

Human Papilloma Virus Knowledge Levels, Sexual Communications, Cultural Sensitivity of Mothers with 9-14 Years-Old Girls

9-14 Yaş Arası Kız Çocuğu Olan Annelerin İnsan Papilloma Virüsü Bilgi Düzeyleri, Cinsel İletişimleri, Kültürel Duyarlılıkları

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Abstract

Objective: This descriptive study was planned to investigate the level of knowledge about Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), sexual communication and cultural sensitivity.

Methods: The research was conducted between May 2023 and December 2023. The sample of the study consisted of 122 mothers registered to Pazar Central Family Health Centre. The data of the study were collected with the 'Personal Information Form', 'HPV Information Scale (HPV-IS)', 'Sexual Communication Scale for Parents (SCS)' and 'Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS)'. Number, percentage, mean, standard deviation, median, independent sample T-Test, Pearson correlation analyses were used in data analysis.

Results: The ages of the mothers participating in the study ranged from 25 to 49 (36,91±5,33). The rate of mothers with one or two children is 51,6%, and the rate of mothers with two or more daughters is 55,4%. The mean score of the mothers on the HPV-SIS was 9,07±8,23. The mean score of the SCS of the mothers was found to be 78,28±9,81. The mean score of the ISS of the mothers was 86,17±11,60.

Conclusion: The mothers' HPV knowledge level was found to be low. Mothers' sexual communication with their children was found to be high. Their intercultural sensitivity was found to be high.

Keywords: Sexual communication, Cultural sensitivity, HPV, Nursing

Özet

Amaç: Bu çalışma, 9-14 yaş kız çocuğu olan annelerin İnsan Papilloma Virüsü (HPV) bilgi düzeylerini, cinsel iletişimlerini ve kültürel duyarlılıklarını incelemek amacı ile gerçekleştirilmiş tanımlayıcı türde planlanmıştır.

Yöntem: Araştırma Mayıs 2023-Aralık 2023 tarihleri arasında yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemini Pazar Merkez Aile Sağlığı Merkezine kayıtlı 122 anneden oluşmaktadır. Araştırmanın verileri Kişisel Bilgi Formu, "HPV Bilgi Ölçeği (HPV-BÖ)", "Ebeveynler İçin Cinsel İletişim Ölçeği (CİÖ)" ve "Kültürlerarası Duyarlılık Ölçeği (KDÖ)" ile toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde sayı, yüzde, ortalama, standart sapma, medyan, independent sample T-Test, Pearson Korelasyon analizi kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular: Çalışmaya katılan annelerin yaşları 25 ile 49 (36,91±5,33) arasında değişmekte olup, bir ve iki çocuğu olan annelerin oranı %51,6, iki ve daha fazla kız çocuğu olan annelerin oranı ise %55,4'tür. Annelerin HPV-BÖ ortalama puanı 9,07±8,23'dür. Annelerin CİÖ ortalama puanı 78,28±9,81 olarak bulunmuştur. Annelerin KDÖ ortalama puanı 86,17±11,60'dır.

Sonuç: Annelerin HPV bilgi düzeyi düşük olarak bulunmuştur. Annelerin çocuklarıyla cinsel iletişimi yüksek olarak tespit edilmiştir. Kültürlerarası duyarlılıkları yüksek olarak belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cinsel iletişim, Kültürel duyarlılık, HPV, Hemşirelik

Citation: Taşdemir, S. & Avşar, F. B. (2026). Human papilloma virus knowledge levels, sexual communications, cultural sensitivity of mothers with 9-14 years-old girls. *Hemşirelikte Araştırma Geliştirme Dergisi*, 28(2), 73-82. <https://10.69487/hemarge.1728235>

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Date of Submission 26.06.2025

