

## Original Article

## Professional Values of Nursing Students in Turkey

**Ozlem Ibrahimoglu, RN, PhD**

Nursing Department, Faculty of Health Sciences, Bilecik Seyh Edebali University, Bilecik, Turkey

**Sevinc Mersin, RN, PhD**

Nursing Department, Faculty of Health Sciences, Bilecik Seyh Edebali University, Bilecik, Turkey

**Hulya Saray Kilic, RN, PhD**

Nursing Department, Faculty of Health Sciences, Bilecik Seyh Edebali University, Bilecik, Turkey

**Burcu Bayrak Kahraman, RN, PhD**

Nursing Department, Faculty of Health Sciences, Bilecik Seyh Edebali University, Bilecik, Turkey

**Correspondence:** Ozlem Ibrahimoglu, Nursing Department, *Faculty of Health Sciences, Bilecik Seyh Edebali University, Gulumbe, 11210, Bilecik, Turkey* e-mail: oogutlu@gmail.com**Abstract**

**Background:** Professional values are defined as beliefs about the value or quality of concepts. Nurses have professional values that allow them to function as efficient team members in providing care. These values develop in both theoretical and clinical education throughout the education process. Therefore, undergraduate education enables the individual to realize and internalize the values that the individual has in the nursing profession.

**Aims:** This study was conducted to determine the professional values of nursing students.

**Methodology:** This descriptive type study was conducted in a nursing school with 290 students in Turkey from November to December 2018. Data were collected by using the information form and the Nurses' Professional Values Scale. For data analysis were used SPSS 21.00.

**Results:** 70.7% of the participants were female (n=205), 25.9% (n=75) were third grade students and the mean age was 20.05±1.55. The total score of the professional values of the students participating in the study was 124.58±17.41. It was found that there was a statistically significant positive low-level relationship between the human dignity subscale score and the grade level and the autonomy results of female students were higher than the male students.

**Conclusions:** The nursing students in the study population have high professional values and grade level and gender variables have an effect on professional values.

**Keywords:** Professionalism, nursing student, gender, grade level.

**Introduction**

Professional values are defined as beliefs about the value or quality of concepts and qualities in a given discipline and they are characterized by professional standards by professional educators and groups, which guide the programs and practices of education, as well as providing shapers and behaviours (Elliott, 2017; Kantek, Kaya & Gezer, 2017). When the values of individuals are internalized, it is clear that a conscious and reliable acquisition of professional values is demonstrated (Rose, Nies & Reid, 2018). Professional values require professional identity and professional behaviour. In addition

to personal and social values, professional values develop in both theoretical and clinical education throughout the education process. Therefore, undergraduate education enables the individual to realize and internalize the values that the individual has in the nursing profession (Elliott, 2017). The development of a professional identity requires the integration of personal values, morals, and qualifications into professional norms, thus forming the relationship of the personal identity of the individual with the professional self (Cowin et al., 2013). Nurses must have professional features that allow them to function as efficient team members in

providing care. These professional values are taught by academicians/nurses at school, hospital and other fields of practice (Baldwin et al., 2017; Rose et al., 2018). Individuals with high professional values are honest. They respect the rights of others. Sense of responsibility is high. They tend to develop themselves. Their communication and interpersonal relationships with others are positive (Rose et al., 2018).

Elliott (2017) defined that “professional values consists caring and compassion, respect for human dignity, advocacy, and altruism, collaboration, professional advocacy, confidentiality, safety and quality, social justice and activism, integrity and honesty, competency and professional growth, authority accountability”. Nurses reflect these values in some processes such as analyzing critical thinking and nursing practice, making therapeutic and professional relations, retaining capabilities for the application, making comprehensive evaluations, developing a plan for nursing practice, providing safe, convenient and sensitive quality nursing practice, and evaluating the results to inform nursing practice (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, 2006; Baldwin et al., 2017).

