

Original Article

Evaluation of Nursing Students' Personal Characteristics and Therapeutic Communication Skills

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Abstract

Objective: This study was conducted to evaluate the personality traits and therapeutic communication skills of nursing students.

Method: This research was conducted with 202 students studying at a nursing faculty in Ankara in the 2019-2020 academic year. The data of the study were collected with the "Demographic Information Form", "The Therapeutic Communication Skills Scale for Nursing Students (TCSS)" and "Five Factor Personality Structures Inventory (FFPI)".

Results: The students' mean scores of TCSS were 66.49 ± 13.83 ; "Extraversion" sub-dimension mean score is 6.24 ± 1.32 , "Softness" sub-dimension mean score is 7.18 ± 1.76 , "Self-control" sub-dimension mean score is 6.98 ± 1.91 , "Neurotism (emotional balance)" sub-dimension mean score is 6.20 ± 1.29 , and The mean score of the "Openness to Experience" sub-dimension is 6.39 ± 1.37 . A weak positive correlation was found between FFPI and TCSS. There is no difference between the mean scores of TCSS and sub-dimension scores and the mean scores of FFPI sub-dimensions of nursing students according to gender, number of siblings, mother's education level, father's education level and place of residence. There is a statistically significant difference between the "Therapeutic Communication Skills 2" sub-dimension mean scores and the TCSS score averages according to the class they are studying.

Conclusion: Nursing students' scores for agreeableness were found to be high, and a relationship was found between therapeutic communication skills and personality traits. Nursing is a profession in which interpersonal relationships are at the forefront in the caregiving process. Communication skills are at the forefront in the steps of data collection, planning, implementation and evaluation of the care given to the patient. In this direction, it is recommended to increase the education programs that support communication skills by keeping the personality traits of the students who are the nurses of the future in the foreground.

Key words: Nursing, students, communication, personal characteristics

Introduction

Effective communication is a clinical skill that supports every aspect of nursing care, human and human assistance, and it is expected that this skill is used well and effectively in professional groups providing health care services (Ciftci et al., 2020).

In the nursing profession, the main purpose of approaching the individual in need of help is a communication based on mutual trust, recognition of the individual, accurate

determination of his/her needs, and planning and implementation of appropriate nursing care in areas that need help and support (Tutuk et al., 2002). Travelbee, who says that the nurse uses her knowledge and skills for communication in her relationship with the patient for three purposes, explains these purposes as recognizing and understanding the individual, determining the care needs of the individual and achieving the purpose of nursing care (Acar & Buldukoglu, 2015).

Therapeutic communication is an important tool in establishing interpersonal relationships, the process of transferring information, clinical competence and patient-centered care. Effective communication has an important role in fulfilling nursing roles such as providing education and counseling to patients and performing patient care, and it is known that this communication increases the satisfaction of patients and their families, reduces the pain and anxiety of patients, positively affects decision-making processes, and increases the trust relationship between patients and nurses (Kira & Akansel, 2019).

In order to establish an effective therapeutic relationship with individuals receiving healthcare services and to provide quality treatment and care, it should be ensured that students receiving health education improve their communication skills (Ciftci et al., 2020).

Having effective communication skills is affected by many factors and one of the most important of these factors is the personality traits of individuals (Erkan & Avci, 2014). It is known that personality traits have an effect on communication skills (Yigit & Deniz, 2012). Accordingly, this study aimed to evaluate the personality traits and therapeutic communication skills of nursing students.

Methods

Place where the research was conducted:

This study was conducted with 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade students studying at a nursing faculty in Ankara in the 2019-2020 academic year. Since there were no 4th grade students in the faculty in the 2019-2020 academic year, there were no 4th grade students in the sample group. The sample of the study consisted of 202 students who wanted to participate in the study.

Data Collection Tools: The data of the study were collected with "Demographic Information Form", "Therapeutic Communication Skills Scale for Nursing Students (TCSS)" and "Five Factor Personality Structures Inventory (FFPI)".

Demographic Information Form: It includes questions to determine the student's gender, grade, number of siblings, mother's education level, father's education level and place of residence.

