

Original Article

Comfort Level of Nursing First Year Students in their First Clinical Practice Experience and Affecting Factors

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Abstract

Background: The comfort level of nursing students in clinical practice is an important but overlooked issue.

Aim: This research was carried out to determine the comfort level and the affecting factors in the first clinical practice experience of first year nursing students.

Methodology: The population of the descriptive and cross-sectional study consisted of nursing students studying in the nursing department of a state university, taking the nursing principles course and participating in clinical practice for the first time (N=114). 110 nursing students who voluntarily accepted to participate in the study and who did not attend the first clinical practice day constituted the sample of the study. The data were collected with a questionnaire form consisting of questions to determine the characteristics of the students regarding the sociodemographic and nursing principles course, and the Short General Comfort Questionnaire.

Results: In the study, the total score average of the students' Short General Comfort Questionnaire was found to be 4.38 ± 0.69 . It was determined that the total score average of the General Comfort Scale Short Form of the students who willingly preferred the nursing department, the relaxation sub-dimension score average of the nursing students who did not feel fear due to the fact that their first clinical application was during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the average score of the overcoming problems sub-dimension of the nursing students who did not have difficulty in fulfilling their self-care needs during the first clinical practice day ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions: In this study, it was found that the comfort levels of nursing students were above the average. In order to ensure that the first clinical applications of the students of the nursing department are better quality and efficient, it is recommended to increase the comfort level of the students by preparing them effectively for this clinical practice before the first clinical practice experience.

Keywords: Clinical practice, comfort, nurse

Introduction

Comfort, which is a concept associated with nursing, is a very complex, individual and holistic concept (Yucel, 2011). Comfort, which is based on relaxation, which is one of the nursing functions, was first theorized by Kolcaba (Terzi & Kaya, 2017). According to Kolcaba, comfort; It is an expected result with a complex structure in physical,

psychospiritual, social and environmental integrity related to helping the individual's needs, providing peace and overcoming problems (Karabacak & Potur, 2017). Kocaba's Comfort Theory has a taxonomic structure consisting of three levels and four dimensions. These levels are; relief, ease, transcendence. Its dimensions are physical, socio-cultural, psychospiritual and

environmental environments where the needs for comfort arise (Karabacak & Potur, 2017; Terzi & Kaya, 2017). The concept of comfort in nursing; It is defined as the process of diagnosing the comfort needs of the patient individual/family/society as a function or result of nursing, planning nursing interventions for unmet needs, and evaluating the basic comfort level and the comfort level after practice (Terzi & Kaya, 2017).

Being a university student and university life can affect the comfort levels of individuals by bringing with them negative emotions such as leaving the family, starting to live in another city, a new environment, new friends, economic problems, fear of school, and future anxiety about career and working life, as well as positive feelings such as joy (Aylaz et al., 2007; Celikel, 2008; Dowd et al., 2007). Nursing students, on the other hand, face some problems created by the school and hospital environment, as well as the negativities they experience as a university student and young person (Erbil, Kahraman & Bostan, 2006).

The main purpose of nursing education is to provide students with knowledge, skills and attitudes in cognitive, affective and psychomotor fields. Nursing education consists of two parts: theoretical and clinical applications that complement theoretical knowledge. The importance of clinical practice in nursing education is indisputable (Mankan et al., 2016). Clinical learning experience is an integral and necessary part of nursing education. Because it enables nursing students to learn the necessary professional knowledge and skills. It also develops psychomotor skills that form the basis of roles that enable them to socialize. In addition to its contribution to professional skill acquisition, clinical learning is among the reasons that cause the most anxiety and stress in students. Especially since the first clinical experience is unpredictable and challenging, it may cause more anxiety and stress, may be perceived as a threat and danger by students, and it may be difficult to provide comfort in the face of this threat-hazard perception (Arabaci et al., 2015). In such a stressful education, students' comfort levels should be taken into consideration (Erbil, Kahraman & Bostan, 2006). The comfort of nurses and nursing students who try to increase the comfort level

of patients is often overlooked. However, they also deserve the comfort they provide to patients (Herad et al., 2014). Therefore, in this study, it was aimed to determine the comfort level and the affecting factors in the first clinical practice experience of the first year nursing students.

Methods

Study design and sample: This research is of descriptive and cross-sectional type. In the study, it was aimed to determine the comfort level and the affecting factors in the first clinical practice experience of the first year nursing students. The research was carried out in a public university health college in April 2022. The population of the study consisted of nursing students studying in the nursing department of a health school of a state university, taking the basics of nursing course and participating in clinical practice for the first time (N=114). 110 nursing students who voluntarily accepted to participate in the study and who did not attend the first clinical practice day constituted the sample of the study.