Researchers determined that professional values reduce burnout, errors, turnover (Altun, 2002; Bao et al. 2013; Erkus & Dinc, 2018), and increase job satisfaction, motivation and productivity (Horton, Tschudin & Forget, 2007; Magdalena, 2015; Terzioglu, Temel & Uslu Sahan, 2016). Therefore, professional values are important for nursing and the factors that affect this need to be investigated.

In this study, it is aimed to determine the professional values of nursing students. In this study, the answers of the following questions were examined:

What are the mean scores of professional values of nursing students?

What are the mean scores of human dignity, responsibility, action, safety and autonomy sub-scales of nursing students?

Is there a relationship between the professional values of nursing students and age, gender, grade level, mother and father education level?

Is there a relationship between the human dignity, responsibility, action, safety and autonomy sub-scales of nursing students and age,

gender, grade level, mother and father education level?

## Method

**Design and Sample:** In this descriptive study, the universe consists of 311 nursing students studying at a university in Turkey. Sample selection was not made and the entire universe was tried to be reached. Students who could not be reached during the study period due to reasons such as absenteeism or illness and did not want to participate in the study were not included in the study. The study was completed with 290 students. 93.24% of the universe was reached.

**Data Collection and Instruments:** Data were collected from November to December 2018. After explaining the purpose of the research and the confidentiality of the data, data collection forms were distributed to the students who accepted the research. This study also was approved by University Ethics Committee. Information Form and Nurses' Professional Values Scale were used to collect data. It took about 15-20 minutes.

**Information Form:** In the Information Form, there are questions about the students' age, gender, grade level, parental education status.

**Nurses' Professional Values Scale:** The scale is a 31-item scale to measure the values developed by nurses based on ethical values. It was developed by Weis and Schank (2000), and its Turkish validity and reliability were made by Sahin Orak and Ecevit Alpar (2012). The total score of the scale is obtained by adding the scores obtained from 31 items. The total score can vary between 31-155 and high scores indicate that nurses give more importance to professional values. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the Nurses' Professional Values Scale was found to be 0.937.

**Data Analysis:** For statistical analysis of data, SPSS (Windows Package for Social Sciences) 21.0 program was used. Continuous variables were expressed as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation and categorical variables were expressed as numbers and percentages. The analysis of the categorical data was performed using the "Chi-square test", the analysis of continuous variables matching the normal distribution was performed by the "Student t-test" and the non-normal distribution was performed using the "Mann-Whitney U" test. Pearson correlation analysis was used in the

correlation analysis. A p value below 0.05 was considered significant.

### Results

The mean age of the participants (n = 290) was  $20.05 \pm 1.55$ . 70.7% (n = 205) of the participants were female and 25.9% (n = 75) were third grade level students. 60.0% (n = 174) of the mothers and 38.3% (n = 111) of the fathers were primary school graduates. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

The scores obtained from the total scale and subscales are presented in Table 2.

The total and subscale scores of the scale and the relationship status of some variables are presented in Table 3. There was no statistically significant relationship between the total and subscale scores of the scale and age, educational status of parents. There was a statistically significant low-level relationship between human dignity subscale score and grade level.

The results of the participants' gender and total scale and subscale scores are presented in Table 4. Autonomy in female students were higher than male.

**Table1: The Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (n=290)**

		Mean $\pm$ Standard Deviation	Minimum-Maximum	
Age*		20.05 $\pm$ 1.55	17-26	
			n	%
Gender	Female		205	70.7
	Male		85	29.3
Grade level	1. Class		92	31.7
	2. Class		74	25.5
	3. Class		75	25.9
	4. Class		49	16.9
Mother education level	Illiterate		15	5.2
	Primary School		174	60.0
	Secondary School		66	22.8
	High School		30	10.3
Father education level	University		5	1.7
	Illiterate		4	1.4
	Primary School		111	38.3
	Secondary School		76	26.2
	High School		59	20.3
	University		40	13.7

\*n=264

**Table 2: Scores of Scale and Sub-Scales (n=290)**

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Points Range
Total Score	124.58	17.41	31-155
Human dignity	46.11	6.73	11-55
Responsibility	27.06	4.59	7-35
Action	18.74	3.70	5-25
Safety	16.37	2.58	4-20
Autonomy	16.28	2.92	4-20

