

Transitioning From Student To Nurse: Readiness For Practice And Influencing Factors

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Article Info

Article History

Received: 01.07.2024

Accepted: 04.09.2024

Published:25.08.2025

Anahtar Kelimeler

Nurse,
Nursing student,
Nursing education,
Graduate,
Curriculum.

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the readiness of new graduates for practice and the factors influencing it. This descriptive and cross-sectional study was conducted in two nursing departments in Konya and Isparta between June 3 and 14. Data were collected from 228 final-year students eligible for graduation using the Personal Information Form, Big Five Personality Traits Scale, and Casey-Fink Readiness for Practice Survey. Descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, correlation, and multiple regression analyses were employed for data analysis. Ethics committee approval and institutional permission were obtained for the study. The study found that the mean age of the new graduates was 22.71 ± 1.45 , with a grade point average of 3.06 ± 1.56 ; 76.8% were female. The highest personality trait was agreeableness (7.92 ± 1.39), and the mean readiness for practice score was 44.52 ± 7.44 . Clinical readiness was influenced by grade point average, income status, the intern program, and the adequacy of practical and theoretical courses. Personality traits accounted for approximately 25% of clinical readiness. This study concluded that sociodemographic, academic, and personality traits affect students' preparedness for professional practice. It is recommended to assess students' readiness for professional life before graduation, identify the influencing factors, and implement interventions to enhance their readiness prior to graduation.

Öğrencilikten Hemşireliğe Geçiş: Kliniğe Hazır Oluşluk ve Etkileyen Faktörler

Makale Bilgisi

Makale Geçmişi

Geliş: 01.07.2024

Kabul: 04.09.2024

Yayın:25.08.2025

Keywords

Hemşire,
Hemşirelik öğrencisi,
Hemşirelik eğitimi,
Mezun,
Müfredat.

ÖZET

Bu araştırma, yeni mezun olan hemşirelik öğrencilerinin klinik uygulamaya hazır oluşluk durumları ve etkileyen faktörleri incelemek amacıyla yürütülmüştür. Araştırma, tanımlayıcı ve ilişki arayıcı türdedir. Araştırma, 3-14 Haziran tarihleri arasında Konya ve Isparta'da bulunan iki hemşirelik bölümünde yürütülmüştür. Veriler, mezun olma hakkı kazanmış, 228 son sınıf öğrencisinden yüz yüze toplanmıştır. Verilerin toplanmasında, araştırmacılar tarafından oluşturulan Birey Tanılama Formu, Beş Faktör Kişilik Ölçeği ve Casey-Fink Uygulamaya Hazır Oluşluk Ölçeği kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde tanımlayıcı istatistikler, t- testi, ANOVA analizi, korelasyon ve çoklu regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın yürütülmesi için etik kurul ve kurum izinleri alınmıştır. Araştırmada, yeni mezunların yaş ortalamasının 22.71 ± 1.45 , akademik ortalamalarının 3.06 ± 1.56 , %76.8'nin kadın olduğu, en fazla görülen kişilik tipinin yumuşak başlılık olduğu (7.92 ± 1.39) ve klinik uygulamaya hazır oluşluk ortalama puanlarının 44.52 ± 7.44 olduğu bulunmuştur. Klinik uygulamaya hazır oluşluğun akademik ortalama, gelir durumu, intörnlik, uygulama ve teorik derslerin yeterli görülme durumundan etkilendiği görülmüş ve kişilik özelliklerinin yaklaşık %25 oranda klinik hazır oluşluğu açıkladığı bulunmuştur (Adjusted R²= 0,245). Araştırmanın sonucunda, sosyodemografik, akademik ve kişilik özelliklerinin öğrencilerin klinik uygulamaya hazır oluşluğunu etkilediği belirlenmiştir. Buna göre, mezun olmadan önce öğrencilerin mesleki hayata hazır oluşluğunun değerlendirilmesi, etkileyen faktörlerin belirlenmesi ve öğrenciler mezun olmadan hazır oluşluğu arttıracak girişimlerin planlanması ve uygulanmasını önermekteyiz.

