

## Investigation of Nursing Students' Perceptions and Protective Approaches to Premarital Sexual Experience and Virginity by Gender

### Hemşirelik Öğrencilerinin Cinsiyete Göre Evlilik Öncesi Cinsel İlişki ve Bekarete İlişkin Algı ve Koruyucu Yaklaşımlarının İncelenmesi

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#### Abstract

This study was conducted to examine Turkish nursing students' perceptions and protective behaviors regarding premarital sexual intercourse and virginity by gender. The study had a cross-sectional descriptive design and was performed with 988 nursing students. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews. Although male students have more sexual experiences before marriage, they give importance to virginity of the person they will marry and approve the hymen examination. It was found that male students preferred anal or oral sex or rubbing or touching genitals so as not to harm the hymen when they were compared to female students. There were significant differences among university students by gender in terms of starting premarital sexual activity, having sexual experiences, perceptions of virginity, and resorting to protective approaches. This shows that different responsibilities are imposed on the genders about sexual experience culturally.

**Keywords:** Hymen, nursing student, sexual intercourse, virginity

#### Özet

Bu araştırma, Türk hemşirelik öğrencilerinin evlilik öncesi cinsel ilişki, bekarete ilişkin algı ve koruyucu yaklaşımlarını cinsiyete göre incelemek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Araştırma kesitsel tanımlayıcı tipte olup 988 hemşirelik öğrencisi ile yapılmıştır. Veriler yüz yüze görüşme yoluyla toplanmıştır. Erkek öğrenciler evlenmeden önce daha fazla cinsel deneyim yaşamalarına rağmen evlenecekleri kişide bekarete önem verdiklerini ve himen muayenesini onayladıklarını ifade etmiştir. Erkek öğrencilerin kız öğrencilere göre hymene zarar vermemek için anal veya oral seks yapmayı, cinsel organlarına dokunmayı veya okşamayı tercih ettikleri saptanmıştır. Üniversite öğrencileri arasında cinsiyete göre evlilik öncesi cinsel ilişkiye başlama, cinsel deneyim yaşama, bekaret algısı ve koruyucu yaklaşımlara başvurma açısından anlamlı farklılıklar vardır. Bu durum kültürel olarak cinsel deneyim konusunda cinsiyetlere farklı sorumluluklar yüklediğini göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bekaret, cinsel ilişki, hemşirelik öğrencisi, kızlık zarı

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## 1. Introduction

Sexuality is an issue that is seen as taboo that people avoid talking about in Turkey (Aydođdu et al., 2019; Yılmaz and Karataş, 2018). This situation can affect the perceptions and attitudes of young people towards sexuality (Evcili and Golbasi, 2017) by suppressing sexuality and associating premarital sexual intercourse with the concept of "honor" (Topcu and Bař, 2017). The concept of 'honor', defined as adherence to moral rules and social values and as chastity by the Turkish Language Association (TLA), contains a double standard in terms of gender, and it is described as "being a maiden" and "purity, chasteness, and innocence" by emphasizing the concept of "virginity" for women in Turkish society (TLA, 2022). In this context, sexuality is treated in terms of women in Turkish society, and virginity is perceived as the honor of women based on the definition of "being a maiden". Since virginity is considered as abstinence from premarital sexual intercourse for women, premarital sexual intercourse is seen as taboo for women in Turkey (Evcili and Golbasi, 2017).