Date of Acceptance 03.06.2026

Date of Publication 14.08.2026



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1. Introduction

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases in the world (Yontem et al., 2019; Shamseddine et al., 2021). It is estimated that approximately 620 thousand new cancer cases in women were caused by HPV. Cervical cancers constitute more than 90% of HPV-related cancers in women (De Martel et al., 2020). 2.532 new cervical cancer cases were diagnosed and 1.245 cervical cancer-related deaths occurred in our country in 2020 in Türkiye (GLOBOCAN, 2020). Cervical cancer, which covers 4,2 per 100 thousand of cancers seen in women in Türkiye, ranks 10th among the most common cancer types (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Health, 2023). HPV prevention is an important factor in reducing disease prevalence and disease burden. The level of knowledge about HPV is generally low and vaccinations are inadequate worldwide (Hakimi et al., 2023). In their study, Celik and Ozdemir (2021) examined the knowledge levels of parents of children aged 9-18 about HPV infection and vaccination, and their attitudes and behaviors regarding the application of the vaccine. According to the study results; It was found that HPV infection awareness was 26.9% among mothers (Celik and Ozdemir, 2021). According to the research findings of Parlak and colleagues (2021), it was determined that the majority of the participants did not have sufficient information about the infections. Studies have proven that the vaccine is protective when vaccinated between the ages of 9-14 (Park et al., 2023; Saxena et al., 2023). The WHO 2030 targets include increasing the HPV vaccination rate of children aged 9-14 to 90% (WHO, 2024). In Korea, there is an immunization program in which two doses of HPV vaccine are administered to 12-year-old girls to prevent cervical cancer (Park et al., 2023). In order for such programs to become policies in countries, they need to be talked about comfortably. This has made sexual communication a necessity in society. One of the important issues affecting HPV vaccination is sexual communication. In a study, it was determined that one of the factors affecting parents' refusal to get vaccinated may be mothers' anxiety levels about sexuality (Hatem, 2019). Mothers and daughters share more information about sexuality than fathers. In a study, it was found that mothers have higher HPV knowledge than fathers (Berk, 2022). Larebo et al. (2022) wanted to conduct a study with mothers and fathers about sexual communication, but when questions were asked to fathers, it was seen that the transfer of information was insufficient. In the same study, it was emphasized that this situation could be affected by cultural differences.

Cultural sensitivity is defined as an active desire that activates a person's intrinsic motivation to understand, accept, and appreciate cultural differences (Bulduk et al., 2017). This desire provides the ability to develop a positive emotion that encourages appropriate and effective behaviors in intercultural communication in the process of making sense of and evaluating cultural differences. It is stated that one of the factors affecting HPV vaccination practices is cultural differences between countries (Wang et al., 2022). In a study conducted with parents in the People's Republic of China on vaccination, it was observed that although parents accepted HPV as a dangerous and easily transmitted virus, the rate of vaccinating their daughters was low due to their culturally conservative attitudes (Wang et al., 2022). No other study was found in the literature directly investigating the effect of culture on vaccination.

Nurses are often the first point of contact with patients and play a critical role in promoting and implementing immunization programs globally (Kandemir, 2023; Abbas, 2023). Nurses are equipped to educate students, patients, and parents about HPV-related health issues and prevention. Individuals see nurses as a reachable and informative resource for HPV vaccination and other sexually transmitted infections (Lin et al., 2022). It is thought that the data obtained as a result of this study, which is expected to contribute to the field of nursing, will guide the studies that need to be conducted on cervical cancer, the only preventable type of cancer.

1.1.Study aim

This study was conducted to examine the HPV knowledge levels, sexual communication and cultural sensitivity of mothers of girls aged 9-14.

1.2.Study questions

What is the level of mothers' HPV knowledge?

What is the mothers' sexual communication language?

What is the mothers' intercultural sensitivity level?

Is there a relationship between mothers' HPV knowledge level, sexual communication language and cultural sensitivity?

2. Materials and methods

2.1.Study type and variables

This study was designed in a descriptive research design. The dependent variables of the research are the sexual communication, cultural sensitivity and HPV knowledge levels of mothers with 9-14 year old girls. Independent Variables; The number of children of mothers with 9-14 year old girls, number of daughters, education status, income status, employment status, whether they have knowledge about HPV, whether they have heard of HPV, whether they have heard of HPV vaccine, where they heard of HPV, at what age the HPV vaccine should be given, what may be the reasons for HPV vaccine refusals, what may be the reasons for preferring HPV vaccine, and whether they want to learn about HPV vaccine.

