Original Article

Analysis of Nurses' Attitudes about the Nursing Profession in Southern Turkey

Gulay Ipek Coban, PhD
Associate Professor, Fundamentals of Nursing Department, Faculty of Health Science, Erzurum, Turkey

Nurcan Kıırca, MSc
Research Assistant, Fundamentals of Nursing Department, Antalya, Turkey

Afife Yurttaş, PhD
Associate Professor, Fundamentals of Nursing Department, Faculty of Health Science, Erzurum, Turkey

Correspondence: Gulay Ipek Coban Associate professor, Fundamentals of Nursing Department, Faculty of Health Science 25240 Erzurum, Turkey. E-mail: laypek_6@hotmail.com

Abstract

Aim: The aim of the present study was to elicit information on Turkish nurses attitudes toward their profession.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional design was used in the study. A convenience sample of 403 nurses with at least four years clinical experience in their current institution were recruited from one university hospital and two state hospitals in a large metropolitan area of southern Turkey. The Attitude Scale toward Nursing Profession (ASNP) questionnaire was completed by the participants to determine their attitudes toward the nursing profession.

The mean score on the ASNP was 157.29 ± 17.34, which indicates that the nurses had a positive attitude toward their profession. The nurses with a higher educational level scored more positively.

Conclusions and implications for practice: The limitation of the study is it was only made to the nurses of one hospital in Turkey. It is necessary to periodically review nurses' performance in order to evaluate their attitude toward the profession. Personal motivation may be generated by rewarding occupational successes.

Implications for nursing and health policy: It is possible to evaluate attitudes of members of the nursing profession toward nursing by the use of attitude scales concerning the profession.

Key words: Nursing, nursing practice, attitude

Introduction

In addition to being part of the social system in every country, the overlapping identity of nursing with the traditional motherhood role has helped it to become a health discipline and profession. The nursing profession has advanced over time in Turkey, taking account of technological developments. In terms of scientific development and professionalization, considerable steps have been taken and these are still in progress (Ay, 2008).

Recent increasing interest in the nursing profession in Turkey and also in the rest of the world, the admission of men to the profession, legislative actions, and the making of regulations have demonstrated how important nursing is. It is necessary to understand how nurses working at health institutions and organizations perceive their profession; those who receive and provide nursing services are expected to display attitudes and behaviors that show awareness of the necessity of nursing profession.

Attitude is a tendency that is attributed to an individual and it forms his/her ideas, feelings, and behaviors about a psychological object (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2004). Attitude represents very organized long-term feelings, beliefs, and behavior tendencies (Cüceloğlu, 1999). Tezbaşaran described attitude as learned tendencies for positive or negative reaction toward a specific object, situation, institution, concept, or other people (Tezbaşaran, 1997). Morris (2004) also defined attitude as the relatively stable organization of beliefs, feelings, and tendencies toward a thing or a person – an attitude object. As understood from these definitions, attitude shows itself in feelings, ideas, and actions. Thus, attitude can be defined as a positive or negative pre-tendency to a reaction that cannot be observed directly, related to an object, situation, or feelings toward individuals; it changes from person to person and guides him/her.

It is possible to evaluate attitudes of members of the nursing profession toward nursing by the use of attitude scales concerning the profession. If there are negative attitudes toward the profession, it can create an opportunity to plan and apply educational goals as a means of changing them. By encouraging trainees to develop positive attitudes toward their profession during their initial education, it may be possible to make a contribution by training nurses who will be loyal and devoted to their profession. It is considered that this research will make a contribution to studies regarding the development and enhancement of the nursing profession.

By evaluating the attitudes of healthcare personnel toward the profession, especially nurses who spend more time with patients, the factors which affect how they adapt themselves to their profession and their expectations from it can be determined. The physical, spiritual, and social wellness of nurses affects both the treatment that they provide and the progress in the representation of health services (Altuntaş & Baykal, 2008).

Nurses who are not content with their jobs and who have a negative attitude toward their profession will suffer more from mental problems such as stress, tension, and high anxiety. This will prevent them from focusing on their work; as a result, they will show behaviors such as complaining about their work, institution, and colleagues as well as idleness and absenteeism, which will affect the availability of nursing services. Moreover, they will affect their fellow workers negatively, which may diminish their motivation and work performance.

