

Original Article

An Investigation of Nursing Students' Attitudes toward Individuals Using Addictive Substances

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Abstract

Aim: This study was conducted to determine nursing students' attitudes toward individuals using addictive substances.

Methodology: Students studying at the Nursing Department of a foundation university in Istanbul in the 2017-2018 academic year (N=570) constituted the population of this descriptive study, and the sample consisted of a total of 217 students who volunteered to participate in the study. The data were collected using the "Personal Information Form" prepared by the researchers and the "Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use Addictive Substances" developed by Tansel in 2006. Percentage distribution, mean, t-test, one-way ANOVA test, and Scheffe's test for advanced statistical analysis were used to analyze data.

Results: It was determined that while 94% of the students included in the study were between the ages of 18-25 years, 87% of them were female students, 6% of them had previously been in the same environment with individuals with substance abuse, 6% of them had a history of substance abuse in their family, and 2% of them had previously had a history of substance abuse. It was determined that while students' total mean score for the AS-AS was 85.76 ± 15.19 (Min:46, Max:115), their mean subscale scores were 26.50 ± 3.58 for the "Bilateral Relations with Individuals Using AS," 17.64 ± 4.41 for the "Personality Structures of Individuals Using AS," 18.11 ± 4.13 for the "Social Relations with Individuals Using AS," 11.76 ± 4.10 for the "Social Perspectives of Individuals Using AS," and 11.73 ± 2.79 for the "Family and Social Environment Relations." A statistically significant difference was found between gender, age, environment, a history of substance abuse, a family history of substance abuse, and nursing students' attitudes toward individuals using addictive substances ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions: As a result of the study, it was determined that nursing students had a moderate level of attitudes toward individuals using addictive substances.

Keywords: Nursing students, addictive substances, attitude

Introduction

Youth problems are very diverse, and one of the most important problems experienced during this period is addictive substance use and addiction (Ogel et al., 2012; Tansel, 2017). Some factors such as peer pressure, trying to look older, not being able to cope with problems well, loneliness, not having good family relationships are almost universal variables that appear to be the reasons for starting substance use. In order not to enter the addiction cycle at all, it should be

ensured by the family and school that the knowledge of the risks for substance use and the protection methods is gained by individuals from an early age. Perhaps, the most protective method is to raise children who grow up in integrity. The possibility of children, whose family and school life are balanced, whose occupations and hobbies are supported, who are provided with an environment suitable for their development, and who "can say no," to become substance-addicted in the future will decrease. Nevertheless, it is extremely important for individuals of all ages to

organize informative activities and not to establish this information on frightening individuals. Frightening people will cause them to move away from the solution of the problem. Therefore, preventive information should be transferred in a way that supports avoiding substances or receiving treatment (Cirakoglu and İsin, 2005).

Addiction means being dependent on something or someone to be supported in any subject (Ogel et al., 2012). The stages of substance addiction in young people are listed as the shaping of attitudes and beliefs regarding addictive substances, trying, experiencing, regular use, and becoming addicted (Havaceliği Atlam and Yuncu, 2017). The ultimate aim of the National Action Plan Against Drugs defined in our country between 2018-2023 is "To keep society away from the use of all kinds of stimulants and drugs." Addiction is an important health problem showing an increase in recent years in the World and in Turkey (<https://hsgm.saglik.gov.tr>).

The number of individuals with substance use problems is gradually increasing. In the EU drugs report, it is stated that cannabis is used at most in the 16-64 age group in Turkey, the illegal drug use is higher among males, and mostly males aged 15-34 years use drugs. In parallel with this increase, the number of hospitalizations due to substance use is increasing every day. It was determined that the majority of those undergoing drug treatment in Turkey also consisted of males. http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/11364/20191724_TDAT19001_TRN_PDF.pdf In a study conducted in Ireland, 50% of the hospitalization rate was related to substance use, and in another study, it was stated that substance-addicted individuals used emergency services by 30% more than non-addicted individuals, while in another study, it was indicated that more than 50% of hospitalizations are caused by problems related to substance abuse (Pilge and Baysan Arabaci, 2016).

