

Original Article

Examination of Postgraduate Dissertations Including Nursing in the Field of Forensic Sciences in Turkey

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Abstract

Background: Among health professionals and at health services and units –in particular at emergency services- it is nurses who first meet victims/perpetrators of a judicial case and evidential objects of these victims/perpetrators. However; to determine the criminals or victims and the rise in the number of victims who were hospitalized led to a necessity to establish forensic nursing and therefore, forensic nursing is featured as a new study field among forensic sciences.

Objective: In this study, we aim to examine of postgraduate dissertations including nursing in the field of forensic sciences in Turkey.

Methodology: It was examined the data base of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) National Thesis Center in the framework of research; 10 master's and 7 doctoral dissertations, including a total of 17 dissertations were evaluated. While analyze masters and doctoral dissertations carried out at different institutes and faculties, related to including nursing terminology in the field of forensic sciences between 1997 and 2017 have been examined. In this study, data were collected by document analysis method. The variables were evaluated with numbers and percentages.

Results: Within the scope of the study, it was determined that the first graduate study was conducted in 1997 and the most dissertations (47.0%) was studied between 2012 and 2015, most of the studies were conducted at the graduate level (58.8%) and prepared using a quantitative research design (88.0%). 52.8% of the dissertations were written in İstanbul University, in Institute of Forensic Medicine and in the department of Social Sciences. In the thesis, it was determined that nurses' roles (11.7%), legislation (11.7%), violence against women (11.7%) and neglect and abuse of children (17.6%).

Conclusion: As a result, the dissertations have been found a limited number of nursing in the field of forensic sciences.

Key Words: Forensic Sciences, Nursing, Postgraduate, Thesis.

Introduction

Forensic sciences constitute the key phase in the penalty-justice system all over the world. The aim of forensic sciences is to help solve a legal problem in a judicial case by identifying, investigating, analyzing and assessing the existing set of evidences and proofs so that a suspect can prove his/her guilt or innocence in conformity with criminal law (Petherick, Turvey

& Ferguson, 2010; Prahlow, 2010). Among health professionals and at health services and units –in particular at emergency services- it is nurses who first meet victims/perpetrators of a judicial case and evidential objects of these victims/perpetrators (Esiiyok et al., 2004; Lynch & Duval, 2011). However; not having enough knowledge and experience on judicial cases, nurses may miss evidences and thus become unable to interpret judicial facts at a sufficient

level (Esiiyok et al., 2004; Abdool & Brysiewicz, 2009; Dogan, 2012). These difficulties to determine the criminals or victims and the rise in the number of victims who were hospitalized led to a necessity to establish forensic nursing during 1970s. Forensic nursing is described as “nurses’ use of education they receive in forensic cases such as violence, trauma and other crime cases and victims in trauma or death cases by scientifically examining and assessing perpetrators.” (Lynch & Duval, 2011). Therefore, forensic nursing is regarded as a new study field among forensic sciences. Study-topics of forensic nursing have been established by International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) and include such topics as interpersonal violence, public health and public health safety, emergency/trauma nursing, and human rights violation (Esiiyok et al., 2004). Nurses who receive forensic nursing education are also employed as forensic medicine experts/witnesses at emergency rooms, suicide prevention centers, sexual assault crisis centers, crime scene investigations, death studies, penitentiaries, prosecution offices, judiciary offices, forensic pathology laboratories and courts (Lynch, 2011; Pinar & Bahar, 2011).

In regard to forensic nursing processes, forensic nurse realize such tasks as distinguishing crimes (domestic violence, child abuse, etc.), taking anamnesis in forensic cases, performing physical examination, forensic examination, collecting biological and physical evidences, protecting safety chain as well as providing support needed by the victims and their significant others and referring them to institutions for rehabilitations, preparing forensic report, providing consultancy and having roles and responsibilities to prevent violence (Encinares, McMaster & McNamee, 2005; Burgess & Piatelli, 2011). It is very important that forensic nurses’ roles and working areas be defined and improved in Turkey while offering justice and developing individuals’ health. Besides, efforts to educate nurses with necessary knowledge and skills in forensic nursing fields should also be made (Yıldırım & Berk Özcan, 2017). In Turkey, the fact that the number of studies on forensic nursing is small and only a few universities offer optional courses on forensic nursing as a part of undergraduate education, a joint understanding of team-work in forensic nursing have not been developed yet and that nursing roles and responsibilities of forensic nursing are not explained in laws affects judicial

processes negatively. Thus; forensic evidences may be missed, insufficient proofs may be collected and evidences may be damaged by mistake. In this sense, developing forensic nursing educations and increasing forensic nursing awareness will help filling this gap.

