

Original Article

Attitudes of Nursing Students towards Children's Rights: A Sample from Turkey

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of this study was to determine the attitudes of nursing students towards children's rights.

Methods: The population and sampling of this descriptive and cross-sectional study consist of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade university students at the Department of Nursing at the Faculty of Health Sciences, who agreed to participate in the study. Data were collected with the Personal Information Form and the Questionnaire for Measuring Attitudes towards Children's Rights. The data were analyzed through frequency distribution, means, analysis of variance and the significance test for the difference between the two means.

Results: It was determined that the average age of the students was 20.90 ± 1.70 , 83.2% of them were female, and 29.3% were 3rd grade students. The average score of attitude scale for children's rights is 29.85 ± 8.10 . For female students, for students who read the Declaration of Children's Rights and for those who think that nursing students should be informed about children's rights, it was determined that attitudes were more positive and the difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). It was found out that students' grades, parental education level, and obtaining information about children's rights during the nursing education did not influence the scale point average statistically significantly ($p > 0.05$).

Conclusion: Throughout the study, attitudes towards children's rights in nursing students were found to be generally positive. In nursing education, it may be suggested to increase and enrich the information given about children's rights.

Key words: Nursing Students, Children's Rights, Attitude

Introduction

Children are the future and the universal assurance of societies. Childhood is one of the most important periods in human life, beginning with fertilization and continuing until the completion of adolescence (Dogan and Durualp, 2011; Conk et al., 2013; Dogan et al., 2014). The value and approach given to children have historically changed (Oktay and Kumbaroglu

2011). While children were seen as a miniature adult in the past, this perspective changed from the seventeenth century, and they were gradually seen as a special being with special needs and rights towards the twentieth century (Akyuz, 2001; Ozmen and Yalcin, 2011; Yildiz et al., 2011). Particularly after the First World War, works at international were started by various organizations in order to protect children who suffered from war and to prevent mother-child

health problems (Conk et al., 2013). Taking into account the special needs of children, their existing rights were shaped and started to appear in legal texts (Inan, 1995; Conk et al., 2013). Children's rights are the benefits protected by the rule of law in order for the child to develop in a healthy and normal manner in freedom and dignity from physical, mental, emotional, social and moral and economic maintenance (Inan, 1995; Akyuz, 2010). The first international regulation on children's rights emerged in 1924. The Declaration of Children's Rights was proclaimed by the United Nations on November 20, 1959, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the final form of the declaration, was adopted on 20 November 1989. The contract was signed by Turkey in 1990 and entered into force on January 27, 1995. Children's rights, regarded as a sub-dimension of human rights, are guaranteed by both national and international legal rules (Inan, 1995; Akyuz, 2001; Akyuz, 2010).

The principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child including children's rights to life, development, protection and participation were regulated in a way to encompass children's needs and their decisions about future, and they apply to all units of the society (Akyuz, 2010; Conk et al., 2013). In order for children's rights to be viable, it is crucial that all the individuals in the society know the rights of children and that the professional groups working for children are trained (Conk et al., 2013; Dinc, 2015). Everyone who are constantly in contact with children, primarily parents and teachers and even all health professionals who care for children, should be made aware of children's rights. It has been found out that in some occupational groups (teachers, social service experts) who need to receive training on children's rights, this training has never been given or is not sufficient (Covell and Howe, 1999; Cooke and Standen, 2002; Shumba, 2003; Karaman Kepenekci, 2006; Casas et al., 2006). It was revealed in the studies conducted with teacher candidates that general attitudes toward children's rights are positive and that mother's education level, the number of siblings and the status of reading the Declaration on the Children's Rights were found to be effective (Merey, 2013; Leblebici and Celikoz, 2017). In a study conducted with nursing students, it was noted that the attitudes of the students towards the rights of the children were

positive and that the gender and the grade level affected the average scores (Aldemir, 2014).