Teamwork is very important in the prevention and treatment of addiction, and nurses play an important role in the team (Avsar, Koc and Aslan, 2016). Nurses take a significant place in the treatment team in the determination of groups at risk for substance abuse, evaluation of individuals with substance use disorder as a whole, and ensuring continuity in care (Simsek, 2010). In a study evaluating nursing students'

attitudes and behaviors toward addicted individuals, 44% of students reported that substance addiction education was insufficient (Baldwin, Bartek, Scott, Hall and DeSimone, 2009). Due to the health problems or repeated hospitalization of addicted individuals, nurses working in health institutions, to which addicted individuals apply frequently, take an important place in intervening in health problems experienced due to addiction, providing early diagnosis and treatment. At this point, their knowledge, attitudes, and skills with regard to the care and treatment of addicted individuals may play a determining role in shaping the nursing care services that they will provide to these patients. Various research findings that examine the perceptions and attitudes of nurses toward individuals with substance use problems have shown that nurses exhibit negative attitudes and reactions that are similar to those exhibited by society toward addicted individuals. The fact that the nurse responsible for the treatment and care of individuals with substance use problems has a negative attitude, such as regarding these patients as dangerous and being reluctant to provide services to these individuals, may lead to belittling these individuals and avoiding contact with them and disrupting the trust relationships between the patient and the nurse. These negative beliefs, values, and stereotypes may prevent nurses from performing their professional roles and providing holistic care to patients. This may also adversely affect the therapeutic relationship between the patient and the nurse and the quality of care provided by the nurse. Since the healing process or the response to treatment of individuals using addictive substances is slow, it may be difficult for nurses to care for these patients, or it may lead to the occurrence of nurses' negative attitudes toward these patients (Pilge and Baysan Arabaci, 2016).

In the literature, there are very few studies that evaluate the factors affecting attitudes and behaviors toward individuals using AS. The prevention of discriminatory attitudes in society toward individuals using addictive substances is important in maintaining the related fight effectively and providing nursing services (Yilmaz and Sasman Kayli, 2020). At this point, hospitals, where the first intervention for addicted people is provided, are at the top of risky places. It is necessary and important to determine nursing students' attitudes toward individuals with substance use problems. It is thought that

the study results related to the subject will shed light on nursing students with the training programs to be organized. It will be ensured that the results of the study will guide the structuring of the planned educational contents, and thus, students who become conscious with standardized training will be ready to provide more qualified care services to addicted patients after graduation. In this context, the study was planned for the purpose of the "Investigation of Nursing Students' Attitudes Toward Individuals Using Addictive Substances."

Method

Type of Research: This research, conducted between September 2017-June 2018, is a descriptive study.

Population and Sample of the Study: The population of the study consisted of a total of 570 students studying at the nursing department registered in a foundation university in Istanbul province. In the study, it was planned to include the whole population without sampling, and questionnaires were distributed to the whole population. From the population, 217 students who volunteered to participate in the study constituted the sample. Volunteering was taken as a basis in the study, and students who did not agree to participate in the study were excluded from the sample.

Data Collection Tools: In the study, the "Personal Information Form" prepared by the researchers and the "Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use Addictive Substances," which was developed by Tansel in 2006 and of which validity and reliability studies were performed, were used as the data collection tools. The mentioned scale consists of 23 items. The first one of the scale's sub-factors is for the status of bilateral relations, the second sub-factor is for personality structures, the third sub-factor is for the state of social relations, the fourth sub-factor is for social perspectives, and the fifth sub-factor is for family and social environment relations. Responses given to the scale items are scored between 1 and 5 points. They are expressed as follows: 1 "Totally Agree," 2 "Slightly Agree," 3 "Undecided," 4 "Disagree," 5 "Strongly Disagree." The reversely coded items in the scale are 1, 4, 9, 10, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22, and 23. High scores obtained from the measurement tool are interpreted as the fact that individuals have a negative attitude toward individuals using addictive substances. In this study, in accordance with the data obtained from the participants,