In Turkish culture, which is mostly Muslim, virginity and the loss of virginity, which has been attributed a lot of meanings, are universally defined as the first vaginal intercourse (Süt and Küçükkaya, 2016). The age of the first sexual experience, the state of having premarital sexual intercourse, and the people who are chosen as partners in the first sexual experience show differences according to gender (Lyu et al., 2020). Although the concepts of virginity and honor are frequently voiced and seen important in Muslim Turkish society, research has shown that the onset of sexual intercourse is as early as the ages of 16 and 18 (Birlik et al., 2019; Karabulutlu, 2018). Although the age of the first sexual experience is early, the rate of premarital sexual experience is between 11% and 50% in females and 50.3% with a significant increase in males (Nazik et al., 2021; Saraçođlu et al., 2014). Also, 24% of the young women in Turkey experience their first sexual intercourse with their spouse or with a man they think might be their spouse, while 46.9% of men are known to prefer experiencing it with individuals they consider as their prospective spouse (Deniz and Aydemir, 2021).

In a study conducted apart from investigating the difference between genders in terms of premarital sexual intercourse, while three-quarters of Turkish men have been reported to approve of premarital sex for men, they do not equally approve of it for women. On the other hand, although women do not approve of premarital sex for both genders, they are more opposed to women's premarital sexual intercourse and show a more conservative attitude (Kızılırmak and Çakıcı, 2021). However, most of the men who do not approve of premarital sexual intercourses state that they have experienced a premarital sexual intercourse, and this reminds the discrimination between the genders favoring men once again.

The necessity that a woman to be married should have virginity, which is the leading justification for the disapproval of premarital sexual intercourses in Turkey, is perceived as something more important among women and conservative university students who have grown up in rural areas (Kızılırmak and Çakıcı, 2021) and have a low-income level (Aşci et al., 2016). However, some studies show that a high or low level of education does not affect the perception of virginity (Özan et al., 2004). Young individuals emphasizing that virginity is "too important to live if it is lost" can also choose to have a premarital sexual intercourse in a way that does not damage the hymen (Özan et al., 2004).

Sexual behaviors aiming to protect hymen include anal and oral sex and rubbing and touching the genitals. In a study conducted in Africa, the rate of oral sex among university students has been found to range from 5 to 46.4%, while the anal sex rate ranges from 46.5 to 50.3 (Morhason-Bello et al., 2019). In a study conducted in New Zealand, the rate of oral sex among young people has been determined to increase to 81.1% (Ellis and Aitken, 2020). In Turkey, it has been determined that young people prefer oral and anal sex instead of vaginal sex in order not to harm female partners' virginity before marriage (Nazik et al., 2021), and this is because the females would still be virgins, as the hymen is not damaged due to oral and anal sex.

Premarital sexual intercourse is still unacceptable in many parts of Turkey, and for this reason, it often ends up with violence, including honor killings (Kaya and Turan, 2018). Young people who do not want to be subjected to this violence try to find some solutions by resorting to options to protect their virginity (anal sex, oral sex, hymenoplasty). As a result, it is thought that there may be a tendency towards sexual protection among university students due to the importance given to virginity. This is important for nursing students to increase their awareness and to determine the right approaches to individuals they will give care without discrimination. The data obtained from this research is important in terms of evaluating the social and cultural perspectives of nursing students towards virginity and raising awareness of both Turkish society and nursing students about virginity.

## **2. Method**

The study used a cross-sectional descriptive design.

### *2.1. Aim of the study*

This study aimed to examine Turkish nursing students' perceptions and protective behaviors regarding premarital sexual intercourse and virginity by gender.

### *2.2. Research Questions*

- Do the genders of nursing students affect their views on premarital sex?
- What do nursing students think about virginity according to their genders?
- What do nursing students of different genders think about hymenoplasty (a surgical operation to reconstruct the hymen in order to give the appearance of virginity)?

### *2.3. Setting and Sample*

The study data were collected between the October and December of the fall semester of the 2017-2018 academic year. The study was conducted in the largest nursing faculty of İzmir province, which is the largest city in the western part of Turkey. There were a total of 1571 students in this faculty during the 2017-2018 academic year, including 340 first-year, 328 second-year, 598 third year, and 305 fourth-year students. In the study, the entire population was targeted; therefore, no sampling method was employed. The students were informed about the purpose of the study, and data were collected from students who volunteered to participate in the study. A total of 988 students (776

females, 212 males) who answered all the questions on the data collection form made up the sample of the study. The response rate was 65.62%.