2.2.Study sample

Participants who met the inclusion criteria of the study were taken to a separate room in the ASM and a survey form prepared with Google Form was sent to their phones. Individuals were asked to fill out the survey form themselves. Participants filled out the survey form in the presence of the researcher. Data for the study were collected face to face by the participants in the presence of the researcher. In case of lack of information, necessary information was provided. If the participant did not have a phone; the participant was taken to a private room and a printed survey form was given. Filling out the forms used in data collection took an average of 30 minutes.

2.3. Data collection tools and process

Participants who met the inclusion criteria of the study were taken to a separate room in the ASM and a survey form prepared with Google Form was sent to their phones. Individuals were asked to fill out the survey form themselves. Participants filled out the survey form in the presence of the researcher. Data for the study was collected face to face by the participants in the presence of the researcher. In case of lack of information, necessary information was provided. If the participant did not have a phone; the participant was taken to a private room and a printed survey form was given. Filling out the forms used in data collection took an average of 30 minutes.

2.3.1. Personal information form

The first part of the survey includes questions about personal information and socio-demographic characteristics (13 questions). The personal information form includes questions about the number of children, number of girls, education status, income status, employment status, whether they have information about HPV, whether they have heard of HPV, whether they have heard of the HPV vaccine, where they heard of HPV, at what age the HPV vaccine should be administered, what may be the reasons for refusing the HPV vaccine, what may be the reasons for preferring the HPV vaccine, and whether they want to learn about the HPV vaccine.

2.3.2. Human papilloma virus knowledge scale (HPV-IS)

HPV-IS, Turkish validity and reliability analysis was conducted by Demir (2019). Its purpose is to evaluate the knowledge levels of individuals about HPV, HPV vaccine and screening tests. The scale consists of 33 questions in total and is divided into four main categories. The answers given to the questions are evaluated with a three-choice Likert type. In the analyzes, the Cronbach α value of the scale was found to be 0.901. The reliability coefficients of the sub-dimensions were determined as Cronbach α : 0.848 for “General HPV knowledge”; 0.679 for “HPV screening test knowledge”; 0.796 for “General HPV vaccine knowledge”; and 0.609 for “HPV vaccination program knowledge.”

2.3.3. Sexual communication scale for parents (SCS)

SCS was developed by Artan et al. (2020). The scale contains a total of 23 questions and four sub-dimensions. The dimensions are content, body language, process management, and anxiety. Sub-dimensions were not used in this study. Each item is 4-rated according to the degree of suitability for the participant's situation. While reverse scoring is not applied to questions regarding the content, body language, and process management sub-dimensions, reverse scoring is used in questions regarding the anxiety sub-dimension. High scores indicate that the parents' level of suitability regarding sexual communication language is high. The reliability of the scale was found to be 0.71.

2.3.4. Intercultural sensitivity scale

ISS was adapted into Turkish by Ustun (2011). This scale consists of a questionnaire consisting of 24 questions aimed at measuring intercultural sensitivity. This scale is evaluated with answers graded from 1 to 5. High scores indicate that the individual has high intercultural sensitivity. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale was determined as 0.88.

2.4. Ethical approval

The data were obtained with the approval of Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Social and Human Sciences Research ethics committee (Date: 04.04.2023 and decision number: 01-17 (278327)). Institutional permission was obtained from Tokat Provincial Health Directorate where the research was conducted (letter dated 24.08.2023 and numbered E-87064461-044-222830997).

2.5. Data analyses

In the normality assessment of the data set, skewness and kurtosis values were examined. Cronbach Alpha coefficient was interpreted in the examination of the reliability of the scales. In the reporting of the data, mean, median, percentage, number, standard deviation were used from descriptive analyses. In the analysis of the obtained data, Independent Sample t-test was generally used for variables with binary parameters. Pearson correlation analysis technique was used for normally distributed variables to reveal the relationship between sexual communication, cultural sensitivity and HPV knowledge levels. Data were analyzed by entering the SPSS 25.0 package program. The statistical significance level was accepted as 0.05.