To cite this article

Koçak, A.T. & Durmaz, M. (2025). Transitioning from student to nurse: readiness for practice and affecting factors, *Journal of General Health Sciences*, 7(2), 300-312. <https://doi.org/10.51123/jgehes.2025.177>

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INTRODUCTION

Nursing is both a science and an art of caregiving (Basit, 2020). Nursing students undergo intensive education to prepare for their professional careers (Albayrak & Uzdil, 2024; Kuleyin & Basaran-Acil, 2023). Upon completing their academic studies, new graduates quickly transition to professional life (Lyman et al., 2020). Nursing graduates who demonstrate competency are deemed suitable for professional careers (Burucu & Dönmez, 2021). However, research indicates that new graduate nurses often face challenges with decision-making and lack self-confidence in their professional roles (Boamah et al., 2017; Kennedy et al., 2023). Over 50% of new graduate nurses report high levels of emotional exhaustion during their first year of practice, and 24-42% have witnessed or experienced workplace incivility (Boamah et al., 2017). This situation impacts the psychosocial well-being of newly graduated nurses (Jarden et al., 2021) and leads to feelings of role inadequacy (Konuk & Su, 2020). Some new graduates report feeling stressed, lonely, and inadequate (Jarden et al., 2021), with some even considering leaving their jobs (Jarden et al., 2021; Li et al., 2024; Lyman et al., 2020). These challenges are reflected in their help-seeking behaviors, which hinder their adaptation to the clinical environment (Lyman et al., 2020).

Healthcare has experienced remarkable progress globally in recent years (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2023). Factors such as nurse migration, digitalization, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the growing need for high clinical competence among newly graduated nurses (Kuleyin & Basaran-Acil, 2023; Özel & Aba, 2023). A recent and concrete example of this occurred during the pandemic, when the urgent need for nurses led to new graduate nurses starting to work under the challenging conditions of the crisis (Matlhaba & Khunou, 2022). As a result, the level of preparedness and competence of newly graduated nurses in clinical practice has become a significant concern (Matlhaba & Khunou, 2022; McMillan et al., 2023). For healthcare to continue effectively and positively impact patient outcomes, new graduate nurses must be prepared to manage complex clinical situations (Wildermuth et al., 2020). In hospitals, newly graduated nurses often receive standardized and generalized training, which is frequently inadequate (Okumura et al., 2022). Planning interventions to enhance students' readiness for the profession before graduation and organizing the curriculum accordingly will improve the quality of nursing education and the profession (Kuleyin & Basaran-Acil, 2023; Okumura et al., 2022). At this stage, assessing the preparedness of recent nursing graduates for professional practice and understanding the influencing factors will facilitate their transition into professional life (Hussein et al., 2019; Okumura et al., 2022). While the transition from student to nurse is a well-known phenomenon in the literature, most studies focus on nurses in their first years of practice, with fewer studies addressing those who have recently graduated but have not yet started their professional careers (Masso et al., 2022). Based on current knowledge, data on the readiness of newly graduated nursing students for clinical practice and the factors influencing this readiness are scarce in our country (Ersoy & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2024). This information is crucial for developing effective support systems for nursing graduates. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the readiness of new graduates for practice and the factors affecting it.

Research questions:

1. What are the sociodemographic and academic characteristics of new graduate students?
2. What is the personality type score of new graduate students?
3. What is the level of professional practice readiness among new graduate students?
4. What factors influence and predict the practice readiness of new graduate students?

METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a descriptive and cross-sectional research design.

Research Sample

The participants of this study were new graduate nursing students from the X and Y nursing departments. There are 154 senior students at Y and 186 students at X. The sample size for the study was calculated using Daniel Soper's online sample size calculator tool, which determines the minimum required sample size for multiple regression analysis based on Cohen's work (Soper, 2024). With an estimated medium effect size (0.15), the anticipated statistical power was calculated at 90%, assuming that the number of predictors would be half the number of items on the symptom scale (24), and using a statistical significance level of 0.05. This resulted in a minimum sample size of 206. The forms were completed by 258 participants who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate in the study. After reviewing the data, incomplete responses were removed, and the study concluded with a total of 228 participants.