Cronbach's alpha (α) internal consistency coefficient for the overall scale was calculated to be 0.92. The internal consistency coefficients of the sub-factors are 0.88 for "Bilateral relations with individuals using AS," 0.90 for "Personality structures of individuals using AS," 0.93 for "Social relations with individuals using AS," 0.90 for "Social perspectives of individuals using AS," and 0.89 for "Family and social environment relations of individuals using AS" (Table 1). Cronbach's alpha (α) internal consistency coefficients of both the sub-factors of the Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use Addictive Substances and for the overall scale are above 0.80, which is the high reliability limit suggested by Kalaycı. Accordingly, the measurement results were determined to be highly reliable (Kalaycı, 2009).

Ethical Aspect of the Study: In order to conduct the research, written permissions were obtained from Istanbul Medipol University Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee (10840098-604.01.01-E.7682) and the relevant institution, and verbal and written consent was obtained from the students who participated in the study. After the purpose of the study was explained to the students, the data were collected by the face-to-face interview method at the time of theoretical lessons or during clinical applications.

Statistical Analysis of Data: The data obtained in the study were analyzed using the licensed SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows 22.0 program. Number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used as descriptive statistical methods in the evaluation of the data. The normal distribution test was applied to determine whether the research variables were normally distributed. It was determined that the research variables were normally distributed ($p>0.05$). Parametric methods were used in the analysis of the data. The t-test was used to compare quantitative continuous data between two independent groups, while the one-way ANOVA test was used to compare quantitative continuous data between more than two independent groups. Scheffe's test was used as a complementary post-hoc analysis to determine differences after the ANOVA test.

Results

It was determined that 87% of the nursing students included in the study were female, 94% were in the 18-25 age range, and 36% were 3rd-

grade students. Of the students, 6% stated that there were individuals who used addictive substances in their families, 6% stated that they were present in the environment in which addictive substances were used, and 2% stated that they tried addictive substances once. It was determined that 60% of those who tried addictive substances tried them in the high school period, and 60% of them tried them with the recommendation of friends (Table 2). The mean score obtained from the Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use Addictive Substances is 85.76 ± 15.19 (Min=46; Max=115), and the mean score for "Bilateral relations with individuals using AS" is 26.50 ± 3.58 , the mean score for "Personality structures of individuals using AS" is 17.64 ± 4.41 , the mean score for "Social relations with individuals using AS" is 18.11 ± 4.13 , the mean score for "Social perspectives of individuals using AS" is 11.76 ± 4.10 , and the mean score for "Family and social environment relations of individuals using AS" is 11.73 ± 2.79 (Table 3). A statistically significant difference was determined between the gender of nursing students and the sub-factor of "social perspectives on individuals using addictive substances" ($p < 0.05$). The male students' mean scores of "social perspectives on individuals using AS" ($x = 14.68$) were found to be statistically significantly higher compared to the female students' mean scores of "social perspectives on individuals using AS" ($x = 11.33$) ($t = 4.18$; $p = 0 < 0.05$), (Table 4). There was a statistically significant difference between the nursing students' age group and the mean scores of the "Personality structures of individuals using AS" ($x = 17.83$), "Social relations with individuals using AS" ($x = 18.32$), "Family and social environment relations of individuals using AS" sub-factors ($x = 11.92$) and the "Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use AS" scores ($x = 86.35$) ($p < 0.05$). The mean scores of those aged between 18-25 years in the scale and scale sub-factors were found to be significantly higher compared to those aged above 25 (Table 4).

A statistically significant difference was determined between the nursing students' status of being previously in an environment in which addictive substances are used and the mean scores of the "Personality structures of individuals using AS" ($x = 13.23$), "Social relations with individuals using AS" ($x = 12.69$), "Social perspectives of individuals using AS" ($x = 7.77$), "Family and social environment

