



Evaluation of Paramedic Students' Thoughts Towards the Profession and Their Concerns About Violence in Health Care

Paramedik Öğrencilerinin Mesleğe Yönelik Düşüncelerinin ve Sağlıkta Şiddete Yönelik Kaygılarının Değerlendirilmesi

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to assess the professional expectations and concerns of students in the First Aid and Emergency Care program before graduation. We hypothesized that paramedic students would have both strong motivations for choosing their profession and significant concerns, which may vary according to sex and class level.

Material and Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted with 129 paramedic students from a state university. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire including demographic and profession-related items. Statistical analyses were performed using chi-square tests, and $p < 0.05$ was considered significant. Ethical approval and informed consent were obtained.

Results: Most students (87.6%) reported that they chose the profession willingly, mainly due to the desire to help patients (56.6%) and for financial/job security (47.3%). While 86.8% intended to practice the profession, 41.1% expressed a desire to work abroad. The most common concerns were violence in healthcare (48.8%), financial difficulties (30.2%), and working conditions (27.1%). Male students were more likely to prefer ambulance services ($p=0.026$) and reported fewer gender-related concerns ($p < 0.01$). Second-year students were more likely to choose the profession for altruistic reasons compared to first-year students ($p=0.037$).

Conclusion: Paramedic students demonstrated strong motivation to help patients but also expressed significant concerns regarding workplace violence, job conditions, and financial insecurity. A substantial proportion wished to work abroad. These findings highlight the need for interventions such as workplace safety training, support programs, and improved job conditions. Future multi-center and qualitative studies are recommended.

Keywords: Paramedics, student, perception of the profession, workplace violence

Öz

Amaç: Bu çalışma, ilk ve Acil Yardım programı öğrencilerinin mezuniyet öncesi mesleki beklentilerini ve kaygılarını değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Hipotezimiz, paramedik öğrencilerinin meslek seçiminde hem güçlü motivasyonlara hem de belirgin kaygılara sahip olacağı ve bunların cinsiyet ile sınıf düzeyine göre farklılık gösterebileceğidir.

Gereç ve Yöntem: Tanımlayıcı ve kesitsel tipte yapılan araştırmaya bir devlet üniversitesinde öğrenim gören 129 paramedik öğrencisi dahil edilmiştir. Veriler, demografik ve mesleğe ilişkin soruları içeren yapılandırılmış bir anket ile toplanmıştır. Analizler ki-kare testi ile yapılmış, $p < 0,05$ anlamlı kabul edilmiştir. Çalışma için etik kurul onayı alınmış ve tüm katılımcılardan bilgilendirilmiş onam sağlanmıştır.

Bulgular: Öğrencilerin çoğu (%87,6) mesleği isteyerek seçtiğini bildirmiştir. En sık nedenler hasta/yaralılara yardım etme isteği (%56,6) ve finansal/iş güvencesi (%47,3) olmuştur. Öğrencilerin %86,8'i gelecekte mesleği icra etmeyi planlarken, %41,1'i yurt dışında çalışmak istediğini belirtmiştir. En sık kaygılar sağlıkta şiddet (%48,8), maddi zorluklar (%30,2) ve çalışma koşulları (%27,1) olarak bulunmuştur. Erkek öğrenciler daha fazla ambulans hizmetlerinde çalışmayı tercih etmiş ($p=0,026$) ve cinsiyetle ilgili kaygıları daha az bildirmiştir ($p < 0,01$). İkinci sınıf öğrencileri, birinci sınıflara kıyasla mesleği hasta yardım isteği nedeniyle seçme oranı daha yüksek bulunmuştur ($p=0,037$).

