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Evaluation of Occupational Professionalism of Final Year Nursing Students of a University

Hacer Kobya Bulut^a, Hacer Erdol^a, Kıymet Yesilçicek Calık^{a*}, Merve Aydın^a, Gokhan Yılmaz^b

^a Instructor at Nursing School, Faculty of Health Sciences, Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, 61080, Turkey

^b Instructor at Health Care Management, Faculty of Health Sciences, Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, 61080, Turkey

Abstract

This descriptive study was undertaken to evaluate the opinions of the nursing students about the nursing profession and their occupational professionalism. 92 students who were present at the school during the data collection period and accepted to participate in the study were included in the study. The data of the study were gathered using “Personal Information Form” and “The Nurses’ Professional Values Scale (NPVS)”. It was found out that 76.1% of them were female students, 65.2% chose the profession willingly, 57.6% liked the profession, 42.2% wanted to work in a field about nursing, 60.9% told that the education given at the school affected their opinions about the profession negatively and 71.7% expressed that the nursing school partly prepared them for the work-life. Mean total NPVS score of the students (N=92) was 172.46±28.47. It is recommended that measures that will increase professional values of the nurses should be taken during undergraduate education.

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1. Introduction

Such reasons as the rapid population growth in the world, human longevity, the elderly population and, in parallel, a rise in chronic diseases, changes in care needs (Vicdan, 2010; Kaya & Memiş, 2002) and people's increasing demand for quality nursing care lead to the gradually increasing need and expectations for innovative, highly motivated and professionally qualified nurses in health care system (Fletcher, 2007).

*Kıymet Yeşilçicek Çalık. Tel.: +90-462-377-88-65

E-mail address: kyesilcicek@ktu.edu.tr

Despite the increasing expectations from nurses, when the studies done in our country are considered, there seems to be a problem with nurses' professional qualifications such as autonomy, problem solving, taking responsibility, doing research, care service competence (Kelleci, Gölbaşı, Yılmaz & Doğan, 2008; Kelleci & Gölbaşı, 2004). The way nurses practice their professional qualifications correspondingly shows how far advanced their professional identities are.

"Professional values" also called occupational integration can be described as criteria people use when they direct their behavior, and general principles which express their ideally desired behavior and way of life and help individuals to make right decisions, or the upper level concepts which exceed certain specific conditions and objects (İmamoğlu & Aygün, 1999). In order to provide nurses' quality services with respect for human life regarded as the most valuable asset, dignity, individuality and integrity, values and decisions, being aware of their values that shape their personal and professional attitudes, and knowing and internalizing certain occupational features, standards and skills in practice are of great importance (Babadağ, 2010). Having professional values contribute to high quality nursing care, an increase in individuals' satisfaction from nursing (Sabancıoğlu & Doğan, 2011) and professionals' more effective and quality services in the health care team (Deppoliti, 2008). Nurses need to have some bases, namely ethic principles and professional values when caring for healthy/sick individuals, defending their behavior and attitudes, explaining their justifications and deciding when they faced ethical dilemmas (Orak & Alpar, 2012; Babadağ, 2010). Professional values on the basis of professional nursing practice help nurses' interaction with patients, colleagues and the public. American Nurses Association-ANA and International Council of Nurses-ICN have determined seven basic values including altruism, aesthetics, equality, freedom, human dignity, fairness, integrity emphasizing that healthy/ sick individual's well-being is the most important and the core value is efficacy (Babadağ, 2010). Nursing students when adapting to their new roles during training should be aware of personal values and integrate them into professional ones. Thus, it is considered that the professionalism value of nursing students who will be a member of the healthcare team need to be determined and evaluated.

Aim: This is a descriptive study aiming to evaluate the opinions of the senior nursing students at a school about the nursing profession and their occupational professionalism.

2. Method

The study was conducted at a nursing School at the Faculty of Health Sciences in March 2014. The study population consisted of 115 senior students due to the subject and purpose of the study, and without sample selection 92 students who were present at the school during the data collection period and accepted to participate in the study were included. Being a senior nursing student was identified as the participation criteria in the study. The data were collected after taken written permission from the relevant authority by ethic rules.

The data of the study were gathered using "Personal Information Form" and "The Nurses' Professional Values Scale (NPVS)". After the literature review, the students' socio-demographic characteristics, undergraduate education, and thoughts about the nursing profession, the judiciary and the attitude has been questioned through "Personal Information Form" developed by the researchers.