Data Collection Tools: A questionnaire form consisting of questions to determine the sociodemographic characteristics of the students, the basics of nursing course and the first clinical practice day, and the Short General Comfort Questionnaire were used to collect the data.

Short General Comfort Questionnaire: The Turkish validity and reliability study of the scale developed by Citlik Saritas et al. The scale consists of three sub-dimensions, namely relief (9 items), ease (9 items), and transcendence (10 items) and 28 items. A six-point rating ranges from 6=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree. In the evaluation of the scale consisting of positive and negative items, negative items are summed up with reverse coding. The average value is found by dividing the total score obtained by the number of scale items. The lowest possible value, 1, indicates low comfort, and the highest value, 6, indicates high comfort. Reverse expressions are: 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25 and 27. Other items are plain coded. In the study of Citlik Saritas et al., the Cronbach alpha values of the scale were found to be 0.82 (Citlik Saritaş, Cevik & Ozden, 2018). In this study, it was found to be 0.87.

Ethical Dimension: In order to carry out the research, ethics committee approval was obtained from the Scientific Research Ethics Committee with the date 04.04.2022 and number 2022/121, and the institutional permission was obtained from the xxx institution with the date 01.03.2022 and number 218550. Survey forms were sent to students online using Google Forms. The students were informed in writing that the purpose of the study, personal information and confidentiality would be protected, and that the participation was voluntary, their consent was obtained and they were asked to fill out the questionnaires at the end of the first clinical practice day. The Declaration of Helsinki was complied with. We acted in accordance with the principles of research and publication ethics.

Statistical Analysis: IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (version 21.0) was used to evaluate the data. While evaluating the categorical variables, the number and percentage distribution were used, while the mean and standard deviation were used for the continuous variables. Independent-Samples t-test and One Way ANOVA tests were used to compare quantitative continuous data between independent groups. Statistical significance cut-off value was accepted as $p < 0.05$.

Results

The mean age of the nursing students participating in the study was 19.60 ± 1.15 years. 64.5% of the students were female, 69.1% of them were Anatolian high school graduates, 81.8% of them voluntarily preferred the nursing department, the general average of 49.1% was between 3.49-3.00 and 50.9% of them had their first clinical practice experience in internal clinics. Before the first clinical practice, 90% of the students stated that they found the theoretical training they received and 52.2% the laboratory practice training they received sufficient, and 73.6% of them reported that they watched visual materials related to their practice skills. On the first day of clinical practice, 84.5% of the students stated that they were compatible with

the guidance nurse, 80% with their friends in the clinical practice group, 59.1% with their clinical nurses, and 72.7% of them could easily communicate with the patients. 89.1% of the students stated that they felt physically healthy on the first clinical practice day, 74.5% of the students stated that they were not culturally challenged in the practice environment (team, friends, patients), and 69.1% were satisfied with the first clinical practice day. 53.6% of the students reported that they had enough sleep in the evening before the first clinical practice, and 63.6% reported that they did not feel fear because their first clinical practice was during the COVID-19 pandemic. 64.5% of the students stated that they were satisfied with the physical conditions (ambient temperature, elevator, dressing room, etc.) of the hospital where they performed their first clinical practice, and 85.5% stated that they had no difficulty in fulfilling their self-care needs (nutrition, WC) during the first clinical practice day (Table 1).

In our study, the total mean score of the Short General Comfort Questionnaire on the first clinical practice day of nursing students was 4.38 ± 0.69 . The mean score for the general comfort scale was 4.39 ± 0.75 for the relief sub-dimension, 4.18 ± 0.77 for the ease sub-dimension, and 4.55 ± 0.78 for the transcendence (Table 2).

In our study, it was determined that the total mean score of the Short General Comfort Questionnaire of the students who willingly preferred the nursing department was higher than the students who reluctantly preferred the nursing department ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3). Since the first clinical practice was during the COVID-19 pandemic, nursing students who did not feel fear had a higher ease sub-dimension score average than those who felt fear ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3). It was determined that nursing students who did not have difficulty in fulfilling their self-care needs (nutrition, WC) during the first clinical practice day had a higher average score of transcendence sub-dimension than students who had difficulties ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3).