Inclusion criteria:

- Completion of undergraduate nursing education

Exclusion criteria:

- More than 3 months have passed since the graduation date
- Foreign nationality
- Has started working as a nurse

Research Instruments and Processes

This study was conducted in June 2024 at X and Y. The researchers distributed forms to new graduates from both faculties and asked them to complete and return them. Data were collected face-to-face using the Personal Information Form, Big Five Personality Traits Scale, and Casey-Fink Readiness for Practice Survey.

Personal Information Form

This form was developed by the researchers to assess the sociodemographic and academic characteristics of graduate students. It consists of 14 questions that evaluate factors such as age, gender, perceived income level, place of residence, academic average, school graduated from, career choice, desire to work abroad, clinical practice status, and adequacy of education (Ersoy & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2024; Kuleyin & Basaran-Acil, 2023; Okumura et al., 2022).

Big Five Personality Traits Scale

This scale is based on the five-factor personality model. Rammstedt and John (2007) abbreviated the original 44-item scale into a 10-item version, making it a more accessible and practical tool in the literature. The Turkish validity and reliability studies of the scale were conducted by Horzum et al. (2017). For the validity of the inventory, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test values were examined. The KMO value of the scale was 0.79, and the Bartlett test of sphericity yielded a value of 1392.06. The scale consists of 10 items and five subdimensions: extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the five subdimensions ranged from 0.81 to 0.90 (extraversion: 0.88, neuroticism: 0.85, conscientiousness: 0.90, openness: 0.85, and agreeableness: 0.81). Scoring on the scale was based on the subdimensions, with higher scores indicating a stronger personality trait.

Casey-Fink Readiness for Practice Survey (CFRPS)

This scale was developed by Casey et al. (2011) to assess senior nursing students' readiness for practice. The original scale consists of 20 items and four sub-dimensions: clinical problem-solving, learning techniques, professional identity, and trials and tribulations. It uses a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is $\alpha = 0.69$ (for the sub-scales: 0.80, 0.50, 0.65, and 0.63). The Turkish validity and reliability of the scale were performed by Kuleyin and Basaran-Acil (2023). In the adaptation study, factor loadings were found to range between 0.39 and 0.70. The scale was reduced to 15 items, which can be gathered under a single factor. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.881. In this study, the total Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.860. There is no specific cut-off point for scoring on the scale. The evaluation is based on average scores, with higher scores indicating that students perceive themselves as more prepared for practice.

Data Analysis

Baseline characteristics of the participants were recorded as frequencies (n), percentages (%), means (standard deviation), and minimum and maximum values. The normality of the data distribution was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. For normally distributed data, One-Way ANOVA, t-tests, and Pearson's correlation were used to compare mean values between independent groups. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between personality traits and nursing students' readiness for practice. The strength of the correlation was categorized according to Pearson's correlation coefficient (r): 0-0.19 as very weak, 0.20-0.39 as weak, 0.40-0.59 as moderate, 0.60-0.79 as strong, and 0.80-1 as very strong correlation (Swinscow & Campbell, 2002). The prediction of readiness for practice was evaluated using multiple regression analysis with the stepwise method. Multicollinearity was tested, and variables with tolerance values greater than 0.2 and VIF values less than 10 were included in the regression analyses. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22.0. A p-value of < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

The mean age of the new graduates was 22.71 ± 1.45 years (min = 21, max = 35), with a grade point average of 3.06 ± 1.56 (min = 2.08, max = 3.9). A majority (76.8%, N = 175) were female, and 54.4% (N = 124) had participated in a nursing internship program. Nearly half (43.9%) of the students chose nursing for job prospects, while more than half (57.9%) studied it out of enjoyment. Additionally, over half (60.1%) expressed a desire to work abroad. The socio-demographic and academic characteristics of the new graduates are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Socio-demographic and Academic Characteristics of New Graduates (N=228)

Variables	N	%
Age M $\pm$ SD (Min.- Max.)	22,71 $\pm$ 1.45 (21-35)	
Grade point average M $\pm$ SD (Min.- Max.)	3,06 $\pm$ 1.56 (2,08-3,90)	
Gender		
Female	175	76.8
Male	53	23.2
Nursing intern program		
Yes	104	45.6
No	124	54.4

