

Original Article

Education Makes a Difference in Nursing: Perceptions of Medical Vocational High School Students about the Nursing Profession

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Abstract

Objective: This study was carried out to determine the view points of the students of medical vocational high school in cross-sectional way.

Material and Method: The universe of study carried out in cross-sectional way is medical vocational high schools located in the centrum of Şanlıurfa. The sample of study consists of 232 students taking education in the nursing department of this high school and accepting to participate in the study. The data of study were completed by the questionnaire prepared in the light of literature, receiving the views of specialists. The data were assessed by SPSS package program.

Results: 41.7% of the students participating in the study were in the group of 15 aged and lesser and 32.8% of the students were male. When regarding to the educational status of student's guardians, 82.3% of mothers were graduate from primary school or at lower level. This rate for fathers is 41.8%. 41.8% of households make a living with the minimum wage. When regarding to the differences of the students agreeing with the view that the nursing is a profession, whose tasks and authorities are definite compared to their grades, while the rate in the first graders was 84.2%, and 43.4% in the fourth graders ($p < 0.05$). About whether or not to stay in this department, while 66.7% of the first graders said "yes", this rate gradually decreased and fell to 50.9% in the fourth graders ($p < 0.05$). While the rate of students agreeing with the expression that nursing is a prestigious profession in the society is 63.2% for the first graders, this rate is 22.6% for the fourth graders ($p < 0.05$). While 63.2% of the first graders said that the nurses were the assistant of the physicians, 56.6% of the fourth graders said that they agreed with this view ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: While the view points of the students of nursing department of medical vocational high school about nursing was positive in the first grad and they correctly defined nursing from professional aspect, this phenomenon decreases until arriving to the fourth grade.

Keywords: Research, Nursing Education, Student

Introduction

Nursing is a professional health discipline composed of science and art grounded upon philosophy, theory, practice and research; achieving its continuous renewal from past to present with the social, cultural and technological changes; aiming at giving care services to all age groups, individuals, families and communities. Developing professional identity starts in school days. Thus, education system plays an effective and important role in providing development of professional identity (Cook et al., 2003; Secrest et al., 2003).

Education plays an important role in effective execution of nursing services. The basic goal of

nursing education is to help students acquire professional nursing traits, prepare them for future in line with profession-related experiences and raise qualified nurses who are conscious of their duties and responsibilities toward their country, responsive to existing health problems and aware of the importance of health protection and improvement (Nazik and Arslan, 2004). Nursing-related vocational education or training in our country is given at very different levels. 6283 numbered Nursing Law updated on 02.05.2007 defines nurse with an undergraduate degree. However, temporary article of the same law allows medical vocational high school students to work as nurses when they complete their high school education in nursing. Having a

high school education in this field is one of the ways to become a nurse (Tunç et al., 2010). Career choice has an aspect that gives people “a goal and meaning” from childhood till present. In this sense, there are some prospective problems that young people may face in decision-making. Busy with the problems of adolescence, young people are expected to make a choice about their future (Eskimez et al., 2008). Literature shows that most of young people leave their career choices to chances after they finish primary education due to monetary, family and low school grade related problems. Whatever the cause is, students should be informed about the profession that they choose as it will affect all aspects of their lives, a fact that all students should be aware of (Baykan, 1998).

Nowadays, there is an increasing rate of young people who attend nursing programs without knowing their profession or without will to do so because career choice are made randomly and generally not built upon students’ desire and abilities. The negative or positive effects of these situations are reflected through students’ success or failure in their education and profession. When there is found a balance between a person’s own values and the values he will develop in his profession, the career choice will have been also realized. To enable development of nursing profession and increase its status in our country, nursing should be performed very well on a solid ground. Therefore, people who will choose this profession should decide on it deliberately; love and accept its nature, knowing in detail what they will perform in the profession. (Baykal et al., 2002; Karakuş et al., 2005; Kaya et al., 2004; Conk et al 1990; Dinç et al., 2007).