Methodology

Aim and type of the study: This study was descriptively undertaken in order to examine postgraduate dissertations on forensic sciences and nursing done between 1997 and 2017 in Turkey in terms of some respects.

Study Sample: The study sample was consisted of 17 dissertations -10 postgraduate dissertations and 7 doctorate dissertations- which were published on forensic sciences and nursing by different academic institutes, faculties and departments between 1997 and 2017 and were stored in database of National Thesis Center of Council of Higher Education.

Data Collection: Simple search option on internet page of National Thesis Center of Council of Higher Education (<https://dissertations.yok.gov.tr/NationalDissertationsCenter/>) was preferred and such key words in nursing as “forensic medicine, forensic sciences and forensic nursing” were sought separately and together. As a part of screening model, documents were investigated and data of the study were collected using “Dissertation Assessment Form” designed in line with the literature by the researcher. The data were clustered and grouped into following topics: postgraduate dissertation and doctorate dissertation, publication year, university, academic department, access, study topic, study design, study groups, data collection tools and data collection techniques.

Data Assessment: Data with the same qualities were classified using content analysis, were presented in numbers and percentages through processing with SPSS program (Version 21) and were interpreted in terms of forensic sciences and nursing.

Results

In this study which was undertaken to examine postgraduate dissertations on forensic sciences and nursing done between 1997 and 2017; it was seen that there were a total of 17 dissertations published -58.8% of these dissertations (10) were postgraduate dissertations while 41.2% of them doctorate dissertations (7) (Figure 1). Nursing dissertations on forensic sciences were conducted

at five universities and the top three universities that published these dissertations most were İstanbul University (52.8%), Marmara University (17.6%) and Ege University (17.6%). Institutes

publishing these dissertations were Forensic Medicine Institute (52.8%) and Health Sciences Institute (47.2%).

Table 1: General Characteristics of Published Dissertations

General Characteristics	Master's Degree		Doctoral Degree		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Type	10	58.8	7	41.2	17	100,0
University						
İstanbul University	5	50,0	4	57.2	9	52,8
Marmara University	3	30,0	-	-	3	17,6
Ege University	-	-	3	42.8	3	17,6
Ankara University	1	10,0	-	-	1	5,8
Yeni Yuzyl University	1	10,0	-	-	1	5,8
Institute						
Forensic Medicine Institute	5	50,0	4	57.2	9	52,8
Health Sciences Institute	5	50,0	3	42.8	8	47,2
Department						
Department of Social Sciences	5	50,0	4	57.2	9	52,8
Department of Surgical Diseases Nursing	2	20,0	-	-	2	11,7
Department of Psychiatry Nursing	-	-	2	28.6	2	11,7
Department of Internal Diseases Nursing	1	10,0	-	-	1	5,8
Department of Public Health	1	10,0	-	-	1	5,8
Department of Child Health and Diseases Nursing	-	-	1	14.2	1	5,8
Department of Health Management	1	10,0	-	-	1	5,8
Academic Mentor						
Professor	7	70,0	6	85.8	13	76,6
Associate professor	2	20,0	1	14.2	3	17,6
Doctor instructor	1	10,0	-	-	1	5,8
Full Text						
Accessible	7	70,0	7	100,0	14	82,4
Not accessible	3	30,0	-	-	3	17,6
Subject Area						
Identification of judicial cases	1	10,0	-	-	1	5,8
Legislation and legal liability	1	10,0	1	10,0	2	11,7
Euthanasia	1	10,0	-	-	1	5,8
Violence against women	1	10,0	1	10,0	2	11,7
Role of nurses	2	20,0	-	-	2	11,7
Child neglect and abuse	2	20,0	1	10,0	3	17,6
Nursing education	1	10,0	-	-	1	5,8
Interpersonal relationship development program	-	-	1	10,0	1	5,8
Safe working environment	-	-	1	10,0	1	5,8
Malpractice	-	-	1	10,0	1	5,8
Sexual assault	1	10,0	-	10,0	1	5,8
Scale development	-	-	1	10,0	1	5,8
Total	10	100,0	7	100,0	17	100,0