relations of individuals using AS" ($x = 8.85$) sub-factors and the total scores of the "Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use Addictive Substances" ($x = 67.85$) ($p < 0.05$). The mean scores of those who had previously been in an environment in which addictive substances are used were found to be significantly lower than the mean scores of those who had not been in such an environment (Table 4). A statistically significant difference was detected between the students' having an individual using addictive substances in the family and the scores of the "Social relations with individuals using AS" sub-factor ($p < 0.05$). The "Social relations with individuals using AS" scores ($x = 18.31$) of students without substance use in the family were found to be higher than the scores of the "Social relations with individuals using AS" of those who had an individual using addictive substances in the family ($x = 15.00$) ($t = 2.84$; $p = 0.005 < 0.05$), (Table 4). A statistically significant difference was determined between the status of using addictive substances and the "Bilateral relations with individuals using AS" mean scores ($x = 26.665$) and "Personality structures of individuals using AS" mean scores ($x = 17.759$), the mean scores of the "Family and social environment relations of individuals using AS" sub-factor ($x = 11.835$) and the mean scores of the "Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use AS" ($x = 86.165$) ($p < 0.05$). The mean scores who had never used addictive substances were found to be significantly higher compared to the mean scores of those who had tried addictive substances once (Table 4).

Discussion

It was stated that as the score obtained from the Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use Addictive Substances increased, the negative attitude toward individuals using addictive substances increased (Tansel, 2006). In this study, the mean total score obtained by nursing students from the scale was 85.76 ± 15.19 , and it can be said that the attitude toward individuals using addictive substances was negative. It can be said that the attitude scores toward individuals using AS varied significantly according to their status of trying/using AS, the group with the highest attitude level toward individuals using AS consisted of students who gave the answer, "I am still using." According to the status of using AS, it can be said that as the level of using AS increases, attitudes toward individuals using AS also increase positively (Tansel, 2006).

Table 1. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normal Distribution Test and Reliability Coefficients

	Bilateral relations with individuals using AS	Personality structures of individuals using AS	Social relations with individuals using AS	Social perspectives of individuals using AS	Family and social environment relations of individuals using AS	Attitude toward individuals using AS
Alpha	0.89	0.90	0.93	0.91	0.89	0.92
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	1.13	1.23	0.90	0.83	1.20	0.97
p	0.11	0.10	0.24	0.37	0.10	0.13

Table 2. Descriptive Characteristics of Students (N=217)

	Groups	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	28	13
	Female	189	87
Age	18-25	203	94
	Above 25	14	6
Grade	1st grade	30	14
	2nd grade	48	22
	3rd grade	79	36
	4th grade	60	28
Status of Being Previously in the Environment in Which Addictive Substances Are Used	Yes	13	6
	No	204	94
Status of Having Individuals Using Addictive Substances in the Family	No	204	94
	Yes	13	6
Use of Addictive Substances	I have never tried	212	98
	I tried once	5	2
Trying Period	Secondary school	1	20
	High school	3	60
	University	1	20
Reason for Trying	Relative advice	2	40
	Friend recommendation	3	60

Table 3. Mean Scores of the Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use Addictive Substances and Its Sub-Factors (N=217)

Dimensions	Mean±Sd	Min.	Max.
Bilateral Relations with Individuals Using AS	26.50±3.58	12.00	30.00
Personality Structures of Individuals Using AS	17.64±4.41	5.00	25.00
Social Relations with Individuals Using AS	18.11±4.13	7.00	25.00
Social Perspectives of Individuals Using AS	11.76±4.10	4.00	20.00
Family and Social Environment Relations of Individuals Using AS	11.73±2.79	3.00	15.00
Total of the Attitude Scale for Individuals Using AS	85.76±15.19	46.00	115.00

Table 4. Descriptive Characteristics of Students and the Comparison of the Mean Scores of the Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use AS and Its Sub-Factors (N=217)