While the health needs of our developing world increase, the nurses’ roles in health care also keep increasing. In their education and training years, nurses are to acquire the knowledge and skills required for sustaining the health of individuals and helping them recover in the best way. The basic step of career awareness is taken during the school life and continues throughout the life, enabling the philosophy of profession to take root in people (Bilecan et al., 2005; Özsoy et al., 1999; Ulusoy, 1992). Educational institutions across the country cannot provide high quality education and instruction, mainly including practical experience and evaluations. Students’ opinions about profession can change positively or negatively at the end of their theoretical and

practical training (Erdemir, 1997; Karadakovan, 1996). There are some conceptual, emotional and psychomotor factors that bear a huge importance to raise a well-trained nurse and contribute into professionalism of nursing. Thus, conceptual, emotional and psychomotor teaching experiences should be determined; teachers, directors and students should be filled with awareness in these areas; the trainees should be taught the professional values of nursing to employ them.

Purpose of the study: This study was done in order to determine medical vocational high school students’ perceptions about nursing profession through cross-sectional descriptive method.

Methods

Study design

This was a cross-sectional, descriptive survey study.

Setting and samples

The universe of this cross-sectional study is medical vocational high schools located in city center of Şanlıurfa, which has one medical vocational school owned by the state. The number of students enrolled in nursing department is 300 in the academic year of 2014. It was planned to include the whole universe in the study. However, only 232 students accepted to take part in the study.

Ethical considerations

Before the initiation of this study, approval from the participants’ organizations was obtained. Participation in the study was voluntary and any refusal to participate in the study was accepted. Signed consent was obtained, and anonymity and confidentiality were assured to all participants. IRB Approval was also taken from the university and presented to school.

Measurements

Research data was collected by a questionnaire, which was prepared in consultation with experts in related field. The questionnaire included items about socio-demographic attributes of students and their information and perceptions about nursing profession.

This study employed survey form to collect data from nursing high school students to determine their opinions about nursing profession. The form was examined by two field-experts in

accordance with the related literature. The survey form is composed of three parts, the first of which includes 11 items about personal information of the students and their families along with other details such as income of the family, the number of siblings. The second part includes 10 items about the reason for selecting nursing school, the willingness to attend school and previous information and expectation about nursing profession. The last part includes 19 items about nursing profession with the choices of “I agree, I disagree and I do not have idea”. The examples about this part includes items such as “nursing is a loved profession”, “nursing job can be easily found” and “it is duty of nurse to plan patient care and apply”.

Data collection

To collect the data, a written permission was taken from Provincial Directorate of National Education and the High School. After the permission was taken, a short meeting was held with the school principal. The dates for data collection through surveys were determined. In accordance with the meeting, one hour was given for each class. The 1st and 2nd grades and the 3rd and 4th grades were interviewed in two days in separate groups. The researchers of the study visited the school at determined hours and introduced themselves and then explained the goal of the study before they distributed the survey forms to those who wanted to participate in the study. The whole universe participated in the study. The completion of each survey lasted about 15 minutes. After all the surveys were handed over, the participants were thanked at the end of the process.

Data analysis

After the collection of the data was finished in the school, the researchers coded each survey form and entered all the data into SPSS 16 package program. The features such as students' class, gender were coded as independent value while the items about nursing profession were coded as dependent variable. The significance level was accepted as $p < 0.05$ and mean, standard deviation, median %ages, minimum and maximum values were used in data analysis. Chi-square test was used to determine whether there is relationship between two variables.

Results

Medical vocational high school students' socio-demographic attributes are given in Table 1. According to these data, more than half of the students are in the age group of 16-18 (58.3%). 67.2 % of the participants are female. The education level of parents shows that 17.6 % of mothers and 58.2 % of fathers have diploma of middle school and higher education schools. It is also seen that the monthly income of almost all families is less than 2000 TL (91.8%).

Table 2 displays students' opinions about medical vocational high school. According to this table, 32.7 % of the students chose this school by their own decision and 62.9 % of the students did not make any search about the department and school they would attend. 72.4 % of participants were directed to medical vocational high school by their families.