3. Results

The ages of the mothers participating in the study ranged from 25 to 49 (36,91 $\pm$ 5,33). The socio-demographic and HPV-related characteristics of the mothers are given in Table 1. The rate of mothers with one or two children is 51,6%, and the rate of mothers with two or more daughters is 55,4%. The rate of mothers who are high school graduates is 39,4%, the rate of those who have university or higher, and the rate of those who have secondary school or lower is 30,3%. Almost half of the mothers (47,5%) stated that their income is equal to their expenses. Unemployed mothers constitute the majority with 67,2%. The rate of mothers who stated that they have no knowledge about HPV is 59,8%, and the rate

of mothers who have heard of HPV is 63,9%. The mothers stated that they heard about HPV from health institutions (30,6%), the media (20,1%), and relatives and friends (14,9%). The rate of mothers who have never heard of the HPV vaccine is 51,6%. 62,3% of mothers argue that HPV vaccination should be given to those aged 27 and over. 63,1% of mothers do not know the reason for rejecting the HPV vaccine. The fact that the HPV vaccine is free (76,2%) is an important factor for mothers to choose the vaccine. The vast majority of mothers (86,1%) stated that they wanted to learn more about the HPV vaccine.

Table 1. Distribution of mothers' descriptive information and HPV-related characteristics (n=122)

Variables		n	%
Number of children	Having one or two children	63	51,6
	Having three or more children	59	48,4
Number of girls	Having one daughter	54	44,3
	Having two or more daughters	68	55,4
Education status	Graduated from primary or secondary school	37	30,3
	Graduated from high school	48	39,4
	Graduated from university or postgraduate	37	30,3
Income status	Income less than expenditure	49	40,2
	Income equal to expenditure	58	47,5
	Income more than expenditure	15	12,3
Employment status	Working	40	32,8
	Not working	82	67,2
Do you know anything about HPV?	Yes	49	40,2
	No	73	59,8
Have you ever heard of HPV?	Yes	78	63,9
	No	44	36,1
Have you ever heard of HPV vaccine?	Yes	59	48,4
	No	63	51,6
Where did you hear about HPV?	From relatives or friends	20	14,9
	From health institutions	41	30,6
At what age should the HPV vaccine be given?	From the media	27	20,1
	Never heard	46	34,3
	9-12 years old	15	12,3
	13-26 years old	31	25,4
What are the reasons for HPV vaccine refusals?	27 years and over	76	62,3
	Unknown side effects	31	25,4
	Not necessary	14	11,5
What are the reasons for preferring HPV vaccine?	Don't know	77	63,1
	Free of charge	93	76,2
	At risk	13	10,7
Would you like to learn about the HPV vaccine?	Don't know	16	13,1
	Yes	105	86,1
	No	17	13,9

The mean scores of the HPV-IS, SCS, ISS scales and their sub-dimensions used in the study are given. The mean HPV-IS score of the mothers was 9.07 ± 8.23 . The mean score of the general HPV knowledge sub-dimension of the same scale was 5.27 ± 4.71 ; the mean score of the HPV screening test knowledge sub-dimension was 1.96 ± 1.75 and the mean score of the general HPV vaccine knowledge sub-dimension was 1.18 ± 1.60 . The mean score of the mothers on the SCS was found to be 78.28 ± 9.81 . The mean score of the mothers on the ISS was 86.17 ± 11.60 (Table 2).

Table 2. Mean values of the scales and subscales used in the study (n=122)

Ölçekler ve Alt boyutları	Min	Max	$\bar{x} \pm ss$
HPV-IS	0	29	9,07±8,23
HPV general knowledge	0	16	5,27±4,71
HPV screening test knowledge	0	6	1,96±1,75
HPV vaccine knowledge	0	5	1,18±1,60
SCS	44	92	78,28±9,81
ISS	62	117	86,17±11,60

As a result of the pairwise comparison of the variables, it was determined that there was a positive relationship between each. A positive and weak low-level significant relationship was found between HPV-IS and SCS ($r=0.354$ $p=0.001$). Similarly, a positive and weak low-level significant relationship was found between HPV-IS and (ISS) ($r=0.328$ $p=0.001$). A positive and strong high-level significant relationship was found between SCS and ISS ($r=0.710$ $p=0.001$) (Table 5).