The protection of children and their rights, which has very significant influence on shaping the future of a society, is highly important (Dogan and Durualp, 2011). Karaman Kepenekci (2010) states that one of the most important rights of children is to learn their rights and that more attention should be paid to education of children's rights. The issues related to the teaching of these rights in our country are included in the curriculum of each stage, starting from the pre-school education (Dogan et al., 2014). In the literature, it has been revealed that attitudes related to children's rights were examined in teacher candidates (Nesliturk and Ersoy, 2007; Karaman Kepenekci, 2009; Merey, 2012), and that only one study was conducted on nursing students (Aldemir, 2014). Nurses undertake important tasks and roles in the care of a healthy/sick child. It is important to determine the attitudes of nursing students towards children's rights so that the child and the family can be given total care. Trainings on the subject, if necessary, are thought to contribute to the development of positive attitudes. This research was planned to determine the attitudes of nursing students towards children's rights.

Methods

Design and sample

This is a descriptive and cross-sectional study. The study was conducted between 3 – 21 April, 2017 at the Department of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences, Cumhuriyet University in Turkey. The population of this study consist of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade university students at the Department of Nursing, the Faculty of Health Sciences. All students attending the course were included in the sampling. The study was conducted with 733 students who agreed to participate in the study and completed the questionnaires.

Instruments

The data were collected using the Personal Information Form prepared by the authors and the Attitudes Towards Children's Rights Scale. The Personal Information Form contains nine questions including descriptive characteristics such as children's age, gender, and the status of getting information about children's rights. In order to determine attitudes towards children's

rights, Questionnaire for Measuring Attitudes towards Children's Rights developed by Karaman Kepenekci (2006) was used. The scale consists of 22 items regarding the vital, developmental, protection and participation rights of children. There is no sub-dimension. The scale has been prepared in 5-point Likert form and has the choices of "I strongly agree", "I agree", "Neither agree nor disagree", "I disagree" and "I strongly disagree". 19 expressions in the scale are positive, 3 are negative. Answers given to negative statements (2, 14 and 15) have been scored in reverse. The lowest score to be taken from the scale is 22 and the highest score is 110, which means that high score indicates a negative attitude.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS 22.0) program (IBM Corporation, New York, USA) was used for the analysis of the research. Percentage, mean and standard deviation were used as descriptive statistics, and Mann Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test were used as analytical statistics. The level of significance was accepted as $p < 0.05$.

Ethical Considerations

For research, research ethics committee approval was taken from Cumhuriyet University and application permission was obtained from the Department of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences. Students were informed about the purpose of the study and included in the study after receiving their written and verbal approvals in the direction of the voluntary basis.

Results

It was found that the average age of the students was 20.90 ± 1.70 , 83.2% of them were female, and 29.3% of them were at 3rd grade. When the education levels of the parents were examined, it was revealed that 53.2% of the mothers and 33.0% of the fathers were primary school graduates, and most of the students (62.2%) had 3 or more siblings. 79.7% of the students stated that they did not read the Declaration on Rights of Children, and 58.7% stated they did not get information about children's rights during nursing education. 91.4% of the students noted that nursing students should get informed about the rights of children (Table 1).

Mean scores of Questionnaire for Measuring Attitudes towards Children's Rights of nursing students are 29.85 ± 8.10 (Table 2).

The average scores of the students for children's rights by their descriptive characteristics were given in Table 3. When the averages scores by gender were analyzed, it was found out that female students showed a more positive attitude towards children's rights and that the difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). When the average scores by students' grades were compared, it was determined that the scores were close to each other and that the mean scores of the attitude scale towards the children's rights were higher in the first grade than the other grades but that the difference was not significant ($p > 0.05$). The number of siblings did not affect the scale mean scores of parent education level ($p > 0.05$). It was revealed that the average score was high in those who read the declaration on the children's rights and who thought that nursing students should be informed about children's rights, and that the difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3).

Discussion

In the study, the attitudes of the nursing students toward the the children's rights were researched, and it was determined that the attitudes of the nursing students for children's rights were positive in general. Aldemir (2014) also obtained a similar result in her study conducted for nursing students. In the literature, studies conducted with teacher candidates showed that they have positive attitudes for children's rights (Karaman Kepenekci, 2006; Leblebici and Celikoz, 2016). This positive attitude may be due to the fact that nurses and prospective teachers work with children when they serve and receive information about the children in their education curriculum.