The Nurses' Professional Values Scale (NPVS): The five-point Likert, containing 44 articles and reflecting ANA's ethical rules, (extremely important: 5; very important: 4; important: 3; somewhat important: 2; not important: 1) is a scale which was developed by Darlene Weis ve Mary Jane Schank so as to uncover the value of nurses, proved its validity and reliability by being translated into Turkish by Orak. The total scale score according to the above-mentioned points based on the responses of the nurses is the sum of the items scored. The total scale score may vary between 44 and 220. High score means nurses give more importance to professional values and ethics (Orak & Alpar, 2012). The data obtained in the study were analyzed through the statistical software package (SPSS 13.0) percentiles, significance test of the difference between two means, analysis of variance, Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests.

3. Findings

The mean age of the students who participated in the study is 22.43 ± 1.37 , 23.9% male, 47.8% Anatolian high school graduates and 46.7% living in the city center (Table 1). When asked about the reasons for choosing the

profession, it was found out that 65.2% chose the profession willingly, 47.8% thought it was a well-paid job, 57.6% liked the profession and 55.4% thought of leaving the profession. 15.2% of student nurses stated that they could not easily tell the people around about their nursing profession and 38% wouldn't recommend nursing profession to the people around (Table 2). 60.9% said that the education given at the school affected their opinions about the profession negatively. 62% stated they received the teaching staff as role models during nursing education. 41.3% said teaching staff are insufficient to promote the profession. 71.7% expressed that the nursing school partly prepared them for the work-life. 42.2% explained that they wanted to work in a field about nursing (Table 2). The mean total NPVS score of the students in the study (N=92) was 172.46 ± 28.47 .

Table 1. The Comparison Between Nursing Students' Demographic Characteristics and Professional Values Scale Score (N=92)

Descriptive features	n(%)	X±S	Test
Sex			
Female	70(76,1)	173,41±29,27	.572
Male	22(23,9)	169,45±26,20	
The place where they live			
Province	43(46,7)	176,90±27,51	.330
District	27(29,3)	166,62±29,35	
Village/township	22(23,9)	170,95±29,09	
The school graduated			
High School	48(52,1)	172,02±25,05	.876
Anatolian High School	44(47,9)	172,95±32,08	

In the study, it was determined that female students compared to males, those living in a city compared to those district and village got more points in NPVS. There were no statistically significant differences between the results obtained ($p > 0.05$) (Table 1).

Those who prefer nursing profession due to their family request, those who easily tell the people around about their nursing profession, those who recommend nursing profession the people around compared to the other nursing students got more points in NPVS. There were no statistically significant differences between the results obtained ($p > 0.05$) (Table 2).

When Table 2 was analyzed, those choosing the profession willingly, those loving nursing profession, those thinking of leaving their profession, those saying school education has a negative effect on profession perspective, those thinking of teaching staff's lack of promotion of nursing profession, those thinking of school education lack of preparation to working life, those preferring to work or study in another field after graduation compared to the nursing students indicating a positive opinion got more points in NPVS. There were no statistically significant differences between the results obtained ($p > 0.05$) (Table 2).

Table 2. The Comparison Between The Opinions of The Nursing Students about the Nursing Profession and Professional Values Scale Score (N=92)

Opinions about the nursing profession	n(%)	X±S	Test
Profession Selection			
Willingly	60(65.2)	171.41±28.46	.631
Unwillingly	32(34.8)	174.43±28.85	
Reason for choice of profession			
Financial Possibility	44(47.8)	172.61±23.14	.091
Family Request	27(29.3)	180.66±30.28	
The university entrance exam score	21(22.8)	161.61±33.66	
Love of profession			
Yes	53(57.6)	170.69±25.89	.490
No	39(42.4)	174.87±31.84	
Thinking of leaving the profession			
Yes	41(46.6)	174.09±30.88	.625
No	51(55.4)	171.15±26.62	
Ability to tell people about nursing profession	78(84.8)	173.08±27.75	.490