Table 1. Sociodemographic and first clinical practice characteristics of first year nursing students (n=110)

	Min-Max	Mean±SD
Age (years)	18-25	19.60±1.15
	n	%
Gender		
Woman	71	64.5
Male	39	35.5
Graduated high school		
Health Vocational High School	15	13.6
Anatolian High School	76	69.1
Other	19	17.3
General average		
4.00-3.50	27	24.5
3.49-3.00	54	49.1
2.99-2.50	24	21.8
2.49-2.00	5	4.5
The case of willingly choosing the nursing department		
Yes	90	81.8
No	20	18.2
The type of clinic in which she/he performed the first clinical practice		
Internal clinics	54	50.9
Surgical clinics	56	49.1
The state of finding the theoretical training received before the first clinical practice sufficient		
Sufficient	99	90
Partly enough	7	6.4
Insufficient	4	3.6
The state of finding the laboratory application performed before the first clinical application satisfactory		
Sufficient	58	52.7
Partly enough	41	37.3
Insufficient	11	10
The state of watching visual materials related to practice skills before the first clinical application		

I watched	81	73.6
I partially watched	21	19.1
I did not watch	8	7.3
Adaptation status with the guide nurse on the first clinical practice day		
I adapted	93	84.5
I couldn't adapt	17	15.5
Adjustment to friends in the first clinical practice group		
I adapted	88	80
I couldn't adapt	22	20
Adaptation to clinical nurses on the first clinical practice day		
I adapted	65	59.1
I couldn't adapt	45	40.9
Ability to communicate easily with patients on the first day of clinical practice		
Yes	80	72.7
No	30	27.3
The state of feeling physically healthy on the first day of clinical practice		
Yes	98	89.1
No	12	10.9
Getting enough sleep in the evening before the first clinical application		
Yes	59	53.6
No	51	46.4
Cultural strain in the practice environment (team, friends, patients) on the first clinical practice day		
I was forced	28	25.5
I was not forced	82	74.5
The state of feeling fear due to the fact that the first clinical application was during the COVID-19 pandemic period		
I was scared	40	36.6
I'm not afraid	70	63.4
Satisfaction with the first clinical practice day		
I am satisfied	76	69.1
Dissatisfied	34	30.9

The state of being satisfied with the physical conditions (ambient temperature, elevator, dressing room, etc.) of the hospital where the first clinical application was made		
I am satisfied	71	64.5
Dissatisfied	39	35.5
Difficulty in fulfilling self-care needs (nutrition, WC) during the first clinical practice day		
I was forced	16	14.5
I was not forced	94	85.5

Min: Minimum, Max: Maximum, SD: Standard Deviation

Table 2. Short General Comfort Questionnaire mean scores of first year nursing students

Scales and Sub-Dimensions	Scale Range	Min-Max	Mean±SD
Short General Comfort Questionnaire Total Score	1-6	2.57-5.71	4.38±0.69
Relief Sub-Dimension	1-6	2.56-5.89	4.39±0.75
Ease Sub-Dimension	1-6	2.11-6	4.18±0.77
Transcendence Sub-Dimension	1-6	1.90-6	4.55±0.78

Table 3. Comparison of some sociodemographic and first clinical practice-related characteristics of first-year nursing students and their mean score of the Short General Comfort Questionnaire

Features	Short General Comfort Questionnaire Total Score	Relief Sub-Dimension	Ease Sub-Dimension	Transcendence Sub-Dimension
The case of willingly choosing the nursing department				
Yes	4.48±0.68	4.46±0.74	4.23±0.76	4.63±0.77
No	4.11±0.66	4.10±0.76	3.99±0.81	4.18±0.72
t	1.997	1.961	1.243	2.383
p	0.048*	0.052	0.217	0.019
The state of feeling fear due to the fact that the first clinical application was during the COVID-19 pandemic period				
I was scared	4.28±0.67	4.28±0.72	4.01±0.74	4.49±0.74
I'm not afraid	4.44±0.70	4.45±0.76	4.28±0.77	4.59±0.80

t	1.214	1.154	1.807	0.634
p	0.227	0.251	0.044*	0.527
Difficulty in fulfilling self-care needs (nutrition, WC) during the first clinical practice day				
I was forced	4.11±0.65	4.14±0.72	4.05±0.72	4.12±0.78
I was not forced	4.43±0.69	4.43±0.75	4.21±0.78	4.62±0.76
t	1.720	1.439	0.741	2.426
p	0.088	0.153	0.460	0.017*

*Student t test

Discussion

According to Kolcaba holistic approach, the concept of comfort; explains it as the instant experience of meeting basic human needs in order to find relief, ease, transcendence (Terzi & Kaya, 2017). Comfort is a situation where basic needs are met. These needs are met with According to Kolcaba holistic approach, the concept of comfort; explains it as the instant experience of meeting basic human needs in order to find relief, ease, transcendence. The state of calmness necessary for effective performance is defined as relief, the state of meeting a certain need, the state of ease necessary for the person to re-establish normal functioning, and the feeling of skill and potential that one has to control one's own life is defined as transcendence (Apostolo, 2009; Apostolo & Kolcaba, 2013).