#### *2.4. Data Collection and Data Collection Tools*

Data were collected in the classroom environment, in 10-15 minutes. Data were collected by using an Introductory Information Form, The Questionnaire for Perceptions of The Hymen and Premarital Sexual Intercourses, and The Questionnaire for Approaches to Protecting Virginity and Thoughts About Hymenoplasty. These forms were evaluated by three experts who conducted scientific studies on sexuality, and the forms were finalized based on feedback from the experts. Data collection forms were distributed to the students who wanted to participate in the study before starting the lesson, a silent classroom environment was ensured, and then they were asked to answer the questions on the forms.

*2.4.1. The Introductory Information Form:* This form consists of ten questions about socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, income level, longest place of residence, the status of religious belief) and sexual life (sexual experience, age of the first sexual experience, first sexual partner) (Birlık et al., 2019; Karabulutlu, 2018).

*2.4.2. The Questionnaire for Perceptions of The Hymen and Premarital Sexual Intercourses:* This form consists of eight questions about approval of premarital sexual intercourses, the importance of virginity when getting married, the relationship between hymen and virginity-honor-trust, and approval of hymen examination and hymenoplasty (Birlık et al., 2019; Karabulutlu, 2018).

*2.4.3. The Questionnaire for Approaches to Protecting Virginity and Thoughts About Hymenoplasty:* This form consists of five questions about the status of protecting hymen in sexual intercourse, sexual intercourse options to protect the hymen, approval of hymen examination, approval of hymenoplasty, and the reasons for not approving hymenoplasty (Birlık et al., 2019; Karabulutlu, 2018).

#### *2.5. Ethical Considerations*

In the beginning, the institutional and ethics committee approval was obtained from the non-interventional research ethics committee (Protocol No. 3248-GOA-2017/17-41), and after the purpose of the study was explained, the forms were given to students who volunteered to participate in the study. To ensure that students could comfortably answer the questions, they were also told that they would not give their names or surnames and that they were expected to only write a short paragraph showing their consent to participate in the study voluntarily.

#### *2.6. Limitations*

The limitation of this study was that the sample of this study consisted of only the students at a state university in western Turkey.

#### *2.7. Data Analysis*

The study data were analyzed on SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 22.0 software package. Numbers and percentages were used in the analysis of demographic data. The Shapiro-Wilk

value which was based on gender was 0.5 ( $p = 0.000$ ), and a non-parametric test was applied as the data were not normally distributed. In the analysis of the data, Mann-Whitney U and Chi-square analyses were used. Type I error level was accepted as  $p < 0.05$  and the confidence interval as 95%. In the power analysis conducted at the end of the data collection process, the power of the study was calculated as 99%.

### 3. Results

The mean ages of the female and male students participating in the study were  $20.83 \pm 1.68$  and  $20.89 \pm 1.83$ , respectively. While there was no statistical difference between the mean ages of the students ( $p > 0.05$ ), there was a statistical difference between the genders (78.5% female students,  $p = 0.064$ ). Also, 61.8% of the students had medium income, 46.2% grew up in a province, and 86.6% believed in a religion. No statistically significant difference was found between the genders in terms of religious beliefs ( $p = 0.039$ ). The comparison of the sexual experience status by gender indicated that male students had a statistically significantly higher sexual experience compared to female students (34.4%, 13.3%, respectively) ( $p = 0.00$ ). While the age of the first sexual experience was  $19.72 \pm 2.13$  in females, it was  $18.08 \pm 2.25$  in males. A statistically significant difference was found between the genders in terms of the age of the first sexual experience of the students ( $p < 0.00$ ). It was found that male students preferred to have vaginal ( $p = 0.00$ ) and anal intercourse more than female students while female students preferred oral sex ( $p = 0.00$ ), rubbing ( $p = 0.00$ ), and touching genitals ( $p = 0.00$ ) more. The preference for having the first sexual intercourse with a lover was higher among females than males ( $p = 0.01$ ) (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic and Sexual Life Characteristics of the Participants