Therapeutic Communication Skills Scale for Nursing Students (TCSS):

The scale developed by Karaca et al. (2019) has a 7-point Likert scale and consists of 3 sub-dimensions and 16 items. The NCCTSC evaluates the therapeutic and nontherapeutic communication skills of nursing students. The maximum score that can be obtained from the scale is $16 \times 7 = 112$ and the minimum score is $16 \times 1 = 16$. The maximum score for the "NonTherapeutic Communication Skills" sub-dimension is 49 and the minimum score is 7; the maximum score for the "Therapeutic Communication Skills 1" sub-dimension is 42 and the minimum score is 6; the maximum score for the "Therapeutic Communication Skills 2" sub-dimension is 21 and the minimum score is 6. (Karaca & Acikgoz, 2019).

Five Factor Constructs of Personality Inventory (FFPI):

It is the 10-question short form of the scale developed by Rammstedt and John (2007) and validated and reliable in Turkish by Horzum, Ayas, and Padir (2015). It consists of five sub-dimensions (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Self-control, Neuroticism (emotional stability) and Openness to Experience) in order to determine the personality traits. While scoring the scale, total score is not taken, total score is taken for each sub-dimension. Considering the scores of individuals from each sub-dimension, it is accepted that the personality trait belonging to the sub-dimension with the highest score is the basic personality trait of that person (Horzum, Ayas & Padir, 2017).

Data Evaluation: SPSS 21.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) package program was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were expressed as percentage, mean, standard deviation and minimum-maximum values. Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests were used to analyze the data. $P < 0.05$ was accepted as an indicator of statistical significance.

Ethical aspects of the research: In order to conduct the research, ethics committee permission was obtained from the ethics committee commission of a university and institutional permission was obtained from the institution where the research would be conducted. The purpose and process of the research were explained to the participants by the researchers and their consent was

obtained. The research was conducted on the basis of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Results

Among nursing students, 87.6% were female and 35.6% had 3 or more siblings. While 44.1% of the sample consisted of students whose mothers' education level was primary school, 30.7% of the students' fathers' education level was high school. 61.4% of the students lived in the city and 61.9% of them were in the 3rd grade (See Table 1.).

The mean scores of the students on the TCSS were 66.49 ± 13.83 ; the mean scores on the "Extraversion" subscale were 6.24 ± 1.32 , the mean scores on the "Mildness" subscale were 7.18 ± 1.76 , the mean scores on the "Self-control" subscale were 6.98 ± 1.91 , the mean scores on the "Neuroticism (emotional balance)" subscale were 6.20 ± 1.29 and the mean scores on the "Openness to Experience" subscale were 6.39 ± 1.37 (See Table 2).

There is no difference between the mean scores of nursing students according to gender, number of siblings, mother's education level, father's education level and place of residence ($p > 0.05$). On the other hand, there is a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the mean scores of the FFPI subscale scores of nursing students according to the grade they are studying. In the pairwise analyses conducted

to evaluate from which group this difference originated, it was seen that the mean scores of the "Mildness" sub-dimension of the students studying in the first grade were higher than those of the students studying in the second grade ($Z = -2.464$; $p = 0.014$).

There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores and sub-dimension mean scores of nursing students according to gender, number of siblings, mother's education level, father's education level and place of residence ($p > 0.05$). There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the "Therapeutic Communication Skills 2" sub-dimension and the mean scores of the TTCS according to the grade of the students ($p < 0.05$).

In the pairwise analyses conducted to evaluate from which group this difference originated, it was found that the mean scores of the "Therapeutic Communication Skills 2" sub-dimension ($Z = -4.346$, $p = 0.001$) and the mean scores of the TTCS ($Z = -3.988$, $p = 0.001$) of the students studying in the first grade were higher than those of the students studying in the second grade and lower than those of the 3rd grade students ($Z = -4.371$, $p = 0.001$) ($p < 0.05$). There was also a weak positive correlation between the five-factor personality scale and therapeutic communication skills ($r = 0.157$, $p = 0.026$) (See Table 3).