Students' opinions about nursing profession in terms of their gender are given in Table 3. While 68.4 % of males agree with the opinion that nursing is a profession that requires constant training and research, this ratio is 80.8 for females. This relationship was found to be significant ($p < 0.05$). Male students that agree with the item “nursing is a profession which can be only done by women” outnumber female students, however, there is no significant relationship between groups (15.8%; 7.7%).

Table 4 shows the opinions of students' opinions about nursing profession according to their classes from 1st year to 4th year classes. 61.4 % of first class and 37.7 % of fourth class students agree that “nursing is a loved profession”.

This ratio decreases when the number of class increases. There was found a significant difference between the groups regarding this item that “nursing is a loved profession” ($p < 0.05$). 77.2 % of 1. Class, 73.3 % of 2. Class, 76.6 % of 3. Class and 56.6 % of 4. Classes agree that nurses check given doctor prescription and do the right thing for patients, for which there was found a significant relationship ($p < 0.05$). Except for the item that “nurses are the ones that communicate with patients and families the most”, other factors are similar in that as the classes increases from 1st to 4th, students seem to agree with the items less as seen in Table 4.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Attributes of Students

Variables	n	%
Age of Students		
15 and younger	97	41.7
Older than 15	135	58.3
Gender		
Female	156	67.2
Male	76	32.8
Class		
1st Class	57	24.6
2nd Class	75	32.3
3rd Class	47	20.3
4th Class	53	22.8
Mother's education level		
Illiterate	86	37.1
Literate	32	13.8
Elementary school	73	31.5
Middle school and higher	41	17.6
Father's education level		
Illiterate	13	5.6
Literate	13	5.6
Elementary school	71	30.6
Middle school and higher	135	58.2
Monthly Income of Family		
Minimum wage	97	41.8
1000-2000TL	116	50.0
Above 2000TL	19	8.2

Table 2: Students' Opinions about Medical Vocational High School

Variables	n	%
Reasons to choose this high school		
With my own will	76	32.7
With my family's decision	68	29.3
To have a job in a short time	88	38.0
Did you search about this school before choosing it ?		
Yes	86	37.1
No	57	24.6
Just some information from the people around me	89	38.3
Who directed you to this school?		
My family	168	72.4
People around me	43	19.5
Nobody	21	9.1

Table 3: Medical Vocational High School Students' Opinions about Nursing According to Gender

Variables	Male n(%)	Female n(%)	X ²	p
Nursing is a loved profession.				
I agree	39(51.3)	69(44.2)	2.47	.290
I disagree	19(25.0)	55(35.3)		
I have no idea	18(23.7)	32(20.5)		
Nursing education should be at undergraduate level				
I agree	33 (43.4)	72 (46.2)	1.93	.381
I disagree	28(36.8)	64(41.0)		
I have no idea	15(19.7)	20 (12.8)		
Nursing profession is based on a clear duty and authority				
I agree	54(71.1)	111(71.2)	0.63	.727
I disagree	22(28.9)	45(28.8)		
Nursing is a respected profession in the society.				
I agree	41(53.9)	61(39.1)	4.79	.095
I disagree	28(36.8)	72(46.2)		
I have no idea	7(9.3)	23(14.7)		
Nursing is a profession divided into branches.				
I agree	56(73.7)	129(82.7)	3.80	.149
I disagree	12(15.8)	12(7.7)		
I have no idea	8(10.5)	15(9.6)		
Nursing is a profession which can be only done by women.				
I agree	12(15.8)	12(7.7)	4.29	.117
I disagree	62(81.6)	142(61.0)		
I have no idea	2(2.6)	2(1.3)		
Nurses are the ones that communicate with patients and families the most.				
I agree	68(89.5)	145(92.9)	1.41	.492
I disagree	8(10.5)	11(7.1)		
Nursing is a profession that requires constant training and research				
I agree	52(68.4)	126(80.8)	8.14	.017
I disagree	10(13.2)	20(12.8)		
I have no idea	14(18.4)	10(6.4)		

Table 4: Medical Vocational High School Students' Opinions about Nursing According to Classes