<b>Socio-demographic characteristics (n=988)</b>	<b>Females</b>		<b>Males</b>		<b>t/ <math>\chi^2</math></b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Age (<math>\bar{x} \pm sd</math>)</b>	20.83±1.68		20.89±1.83		0.45	0.64
	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>		
<b>Gender</b>	776	78.5	212	21.5		
<b>Level of income</b>						
Equal income and expenses	488	62.9	123	58.0	3.16	0.2
Income less than expenses	185	23.8	51	24.1		
Income more than expenses	103	13.3	38	17.9		
<b>The longest place of residence</b>						
Village	126	16.2	54	25.5	12.95	<b>0.005</b>
Town	45	5.8	5	2.4		
County	237	30.5	65	30.7		
Province	368	47.4	88	41.5		
<b>Status of believing in religion</b>						
Yes	602	77.6	149	70.3	6.46	<b>0.039</b>
No	42	5.4	20	9.0		
Yes, but doesn't fulfill duties	132	17.0	43	20.3		
<b>Sexual experience (n=988)</b>						
Yes	103	13.3	73	34.4	50.92	<b>0.00</b>
No	673	86.7	139	65.6		

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic and Sexual Life Characteristics of the Participants (Continued)

<b>Sexual life characteristics (n=103)</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>t/ <math>\chi^2</math></b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Age of first sexual experience (<math>\bar{X} \pm sd</math>)</b>	19.72 $\pm$ 2.13		18.08 $\pm$ 2.25		4.88	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Type of the first sexual experience*</b>						
Vaginal	52	49.51	39	50.68	27.23	<b>0.00</b>
Oral	36	30.09	33	41.09	30.60	<b>0.00</b>
Anal	10	8.73	18	23.28	31.36	<b>0.00</b>
Rubbing	92	38.83	73	43.83	28.62	<b>0.00</b>
Touching genitals	52	50.48	41	56.16	35.94	<b>0.00</b>
<b>First sexual partner</b>						
Lover	87	84.5	45	61.6	11.86	<b>0.001</b>
Not a lover	16	15.5	28	38.4		

*t*=Mann Whtney U test,  $\chi^2$ =Chi-square,  $p < 0.05$

While male and female students approved of premarital sexual experience for males, they did not approve of it for females ( $p = 0.00$ ). Also, male students thought that a woman had to have virginity when getting married ( $p = 0.00$ ) (Table 2). Compared to female students, male students attached more importance to the virginity of women ( $p = 0.00$ ) and stated that hymen indicated virginity ( $p = 0.00$ ). The level of relating the presence of the hymen to honor ( $p = 0.00$ ), the level of trusting virgin women ( $p = 0.00$ ), and the level of approving premarital hymen examination ( $p = 0.00$ ) were higher among the male students compared to the female students (Table 2). However, the answers to the question of whether they approved of hymenoplasty from both males and females were highly negative (females: 79.3%, males: 70.8%) ( $p = 0.00$ ). Most of the students in both groups stated that undergoing hymenoplasty meant deceiving others (females: 59.8%, males: 61.2%) ( $p = 0.00$ ) (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Perceptions of the Hymen and Premarital Sexual Experience by Gender