Demographic Characteristics		n	Bilateral Relations with Individuals Using AS	Personality Structures of Individuals Using AS	Social Relations with Individuals Using AS	Social Perspectives of Individuals Using AS	Family and Social Environment Relations of Individuals Using AS	Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use AS
			Mean±SD	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	Mean±SD
Gender	Male	28	27.36±3.38	18.86±5.42	18.96±5.04	14.68±4.64	11.75±3.17	91.61±19.08
	Female	189	26.38±3.60	17.47±4.23	17.98±3.99	11.33±3.84	11.74±2.75	84.90±14.39
	t=		1.35	1.56	1.17	4.18	0.03	2.20
	p=		0.18	0.20	0.33	0.00	0.98	0.08
Age	18-25	203	26.51±3.68	17.83±4.51	8.32±4.18	11.77±4.23	11.92±2.80	86.35±15.53
	Above 25	14	26.50±1.61	15.000±0.39	15.07±1.39	11.64±1.34	9.14±0.86	77.36±3.03
	t=		0.00	2.34	2.89	0.12	3.69	2.16
	p=		0.99	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00
Grade	1st grade	30	26.00±4.13	17.37±4.01	17.53±4.63	11.20±4.21	12.07±2.57	84.17±14.15
	2nd grade	48	26.00±4.46	16.33±4.81	17.58±4.66	10.92±4.24	11.25±2.96	82.08±17.68
	3rd grade	79	26.42±3.34	18.23±4.28	18.71±3.99	12.17±3.91	11.87±2.72	87.39±14.63
	4th grade	60	27.28±2.64	18.07±4.32	18.03±3.59	12.20±4.15	11.78±2.88	87.37±14.02
	F=		1.49	2.13	1.01	1.36	0.69	1.59
	p=		0.22	0.10	0.39	0.26	0.56	0.19
Environment	Yes	13	25.31±3.20	13.23±5.04	12.69±3.40	7.76±2.74	8.85±2.23	67.85±12.05
	No	204	26.58±3.60	17.93±4.23	18.46±3.94	12.02±4.05	11.92±2.73	86.91±14.67
	t=		-1.25	-3.84	-5.15	-3.73	-3.98	-4.58
	p=		0.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Status of Having Individuals Using AS in the Family	No	204	26.52±3.56	17.60±4.25	18.31±4.08	11.69±3.98	11.77±2.72	85.89±14.99
	Yes	13	26.31±4.11	18.32±6.70	15.00±3.96	12.92±5.77	11.31±3.88	83.85±18.67
	t=		0.21	-0.56	2.84	-1.05	0.57	0.47
	p=		0.84	0.71	0.01	0.46	0.68	0.64
Substance Use	I have never tried	212	26.67±3.41	17.76±4.38	18.16±4.16	11.75±4.15	11.84±2.70	86.17±15.12
	I tried once	5	19.80±4.60	12.80±3.03	16.00±2.24	12.60±0.89	7.60±3.98	68.80±5.76
	t=		4.41	2.51	1.16	-0.46	3.43	2.56
	p=		0.00	0.01	0.25	0.11	0.00	0.01

Discussion continue

In the qualitative study conducted by Daibes et al. (2017) to determine the attitudes of nurses toward addicted individuals, three basic themes emerged. These were defined as the headings of negative attitude, stigmatization and marginalization, and avoidance as the third theme. According to the results of the study carried out by Pilge and Arabaci (2016), the nurses' mean score of the attitude scale was found to be 49.43 ± 19.59 . This result reveals that nurses tend to exhibit a negative attitude in terms of keeping social distance toward substance-addicted individuals. In our study, there were statistically significant differences between the nursing students' genders and the sub-factor of "Social perspectives on individuals using AS" ($p < 0.05$). The mean scores of male students ($x=14.68$) were found to be statistically significantly higher than the mean scores of female students ($x=11.33$) ($t=4.18$; $p=0 < 0.05$). In the study conducted by Tansel, the attitudes of female students toward individuals using addictive substances were found to be higher than those of males. It can be said that the level of consciousness of female students on this issue is higher than that of males, and they approach individuals using addictive substances with a more cautious and conscious attitude and with the awareness of the harmful and bad effects of addictive substances (Tansel, 2006). In the study carried out by Demirci and Eker (2018), the frequency of substance addiction of university students and substance use characteristics were examined. In the evaluation of the total scores of the addiction profile index and its sub-dimensions by gender, the substance use of males was found to be significantly higher than that of females ($p=0.002 < 0.05$). In the study carried out by Altintas, Temel and Benli (2004) on substance addiction, when the participants were questioned whether they agreed with the statement, "Addictive substances take people away from their problems," the researchers determined that 60.3% of male students and 80% of female students disagreed with this statement. It is observed that 15.2% of male students and 5.7% of female students agreed with the statement, "I will not become addicted if I use an addictive substance." It was stated that the difference was statistically significant in these two cases addressed according to the gender variable, and generally, males were more prone to risk-taking behaviors than females. On the other hand, it was

stated that females were more cautious about these situations due to their roles in society.