Sonuç: Paramedik öğrencileri, hastalara yardım etme konusunda güçlü motivasyona sahip olmakla birlikte sağlıkta şiddet, çalışma koşulları ve finansal güvensizlik gibi önemli kaygılar da ifade etmiştir. Öğrencilerin önemli bir kısmı yurt dışında çalışmayı istemektedir. Bu sonuçlar, işyeri güvenliği eğitimleri, destek programları ve iyileştirilmiş çalışma koşulları gibi müdahalelerin gerekliliğini ortaya koymaktadır. Gelecekte çok merkezli ve nitel çalışmalara ihtiyaç vardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Paramedik, öğrenci, meslek algısı, sağlıkta şiddet



INTRODUCTION

With population growth, one of the professions whose importance and effectiveness has increased in recent years is that of emergency medical technician (EMT). Paramedics provide emergency health services in both pre-hospital and in-hospital settings.^[1] As one of the cornerstones of emergency health service delivery, paramedics are considered the first link in the chain of survival. They initiate emergency medical care outside the hospital, continue it in the ambulance, strive to stabilize patients' conditions, provide emergency department staff with the necessary patient information, and use medications and/or medical devices within their scope of practice.^[2]

The role of paramedics begins with an emergency incident and ends with the patient's transfer to the hospital.^[3] Paramedics may also work in hospital emergency departments, participating in patient care within the scope of their duties, authority, and responsibilities. Healthcare institutions, which bring together many professional groups such as doctors, nurses, paramedics, midwives, and health officers, are among the sectors where violence is most prevalent. It is thought that difficult working conditions and increasing incidents of violence affect healthcare workers' outlook on the future and intensify their professional concerns.^[4,5]

Recent studies have also highlighted that violence against healthcare workers has continued to rise over the past five years, significantly influencing job satisfaction, career planning, and retention in the health sector.^[6-8] Evidence from Türkiye and other countries demonstrates that workplace violence remains common among healthcare workers, especially in emergency departments, with non-physical violence occurring slightly more frequently than physical violence. Nevertheless, both types of violence have substantial psychological and professional consequences.^[9-12] In addition, paramedics and other emergency healthcare workers have developed various coping strategies in response to violence and aggression.^[13]

The current study specifically aims to evaluate the expectations and professional concerns of paramedic students before graduation. We hypothesize that paramedic students have both strong motivations for choosing their profession (such as willingness to help patients and job security) and significant concerns (such as workplace violence, working conditions, and financial dissatisfaction), and that these perceptions may vary according to sex and class level.

It is important for students who have completed their two-year associate degree program and are preparing for placement to develop a sense of belonging to the profession. Therefore, this study was conducted to evaluate this situation by investigating the expectations of students in the First Aid and Emergency Care program regarding starting their career and examining how these expectations affect their perspective on the profession. It also aimed to determine whether differences existed between first-year students, who

had not yet completed their internship, and second-year students, who had completed their internship and gained experience in the fieldwork system.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Ethical approval was obtained from the Hacettepe University Ethics Committee (Decision no: GO22/1222, session date: 24.01.2023, session no: 2023/01). All procedures were carried out in accordance with the ethical rules and the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Purpose and Type of Research

This study was designed as a descriptive cross-sectional survey to investigate the expectations and concerns of students in the First Aid and Emergency Care program regarding their profession. A total of 11 questions were asked, including three demographic questions (age, sex, class) and eight profession-related questions. All items were closed-ended, and the survey required approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Research Population and Sample

The study population consisted of paramedic students enrolled at a state university vocational school. The sample included both first- and second-year students in the First Aid and Emergency Care program. The aim was to reach all 150 students enrolled in the program; however, 21 were absent during data collection. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 129 students.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected between March 2023 and July 2023.

The questionnaire was developed based on previous studies in the literature and reviewed by^[14] experts in healthcare professional education for content validity.

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and voluntarily agreed to participate. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant.

Data were analyzed using SPSS 23 (IBM SPSS Statistics 23 for Windows). Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and percentages) and chi-square tests were applied. A p-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Limitations of the Study

As the study was conducted at a single institution with a relatively limited sample size, the results cannot be generalized to all paramedic students in Türkiye.

RESULTS

The study began with 150 participants who were first- and second-year students in the First Aid and Emergency Care Program at a state university vocational school; 21 students were excluded from the study due to school absenteeism (**Figure 1**).