Table 1. Sociodemographic data of nursing students

Sociodemographic Data		n	%
Gender	Female	177	87.6
	Male	25	12.4
Number of siblings	0	9	4.5
	1	51	25.2
	2	70	34.7
	3 and above	72	35.6
Mother's education level	Illiterate	8	4
	Primary School	89	44.1
	Middle School	49	24.3
	High School	39	19.3
	University	17	8.4

Father's education level	Primary School	38	18.8
	Middle School	46	22.8
	High School	62	30.7
	University	56	27.7
Place of residence	Village	24	11.9
	District	54	26.7
	City	124	61.4
Class of study	1	37	18.3
	2	38	18.8
	3	127	62.9
TOTAL		202	100

Table 2. Nursing students' mean scores on the TCSS and FFPI

	Min	Max	x±SD
FFPI			
Extraversion	3	10	6.24±1.32
Mildness	3	10	7.18±1.76
Self-regulation	2	10	6.98±1.91
Neuroticism	3	10	6.20±1.29
Openness to Experience	3	10	6.39±1.37
TCSS			
NonTherapeutic Communication Skills	7	41	23.35±7.49
Therapeutic Communication Skills 1	6	39	25.92±6.50
Therapeutic Communication Skills 2	3	21	17.21±3.20
TCSS Total	16	97	66.49±13.83

Table 3. Comparison of the Mean Scores of the TTCS and FFPI according to the demographic data of nursing students

	Gender	Number of Siblings	Mother's Education Status	Father's Education Status	Experienced Location	Class of Study
FFPI						
Extraversion	Z= - 0.503 p=0.615	X=4.830 p=0.185	X=2.043 p=0.564	X=3.345 p=0.341	X=5.117 p=0.077	X=0.069 p=0.966
Mildness	Z= - 0.848 p=0.397	X=6.670 p=0.083	X=3.376 p=0.337	X=2.631 p=0.452	X=2.135 p=0.344	X=8.349 p=0.015
Self-regulation	Z= - 1.074 p=0.283	X=3.479 p=0.324	X=1.307 p=0.728	X=2.216 p=0.529	X=2.040 p=0.361	X=3.052 p=0.217

Neurotism	Z= - 0.480 p=0.631	X=0.720 p=0.869	X=1.622 p=0.654	X=5.088 p=0.165	X=0.186 p=0.911	X=1.481 p=0.477
Openness to Experience	Z= - 0.832 p=0.405	X=4.952 p=0.175	X=5.918 p=0.166	X=3.136 p=0.371	X=1.053 p=0.591	X=0.430 p=0.806
TTCS						
NonTherapeutic Communication Skills	Z= - 1.397 p=0.162	X=5.201 p=0.158	X=1.190 p=0.755	X=2.198 p=0.532	X=0.089 p=0.956	X=2.447 p=0.294
Therapeutic Communication Skills 1	Z= - 1.661 p=0.097	X=6.475 p=0.091	X=4.207 p=0.240	X=5.454 p=0.141	X=0.180 p=0.914	X=5.368 p=0.068
Therapeutic Communication Skills 2	Z= - 1.789 p=0.074	X=0.326 p=0.955	X=1.238 p=0.744	X=6.447 p=0.092	X=4.247 p=0.120	X=22.737 p=0.001
TTCS Total	Z= - 0.188 p=0.851	X=3.981 P=0.264	X=1.828 p=0.609	X=2.215 p=0.529	X=1.797 p=0.407	X=13.645 p=0.001

Discussion

In this study, personality traits and therapeutic communication skills of nursing students were evaluated. When the personality traits of nursing students are examined, it is seen that mildness is the highest sub-dimension. While evaluating the FFPI, it is stated that the sub-dimension with the highest score represents the personality traits of the participants (Horzum, Ayas & Padir; 2017).

In this direction, it was determined that the students generally have the personality trait of mildness. Mildness indicates the individual's tendency to cooperate in interpersonal relationships (Horzum, Ayas & Padir; 2017).

Carrying out health care services in team cooperation is an important and valuable point for patient and employee safety and satisfaction. For this reason, it is thought that having a mild-mannered personality trait may be an advantage for students, who will be the nurses of the future, to be satisfied with the profession and to work efficiently. In Dogan's (2013) study examining personality traits and subjective well-being, a positive relationship was found between mildness personality trait and subjective well-being. (Dogan, 2013).