In our study, the mean scores in the overall scale and "Personality structures of individuals using AS," "Social relations with individuals using AS," and "Family and social environment relations of individuals using AS" sub-factors of the nursing students aged between 18-25 years were found to be significantly higher than those of the nursing students aged above 25 years. In the study of Tansel (2006), the difference between attitude scores toward individuals using AS was stated to be significant between the age groups in the 16-18 age range and of 25 years and above. These results are parallel to our study.

In our study, a statistically significant difference was detected between the nursing students' status of being previously in an environment in which addictive substances are used and the mean scores of the "Personality structures of individuals using AS" ($x=13.23$), "Social relations with individuals using AS" ($x=12.69$), "Social perspectives of individuals using AS" ($x=7.77$), and "Family and social environment relations of individuals using AS" ($x=8.85$) sub-factors and the total scores of the "Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use AS" ($x=67.85$) ($p < 0.05$). The mean scores of those who had previously been in an environment in which addictive substances were used were found to be significantly higher than the mean scores of those who had not been in such an environment. In general, participants who have no individuals drinking alcohol and using drugs in their immediate environment and who do not have relatives who have undergone addiction treatment have more negative attitudes toward these individuals (Yılmaz and Sasman Kayli, 2020). It can be said that the attitudes toward individuals using AS of students who have been in the environment in which addictive substances are used are more positive than the attitudes of students who have not been in such an environment (Tansel, 2006). According to the logistic regression results of the study conducted by Coskun, Cirpici and Özgür (2019), a significant relationship was found between the current alcohol use status and gender, grade, and having those drinking alcohol in the immediate environment. The heading that had the most effect on drinking alcohol was stated to be having individuals currently drinking alcohol in the immediate environment.

In our study, a statistically significant difference was detected between the students' status of having an individual using addictive substances in the family and the "Social relations with individuals using AS" sub-factor scores ($p < 0.05$). In the study carried out by Ersoy (2015), when the relationship between the students' substance use status and the substance use status among the family and close relatives was examined, it was found to be statistically higher compared to other students. In the study conducted by Alemu (2020) et al., it was stated that there were many risk factors for the use of the khat (Yemen grass) substance used specifically in the region, and in addition to being of the male gender among these, the possibility to use this substance of students who had a family member with a history of khat use or using khat currently was higher in comparison with students who did not have such a family member. In the study conducted by Baldwin (2009) et al., they reported more substance use among nursing students who reported medication or alcohol use in their family histories than students not using addictive substances.

Conclusion and Recommendations: High scores obtained from the measurement tool can be interpreted as negative attitudes of individuals toward addictive substances. In our study, the nursing students' mean score obtained from the Attitude Scale for Individuals Who Use Addictive Substances is 85. In our study, the attitudes of nursing students toward individuals using addictive substances were observed to be negative. The fact that nurses responsible for the treatment and care of individuals with substance use problems have a negative attitude, such as regarding individuals using addictive substances as dangerous and being reluctant to provide services to these individuals, may lead to avoiding contact with them and disrupting the trust relationships between the patient and the nurse. These negative beliefs, values, and stereotypes may prevent nurses from performing their professional roles and providing holistic care to patients. This may also adversely affect the therapeutic relationship between the patient and the nurse and the quality of care provided by the nurse.

The prevention of discriminatory attitudes in society toward individuals using addictive substances is important in maintaining the related fight effectively and providing nursing services. The creation and application of standardized

training programs for nursing students will ensure that students who become conscious will be ready to provide more qualified care services to addicted patients after graduation.

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