.6
	University	48	18.5
Total		260	100.0

A significant difference was found between the students' age group and the average PMSAS score according to the region of their hometown ($p < 0.05$). It was determined that those between

the ages of 18-20 and those whose hometown was in the eastern region had a more negative attitude towards premarital sex ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3).

Table 2. Premarital Sex Attitude Scale (PMSAS) score average

Scale	Mean	SD	min	max
Premarital Sex Attitude Scale (PMSAS)	52.44	14.32	23	82

Table 3. Comparison of average scale score by students' demographic characteristics

Parameters	n	PMSAS mean±sd	Test p
Age Group	18-20 years	49.64±13.11	t: -2.374
	21 years and over	54.00±14.76	p: .018
Gender	Female	52.71±14.10	t: .511
	Male	51.66±15.03	p: .610
Class attending	First grade	50.52±14.31	F: 1.066 p: .364
	Second grade	51.15±13.59	
	Third grade	54.24±15.14	
	Fourth grade	53.66±14.10	
Dating status	Yes	53.94±13.46	t 1.550
	No	51.18±15.03	p: .122
Homeland*	Western region provinces ^a	55.77±14.43	F: 6.049 p: .003 c<a.b
	Central region provinces ^b	48.62±14.71	
	Eastern region provinces ^c	50.80±13.00	
Education status of the mother	Primary education	52.94±14.94	F: .201
	High school	51.77±13.86	p: .818
	University	52.83±13.96	
Education status of the father	Primary education	52.42±15.03	F: .980
	High school	51.34±13.76	p: .377
	University	54.85±13.82	

t: t test. F: Anova test * West (Marmara. Aegean. Mediterranean). Central (Black Sea. Central Anatolia). East (Eastern Anatolia. Southeastern Anatolia)

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to determine nursing students' attitudes on premarital sex and the factors affecting it. Individuals' point of view on sexuality, the culture they live in, religious beliefs, the standards of judgments of the society, and misinformation and beliefs about sexuality of the society affect (Shrestha, 2019). In cultures that prohibit or suppress sexuality, sexuality other than reproduction is prevented by keeping young people unaware and strictly prohibiting the premarital intercourse. In Turkey, there is a cultural structure that prohibits sexuality, restricts sexuality and allows sexuality through marriage (Aydoğdu et al., 2019).

The students' mean score of PMSAS was found to be 52.44 ± 14.32 (min: 23. max: 82) (Table 2). This result can be interpreted as the students' attitudes towards premarital sex are at a moderate level. In general, in studies conducted with university students, the rate of students who did not consider premarital sexual intercourse normal ranged from 41.9% to 58.7% (Kim & Choi, 2016; Wang, 2020). In the study conducted by Evcili et al. (2013), it was stated that 85.1% of the students did not find it right to have sexual intercourse before marriage (Evcili et al., 2013). In the study of Gibbs et al. (2014) which was conducted on young people, it was stated that the acceptability of premarital sexual intercourse was low (Gibbs et al., 2014). In the study conducted by Süt et al., (2015) on nursing students, it was determined that 67.4% of the students were against premarital sexual intercourse (Süt et al., 2015). In the study conducted by Can et al. (2018). 89.1% of midwifery students stated that premarital sex is not acceptable (Can et al., 2018). In the study of Aydoğdu et al. (2019). 51.16% of midwifery students stated that they did not find it right for people to get to know each other sexually before they got married, and 70.93% of them stated that they would be uncomfortable with having premarital sexual intercourse (Aydoğdu et al., 2019). When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that most of the students disapprove of extramarital sexual intercourse. The results support the view that sexuality can only be

experienced within the institution of marriage in our country. Unlike the findings of the study, it was thought that the results of the study in which the attitude towards premarital sexual intercourse was high was due to the different sample groups.

No statistically significant difference was found between the gender of the students, the class they attended, their dating status, and the education level of their mothers and fathers and their attitude for premarital sex ($p > 0.05$) (Table 3). There are studies in the literature that are similar to the study findings. In the study conducted by Ergün and Çakır (2015) with senior nursing students, no significant difference was found between female and male students in terms of their attitudes for premarital sexual experience (Ergün & Çakır, 2015). In the study conducted by Can et al. (2018), the sexual attitudes of midwifery students did not differ according to the classes they attended (Can et al., 2018). Unlike the study findings, Blakey and Aveyard (2017) found in their study that women did not approve of extramarital sexuality more (Blakey & Aveyard, 2017). In the study conducted by Kim and Choi (2016) on sexual attitude among collage students, it was found that male and female students considered premarital sexual experience as normal with a statistically significant difference (Kim & Choi, 2016). In the study conducted by Kaya and Turan (2018) with nursing and midwifery students, it was determined that male students found extramarital sexual experiences more acceptable than girls and the difference was statistically significant (Kaya & Turan, 2018). In the study conducted by Birlik et al. (2019) to determine the sexual attitudes of university students, a significant difference was found by their gender, and no significant difference was found by the status of dating (Birlik et al., 2019). These differences in the studies are thought to be caused by the region where the research is conducted and cultural differences. In the study conducted by Ebeoğlu and Karacan (2019) with university students, it was determined that the participants at the end of the university were more permissive to sexuality