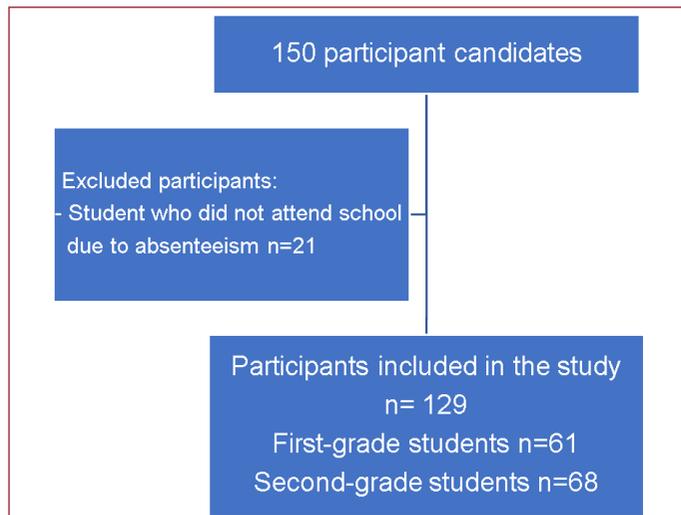


Figure 1. Workflow Diagram

A total of 129 students participated, with a mean age of 20.4 years (range: 18–25). The majority were female (69.0%) and second-year students (52.7%). Most (87.6%) stated that they chose the profession willingly, and 86.8% intended to practice it in the future.

The most common reasons for choosing the profession were the desire to help patients or injured individuals (56.6%), financial gain and job security (47.3%), and family recommendation (31.0%). A smaller proportion cited exam results (5.4%) or personal interest (3.9%).

Regarding future career plans, 60.5% of students preferred to work in 112 Emergency Ambulance Services, 24.8% in hospital emergency departments, and 9.3% in both settings. In addition, 41.1% expressed the desire to work abroad.

Concerns most frequently reported were workplace violence (48.8%), financial difficulties (30.2%), working conditions

(27.1%), and unemployment (10.1%). A majority of students (86%) believed that women were more likely to be exposed to violence in this profession.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Characteristics and Thoughts on Their Profession

	Number (Percentage)
Female Sex	89 (69.0%)
Male Sex	40 (31.0%)
Those who chose their profession voluntarily	113 (87.6%)
Factors influencing career choice *	
Helping patients/injured individuals	73 (56.6%)
Family recommendation	40 (31.0%)
Financial gain and job security	61 (47.3%)
Due to exam results	7 (5.4%)
Interest in the department	5 (3.9%)
The unit where they wish to work after graduation	
Emergency department	32 (24.8%)
112 Emergency Ambulance	78 (60.5%)
Both the emergency department and 112 Emergency Ambulance	12 (9.3%)
Another unit	7 (5.4%)
Want to practice the profession in the future	112 (86.8%)
Want to work abroad	53 (41.1%)

*: Participants could select more than one option.

Male students were significantly more likely to prefer ambulance services than female students (82.5% vs. 64.0%, $p=0.026$) and reported fewer concerns related to sex compared to female students (95% vs. 63%, $p<0.01$). Second-year students were more likely than first-year students to state that they chose the profession because of a desire to help patients (64.7% vs. 47.5%, $p=0.037$). No other significant differences were found between class levels.

Table 2. Comparison of Thoughts and Concerns Related to Gender and Continuing Education with Occupation