The attitudes of nurses toward their work, profession, organization, and administration will predict the behaviors that they will show in these fields. The administrators of nursing services can contribute to both the nursing service and the development of its staff by evaluating their attitudes and taking actions according to the results (Altuntaş & Baykal 2008).

This study was undertaken in order to determine attitudes of nurses toward their education.

Methodology

Design

A descriptive cross-sectional design was used in the study.

Sample and Participant Selection

A convenience sample of 435 nurses with at least four years clinical experience in their current institution was recruited from one university hospital and two state hospitals in a large metropolitan area of southern Turkey. The nurses who agreed to be included had worked at different clinics and had served at the same institution for at least a year. However, because some nurses did not complete the responses, lost the form, had insufficient time, or had left their job, complete data for 403 out of 435 nurses were acquired.

Instruments

The following instruments were used for the survey:

(1) Demographic Questionnaire: The demographic questionnaire was developed by the researchers according to the literature and included the variables of age, gender, marital status, education level, years of working, location of clinical work, and so on.

(2) Attitude Scale toward Nursing Profession (ASNP): In order to determine attitudes toward the profession, a questionnaire was formed by

researchers using relevant literature and the Attitude Scale toward Nursing Profession (ASNP) for use as a data collection tool. ASNP was developed by Ipek, Coban, and Kasikci in 2010, and its validity and reliability has been confirmed. It is a 40-item questionnaire that uses a 5-point Likert-type scale. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale is 0.91.

There are three sub-dimensions of ASNP: "Properties of nursing profession" (total number of items is 18); "Preference for nursing profession" (total number of items is 13); and "General position of nursing profession" (total number of items is 9)**.**

The total score for the scale is 200. Reverse scoring was performed on items 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30, 34, and 38 – the higher the score, the more positive the attitude toward the profession.

Data analysis plan

Descriptive research was carried out at a university hospital and two state hospitals in the city center of Antalya between the dates of May and August 2011. All of the nurses working at state institutions in Antalya city center formed the population. The sample size of the research was counted by the known sample of context method.

Having received permission from the institutions, the data collection tools were distributed to the nurses working on the day shift and they were collected a few days later.

The time required for filling out the questionnaire is between 10 and 12 minutes for each. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the demographic data.

The data were analyzed by performing percentages, one way analysis of variance, and t-test.

Results

Descriptive features of the nurses included in the research are shown in Table 1. These reveal that 45% of the nurses in the research were in the 28 to 35 age group, 69% of them were married, 57.3 % were nursing graduates, and 33.2 % had been working for 15 years or more. It was also noted that 44.7% of the staff had a monthly income of

TL 1500–2500, 80.6% of them were not members of any union, and 49.4% chose this profession because their families wanted it (Table 1).

The scores that nurses obtained from the ASNP and its subscales are evaluated according to the break points. The total of average scores that they obtained from the ASNP is noted as 157.29 ± 17.34 (Table 2).

It was observed that, statistically there is no meaningful difference between the ages of the nurses and their total scores on the ASNP ($p > 0.01$). However, it was also observed that there is a meaningful difference between the age and the subscale score of the ASNP's "General position of nursing profession" ($p > 0.01$; see Table 3)

In addition, statistically there is no significant difference between the marital status of the nurses and total score obtained from the ASNP ($p > 0.01$). It was observed that there is a significant difference between the educational status of the nurses and the sub-dimension of "Properties of nursing profession" and the total score obtained for the ASNP ($p < 0.05$).

The average total ASNP score of the nurses was 157.29 ± 17.34. It was identified that average scale score of the nurses is above the cut off score; thus nurses' attitude toward the profession is positive.

Furthermore, there was a meaningful statistical difference between years of work and the sub-dimension of "General position of nursing profession" ($p < 0.05$). Statistically, there is an important difference between the clinic where nurses work and the sub-dimension of "Preference of nursing profession" ($p<0.05$).

In addition, there was a significant difference between nurses' membership about nursing and sub-dimension of "Preference of nursing profession" in the total points obtained from the ASNP ($p < 0.05$).