Variables	1. Class n(%)	2. Class n(%)	3. Class n(%)	4. Class n(%)	X ²	p
Nursing is a loved profession.						
I agree	35(61.4)	41(54.7)	12(25.5)	20(37.7)	18.74	.005
I disagree	12(21.1)	18(24.0)	23(48.9)	21(39.6)		
I have no idea	10(17.5)	16(21.3)	12(25.5)	12(22.6)		
Nursing education should be at undergraduate level.						
I agree	27(47.4)	40(53.3)	19(40.4)	19(35.8)	14.55	.024
I disagree	15(26.3)	27(36.0)	22(46.8)	28(52.8)		
I have no idea	15(26.3)	8(10.7)	6(12.8)	6(11.3)		
Nursing profession is based on a clear duty and authority						
I agree	48(84.2)	61(81.3)	33(70.2)	23(43.4)	37.47	.000
I disagree	9(15.8)	14(18.7)	14(29.8)	30(56.6)		
Nursing is a respected profession in the society.						
I agree	36(63.2)	43(57.3)	11(23.4)	12(22.6)	46.37	.000
I disagree	12(21.1)	23(30.7)	26(55.3)	39(73.6)		
I have no idea	9(15.8)	9(12.0)	10(21.3)	2(3.8)		
Nursing is a profession divided into branches.						
I agree	44(77.2)	64(85.3)	40(85.1)	37(69.8)	14.39	.021
I disagree	4(7.0)	4(5.3)	4(8.5)	12(22.6)		
I have no idea	9(15.8)	7(9.3)	3(6.4)	4(7.5)		
Nursing job can be easily found.						
I agree	32(56.1)	45(60.0)	26(55.3)	29(54.7)	6.60	.359
I disagree	12(21.1)	21(28.0)	15(31.9)	19(35.8)		
I have no idea	13(22.8)	9(12.0)	6(12.8)	5(9.4)		
Nurses are the ones that communicate with patients and families the most.						
I agree	47(82.5)	72(96.0)	43(91.5)	51(96.2)	12.41	.053
I disagree	10(17.5)	3(4.0)	4(8.5)	2(3.8)		
Nurses check given doctor prescription and do the right thing for patients.						
I agree	44(77.2)	55(73.3)	36(76.6)	30(56.6)	17.74	.007
I disagree	7(12.3)	8(10.7)	7(14.9)	19(35.8)		
I have no idea	6(10.5)	12(16.6)	4(8.5)	4(7.5)		

Table 5: Students' Opinions about Nursing According to their Reason of Choosing Medical Vocational High School

Variables	With my own will	With my family's decision	To have a job in the shortest time	X ²	p
	n(%)	n(%)	n(%)		
Nursing is a loved profession.					
I agree	32(67.1)	22(32.4)	54(39.8)	36.70	.000
I disagree	12(21.1)	36(52.9)	26(25.0)		
I have no idea	8(11.8)	10(14.7)	32(35.2)		
Nursing is a known profession in the society					
I agree	34(64.5)	31(45.6)	66(58.0)	15.11	.004
I disagree	15(28.9)	35(51.5)	32(28.4)		
I have no idea	3(6.6)	2(2.9)	14(13.6)		
Nursing is a respected profession in the society.					
I agree	24(48.7)	20(29.4)	58(51.5)	8.37	.079
I disagree	20(39.5)	37(54.4)	43(37.5)		
I have no idea	8(11.8)	11(16.2)	11(11.4)		
Nurses are helpers for doctors					
I agree	27(52.6)	39(57.4)	69(63.6)	2.95	.566
I disagree	23(42.1)	24(35.3)	35(29.5)		
I have no idea	2(5.3)	5(7.4)	8(6.8)		
Nurses check given doctor prescription and do the right thing for patients					
I agree	37(75.5)	42(61.8)	86(75.0)	9.83	.043
I disagree	11(19.7)	17(25.0)	13(10.2)		
I have no idea	4(5.3)	9(13.2)	13(14.8)		

When the item “nursing profession is a beloved profession” is checked through logistic regression, it is seen that the agreement level for this item was seen to be 2.5 more in the first class. There was found significant difference among the groups in terms of these items “nursing education should be at undergraduate level”, “nursing is a profession divided into branches”, “nurses are the ones that communicate with patients and families the most”, “nursing profession is based on a clear duty and authority” and “nursing is a respected profession in the society.” ($p= 0.024; 0.021; 0.053; 0.000$).