The average score of Questionnaire for Measuring Attitudes towards Children's Rights of the students in the study is 29.85 ± 8.10 . In a similar study, Aldemir (2014) found the average score of scale in nursing students as 29.88 ± 12.24 . In a study in which the attitudes for children's rights of the teacher candidates who study in different programs, it can be said that attitudes are positive and average scores are similar with the results of the study (Karaman Kepenekci, 2009; Meray, 2012).

Table 1 Distributions of Students by Descriptive Characteristics (n=733)

| Descriptive Statistics | n | % |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Age (X±SD=20.90±1.70, Min=17, Max=30) | | |
| Gender | | |
| Female | 610 | 83.2 |
| Male | 123 | 16.8 |
| Grade | | |
| 1 st grade | 167 | 22.8 |
| 2 nd grade | 142 | 19.4 |
| 3 rd grade | 215 | 29.3 |
| 4 th grade | 209 | 28.5 |
| Number of siblings | | |
| 2 and less | 277 | 37.8 |
| 3 and more | 456 | 62.2 |
| Mother's education level | | |
| Illiterate | 70 | 9.5 |
| Literate | 63 | 8.6 |
| Primary school | 390 | 53.2 |
| Secondary school | 115 | 15.7 |
| High school | 69 | 9.4 |
| University | 26 | 3.5 |
| Father's education level | | |
| Illiterate | 11 | 1.5 |
| Literate | 73 | 10.0 |
| Primary school | 242 | 33.0 |
| Secondary school | 164 | 22.4 |
| High school | 152 | 20.7 |
| University | 91 | 12.4 |
| The status of reading the Declaration on the Rights of Children | | |
| Yes | 149 | 20.3 |
| No | 584 | 79.7 |
| The status of receiving information towards children's rights during nursing education | | |
| Yes | 303 | 41.3 |
| No | 430 | 58.7 |
| Should nursing students get informed towards children's rights? | | |
| Yes | 670 | 91.4 |
| Neutral | 43 | 5.9 |
| No | 20 | 2.7 |

Table 2 Mean Scores of Questionnaire for Measuring Attitudes towards Children's Rights of the Students

| Scale | Mean Scores Mean \pm SD | Scores Taken from This Study (Min-Max) | Scores To Be Taken from the Scale (Min-Max) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Questionnaire for Measuring Attitudes towards Children's Rights. | 29.85 \pm 8.10 | 22-100 | 22-110 |

Table 3 Mean Scores of the Students for Children's Rights by Descriptive Characteristics

| Descriptive Characteristics | Score | Test |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Score (Mean \pm SD =29.85\pm8.10, Min=22, Max=100) | | |
| Gender | | |
| Female | 29.41 \pm 7.77 | Z=31412.5 |
| Male | 32.00 \pm 9.33 | p=0.004 |
| Grade | | |
| 1 st grade | 28.80 \pm 8.03 | KW=5.619 p=0.132 |
| 2 nd grade | 30.34 \pm 7.97 | |
| 3 rd grade | 29.66 \pm 6.20 | |
| 4 th grade | 30.55 \pm 9.75 | |
| Number of Siblings | | |
| 2 and less | 29.89 \pm 7.84 | Z=620067.0 |
| 3 and more | 29.82 \pm 8.26 | p= 0.695 |
| Mother's education level | | |
| Illiterate | 30.80 \pm 7.59 | KW=5.356 p=0.374 |
| Literate | 30.19 \pm 8.60 | |
| Primary school | 29.49 \pm 6.91 | |
| Secondary school | 30.69 \pm 10.23 | |
| High school | 29.40 \pm 9.17 | |
| University | 29.26 \pm 10.97 | |
| Father's education level | | |
| Illiterate | 28.18 \pm 7.97 | F=2.749 p=0.739 |
| Literate | 30.00 \pm 7.96 | |
| Primary school | 29.73 \pm 7.79 | |
| Secondary school | 29.42 \pm 6.65 | |
| High school | 30.51 \pm 9.59 | |
| University | 29.90 \pm 8.79 | |
| The status of reading the Declaration on the Rights of Children | | |
| Yes | 29.04 \pm 9.07 | Z= 37487.5 |
| No | 30.05 \pm 7.83 | p=0.009 |
| The status of receiving information towards children's rights during nursing education | | |
| Yes | 29.91 \pm 8.47 | Z=65017.5 |
| No | 29.80 \pm 7.84 | p= 0.964 |
| Should nursing students get informed towards children's rights? | | |
| Yes | 29.24 \pm 7.02 | KW=23.973 p=0.000 |
| Neutral | 32.67 \pm 8.15 | |
| No | 44.30 \pm 19.88 | |