Yes	14(15.2)	169.00±33.17	
No			
Recommending nursing as a career	44(47.8)	175.61±21.07	.797
Yes	35(38)	168.51±34.37	
No	13(14.1)	172.46±33.60	
Undecided			
The effect of school education on profession perspective			
Positively	36(39.1)	169.72±28.13	.462
Negatively	56(60.9)	174.23±28.80	
Your role model during education			
Teaching staff	57 (61.9)	172.45±30.47	.996
Clinic nurses	35 (38.1)	172.48±25.31	
Teaching staff's promotion of nursing profession			
Partly sufficient	54(58.7)		
Insufficient	38(41.3)	171.62±30.34	.739
Preparation of School Education to Working Life		173.65±25.94	
Partly sufficient	66(71.7)		
Insufficient	26(28.3)	169,96±31,31	.182
Post-graduation job-related plans		178,80±18,54	
Working as a nurse	39(42.2)		
Looking for education and civil service in another field	21(22.8)	172.10±27.81	.885
Continuing education after graduation	32(34.8)	175.09±29.85	
		171.18±29.16	

4. Discussion

Nursing profession serves individuals, families and communities in health and sickness. The most important feature of nursing is its holistic approach to the individuals being served. The curriculum of nursing schools should be organized for this purpose because nursing graduates need to know about philosophy, understand what and why they are doing, and acquire professional nursing knowledge, skills and behavior (Arslan, 2001; Velioglu, 1992). In this study, the evaluation of the professional values of nursing students and findings obtained are discussed below.

In this study, NPVS score of the nursing students showing the professional values of nursing students (N=92) was 172.46±28.47 and when the highest score in NPVS is considered to be 220, the professional values of the senior students participating in the study are assessed as close to the upper limit. These findings are pleasing in terms of a good reflection of the professional values of nursing students in this study. In the literature, NPVS score of the professional values of nursing students was 174.81±23.63 in the study made using the same scale and conducted by Kaya, Işık, Şenyuva and Kaya (2012). This score was 182.35±21.24 in the study done by Martin, Yarbrough and Alfred (2003). Our results are similar to these results.

65.2% of the nursing students chose the profession willingly. This finding corresponds to the results showing that students have recently given priority to their own wishes and opinions while choosing their nursing professions. 56% of nursing students in the study by Ünlü, Özgür and Babacan (2008), 52.7% of nursing students in the study by Tüfekçi and Yıldız (2009) and 57.35% of them in the study by Sabancıoğulları and Doğan (2012) chose nursing profession willingly. In the studies done before, the percentage of choosing nursing profession willing was found much lower (Erkal & Yalçın, 2003). Besides, in this study, most of the nurses stated that they love their nursing profession, they have chosen this profession due to its financial possibility, they don't want to leave their this profession, they don't abstain from telling the people around about their nursing profession and they can recommend this profession to the others.

The development of professional values is an important process for each profession. The development of professional values is largely complete in nursing school education. Hence, school education is an important factor contributing to positive perceptions and thoughts related to the profession in the positive development of professional values (Sabancıoğulları & Doğan, 2012). Tüfekçi and Yıldız (2009) stated that 96.2% of students want to continue their career as a nurse. Özsoy and et al. (1999) pointed out that 84.9% of them want to stay in the nursing profession. In this study, most of the students (71.1%) think that school education helps prepare to work life and 42.2% of them want to stay in nursing profession after graduation.

In the study, the NPVS average score of nurses choosing their profession due to family request, telling people about their nursing profession easily and recommending this profession to the others is higher than those preferring this profession due to their exam score and its financial possibility, not telling people about their profession and undecided about recommending nursing profession. The NPVS average score of nurses choosing their profession unwillingly, disliking this profession, affected by nursing school education negatively, saying school education lack of preparation of work life and not wanting to continue their career as a nurse after graduation is surprisingly high than those loving their nursing profession, affected by nursing school education positively, saying school education sufficient for preparation of work life and wanting to continue their career as a nurse after graduation because we can say that the professional values of nurses choosing their own profession before nursing school education, being acquainted with the profession, internalizing its principles and norms values during their school education may develop more positively according to the literature (Sabancıoğulları & Doğan, 2012; Ülker, Kocaman & Özkan, 2006; Costello, 2004). In line with the findings of the study, it can be said that education system is not sufficient and influential in developing positive thoughts and perceptions of nursing students and positive configuration of their professional values. We think that educational curriculum should be reviewed and planned so that it can contribute to the positive development of professional values of nursing students.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Considering the professional values of nursing students, "Nurses' Professional Values Scale" scores of students (172.46±28.47) were found to be close to the upper limit. This result suggests that at the end of the academic year students' professional practices are of professional values and ethical principles. Besides, it may be interpreted that nursing education contributes to students' acquisition of professional values during nursing education.

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