Income status		
High	16	7
Middle	189	82.9
Low	23	10.1
Living place		
City	150	65.8
District	59	25.9
Rural	19	8.3
Reason for choosing nursing		
Family	26	11.4
Own interests and desires	47	20.6
Being unable to secure the job you desire	55	24.1
Nursing students' job prospects	100	43.9
Status of studying with enjoyment		
Yes	132	57.9
No	96	42.1
Wanting to work abroad		
Yes	137	60.1
No	91	39.9
Initiative to work abroad		
Yes, I have conducted research	69	30.3
Yes, I am taking a language course.	18	7.9
No	141	61.8
Practice in intensive care		
Yes	173	75.9
No	55	24.1
Sufficiency of intensive care practices*		
Yes	78	45.1
No	95	54.9
Sufficiency of clinical practice		
Yes	119	52.2
No	109	47.8
Sufficiency of theoretical courses		
Yes	131	57.5
No	97	42.5

Abbreviations: M: Means, N: Number SD: Standard Deviation, %: Percent.

*Evaluated by students who practised in intensive care.

Table 2 presents the personality traits and practice readiness of new graduates. The results revealed that agreeableness had the highest personality score, while neuroticism had the lowest.

Table 2
Personality Traits and Practice Readiness Of New Graduates (N=228)

Variables	M	SD
Subdimensions of the Big Five personality trait scale		
Extraversion	7.21	1.63
Agreeableness	7.92	1.39
Conscientiousness	7.68	1.50
Neuroticism	6.17	1.34
Openness	6.90	1.47
Casey-Fink Readiness for the Practice Survey	44.52	7.44

Abbreviations: M: Means, N: Number SD: Standard Deviation.

The effect of new graduates' sociodemographic and academic characteristics on their readiness for practice was examined. It was found that readiness for practice increased as the grade point average (GPA) increased. Graduates who participated in the nursing intern program had lower readiness levels compared to those who did not, and students with higher income showed greater readiness compared to those with middle or low income. Additionally, graduates who felt that their theoretical and clinical lessons during education were inadequate demonstrated lower readiness (Table 3).

Table 3. *Effect of Sociodemographic and Academic Characteristics of New Graduates on Their Readiness for Practice (N=228)*

Variable	Test and p value
Gender	
Female	t= -0.002
Male	p=0.998
Nursing intern program	
Yes	t=-2.647
No	p=0.009
Income status	
High	F=6.266
Middle	p=0.002
Low	
Living place	
City	F=1.291
District	p=0.294
Rural	
Reason for choosing nursing	
family's wish	F=0.149
Own interests and desires	p=0.930
Being unable to secure the job you desire	
nursing students' job prospects	
Status of studying with enjoyment	
Yes	t=1.037
No	p=0.301
Wanting to work abroad	
Yes	t=1.843
No	p=0.067
Initiative to work abroad	
Yes, I have conducted research	F=1.085
Yes, I am taking a language course.	p=0.340
No	
Practice in intensive care	
Yes	t=-0.209
No	p=0.835
Sufficiency of intensive care practices	
Yes	t=1.375
No	p=0.171
Sufficiency of clinical practice	
Yes	t=3.880
No	p=0.000
Sufficiency of theoretical courses	
Yes	t=2.160
No	p=0.032
Age	r=0.05
Grade point average	r=0.176**

**p<0.01

Correlations between participants' personality traits and practice readiness are presented in Table 4. A low positive correlation was found between extraversion, agreeableness and openness to experience with readiness for practice. Additionally, a low negative correlation was observed between the participants' neuroticism personality traits and their readiness for practice. It was also determined that there was a moderate positive correlation between participants' conscientiousness personality trait and their readiness for practice.