**Table 3: Relationship Between Some Variables and Total Scale and Subscale Scores (n=290)**

		Total scale	Human dignity	Responsibility	Action	Safety	Autonomy
Age	r*	-0.069	-0.119	-0.001	0.010	-0.044	-0.112
	p	0.261	0.054	0.985	0.868	0.478	0.070
Grade level	r*	-0.086	0.133	-0.052	0.001	-0.087	-0.050
	p	0.143	0.023	0.377	0.992	0.141	0.400
Mother education level	r*	0.016	0.025	0.032	-0.002	-0.013	0.002
	p	0.784	0.667	0.592	0.971	0.825	0.970
Father education level	r*	0.016	0.050	-0.065	-0.046	-0.036	-0.018
	p	0.784	0.394	0.273	0.439	0.538	0.755

\*Pearson correlation

**Table 4: Gender and Scale Scores (n=290)**

	Gender		Test value	
	Female	Male	F*	p
Total score	125.81±16.64	121.61±18.92	1.881	0.061
			Z†	p
Human dignity	46.50±6.44	45.17±7.36	-1.266	0.206
Responsibility	27.37±4.35	26.31±5.07	-1.588	0.112
Action	18.82±3.71	18.54±3.68	-0.592	0.554
Safety	16.53±2.44	15.97±2.86	-1.282	0.200
Autonomy	16.57±2.67	15.60±3.37	-2.184	0.029

\*Student t test †Mann Whitney u test

## Discussion

The accumulation of scientific knowledge and their professional identification increases the acceptability of the profession as well as the feeling of the power of the profession. Therefore, different studies have been conducted to determine the relationship between nursing and professional values. In this study, the professional values of nursing students and the factors affecting them were defined.

According to the data obtained from the study, most of the students are female (Table 1). Parents' education levels are generally low. When the professional values of the students were examined, the total score of the scale was  $124.58 \pm 17.41$  (31-155). Goris et al., (2014) examined the professional values of nurses in the study found  $90.7 \pm 14.7$ ; Erkus and Dinç (2018), in their study examining the professional values of nursing students found  $103.42 \pm 17.36$ ; Iacobucci et al., (2013) determined to be  $101.43 \pm 12.78$ . In this study, it is seen that the scores and subscores of the students on the professional values scale are high. This result can be explained by the ease of access to information. Today, TV, the internet and especially with the spread of social media, individuals can easily access information and its details. Thus, individuals can easily complete the areas that they think are missing in their educational processes and can reach the authorities in this field. Price et al., (2018) reported that students considered social media useful for their professional development and used it in accessing and disseminating information. Professionalism guides the relationship between healthy and sick individuals, their own membership and other health professionals. It guides the career of the member. Thus, the individual obtains a status in society with professional values in life (Goriş et al., 2014). In the nursing profession, professional values continue to exist as a value from the educational process to the end of life (Cheng, Meng & Jin, 2015). High professional values may increase nurse's job satisfaction (Woo & Park, 2017), reduce burnout (Altun, 2002; Cheng et al., 2015), and reduce work stress (Sun et al., 2016; Ye et al., 2018).

According to the other results of the study, the students' human dignity subscale was determined as  $46.11 \pm 6.73$  (11-55), and it was found that there was a statistically significant positive low-level relationship between the human dignity