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Females</b>		<b>Males</b>		<b><math>\chi^2</math></b>	<b>p</b>
	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>		
<b>Do you approve of premarital sexual experience?</b>						
Yes, for males	8	1.0	12	5.7	17.99	<b>0.00</b>
Yes, for both genders	273	35.2	63	29.7	2.21	0.13
No for females	21	2.7	10	4.7	1.34	0.24
No for both genders	414	53.4	109	51.4	0.10	0.61
No idea	64	8.2	19	9.0	0.11	0.73
<b>Does the virginity of a woman matter when getting married?</b>						
Yes	448	57.7	168	79.2	32.82	<b>0.00</b>
No	328	42.3	44	20.8		
<b>Does the presence of the hymen indicate virginity?</b>						
Yes	335	43.2	129	60.8		
No	441	56.8	83	39.2	20.89	<b>0.00</b>

**Table 2.** Perceptions of the Hymen and Premarital Sexual Experience by Gender (Continued)

Variables	Females		Males		$\chi^2$	P
	n	%	n	%		
<b>Is the presence of the hymen related to honor?</b>						
Yes	216	27.8	121	57.1	63.34	<b>0.000</b>
No	560	72.2	91	42.9		
<b>Does the virginity of a woman affect how much a man trusts her?</b>						
Yes	405	57.6	148	75.5	20.74	<b>0.000</b>
No	298	42.4	48	24.5		
<b>Do you approve of the hymen examination?</b>						
Yes	74	9.5	90	42.5	130.32	<b>0.000</b>
No	702	90.5	122	57.5		
<b>Do you approve of hymenoplasty? (n=988)</b>						
Yes	161	20.7	62	29.2	6.88	<b>0.009</b>
No	615	79.3	150	70.8		
<b>Why do not you approve of hymenoplasty? (n=844)</b>						
Religiously inappropriate	61	9.2	20	10.9	0.705	0.48
Culturally inappropriate	46	7.0	17	9.3	1.01	0.30
It means deceiving others.	395	59.8	112	61.2	0.49	0.61
An unnecessary process since the hymen is not an indicator of honor	159	24.1	34	18.6	1.52	0.12

$\chi^2$  Chi-square,  $p < 0.05$

Sexually active male students were determined to pay more attention to not harming the hymen during sexual intercourse (females: 43.7%, male: 58.9%) ( $p = 0.04$ ). To avoid damaging the hymen, male students were found to prefer having anal and oral sex or rubbing or touching genitals more than female students ( $p = 0.000$ ). Also, the rate of disapproving hymen examination and hymenoplasty was significantly higher in females than in males ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ). The reasons for not approving hymenoplasty operations were similar in both genders (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Approaches to Protecting Virginity and Thoughts About Hymenoplasty by Gender

	Females		Males		$\chi^2$	p
	n	%	n	%		
<b>Do you pay attention to protecting the hymen during sexual intercourse? (n=176)</b>						
Yes	45	43.7	43	58.9	3.95	<b>0.04</b>
No	58	56.3	30	41.1		
<b>What methods do you use to protect the hymen? (n=988)</b>						
Anal	66	8.5	45	21.2	5.68	<b>0.000</b>
Oral	90	11.6	57	26.9	5.61	<b>0.000</b>
Rubbing	156	20.1	84	39.6	5.42	<b>0.000</b>
Touching genitals	173	22.3	90	42.5	6.10	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Do you approve of the hymen examination? (n=988)</b>						
Yes	74	9.5	90	42.5	130.32	<b>0.000</b>
No	702	90.5	122	57.5		



**Table 3.** Approaches to Protecting Virginity and Thoughts About Hymenoplasty by Gender Continued)

	Females		Males		x <sup>2</sup>	p
	n	%	n	%		
<b>Do you approve of the hymenoplasty? (n=988)</b>						
Yes	161	20.7	62	29.2	6.88	<b>0.009</b>
No	615	79.3	150	70.8		
<b>Why do not you approve of the hymenoplasty? (n=844)</b>						
Religiously inappropriate	61	9.2	20	10.9	0.705	0.48
Culturally inappropriate	46	7.0	17	9.3	1.01	0.30
It means deceiving others.	395	59.8	112	61.2	0.49	0.61
An unnecessary process since hymen is not an indicator of honor	159	24.1	34	18.6	1.52	0.12

x<sup>2</sup>=Chi-square, p<0.05

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Socio-demographic and Sexual Life Characteristics