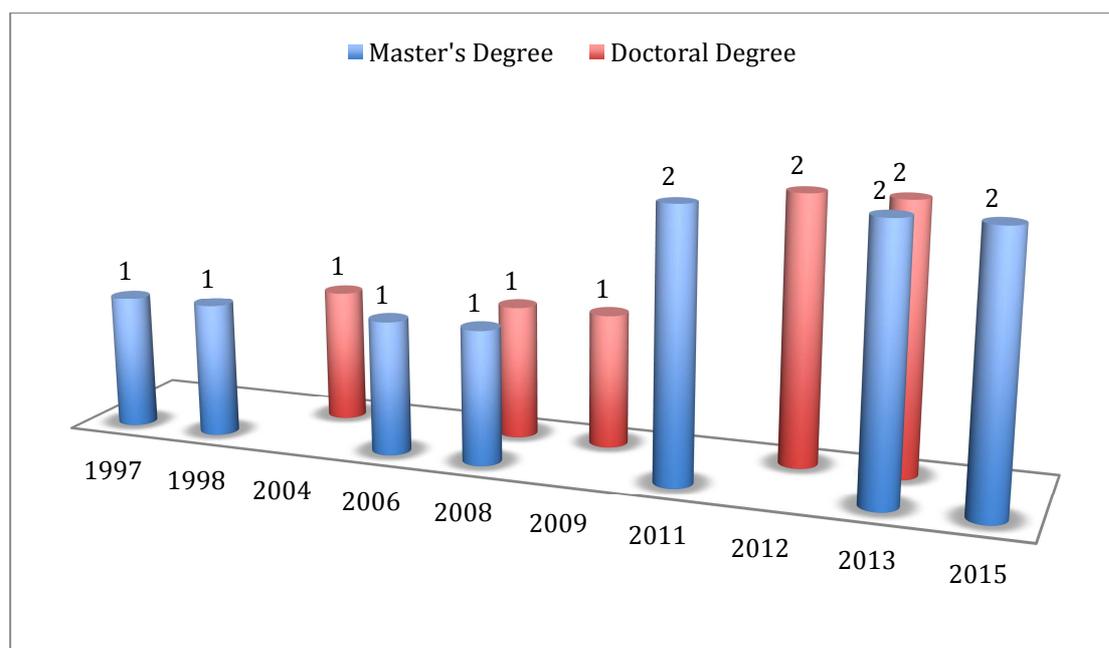


Figure 1: Distribution of Published Dissertations by Years

Table 2: Distribution of Published Dissertations by Study Design, Groups, Data Collection Tools and Data Publication Technique

General Characteristics	n	%
Study Design		
Quantitative study	15	88,0
Mix (qualitatively and quantitatively)	2	12,0
Study Groups		
Nurse	9	52,8
Physician	2	11,7
Children	2	11,7
Forensic Medicine Expert	1	5,8
Midwife	1	5,8
Police	1	5,8
Woman+Man	1	5,8
Adolescent	1	5,8
Patient	1	5,8
Data Collection Tools		
Questionnaire	12	70,5
Scale	5	29,4
Document Investigation	4	23,6
Semi-structured Interview	2	11,7
Sampling (urine + cloth)	1	5,8
Data Publication Technique		
Non-parametric test	9	52,8
Parametric test	4	23,6
Descriptive statistic	4	23,6
Total	17	100,0

Table 3: Dissertations Evaluated in the Scope of the Study

Thesis	Researcher	Name of Thesis
Master	Yılmaz B.	The investigation of nurse's knowledge level and approach towards child abuse and neglect
Master	Yesilyurt A.	The role of male nurse in forensic management
Master	Kaba O.	Identification of the role of nurse for examination of sexual assault phenomena
Master	Kucuk N.	Police attitudes towards violence against women and their occupational role in intervening these events
Master	Karabakır B.	Awareness of nursing legislations and legal responsibilities among nurses
Master	Yalcinkaya A.	Assesment of child sexual abuse in the district of Kartal İstanbul
Master	Tasdelen Bahar M.	Diagnosing of forensic cases by the nurses working in emergency services
Master	Tepehan S.	Health staffs attitude towards euthanasia in icus and other units
Master	Durgun B.	Sexual harassment in nursing
Master	Gokdogan M.R.	Forensic medicine and nursing education
PhD	Sahin D.	Evaluation of the perspectives on violence and shame-guilt levels among perpetrators of violence in prison or victims of violence living in women's shelters
PhD	Sertler S.	Assessment of the safe working condition of the healthcare personnel with antineoplastic drugs and biological and environmental contamination
PhD	Sunmaz D.	The role of forensic nurse in overcoming the anxieties of the children during the gynecologic examination who were claimed to have been sexually assaulted and abused
PhD	Tepehan S.	Analyzing the brain death and organ transplantation perspective of the legal legislation and health staff's approach to the topic
PhD	Baysan Arabacı L.	Development of nurses attitude towards forensic psychiatric patients scale
PhD	Gordeles Beser N.	Determine the efficiency of program in adolescents predisposed to crime for developing positive interpersonal relationship
PhD	Safran N.	Malpractice in nursing and midwifery

Dissertations done in 7 distinct fields were mostly published in Social Sciences (52.8%), Surgical Diseases Nursing (11.7%) and Psychiatry Nursing (11.7%). The academic

mentors of these dissertations were professors (76.6%), associate professors (17.6%) and doctor instructors (5.8%). Full texts of 82.4% of these dissertations were obtained but authors of 17.6%

of these dissertations restricted access to them and only abstracts were achieved. Number distributions of these dissertations were provided as postgraduate or doctorate dissertations and postgraduate dissertations investigated identification of judicial cases (10.0%), legislation and legal liability (10.0%), euthanasia (10.0%), violence against women (10.0%), role of nurses (20.0%), child neglect and abuse (20.0%), nursing education (10.0%) and sexual assault (10.0%) whereas doctorate dissertations investigated legislation and legal liability (10.0%), violence against women (10.0%), child neglect and abuse (10.0%), interpersonal relationship development program (10.0%), safe working environment (10.0%), malpractice (10.0%) and scale development (10.0%) (Table 1).