Table 3. The relationship between the mean scores of the scales and sub-dimensions used in the study

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
HPV-IS	1					
HPV general knowledge	0,970** 0,001	1				
HPV screening test knowledge	0,812** 0,001	0,734** 0,001	1			
HPV vaccine knowledge	0,862** 0,001	0,779** 0,001	0,558** 0,001	1		
SCS	0,354** 0,001	0,349** 0,001	0,208* 0,001	0,363** 0,001	1	
ISS	0,328** 0,001	0,308** 0,001	0,113 0,214	0,415** 0,001	0,710** 0,001	1

** $p<0,01$ * $p<0,05$, r =pearson corelasyon analyses

4. Discussion

In the study, the total HPV knowledge score average of mothers with girls aged 9-14 was found to be 9.07 and it was determined that their HPV knowledge level was low. When the studies in the literature were examined, the HPV knowledge level was found to be Ateş Ozbey (2024) 6,88; Ayan (2024) 7.44; Cakir et al. (2021) 9.08; Gullu (2023) 11.45; Cetin (2024) 12.55. These studies also stated that the HPV knowledge level was low and emphasized that initiatives should be taken to increase it. In a study conducted by Kops et al. (2019), it was determined that 51.7% of the participants had knowledge about HPV. When we look at the research data, it is possible to say that although there are research results with lower and higher mean scores, the mean HPV knowledge level of 9.07 we obtained is similar to the relevant literature, and the difference in the results obtained in similar studies may be due to the participants having different sociodemographic characteristics. In this context, considering the result we obtained in our study, it can be said that the mothers' HPV knowledge is low.

In the study, the average sexual communication score of the mothers was determined as 78.28 and it was determined that their sexual communication was high. In similar studies, the average sexual communication score was determined as 69.10 by Guney (2022); 78.18 by Ertas (2024), 41.15 by Genc (2023) on a scale where the average was 40.50; and Sooki et al. (2022) found the comfort level of mothers in sexual discourse with their daughters as 37.04 on a scale where the average value was 32.50. Sexual attitudes and behaviors are often affected by the individual's family, relationships with others, and living conditions, and each culture has its own sexual norms (Ebeoglu and Karacan, 2019). These

differences in sexual attitudes and behaviors can also be reflected in the sexual communication level of individuals and cause the level of sexual communication to increase and decrease. Therefore, it can be said that the differences are due to culture and norms.

The mean score of intercultural sensitivity was found as 86.17 in the study and it was determined that the level of intercultural sensitivity was high. Altinkaya and Amanak (2020) found the level of intercultural sensitivity as 78.04; Abbas (2023) 84.14; Yurdakul (2023) 87.73; Ozcan et al. (2023) 91.26 in their studies. When the results obtained from the studies in the literature are examined, it is seen that the level of intercultural sensitivity we obtained from our research is similar to the results of other studies. The basis of cultural sensitivity lies in the ability to understand different cultures and is affected by cognitive and affective processes (Bulduk et al., 2017). For this reason, globalization, employment opportunities, force majeure such as war and disaster make it necessary for individuals from different cultures to come together. The cultural characteristics of individuals from different cultures can cause the level of cultural sensitivity among individuals to differ.

It was determined that there is a statistically significant, positive relationship between the total HPV-IS and its sub-dimensions of mothers. Alparslan Ozdemir (2024) also found a positive relationship between the total HPV-BÖ and its sub-dimensions, similar to the result we obtained in our study. The fact that HPV is a health problem can increase mothers' tendency to obtain information on this subject and therefore increase their knowledge levels about HPV screening test and HPV vaccine in addition to general knowledge about HPV.