Table 4

Correlation Between Personality Traits of New Graduates and Their Readiness to Practice (N=228)

Subdimensions of the Big Five personality trait scale	Casey-Fink Readiness for the Practice Survey
Extraversion	$r = 0.193^*$
Agreeableness	$r = 0.237^*$
Conscientiousness	$r = 0.412^*$
Neuroticism	$r = -0.380^*$
Openness	$r = 0.213^*$

* $p < 0.01$

The prediction of readiness for practice was evaluated using multiple regression analysis with the stepwise model (Table 5). The results of the regression analysis indicated that the model was significant ($F = 39.944$, $p < 0.01$). The analysis revealed that the conscientiousness ($\beta = 0.339$) and neuroticism ($\beta = -0.296$) personality traits of new graduates significantly influenced the mean readiness for practice score and accounted for approximately 25% of the variance in readiness to practice (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.245$).

Table 5

Predictive Factors Explaining New Graduate Students' Readiness for Practice (N=228)

Predictors	Casey-Fink Readiness for the Practice Survey					
	B	β	t değeri	p	Collinearity	
					Tolerance	VIF
Conscientiousness	1.680	0.339	5.688	<0.001	0.938	1.066
Neuroticism	-1.645	-0.296	-4.975	<0.001	0.938	1.066

$R = 0.502$ $R^2 = 0.252$ $F = 22.049$ $p < 0.001$ Durbin-Watson = 1.745

Abbreviations: B: Unstandardized beta, β : Standardized beta, $\overline{R^2}$: Adjusted R^2 , VIF: Variance Inflation Factor

DISCUSSION

This study examined the readiness of newly graduated student nurses for their professional careers and identified the factors influencing this readiness. The findings provided valuable insights into the profiles of nursing students in our country. Unfortunately, a significant number of students choose nursing not out of interest or passion, but rather because they perceive it as an easy job. Additionally, our research revealed that a significant proportion of new graduates did not complete their nursing studies with genuine interest or enjoyment. We believe that this lack of passion negatively impacts both academic and professional success, as well as the public perception of nursing. Based on these findings, it may be crucial to provide better guidance and introduction to the nursing profession before students make their career choice. Interestingly, this research reveals that the majority of new graduates expressed a desire to work abroad and have taken steps to make it happen. Nurse migration has gained momentum, particularly after COVID-19, due to the increasing global demand for nurses (OECD, 2023). Similarly,

several studies have shown that nursing students in our country have positive attitudes toward immigration and plan to migrate (Seven & Adadioğlu, 2022; Tosunöz & Nazik, 2022). The findings of this study corroborate and extend previous conclusions. Increasing nurse migration in our country will likely result in a gradual decrease in the current shortage of nurses and a loss of a qualified workforce (Tosunöz & Nazik, 2022). As a country with an increasing elderly population, we believe that improving professional conditions is crucial to addressing this issue. Another important finding of the study was related to intensive care practice. Our findings revealed that some students graduated without ever having visited an intensive care unit, and those who had experience in this setting found their intensive care practice inadequate. However, intensive care units play a critical role in preparing students for professional life and offer rich learning opportunities (Jiang et al., 2024). Students who participate in intensive care clinical practice often consider themselves more competent than those who do not (Danielis et al., 2021) and acquire valuable technical skills such as intubation and aspiration (Özkaya Sağlam et al., 2021). Therefore, we believe it is essential to identify students who have not had intensive care experience and address these deficiencies before graduation.

In this study, similar to previous research (Ersoy & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2024; Uğur et al., 2020), we observed that new graduates had a moderate level of readiness for professional practice. Our study also demonstrated that certain variables influence the level of professional readiness. Consistent with Ersoy and Ayaz-Alkaya's (2024) findings, students with higher academic achievement were more prepared for professional practice. Our study further revealed that the internship program and new graduates' perceptions of the adequacy of theoretical and practical courses significantly affected their readiness. Nursing is a science that integrates both theory and practice (Tosunöz & Nazik, 2022). Enhancements in the quality and quantity of clinical practice contribute to the improvement of education quality and better prepare students for the profession (Ersoy & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2024; van Kraaij et al., 2023). In line with these results, it is crucial to examine students' perceptions of competence in relation to nursing education in order to make necessary improvements. Additionally, our findings highlighted the importance of an internship program and supported research showing that increased clinical practice contributes to better readiness (Ersoy & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2024; Sharma et al., 2020). Interestingly, this study also indicates that new graduates with lower income levels are less likely to demonstrate a high level of readiness for professional practice. This may be attributed to the influence of students' socioeconomic status on their choice of profession, with livelihood concerns often taking precedence over the development of professional skills. Therefore, we believe that identifying and providing support to students with low economic backgrounds can enhance their academic success, ensuring that their financial situation does not negatively impact their educational journey.