subscale score and the grade level. Dignity is indispensable for the nursing profession in improving the lives of healthy and sick individuals. In the Declaration of Helsinki (2008), the protection of the dignity of individuals and respect for their decisions are declared. International Council of Nurses (ICN) stated that "Nurses have four fundamental responsibilities: to promote health, to prevent illness, to restore health and to alleviate suffering. The need for nursing is universal. Inherent in nursing is a respect for human rights, including cultural rights, the right to life and choice, to dignity and to be treated with respect. Nursing care is respectful of and unrestricted by considerations of age, color, creed, culture, disability or illness, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, politics, race or social status. Nurses render health services to the individual, the family and the community and coordinate their services with those of related groups" (ICN, 2012). In this school the study conducted, nursing education is carried out as history, basic health courses, technical skills and philosophical courses and clinical applications are selected according to the student's development areas. As the student's grade level progresses, he/she takes courses on ethics and other human-related nursing knowledge and skills. As a result of this study, as the grade level increases, the protection value of human dignity which is one of the professional values of the student increases. This result shows us that the protection of human dignity is related to professional knowledge, skills, and level of understanding. Kantek et al., (2017) in their study of professional values in nursing students determined that the fourth-grade students had higher dignity scores which are the professional values subscale than the first-grade students, and they explained this change with the development of the student over the years.

In this study, students' professional values subscale responsibility score was  $27.06 \pm 4.59$  (7-35); action score  $18.74 \pm 3.70$  (5-25); safety score was determined as  $16.37 \pm 2.58$  (4-20) and the results suggest that students are sensitive in taking responsibility, taking action and maintaining safe and intimate care. It has been reported in the literature that it is important for nurses to take action to provide care and to protect the privacy of the individual they care for (Erkus & Dinc, 2018).

Although there was no statistically significant relationship between autonomy subscale score

and age, class and parent education status of the students, the importance of autonomy in the nursing profession still exists in the literature (Kantek et al., 2017; Marañón & Pera, 2019). Autonomy refers to the professional member's acting in accordance with his / her professionalism (Kramer, Maguire & Schmalenberg, 2006). As the autonomy of nurses increases, their level of decision making in patient care increases and they can make more free decisions (Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2019) and their professional satisfaction may increase (Marañón & Pera, 2019). Autonomy enables individuals to use their abilities and increase their creativity (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012) and improve the quality of nursing care (Rose et al., 2018). Erkus and Dinç (2018) reported in their study that professional values had a positive effect on the quality of care.

When the gender and total scale and subscale scores of the students were examined, it was found that the autonomy subscale score of the female students was higher than the male students. Gao et al., (2019) reported that male nurses did not gain enough social acceptance in the society and this situation caused them to be reluctant to do the nursing profession. They also reported that the number of male members was less than female members and there were mostly female teachers in nursing schools affected male nurses' professional identities. Erkus and Dinç (2018) stated that professional values and autonomy are influenced by socio-cultural contexts.

**Conclusion:** Professional values are decisive in the selection of the profession, attitudes, values, and beliefs towards the profession, and the relationship between the individual and other health professionals. High professional values can increase the quality of nursing care and increase the satisfaction of both them and the individuals they care for. When it is assumed that the professional values of nursing are gained in the education process and developed during the professional life, it is important to determine the professional values and related factors of the students in the early period by identifying the deficiencies in this field and discussing the solution methods. According to the results of this study, the nursing students in this study population have high professional values and grade level and gender variables have an effect on professional values. This study was conducted in a nursing school in Turkey and was

recommended to carry out in different cultures nursing students. So, the results of this study may enable to evaluate students' professional development on different platforms in international nursing education.