Finally, having family members and relatives that are also nurses made an important difference to the results for "General position of nursing profession," "Preference for nursing profession" and the total score nurses' obtained for the ASNP ($p < 0.05$).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics and Reasons for Choosing Nursing as a Profession (Study population N = 403)

Variable	Number (%)
Sex	
Female	389 (96.5)
Male	14 (3.5)
Age (in years)	
20–27	77 (19.1)
28–35	181 (44.9)
35 and above	145 (36.0)
Marital Status	
Married	279 (69.2)
Single	124 (30.8)
Educational Status (highest level achieved)	
High school	14 (3.5)
Associate degree	149 (37.0)
Bachelor's degree	231 (57.3)
Postgraduates	9 (2.2)
Years of Nursing Practice	
1–5 years	83 (20.6)
6–10 years	87 (21.6)
11–15 years	101 (25.1)
15 years and more	132 (32.7)
Location of Clinical work	
Surgical clinic	146 (36.2)
Internal clinic	257 (63.8)
Monthly income in TL*	
1500–2500	180 (44.7)
2500–3500	95 (23.6)
3500 and above	128 (31.8)
Union membership of nursing	
Yes	78 (19.4)
No	325 (80.6)
Any other nurses in family or relatives	
Yes	173 (42.9)
No	230 (57.1)
Reason for choosing the profession **	
Nursing has non-public working opportunity	75 (18.6)
Nursing is a holy profession	54 (13.4)
I am Inspired by nurses	51 (12.7)
Nursing has easier appointment criteria than other professions	162 (40.2)
Nursing is highly motivated profession	19 (4.7)
Nursing gives opportunity for academic enhancement	19 (4.7)
There is no other choice	87 (21.6)
My family wanted me to be a nurse.	189 (46.9)
Total	403 (**100**)

 * TL = Turkish Lire (1EURO=2,50 TL)   ** **May** have more than one answer

Table 2. Average Score that Nurses Obtained from Attitude Scale toward Nursing Profession (ASNP; N = 403)

ASNP Subscale	X ± standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Properties of nursing profession	79.59 ± 9,01	47.00	90.00
Preference for nursing profession	43.52 ± 8,94	21.00	64.00
General position of nursing profession	34.18 ± 3,11	26.00	51.00
Total	157.29 ± 17.3	100.00	199.00

Discussion

Every individual has original and latent ability, innate capacity, and potential. People always want to reveal, use, and develop these in their lifetime (Kuzgun, 2010). One element that can enable the development of these is a person's occupation. Correct use of an individual's talents and potential is facilitated by the correct choice of profession, and whether the person is devoted to her/his profession. Loving one's job helps individuals to achieve self-realization and behave in a professional manner by galvanizing them and revealing their original talents and potential (Beydağ & Arslan, 2008; Dede & Çınar, 2008; Karamanoğlu, Özer, & Tuğcu, 2009). In this context, the development of the nursing profession is can be made possible by professionalizing of members of this service.

It can be said that social and other nearby facilities in the city in which nurses who participated in the research lived raised their professional attitudes. A research study in which factors affecting job satisfaction in service businesses were analyzed was carried out by Ölçer (2005); it was pointed that environmental factors such as recreation activities and facilities for social progress improved the attitude toward the profession and job satisfaction. A positive attitude toward the profession can be identified for those who are graduates and postgraduates. One of the researches carried out by Ünsar, Akgün Kostak, Kurt, and Erol (2011) stated that 69.6% of nurses love their profession and 48.2% of them chose the profession because they loved it. As devotion to one's profession is a positive attitude, the results of this study resemble the results of our study

One study (Karamanoğlu et al., 2009) found that 22% of nurses did not love their profession and that the professionalism of those who loved their profession was better than that of those who did not. In a different study, Arcak and Kasımoğlu (2006) found that 37% of nurses did not love their profession. Another study by Beydağ and Arslan (2008) noted that 64.2% of nurses do not love their profession or they are undetermined about this issue, and that nurses and midwives who are not content with their profession and who want to change their profession are less professional.

It was observed that there was a statistically an important difference between the subscale for the "General position of nursing profession" and age according to the ASNP results (p > 0.01). The older the nurses, the more positive their attitude becomes toward the general position of nursing. In her study, Polat (2008) pointed out that the job satisfaction of young nurses is relatively higher

than other age groups. It was noticed that there is statistically significant difference between nurses' length of service and "General position of nursing profession" ($p < 0.05$). It was observed that nurses with a longer service period are more positive about their profession than those with a shorter service period. As there is a direct relation between nurses' age and service period, it is thought that the improvement in this attribute is due to the length of service. In this context, "service period" means the duration of a person's employment at the institution (Sığrı & Basım, 2006). Naturally, in parallel with a long period of service, income growth, promotion, and greater responsibilities can be expected. The relationship between job satisfaction and service duration can be explained by the rewards that employees obtain from an organization for their service.