Students’ opinions about nursing according to their reason of choosing medical vocational high school are given in Table 5. According to the data presented above, 67.1 % of students agree that nursing is a loved profession; 32.4 % of students chose this department depending on their family’s decision. There was found a significant difference between these two factors ($p<0.05$). The students who agree “nursing is a known profession in the society” is more than the ones that chose this department with their own will; there was found a significant difference between these two factors ($p<0.05$). 63.6 % of students who agree that “Nurses are helpers for doctors” was seen to have chosen this department to have a job in a short time. This ratio is 52.6 % for those who chose this department with their own will. This relationship did not display a significant difference ($p>0.05$).

Discussion

In this study which examines the perceptions of students about nursing who attend medical vocational high school, it is seen that 58.3 % of students are in the age group of 16-18 and others are 15 years old or younger. Students in the school being younger than the age of 18 are defined as child. Being children, these students are expected to get proficient in this dynamic profession which evaluates care plan of people from all walks of life in a systematic way and requires professional knowledge and skills. It is thought to be really hard for students to learn, adopt this profession and contribute into human development at such an age group while their physical development is not even completed. As the education level increases, definition and values attributed to a chosen profession keeps changing. Özcan et al (1997) stated in their studies that while higher education school of

nursing students can define the roles of nurses as educator and consultant, medical vocational high school students lack these role definitions. The skills such as decision-making and critical thinking, understanding the philosophy of profession are earned at ages that correspond to university education years. Therefore, it is evident that a high school based medical vocational education will not help students reach the goals of nursing profession.

A 67.2 % of students that attend medical high school are females which means girls prefer this department more. However, increase in the number of male students registered to these schools means there is a rise of interest in this profession by boys. When the opinions of students are examined according to gender, there are more males compared to females that agree with the items that “nursing is a loved profession” and “respected in the society” (Table 3; $p>0.05$), which suggest that boys have more positive perception about nursing profession. But, the same table causes paradox as males agree less with the item that “nursing is a profession that requires constant training and research” compared to girls. 35.5% of males and 31.5% of females chose this department voluntarily, which is a supporting data that shows boys have more positive perceptions. In one study, boys who chose the profession willingly and unwillingly were compared; it was seen that boys having been willing were more content with receiving nursing education and wanted to go on this profession (Çınar et al., 2011). There was not found any study done related to this issue regarding medical vocational high school students. When studies about university students are examined, there is one study in which more than half of the male students attending nursing department were stated to be glad with receiving nursing education. Also, 78.1 % of students were found to be glad to have chosen their department (Yigit et al., 2007). This result is in parallel with results of this study. In another study, out of 22 male students, 20 boys agreed with “males can do nursing”. 27.6 % of students think that placing males in the nursing sector is an important factor for males to earn their legal rights in this profession. This situation may stem from traditional perceptions such as males’ having predominant role in the society, affecting the decision making process more. In a study done in England, when the distribution of work was

examined between genders, it was seen that 50, 25 % of males and 49.75 % of females worked in nursing management positions. It was discussed that males had more prestigious and managerial positions even in a field where females are dominant in numbers (Gaze, 1987). There are other studies that support this finding (Bartfray et al., 2010). In another study about gender, male students have more negative perceptions about nursing (Abushaikha et al., 2014). Having different results regarding nursing may be caused by the different social norms and structures in communities.