**Limitations:** The limitation of this study is being conducted in a single nursing school in Turkey.

## References

- Altun I. (2002). Burnout and nurses' personal and professional values. *Nursing Ethics*, 9(3): 269-278.
- Baldwin A, Mills J, Birks M, & Budden L. (2017). Reconciling professional identity: A grounded theory of nurse academics' role modelling for undergraduate students. *Nurse Education Today*, 59: 1-5.
- Bao Y, Vedina R, Moodie S, & Dolan S. (2013). The relationship between value incongruence and individual and organizational well-being outcomes: An exploratory study among Catalan nurses. *The Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 69(3): 631-641.
- Both-Nwabuwe JM, Lips-Wiersma M, Dijkstra MT, & Beersma B. (2019). Nurses' experience of individual, group-based and professional autonomy. *Nursing Outlook*. [InPress].doi:10.1016/j.outlook.2019.05.002.
- Cheng F, Meng AF, & Jin T. (2015). Correlation between burnout and professional value in Chinese oncology nurses: A questionnaire survey. *International Journal of Nursing Sciences*, 2(2): 153-157.
- Cowin LS, Johnson M, Wilson I, & Borgese K. (2013). The psychometric properties of five Professional Identity measures in a sample of nursing students. *Nurse Education Today*, 33(6): 608-613.
- Declaration of Helsinki (2008). Retrieved from <https://www.wma.net/what-we-do/medical-ethics/declaration-of-helsinki/>
- Elliott AM. (2017). Identifying professional values in nursing: An integrative review. *Teaching and Learning in Nursing*, 12(3): 201-216.
- Erkus G, & Dinc L. (2018). Turkish nurses' perceptions of professional values. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 34(3): 226-232.
- Gao Y, Cheng S, Madani C, & Zhang G. (2019). Educational experience of male students in a baccalaureate nursing program in China. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 35: 124-129.
- Goris S, Kilic Z, Ceyhan O, & Senturk A. (2014). Nurses' professional values and affecting factors. *Journal of Psychiatric Nursing*, 5 (3): 137-142. (in Turkish)
- Horton K, Tschudin V, & Forget A. (2007). The value of nursing: A literature review. *Nursing Ethics*, 14(6): 716-740.
- Iacobucci TA, Daly BJ, Lindell D, & Griffin MQ. (2013). Professional values, self-esteem, and

- ethical confidence of baccalaureate nursing students. *Nursing Ethics*, 20: 479-490.
- Kantek F, Kaya A, & Gezer N. (2017). The effects of nursing education on professional values: A longitudinal study. *Nurse Education Today*, 58: 43-46.
- Kramer M, Maguire P, & Schmalenberg CE. (2006). Excellence through evidence: the what, when, and where of clinical autonomy. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 36(10): 479-491.
- Lips-Wiersma M, & Wright S. (2012). Measuring the meaning of MW : Development and validation of the comprehensive MW scale (CMWS). *Group and Organization Management*, 37(5): 655-685.
- Magdalena SM. (2015). Study on the motivational variables and professional values in the Romanian academic environment. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 180: 1661-1666.
- Marañón AA, & Pera MPI. (2019). Confusion about professional autonomy among final-year nursing students in Spain. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 35(2): 147-152.
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (2006). National competency standards for the registered nurse. Retrieved from <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au>
- Price AM, Devis K, LeMoine G, Crouch S, South N, & Hossain R. (2018). First year nursing students use of social media within education: Results of a survey. *Nurse Education Today*, 61: 70-76.
- Rose T, Nies MA, & Reid J. (2018). The internalization of professional nursing values in baccalaureate nursing students. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 34(1): 25-30.
- Sun L, Gao Y, Yang J, Zang XY, & Wang YG. (2016). The impact of professional identity on role stress in nursing students: A cross-sectional study. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 63: 1-8.
- Sahin Orak N, & Ecevit Alpar S. (2012). Validity and reliability study of the Professional Values Scale of Nurses. *Clinical and Experimental Health Sciences*, 2 (5): 22-31. (in Turkish)
- Terzioglu F, Temel S, & Uslu Sahan F. (2016). Factors affecting performance and productivity of nurses: professional attitude, organisational justice, organisational culture and mobbing. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 24(6): 735-744.
- The ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses (2012). Retrieved from [https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/inlinefiles/2012\\_ICN\\_Codeofethicsfornurses\\_%20eng.pdf](https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/inlinefiles/2012_ICN_Codeofethicsfornurses_%20eng.pdf)
- Weis D, & Shank MJ. (2000). An Instrument to measure Professional nursing values. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 32(2): 201-214.
- Woo CH, & Park JY. (2017). Specialty satisfaction, positive psychological capital, and nursing professional values in nursing students: A cross-sectional survey. *Nurse Education Today*, 57: 24-28.
- Ye Y, Hu R, Ni Z, Jiang N, & Jiang X. (2018). Effects of perceived stress and professional values on clinical performance in practice nursing students: A structural equation modeling approach. *Nurse Education Today*, 71: 157-162.