Table 3. Average Score of ASNP According to Descriptive Features of Nurses

Descriptive Features	Properties of nursing profession Test and p value	Preference for nursing profession Test and p value	General position of nursing profession Test and p value	Total ASNP Test and p value
Age 20–27 28–35 35 and above	F = 1.001 p = 0.471	F = 1.158 p = 0.237	F = 1.001 **p = 0.009***	F = 1.222 p = 0,116
Sex Female Male	t = 0.340 p = 0.176	t = −0.567 p = 0.663	t = 0.483 p = 0.949	t = −0.029 p = 0.589
Educational Status High school Associate degree Bachelor's degree Postgraduates	F = 1.477 **p = 0.040***	F = 1.213 p = 0.177	F = 1.208 p = 0.251	F = 1.384 **p = 0.027***
Years of Work 1–5 years 6–10 years 11–15 years 15 years and more	F = 1.042 p = 0.407	F = 1.019 p = 0.443	F = 2.048 **p = 0.007***	F = 1.217 p = 0.121
Clinic of work Surgical clinic Internal clinic	t = 1.619 p = 0.189	t = 1.734 **p = 0.010***	t = 1.084 p = 0.390	t = 1.924 p = 0.168
Union membership of nursing Yes No	t = −1.387 p = 0.293	t = −2.383 **p = 0.021***	t = −1.465 p = 0.294	t = −2.211 **p = 0.035***
Any other nurses in family or relatives Yes No	t = −2.760 p = 0.595	t = −1.954 **p = 0.038***	t = −2.022 **p = 0.024***	t = −2.807 **p = 0.041***

*p<0.01

When an evaluation of the years passed in an organization is made, and when the facts about the organization are considered, it is possible to identify an improvement in attitudes toward the profession.

A statistically significant difference was observed between the education levels of nurses and the sub-dimension of "Properties of nursing profession" and total score they obtained from the ASNP ($p < 0.05$). The higher the nurses' education level, the more positive their attitude was toward the profession. Having evaluated job satisfaction and professional attitude, it can be observed that the relation between "education" and attitude toward the profession may be negative or positive. If employees believe that there is insufficient reward in proportion to the higher education level and capabilities, there will be decrease in job satisfaction and a poorer professional attitude. On the other hand, if a higher education level and improved capabilities lead to positive changes in position, salary, authority, and responsibilities, there will be an improvement in their attitude toward the profession. In the Nursing Regulation, passed in Turkey in 2010, the importance of the education level of nurses' and their duties, authority, and responsibilities is stressed, and nurses who have a bachelor's or a master's degree are employed in the more senior positions. With this improvement in position, it is very natural that nurses with higher education levels should have more positive attitudes toward the profession (Official Gazette, 2007).

It was observed that there is a statistically meaningful difference between the clinics that nurses work serve and the sub-dimension of "Preference of nursing profession" ($p < 0.05$). It was noted that nurses working at internal clinics have a more positive attitude toward the profession than those working at surgical clinics, depending on preference of the profession. Preoperative and postoperative care, excessive acute changes compared to surgical clinics, and high risk levels are some indicators of difficulty of working in these clinics. Firstly, difficult hard working conditions may lead to some physical diseases; secondly, employees may experience physiological problems as long working hours takes most of an employee's time. Scandura and Lankau (1997) have pointed out that less busy female employees with family responsibilities have more positive attitudes toward the profession than busier ones.

It was observed that there was a statistically significant difference between membership of a nurses' organization, the sub-dimension of "Preference for nursing profession," and the total score they obtained from the ASNP ($p < 0.05$). Non-union member nurses had a more positive attitude toward the profession than members in terms of preference for the profession. This could be related to the low number of nurses (19.4%) included in the research. Buldukoğlu, Kantek, and Öncel (2004) found that the occupational organisation of nurses is low. According to these findings it can be said that occupational organization of nurses and nursing students has not developed at the expected level. It may be useful to raise the consciousness of this to stress the importance of occupational organization and their motivation.

It was observed that there was a statistically significant difference between the status of having nurse relatives and the "General position of nursing profession," "Preference for nursing profession," and the total score they obtained from the ASNP ($p < 0.05$). It was remarked that nurses who do not have nurse relatives have more positive attitudes toward the profession than the ones who have nurse relatives. It was thought that this may be because of the negative attitudes of nurse family members among their relatives.