than those at the beginning of the university, and their attitudes for premarital sex were more positive. This difference at the beginning and end of the university can be explained by the fact that the university environment is relatively freer, and most of the students live a life separate from the family. In the same study, it was found that gender affects the attitude for premarital sex and that premarital sex of men is more acceptable than women (Ebeoğlu & Karacan, 2019). The fact that female students do not lean positively on premarital sexual experience is thought to be due to the fact that the situation, which is considered as an experience for men and growing up with a patriarchal and sexist perspective in the society we live in. Differentiate for girls and go as far as honor killings under the concept of honor.

A significant difference was found between the students' age group and premarital sex attitudes according to the region of their hometown ($p < 0.05$). It was determined that those between the ages of 18-20 and those whose hometown was in the eastern region had a more negative attitude towards premarital sex (Table 3). The culture of a society includes norms or expectations about how male and female behaviors should be, how they should behave, how they will think and act in society, and complex gender patterns. Different roles of men and women in society gain a different dimension in terms of sexuality (Yılmaz & Karataş, 2018). Changing values and judgments in parallel with the advancement of age and education level may have affected the views on having premarital sexual experiences. In many studies in the literature, it is seen that students stated sociocultural limitations and barriers as the reason for not having sexual experience (Aygör et al., 2017; Berliana et al., 2018; Çuhadaroğlu, 2017; Ergün & Çakır, 2015; Shiestha, 2019). Therefore these findings in the research can be interpreted as a reflection of gender roles. Similarly, Hellmer et al. (2018) stated that the effect of the perception of honor and patriarchal discourse in the society in which they look at attitudes towards experiencing premarital sex is determinant (Hellmer et al., 2018). In the study of Çağlayan and Topatan

(2020) the factors preventing students from having premarital sexual experiences were stated as individual values and familial factors (Çağlayan & Topatan, 2020). In the study of Yılmaz and Karataş (2018), it was determined that 85.8% of male students receiving education at university think that there are taboos for men and women regarding sexuality in society (Yılmaz & Karataş, 2018). In the study of Evcili et al. (2013) found that the factors that prevent students from having sexual experiences are individual values and familial factors (Evcili et al., 2013). In the study of Gibbs et al. (2014) conducted on young people, it was found that factors such as regional differences, advanced age, urban life, and society's perception of premarital sexual intercourse affected the acceptability of premarital sexual intercourse (Gibbs et al., 2014). In the study of Aşçı et al. (2016), a significant difference was found between age and sexual attitude (Aşçı et al., 2016). In a study conducted by Aksoy et al. (2017), half of the students stated that they had a suppressive social structure regarding sexuality, 92.8% of the students stated that cultural structure is an important factor in developing behavior on sexual issues (Aksoy et al., 2017). In the study of Aydoğdu et al. (2019), students stated that cultural structure prevents them from having sexual intercourse (Aydoğdu et al., 2019). Different from the study findings, no significant difference was found between age and sexual attitudes in the studies of Can et al. (2018) and Birlık et al. (2019).

CONCLUSION

In this study, which was carried out considering that the sexual attitudes of nursing students from different cultures and backgrounds can contribute to knowledge about the attitudes of our country. It was aimed to determine the perceptions of students who will be future nurses to premarital sex. As a result of the study, it was found that more than half of the students did not consider premarital sexual intercourse normal. Based on this, it is concluded that students have common cultural values with the society they live in and that premarital sex is still seen as a taboo in our country. This creates

the opinion that when nursing candidates start to work as professional staff, their professional independence and acting in the light of ethical principles may be affected by the social standard of judgments they are in. In addition, the level of knowledge of young people on sexual issues closely affects their future sexual and family lives. In this context, their needs related to sexual health should be determined and the trainings should be planned and presented for the subjects they need to prevent the social standard of judgments of students from affecting their service. During the education of nursing students, it is important to include premarital sex subjects within the scope of courses such as sexual health/reproductive health and gender in the curriculum. These trainings should not be limited to student groups receiving health education, but other university youth should also be provided with sexual health education. In addition, subjects related to sexual health should be adopted not only within the education policy but also as a health policy. Establishing specialized units where young

people can receive consultancy on the subject will also be important in terms of reducing possible risks.

Study limitations

The fact that research conducted in descriptive study and a single center is one of the limitations of this study. The sample size of this study is limited and it is limited in terms of generalizability to society.

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Authorship contributions

Working idea or design: KDB

Data collection: KDB, NAD

Analysis and interpretation of results: KDB

Stone preparation: KDB, NAD

Critical review: KDB

All authors (KDB, NAD) have been reviewed and will remain in the final version of the article.

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