	Sex		P	Grade		P
	Female n (%)	Male n (%)		1 st Grade n (%)	2 nd Grade n (%)	
Did you choose your profession willingly? (Yes)	80 (70.8)	33 (29.2)	0.18	51 (45.1)	62 (54.9)	0.19
What are the factors that influence career choice?						
Family reasons	27 (69.2)	12 (30.8)	0.96	20 (51.3)	19 (48.7)	0.55
Desire to help patients	52 (71.2)	21 (28.8)	0.53	29 (39.7)	44 (60.3)	0.04
Financial gain	19 (59.4)	13 (40.6)	0.17	17 (53.1)	15 (46.9)	0.44
Job security	18 (60)	12 (40)	0.22	11 (36.7)	19 (63.3)	0.18
Would you like to practice this profession in the future? (Yes)	80 (71.4)	32 (28.6)	0.12	54 (48.2)	58 (51.8)	0.58
Which department would you like to work in after graduation?						
Emergency services	35 (79.5)	9 (20.5)	0.62	22 (50.0)	22 (50.0)	0.65
112 Ambulance	57 (63.3)	33 (36.7)	0.03	43 (47.8)	47 (52.2)	0.86
Other units	4 (47.1)	3 (42.9)	0.48	3 (42.9)	4 (57.1)	0.80
Would you like to work abroad?	32 (60.4)	21 (39.6)	0.07	27 (50.9)	26 (49.1)	0.48
What are your concerns about the profession?						
Financial situation	24 (61.5)	15 (38.5)	0.22	20 (51.3)	19 (48.7)	0.55
Violence in healthcare	46 (73.0)	17 (27.0)	0.33	29 (46.0)	34 (54.0)	0.78
Working conditions	52 (75.4)	17 (24.6)	0.09	30 (43.5)	39 (56.5)	0.35
Unemployment	14 (82.4)	3 (17.6)	0.20	7 (41.2)	10 (58.8)	0.58
Do you have concerns about working conditions due to your gender? (No)	56 (49.6)	38 (40.4)	<0.01	46 (48.9)	48 (51.1)	0.53
Do you think women are more exposed to violence? (Yes)	79 (71.2)	32 (28.8)	0.18	11 (61.1)	7 (38.9)	0.20

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the expectations and concerns of students in the First Aid and Emergency Care program prior to graduation. The majority reported choosing the profession willingly, most commonly due to a desire to help patients. This is consistent with previous research showing altruism as a strong motivator in healthcare professions.^[2,6,7] Financial and job security motives were also common, in line with earlier studies.^[6,7]

Most students expressed a preference for working in 112 Emergency Ambulance Services, reflecting the central role of pre-hospital emergency care in Türkiye.^[1,5] Male students were more likely to prefer ambulance services, possibly due to perceptions of its physical demands, a trend also observed in previous literature.^[10]

Second-year students, who had completed internships, were more likely than first-year students to state that they chose the profession to help patients. This suggests that clinical exposure strengthens students' professional identity and altruistic motivations, as highlighted in educational studies.^[17-19]

Concerns focused on violence, working conditions, and financial insecurity. Nearly half feared workplace violence, and most believed that women are at greater risk. These perceptions align with national and international findings.^[6-13] Although some studies reported no significant gender difference in exposure to violence,^[12] students' perceptions suggest otherwise, which may influence career planning.

A notable proportion of students (41.1%) expressed a desire to work abroad. This supports prior findings that better conditions abroad contribute to brain drain in the health sector.^[8] These results underscore the importance of improving local working conditions and providing support mechanisms to retain paramedics in Türkiye.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. It was conducted at a single institution with a relatively small sample, which limits generalizability. Data collection was based on self-reported questionnaires, which may be influenced by recall or social desirability bias. Additionally, only quantitative data were collected; qualitative interviews could have provided deeper insights. Despite these limitations, the findings provide valuable information and a basis for future studies.

CONCLUSION

The paramedic profession is a vital component of emergency healthcare. Students primarily chose the profession to help others, with financial motives also playing a role. Internship experiences appeared to reinforce professional motivation.

Nevertheless, students expressed significant concerns regarding workplace violence, working conditions, and financial insecurity. Many perceived female paramedics as

being at higher risk of violence, and a substantial proportion indicated a desire to work abroad.

This study provides insights into the professional expectations and concerns of paramedic students before graduation. Interventions such as workplace safety training, stress-reduction support programs, and policies to improve job conditions are recommended. Future research should include multi-center studies with larger and more diverse samples, as well as qualitative approaches, to inform strategies for strengthening the paramedic workforce.

ETHICAL DECLARATIONS

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethical approval was obtained from the Hacettepe University Ethics Committee (Decision no: GO22/1222, Session date: 24.01.2023, Session no: 2023/01).

Informed Consent: All patients signed the free and informed consent form.

Referee Evaluation Process: Externally peer-reviewed.

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