Implications for nursing and health policy: It is possible to evaluate attitudes of members of the nursing profession toward nursing by the use of attitude scales concerning the profession. If there are negative attitudes toward the profession, it can create an opportunity to plan and apply educational goals as a means of changing them.

Conclusion and Suggestions

As a result of this study being carried out to determine the attitudes of nurses toward the profession, it was determined that nurses who have more a positive attitude also possess the following features:

- A love for their profession

- A longer service period

- A low education level

- Work at internal clinics

- Do not have membership of a nurses' organizations

- Do not have relatives who are nurses.

In accordance with these results, the following suggestions for improvement can be made:

- It is necessary to periodically review nurses' performance in order to evaluate their attitude toward the profession.

- Personal motivation may be generated by rewarding occupational successes.

- Working conditions at surgical clinics should be regularization and systematized.

- Support should be given to members of the profession and potential candidates for nursing to raise their education levels.

- Similar studies on different sample groups may be carried out.

References

Altuntaş, S., & Baykal, Ü. (2008). Adaptation of Attitude Scale toward Profession for Nurses. *Atatürk University Journal of Nursing School*, *11*(1), 51–62.

Arcak, R., & Kasımoğlu, E. (2006). Role of the nurses who work at hospitals and health centres of Diyarbakır centre in health services and their job satisfaction. *Dicle Medical Journal*, *33*(1), 23–30.

Ay, F. (2008). *Basic Nursing, concepts, principles, practices*. Istanbul: Medical Publishing: 5-30.

Beydağ, K. D., & Arslan, H. (2008). Factors that affect professionalism of midwives and nurses working in gynaecology clinics. *Journal of Fırat Health Services*, *3*(7), 75–87.

Buldukoğlu, K., Kantek, F., & Öncel, S. (2004). A study of evaluation and reformation of education: Views of first three term graduates from Antalya School of Health. *Journal of Nursing Forum*, 2, 8–16.

Coban, G. I., & Kasikci, M. (2011). Development of the Attitude Scale for Nursing Profession. *Int J Nurs Pract*, 17(5), 518–524.

Cüceloğlu, D. (1999). *Human and his behaviour: Basic Concepts of Psychology*. İstanbul: Remzi Bookstore Publishing.

Dede, M., & Çınar, S. (2008). Job satisfaction and determination of difficulties that intensive care nurses working in internal clinics face. *Maltepe Üniversity Journal of Nursing Science and Art*, 1(1), 3–14.

Kağıtçıbaşı, Ç. (2004). Human and Human Beings. İstanbul: Evrim Printing and Publishing.

Karamanoğlu, A. Y., Özer, F. G., & Tuğcu, A. (2009). Evaluation of professionalism of nurses working in surgical clinics of hospitals in Denizli. *Fırat Medical Journal*, 14(1), 12–17.

Kuzgun, Y. Self realization (2010). Retrieved from http://journals.ankara.edu.tr/journals/34/970/11942.pdf

Morris, C. (2002). *Understanding Psychology* (Trans. A. Erkus, A. D. Batıgün, Ayvasık, B., and colleagues). Ankara: TPD Publications.

Official Gazette (2007). 8.3.2010-27515. Retrieved from http://www.ttb.org.tr/mevzuat/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=745:hemrel-yetmel&catid=2:ymelik&Itemid=33

Ölçer, F. (2005). A survey on department stores. *Journal of Erciyes University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences*, *25*, 45–68.

Polat, N. (2008). *Nurses' stress based on profession and their job satisfaction: Field work at a training hospital* (master's thesis). Başkent University Institute of Social Sciences, Administration of Health Facilities, Ankara.

Scandura, T.A., & ve Lankau, M. (1997). Relationships of gender, family responsibility and flexible work hours to organizational commitment and job satisfaction. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *18*(4), 377–391.

Sığrı, Ü., & Basım, N. (2006). Analysis of workers' job satisfaction and level of organizational commitment: A comparative research on state and private sectors. *Selçuk University Journal of Social and Economic Researches*, *6*(12), 131–154.

Tezbaşaran, A. (1997). *Manual of development of Likert Scale.* Ankara: TPD Publications.

Ünsar. S., Akgün Kostak, M., Kurt, S., & Erol, Ö. (2011). Nurses' self realization levels and affecting factors, *DEUHYO*, *4*(1), 2–6.