Evidence suggests that personal traits influence occupational adjustment (Masso et al., 2022). This study found that personality traits are significant predictors of new graduate nurses' readiness for the profession, impacting it both positively and negatively. Our findings contribute to the literature by demonstrating that the effect of personality traits on adaptation begins during the student period and continues into the early years of clinical practice, as noted by Mihailovic et al. (2022). In this study, we found that neuroticism negatively predicts readiness for practice, while conscientiousness positively predicts it. Individuals with neuroticism tend to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and anger. They often feel anxious, restless, and upset, and struggle with stress management and coping (Horzum et al., 2017). Stress can negatively impact caring behaviors in nursing students (Albayrak & Uzdil, 2024). Moreover, a significant proportion of nurses require stress-reducing interventions in the early years of their practice (Mihailovic et al., 2022). We believe that graduates with a neurotic personality type may experience decreased educational efficiency due to heightened anxiety and stress throughout their education. Additionally, their anxiety about beginning work and taking on responsibilities could negatively affect their readiness for practice. In this study, conscientiousness was

another personality trait found to explain new graduates' readiness for professional practice. Conscientious individuals are hardworking, goal-oriented, responsible, and self-controlled (Horzum et al., 2017). Nursing is a profession that requires dedication, responsibility, and patient care (Ersoy & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2024). Individuals with this personality type may navigate their education more efficiently and feel more prepared for professional practice. For this reason, we recommend that students' personality traits be evaluated, particularly by the instructors with whom they practice, and used as a parameter in planning their educational experiences. We believe that organizing support programs before graduation to address the occupational anxiety of students with neurotic personality traits will enhance their adaptation and success in the profession.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

As a result of the study, it was revealed that new graduates chose nursing out of personal interest and desire, expressed a desire to work abroad, and took steps to achieve that goal. However, some graduates did not have exposure to intensive care units and did not find their clinical practice or theoretical courses sufficient. Additionally, we found that the readiness of newly graduated nurses for clinical practice was at a moderate level. Factors such as grade point average, income status, participation in the internship program, and perceptions of competence in clinical practice and theoretical courses were found to influence their readiness for practice. Another important finding of the study was that neuroticism and conscientiousness personality traits had an explanatory effect on the readiness of new graduates. Based on this, we recommend evaluating the readiness of student nurses for professional life, identifying the factors that influence it, and planning and implementing interventions to enhance this readiness. This process is essential for improving the quality of nursing education and ensuring that graduates are better prepared to begin their professional practice. Methods such as readiness assessments, identification of influencing factors, interventions to enhance readiness, feedback, nursing schedule programs, and improvements in course content can be utilized to support these recommendations. These steps will ensure that student nurses are better prepared for practice before graduation and contribute to the training of more effective and well-equipped professionals in the nursing field.

LIMITATIONS

A limitation of the study is that it included only new graduates from two universities, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.

Acknowledgments

The authors extend their sincere gratitude to the recent graduates.

Ethic Approval

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University Ethics Committee of Süleyman Demirel University (Decision No. 75/12, dated May 22, 2024). Institutional permission was obtained from the Süleyman Demirel University Faculty of Health Sciences (Decision number: E-19573338- 605-750161, date: 22.05.2024) and Selcuk University Faculty of Nursing (Decision number: E-751754, date: 10.05.2024). Participants were informed about the study objectives and data collection tools, and their verbal consent was obtained. This study was conducted in a way that conforms to the provisions of the Declaration of Helsinki. The utilization permit for the scales was obtained from the authors via email.

Conflict of interest

No conflict of interests.

Financial support

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency.

Author Contributions

Design: A.T.K. Data Collection or Processing: A.T.K., M.D. Analysis or Interpretation: A.T.K., M.D. Literature Search: A.T.K., M.D. Writing: A.T.K.

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