According to the results of the study, the age of the first sexual experience was earlier among males when compared to the females, and these findings were similar to those of studies conducted in the past in Turkey (Birlik et al., 2019). Also, similar findings have been found in Japan (Onuki et al., 2022) as well as in the countries having more traditional societies, such as Ethiopia, China, and Sri Lanka (Amare et al., 2019; Perera and Abeysena, 2018; Ren et al., 2022). Along with these findings, in our study, significant differences were found between males and females in terms of the rates of premarital sexual experience. Similar findings have been encountered in both Turkey (Saraçoğlu et al., 2014) and the USA, which has a culturally different structure (Ethier et al., 2018). This situation shows that traditional gender norms affect women more deeply even in different geographies of the world (Delgado Amaro et al., 2022). Sexuality is seen as taboo in Turkey and people avoid to talk about it (Aydoğdu et al. 2019). Premarital sex represents power for men (Civil & Yıldız, 2010), and premarital sex for women is an act that should be avoided (Yılmaz & Karataş, 2018). Culturally, these attitudes and thoughts show that value judgments about sexuality have not changed, and that premarital sexual intercourse creates a double standard between the genders.

According to the results of our study, the rate of female students preferring a sexual experience with their lovers was higher than that of male students. Other Turkish researchers have also reached the conclusion that compared to males, females choose as their sexual partner for their first experience people who they intend to marry (Deniz and Aydemir, 2021). According to these findings, male students were observed not to seek emotional intimacy to have sexual intercourse, but females were determined to choose people with whom they felt more emotional intimacy. It is thought that this is possibly due to females' preference for having a sexual experience with the person whom they intend to marry.

### 4.2. Perceptions of the Hymen and Premarital Sexual Experience

According to the results of the present research, the majority of female and male students did not approve of premarital sexual experience for both genders. According to studies conducted in Turkey, students have been found to disapprove of premarital sexual experience (Özbaş et al., 2016).



However, as a result of the statistical analysis in the present study, male students were found to approve of a sexual experience only for males at significantly higher levels. Other researchers have also found that premarital sexual experience is considered acceptable for males (Akter Hossen and Quddus, 2021; Birlik et al., 2019; Özbaş et al., 2016). While most Turkish males consider flirting as normal for females, they state that they cannot accept premarital sexual experience (Gürsoy and Arslan Özkan, 2014). As stated in the study, this situation may also be due to the idea that men should be more experienced sexually, the patriarchal characteristics that are common in Turkish culture, and the way of raising children according to gender rules.

Although the premarital sexual experience rates among male students participating in the study were higher than those of female students, it was found that male students gave more importance to virginity than females when getting married: they thought virginity was a sign of honor and found women having virginity more reliable.

However, giving importance to virginity by males who have premarital sexual experiences is a situation that suggests a double standard in terms of gender (Gonzalez-Marugan et al., 2021). Another study conducted in Turkey has concluded that female students will be excluded and undergo violence if they do not maintain their virginity and that virginity is important in terms of being satisfied with their future sexual life (Yılmaz and Karataş, 2018). Decision-making about the sexual experience is a complex process that is affected by individual, social, and cultural factors (Nazik et al., 2021). Although Turkey has gone through many changes in recent years in this respect, we can say that social structure still has a traditional perspective (Özbaş et al., 2016). It is believed that females will get married to the males having similar cultural backgrounds in the future and that virginity will still be associated with honor as these males care about virginity and trust women with virginity.