A 32.7 % of students in the study chose this high school by themselves; 67, 3 of the students were seen to be directed to this department either by their families or by thought of having a job in a short time. 91, 8 % of students have families who have an income of less than 2000 TL monthly; thus, the families direct their children to nursing profession so that they can contribute to family and have a job in a short time. Thus, study results give rise to thought that students with lower levels of family income choose medical high school due to ease of finding a job in this sector and helping the family economy. These results are similar to results of some studies related to this subject (Kuzulu and Kocak, 1997; Sezgin and Yalçinkılıç, 1997; Yanikkerem et al., 2004). Yanikkerem et al (2004) found in their study that more than half of nursing students come from families with average or moderate income; 32.4 % of nursing students and 32.3 % of health services students were found to be directed by their friends and families into these professions. This situation also affected perspectives of nursing students. In studies conducted, there are data pertaining to families' impact on students' career choice; the ratio of students choosing nursing career under the influence of families were found to be 13 % (Bayık, 1984), 10 % (Fadıloğlu et al., 1996), 30 % (Buzlu and Kutlu, 1997), 33.6 % (Altuğ-Özsoy et al., 1999), 22.3 % (Dinç et al., 2007). In another study, students attending nursing school of higher education and medical vocational high schools were also found to be mainly directed by their families (İlhan et al, 2012). Students who chose nursing school of higher education told that they considered factors such as family, desire to help people and points they had in ÖSS (student selection examination for university). Students attending medical vocational high schools were seen to consider family and financial factors (Özcan et al., 1997).

Yanikkerem et al. (2004) determined that 42.2 % of the students were affected by their families in career choice while factors such as having a nurse in family, income level, parent's education level were found not to be effective.

In this study, 61.7 % of high school students who chose this high school by themselves agree that nursing is a loved profession and there are 39,8 % of students who chose this school with the intention to have a job in a short time ($p < 0,05$). This situation shows that students coming to school involuntarily or without their own will have more negative perception about nursing. In a study done about undergraduate students, it was seen that more than half of the students love nursing profession, which is supported by other studies, too (Özpancar et al, 2008). Performing nursing with a love ascribed to it will affect the development of this profession positively. In addition, persons who love and adopt this profession will be more successful in this field (Nazik and Arslan, 2014).

Majority of students define nursing profession with positive traits; however, this group gets smaller as they progress into upper grades or classes ($p < 0.05$). In a study done for 1st grade undergraduate students, 66.3 % of them agree with the item "nurses are helpers for doctors". This lack of information may stem from the fact that students in the study were 1st graders and did this assumption before they received any lesson about nursing. In a way, it is a reflection of society. Karagöz (2002) in his study found that while the item "nurses depends on doctors" was agreed by 30.7 % of participants prior to their nursing lesson, it decreased to 5.1 % at the end of lesson. Özcan and Özgür (1990) in their study found that 74.1 % of nurses in the study agree with the item that "as nurses, we are the most important helpers of doctors". Işık et al (2006) in their study stated that 80 % of doctors said yes to the question whether nurses have independent tasks or not. However, 50 % of survey results show the perception of society toward nursing that they are the helpers for doctors. The process in which students starting their nursing education with this impression of society change their perception into the right one is very important. Defined as professional socialization, internalization and professional identity development starts in school and continues throughout working life (Chitty, 2001). Nursing students who are new to the school of nursing should be supported in recognition of

their profession. In this context, developing educational programs for professional nursing is an important responsibility for educators (Özpancar et al, 2008). These findings could be accepted as the general perception of community about nursing as the data were collected from the students on their first day on school about nursing without receiving any training about the profession. Medical vocational high school students, the future nurses, are in the opinion that present nurses are not well serving in the hospitals. While the ratio of the ones that agree “nurses serve well” is 8.80, negative responder ratio is 73.20 (Özkan and Özkan, 1993). It has been found out in this study that undergraduate education makes the perception about nursing positive while high school education does the otherwise.

Conclusion

Students being at the ages of 16-18 from poor families and generally directed by families in school selection process choose medical vocational high schools to contribute into family financially in a short time since they can easily find related jobs after they finish high school. Students choosing their own career by themselves have more positive attitude toward their profession as they decide by themselves while selecting the school and ascribe positive image to the profession they like. Moving vocational education to high level of quality can be done through letting students to decide for their own career, care about it and try to earn a professional identity. It was found in this study that high school education lowers the quality of nursing education. The most important suggestion in this study is that steps should be taken to remove nursing education from high school program.

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