The first clinical experience, which enables the nursing student to understand the relationship between theoretical knowledge and practice, contributes to the learning of psychomotor skills. The first clinical experience causes more anxiety and stress in nursing students due to uncertainty and reluctance. In the first year nursing students who went into clinical practice for the first time; It is stated that reasons such as fear of making mistakes, procedures, equipment, observation and evaluation by the educator, patient education, and first clinical experience affect students negatively (Su et al., 2018; Kurt & Ozturk, 2019). A student who enters the field of clinical practice undoubtedly enters a new environment that is not accustomed to. It is extremely important to know the effect of this clinical practice on their comfort level and to prevent its negative

effects in order for the clinical education of nursing students to reach their goals (Tasdelen & Zaybak, 2013).

In our study, which aimed to determine the comfort level of first year nursing students and the factors affecting their first clinical practice experience, the comfort level of the students is above the average. In the study of Aydın and Yücel, the comfort levels of nursing students were determined as moderate (Aydın & Yucel, 2014). In the study of Cunkus et al., a positive and significant relationship was found between the comfort level of nursing students in pediatric clinical practice and their communication skills (Cunkus, Yigitoglu & Solak, 2021). It is stated that the first clinical practice is effective in perceiving the professional qualities of the nursing profession. In this direction, in order to develop students' perceptions of the nursing profession in a positive way, clinical education should be carefully planned and carried out under the guidance and counseling of knowledgeable and experienced student role model instructors (Eser, Khorshid & Denat, 2008). Nursing students have an intensive curriculum from the first years of their academic life. They may encounter many situations in which they feel anxious, such as the intensity of the theoretical courses, having hospital experience for the first time, participating in patient care, and not knowing how to deal with the patient's problems (Savasan & Meric, 2021). Nursing students have difficulty in meeting their basic life needs such as receiving social support, being understood, sheltering, economic security and protecting their health in cities where they are

foreign, and their comfort levels may decrease because they try to cope with the difficulties of nursing education (Aydin & Yucel, 2014). Qualified manpower is the most important component in the development of a country and universities play a key role in providing this manpower. The quality of the education provided by the universities affects the quality of their graduates and thus the future of the country depends on the quality of the universities. For this reason, it is necessary to pay attention to the education and comfort levels of nursing students in the first years of their university education (Aydin & Yucel, 2014).

In our study, it was determined that the total score average of the Short General Comfort Questionnaire of the students who willingly preferred the nursing department was higher than the students who reluctantly preferred the nursing department ($p < 0.05$). The choice of profession, which is an important decision in the life of individuals, is affected by many factors (Sahin et al., 2020). It has been stated that the factors affecting the process of choosing the nursing profession of first-year nursing students are the interest in the nursing profession, the image of the nursing profession, and the link between the profession and personality (Sahin et al., 2020). The fact that the nursing profession has good employability and income opportunities and is a profession that offers the opportunity to help people also increases the preferability of the profession (Aydemir, 2018). In our study, it is thought that the high level of comfort of the students who willingly preferred the nursing department is due to being in the desired department and doing the desired profession.

Since the first clinical practice was during the COVID-19 pandemic, nursing students who did not feel fear had a higher ease sub-dimension score average than those who felt fear ($p < 0.05$). The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the whole world and caused the students who performed their clinical practices during this period to experience fear and anxiety (Oguz & Kuyucuoglu, 2023). It was determined that nursing students' thoughts of contagion prevented their practices (Ozbasan & Bayram, 2020). Ease is defined as the state of being calm, relaxed, or at peace. It is affected by physical and

emotional experiences and environmental characteristics (Terzi & Kaya, 2017; Yucel, 2011). It is thought that nursing students who do not feel fear because their first clinical practice was during the COVID-19 pandemic period did not perceive the COVID-19 pandemic as a physical and environmental hazard and therefore scored higher in the ease sub-dimension.

It was determined that nursing students who did not have difficulty in fulfilling their self-care needs (nutrition, WC) during the first clinical practice day had a higher average score of transcendence sub-dimension than students who had difficulties ($p < 0.05$). sub-dimension is defined as a state of increasing ordinary forces. The individual, whose needs for comfort are fully met, can reach the level of sub-dimension, which is the superiority of comfort (Terzi & Kaya, 2017; Yucel, 2011). Peplau comfort; defines it as a basic need together with nutrition, rest, sleep, friendship and agreement (Terzi & Kaya, 2017). The fact that there were no problems in meeting their self-care needs enabled the students to feel comfortable and to score higher in the transcendence sub-dimension.

Conclusion: In this study, it was found that the comfort levels of nursing students were above the average. It was determined that the total score average of the Short General Comfort Questionnaire of the students who willingly preferred the nursing department, the ease sub-dimension score average of the nursing students who did not feel fear due to the fact that their first clinical application was in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the average score of the transcendence sub-dimension of the nursing students who did not have difficulty in fulfilling their self-care needs during the first clinical practice day were determined. In order to ensure that the clinical practices of the nursing department students are better quality and efficient, it is recommended to increase the comfort level of the students by preparing them effectively for this clinical practice before the first clinical practice experience.

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