There is a positive, statistically significant difference between mothers' total knowledge level about HPV-IS and their level of sexual communication and intercultural sensitivity. Basar et al. (2019) found in their study that, similar to the findings we obtained in our study, knowledge levels about HPV and its vaccine are related to their status of talking about sexuality with their families. The spread of knowledge about sexually transmitted HPV among mothers and the increase in HPV knowledge levels require mothers to have a high level of sexual communication. In other words, mothers with a high level of sexual communication can obtain information about HPV from healthcare personnel, their environment and individuals from different cultures. This situation may cause the level of HPV knowledge, sexual communication and intercultural sensitivity to move in the same direction.

There is a positive, statistically significant difference between the total sexual communication level of mothers and the level of intercultural sensitivity. There is no study in the literature directly related to the relationship between the level of sexual communication and the level of intercultural sensitivity. However, Bekiroglu and Balci (2014); Oğut and Olkun (2018) determined in their studies that the level of communication and the level of intercultural sensitivity are related, similar to our study. Globalization, employment opportunities in different regions, and migration events experienced voluntarily or involuntarily can cause individuals from different cultures to live side by side. Effective communication can ensure that different cultures become aware of each other's characteristics and accept existing differences.

4.1. Limitations of the study

The most important limitation of this study is that it was conducted in only one Family Health Centre. Another limitation is that fathers were not included in the study.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In the study, the total HPV knowledge score average of mothers with girls aged 9-14 was found to be 9,07 and it was determined that the HPV knowledge level was low. The sexual communication score average of the mothers was found to be 78,28. It was found that the sexual communication of the mothers

with their children was high. The intercultural sensitivity score average of the mothers was found to be 86.17 and it was determined that their cultural sensitivity was high.

It was determined that there is a statistically significant, positive relationship between the total HPV-IS and its sub-dimensions of mothers. There is a positive, statistically significant difference between the total sexual communication level of mothers and the level of intercultural sensitivity. There is a positive, statistically significant difference between mothers' total knowledge level about HPV-IS and their level of sexual communication and intercultural sensitivity.

In order to increase the knowledge level of all women applying to the institution by health professionals working in health institutions providing preventive health services; trainings should be planned, implemented and consultancy services should be provided. It is very important for nurses and health workers to provide information about the vaccine. It was determined that the HPV knowledge level of the mothers was affected by their sexual communication and cultural sensitivity. It is thought that analytical studies should be conducted on the subject.

Financial Support

No financial support has been received for this research sectors.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest has been declared by the authors.

Ethical Consideration: *I declare that I have adhered to scientific and ethical principles in conducting and writing this study, and that I have properly cited all sources used.*

The data were obtained with the approval of Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Social and Human Sciences Research ethics committee (Date: 04.04.2023 and decision number: 01-17 (278327)). Institutional permission was obtained from Tokat Provincial Health Directorate where the research was conducted (letter dated 24.08.2023 and numbered E-87064461-044-222830997).

**This study is derived from a master's thesis (Author: Selma Taşdemir, Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Fatma Avşar, Institution: Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Thesis Title: Human papilloma virüs knowledge levels, sexual communications, cultural sensitivity of mothers with 9-14 years-old girls, Thesis completion year: 2024).*

Use of Artificial Intelligence: *No artificial intelligence-based tools or applications were used in the preparation of this study. All content of the study was produced by the authors in accordance with scientific research methods and academic ethical principles.*

Authorship Contributions: *First author 60%, second author 40%*

Study concept and design: FA, ST; **Data collection:** ST; **Data analysis and interpretation:** FA, ST; **Writing the manuscript:** FA, ST; **Critical revision of the manuscript:** FA.

Acknowledgements: *This study is the master's thesis of the first author. We would like to thank Assistant Prof. Dr. Bahtişen KARTAL and Prof. Dr. Naile BİLGİLİ for their suggestions and contributions to the research.*

Evaluation: *Double-blind peer review*

Similarity Screening: *Done –intihal.net*

Ethical Statement: hemarge@gmail.com

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