Z = Mann-Whitney U test, KW = Kruskal-Wallis test, F=Independent sample t test

When the average scores by gender were analyzed, it was revealed that female students showed a more positive attitude towards children's rights and that the difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). In some studies, it has been found that women have a more positive attitude towards children's rights than men (Karaman Kepenekci, 2006; Degirmenci, 2011; Leblebici and Celikoz, 2016). This may be related to the fact that women are more sensitive and compassionate toward children. In the literature, however, Aldemir (2014) found that male nurse candidates have a more positive attitude for children's rights, whereas Kaya (2011) and Meyer (2013) noted that male teacher candidates have a more positive attitude for children's rights. When the average scores by students' grades were examined, it was found out that scores were close to each other, the first grade students showed a more positive attitude and that the difference was not significant ($p > 0.05$). In another study conducted with nursing students, it was revealed that the mean scores of the final-year nursing students were high and that the difference was significant (Aldemir, 2014). In the nursing education, especially from the 3rd grade, the subject of children's rights is included in the content of the course. However, it is seen that the education received is not effective in nursing students participating in the study. A study conducted with preschool teacher candidates indicates that students' grades is not an affecting factor (Dogan et al., 2014).

Children need a family to be able to continue their life in a healthy way and to get into the outside world (Conk et al., 2013). Parents have to be aware of children's rights and to be effective in using them (Yasar et al., 2011). Therefore, raising a child who knows and can apply his rights within the family should be the basic approach (Kucuk Bicer et al., 2016). In the study, the number of siblings was found not to influence the scale point averages of parental education level ($p > 0.05$). In a study conducted with preschool teacher candidates, the number of siblings was found to be effective, while there was no significant difference between parental education level and attitudes related to children's rights (Dogan et al., 2014). Again, a study by Salman-Osmanagaoglu (2007) suggests that the views on children's rights do not differ according to the number of the siblings.

Being aware of children's rights and receiving education related to them affect the attitudes positively (Covell and Howe, 1999; Karaman and Kepenekci, 2006). In accordance with Article 42 of the Declaration on the Children's Rights, it has been projected that children's rights will be learned and popularized by adults and children. This applies to all areas where children are the case (Leblebici and Celikoz, 2016). In the study, 79.7% of the students stated that they did not read the Declaration on the Children's Rights. In another study, it was found that 70% of teachers did not read the Declaration on the Children's Rights (Kop and Tuncel 2010). In a study conducted with university students, about 60% of the 5221 students stated that they heard of the Declaration on the Children's Rights (Kucuk Bicer et al., 2016). Aldemir (2014) found that 61% of nursing students did not receive any information on children's rights. In this study, it was determined that the attitudes of nursing students who read the Declaration on the Children's Rights are positive. In the study of Leblebici and Celikoz (2016), it was found that prospective teachers who read the Declaration on the Children's Rights showed a more positive attitude towards children's rights than those who did not (Leblebici and Celikoz, 2016).

Nurses have important responsibilities in the upbringing of healthy generations and in the healthy growth and development of children in physical, cognitive, emotional and social aspects in family and society. 58.7% of the students stated that they did not get information about children's rights during nursing education. 91.4% of them think that nursing students should be informed about the children's rights. It was revealed that attitudes were positive in those who think that nursing students should be informed about children's rights, and the difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). However, it was found that getting information about children's rights in nursing education did not significantly affect attitudes. In a similar study, no statistically significant difference was found between the status of obtaining information on children's rights and the scale scores (Aldemir, 2014).

Conclusion

It has been found in the study that attitudes of nursing students toward children's rights are positive. It is advisable to place lessons concerning children's rights in the curriculum of

nursing education and to include the subjects regarding children's rights in these lessons in a comprehensive way.

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