Gursoy and Aksoy (2021) examined the personality traits and leadership orientations of nursing and midwifery students and found that more than half of the students showed type A personality traits. In the related study,

it is stated that individuals with type A personality traits are individuals who love competition, devote themselves to their work, are punctual and aim to be very successful in a short time (Gursoy & Aksoy, 2021).

Interpersonal relationships are at the forefront in the nursing profession. It is thought that the personality characteristics of nursing students are important in terms of both their own well-being and their motivation to perform their profession in the best way since they start their profession.

Considering the grade in which the students were studying, the soft-headedness scores of the students studying in the first grade were higher than those of the students studying in the second grade. Nursing education is an education in which students are equipped with professional knowledge as well as skills to perform their profession in the best way. In this education process, students' personality traits are also shaped as a result of the education they receive. Nursing students, who are the leaders of the health team, are expected to be strengthened in areas such as leadership, emotional intelligence, team cooperation, problem solving, and conflict management at the end of their education.

However, this study did not use a measurement tool that evaluates this aspect of students. Kilinc et al. (2019) examined the leadership characteristics of nursing students

regarding emotional intelligence in their study. According to the results of the study, it was seen that students studying in the second and last year had higher emotional intelligence leadership (Kilinc et al., 2019).

In our study, the reason for the low mildness scores of second-year students suggests that the education they received strengthened different aspects of their personalities.

Students' therapeutic communication skill levels are close to the average. The highest score that can be obtained from the TTCS is 112 and the lowest score is 16. (Horzum, Ayas & Padir; 2017).

This scale evaluates the level of therapeutic and nontherapeutic communication skills that students acquire during the education process and use in clinical practice (Horzum, Ayas & Padir; 2017). In the faculty where the study was conducted, students take communication skills course in the first year and psychiatric nursing course in the third year. Therapeutic and non-therapeutic communication skills are among the topics covered in the communication skills and psychiatric nursing course. When the data are evaluated in this direction, it is thought that the reason why the therapeutic communication skill levels of first-year students are higher than second-year students is related to the fact that their knowledge on this subject is new and fresh. On the other hand, the high therapeutic communication scores of third-year students suggest that their knowledge is more consolidated because they received training on this subject in both the first and third grades.

In Hendekci's (2020) study evaluating the communication skills of nursing students, it was stated that the communication skills scores of students studying in the last year were high (Hendekci, 2020). It is thought that the trainings received by nursing students increase their skill levels and therefore, it is important to increase the quality of trainings to support therapeutic communication skills and to support them with interactive training methods.

A weak positive correlation was found between students' personality traits and therapeutic communication skills. In the study of Sogut et al. (2018) evaluating the

communication skills of nursing students, the communication skill levels of students who had difficulties in interpersonal and professional relationships and who did not consider themselves to be a social individual were found to be low (Sogut, et al., 2018). In the study of Ayar et al. (2019), it was stated that there was a positive, low-level significant relationship between personality traits and professional values of undergraduate nursing students (Ayar et al., 2019).

According to Akgun and Cetin (2018) in their study with university students, it is stated that students with developed empathy skills are also good at interpersonal relationships (Akgun and Cetin, 2018). Nursing is a professional group in which communication is a basic tool in the process of giving care to healthy and sick individuals. Therefore, it is expected to have effective communication skills in order for the care-giving process to be qualified. It is seen that personality traits also affect communication skills. In this direction, it is recommended to increase the studies supporting communication skills by evaluating students in terms of personality traits.

Conclusion: In this study in which therapeutic communication skills and personality traits of nursing students were examined, it was found that the students had high scores of mild-mannered personality trait. Therapeutic communication skills and personality traits of the students vary according to the class in which they study. In this direction, it is recommended to organize trainings to support the development of students' personality traits in nursing education institutions. Nursing is a profession in which interpersonal relationships are at the forefront in the care-giving process. Communication skills are at the forefront in the steps of data collection, care planning, implementation and evaluation of the care given to the patient. For these reasons, it is recommended to increase training programs to support nursing students' therapeutic communication skills.

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