#### *4.3. Approaches to Protecting Virginity and Thoughts About Hymenoplasty*

It is known that young people who want to have sexual experience and maintain their virginity at the same time prefer anal and oral sex apart from vaginal intercourse and even having sexual experience only by rubbing and touching genitals (Aras et al., 2007). Aras et al. (2007) found that there was a significant difference between males and females in terms of oral sex (37.8% and 8.4%, respectively), anal sex (21.9%, 2.3%, respectively), and vaginal intercourse (55.0%, 14.1%, respectively). Our study results were similar to those of Aras et al. Students who had sexual experience and were determined to mostly prefer “touching” regardless of gender (Aras et al., 2007). Aras et al. (2007) determined that 73.1 % of Turkish university students preferred kissing which meant touch. It might be thought that this situation has arisen from the considering of oral and anal sexual activity as a sin from a religious perspective (Yılmaz and Karataş, 2018). It has been determined that adolescents in other cultures have similar practices (de Brouwer et al., 2022; Schwartz & Coffield, 2022).

The attribution of premarital sexual experience to honor and the attribution of honor to the presence of hymen cause pressure on women. As a result of this pressure, women in some parts of Turkey are forced to have a virginity test that is attributed to the presence of the hymen (Parla, 2001), resort to hymenoplasty operations (Gürsoy and Vural, 2003), experience physical violence, and face different dimensions of violence such as being killed by the men in the family (Gürsoy et al., 2016). In a study

conducted with nursing students in Turkey, 84.6% of the students stated that men should marry a woman with virginity and that this is the requirement of Islam (Zeynelođlu et al., 2012).

In our study, male students were found to approve of the hymen examination more than female students. However, both female and male students were determined not to approve of the hymenoplasty operation because they thought this would be “deceiving others”. In some parts of Turkey, women’s premarital sexual experience causes them to be considered inappropriate as a wife. Indeed, there have been some periods when women have been forced to take virginity tests (Gürsoy and Vural, 2003). Restoring virginity is possible with a hymenoplasty operation. It is known that the applications of hymenoplasty are increasing in China, Canada, the USA, and some European countries (Steinmüller and Tan, 2015). The increasing demand for this operation, as in Turkey (Steinmüller and Tan, 2015), is generally due to the men expecting to get married to a woman with virginity (Nazik et al., 2021). These findings suggest that men in Turkey, even though they have a sexual experience, prefer marrying a woman with virginity, they welcome virginity tests when considered necessary, and that they disapprove of hymenoplasty as they do not want to be deceived.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, significant differences were found between genders in terms of the age of premarital sexual experience, the rates of sexual experience, perceptions of sexual experience and protective approaches to sexuality, and perceptions of hymenoplasty. It is also a remarkable result that male students' approaches and perceptions towards premarital sexual experience are more rigid than female students, but that male students have more premarital sexual experiences than female students. This contradiction was thought to stem from the idea that premarital sexual experience would not cause any problems for men in Turkish society. Also, the perceptions and approaches of female students might have resulted from the fact that they might face violence in the case of premarital sexual experience.

It is important to determine the attitudes and behaviors of adolescents regarding premarital sexual intercourse. It is known that possible wrong attitudes and behaviors will harm their physical and psychological health in their future lives. It may not be enough to share information about this subject in only one course, especially in the nursing curriculum. It is recommended that more space be allocated to this subject in the curriculum and that it should be among the priority education topics, knowing that premarital sexual intercourse and attitudes may be affected culturally. However, it is important that future nurses, who will care for patients for the longest time, move away from the gendered perspective on premarital sex. Thus, as in the nursing oath, it will be ensured that they can provide equal care to the individuals they are responsible for, without any discrimination and with a perspective free from prejudice. In this context, researches can be planned to eliminate the attitudes of future nurses that might prevent their professional practice because of the characteristics of the individuals they care for.

## Authors Contributions

Topic selection: ÖÇ, MAT; Design: ÖÇ, DB, MAT; Planning: ÖÇ, DB, MAT; Data collection: ÖÇ, DB, MAT; Data Analysis: ÖÇ; Article writing: ÖÇ; Critical review: ÖÇ, DB, MAT.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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