Table 2 demonstrated dissertations published in forensic sciences according to study designs and it was seen that most of them were quantitative studies (88.0%) and only 12% of them were mixed studies done qualitatively and quantitatively. When distribution of these dissertations were examined in study groups, most of them were done with nurses (52.8%), physicians (11.7%), children (11.7%), forensic medicine experts (5.8%), midwives (5.8%), police (5.8%), women and men (5.8%), adolescents (5.8%) and patients (5.8%). Data collection tools in most of the dissertations were questionnaires (70.5%), scales (29.4%), document investigations (23.6%), semi-structured interviews (11.7%) and sampling (5.8%). When distribution of these dissertations were examined in data publication techniques; it was found that the most commonly used data collection technique was non-parametric tests (52.8%), parametric tests (23.6%) and descriptive statistics techniques (23.6%). Table 3 presented the dissertations included in the study.

Discussion

With the opening of forensic medicine departments, the number of forensic medicine experts in Turkey has recently increased. Thanks to increasing number of those working in forensic medicine, interest and awareness in this area has gone up, too. Thus, forensic medicine has developed day by day and forensic facts have drawn attention of people more. Besides, because topics related to forensic sciences are discussed on TV programs, they have become more popular among common people. With the development of

and emphasis on forensic medicine and forensic facts; particularly those cases that have been brought to emergency services are dealt with and cared more carefully and meticulously; as a result of which the need for forensic nurses has increased. That need has been pointed out thanks to the relevant studies in Turkish nursing literature of forensic medicine. The studies explored lack of knowledge among health personnel and recommendations to increase the number of the studies on forensic medicine were made (Sogukbulak, Kucukoglu & Aytekin, 2014; Karatas Aslan & Erkan, 2016; Polat Kulcu & Karatas, 2016; Kucukoglu, Bucecik, Aytekin & Celebi, 2017).

In the study; 17 postgraduate dissertations that focused on forensic sciences and nursing and were stored in database of National Thesis Center of Council of Higher Education between 1997 and 2017 were investigated. The most published dissertations on forensic science and nursing were postgraduate dissertations in Turkey; the reason of which -we thought- the number of postgraduate programs and postgraduate students were bigger than doctorate programs and doctorate students. In the study; it is striking that more dissertations were published by İstanbul University and by Forensic Medicine Institute. İstanbul University was the first university to initiate studies on forensic sciences and hold a forensic medicine institute; therefore, we are of the opinion that the number of those studying forensic sciences and undertaking postgraduate studies was higher.

Different academic departments published postgraduate dissertations on forensic sciences and nursing and social sciences departments occupied the first place; the reason of which may have been that the term “forensic sciences” was a new term in nursing, the first forensic nursing department was opened in 2004, the first postgraduate program under the name of forensic nursing was initiated in 2008, forensic nursing is a joint study field for social sciences and there are numerous topics on forensic nursing that could be discussed under social sciences. It was identified that dissertations were mostly conducted under mentorship of professors and most of them were full texts.

It is interesting that especially during and after 2012, the number of dissertations on forensic sciences and nursing almost doubled. With time, the number of those studying forensic sciences

went up, forensic medicine and forensic nursing became popular, universities opened more forensic medicine institutes, the number of forensic cases –particularly, at emergency services- went up, the number of postgraduate forensic sciences programs went up, forensic cases were broadcast and discussed more on TVs and occupied the agenda of the country; as a result of which the number of the studies may have risen. As for the contents of the dissertations, the most frequently discussed topics were found to be the role of nurse and child neglect and abuse. According to recent data, it was identified that rate of children who became the victims of sexual crimes rose by 33% from 2014 to 2016 and the number of the victimized children rose from 74 thousand in 2014 to 84 thousand in 2016 (Polat, 2018). Since the role of nurse in forensic cases is not explained clearly enough and more and more cases of child neglect and abuse have been encountered; we thought that studies are mainly focused on these topics.

It was noted in the current study that almost all the studies employed quantitative study design, used questionnaires as data collection tools, used non-parametric tests and were mostly completed with nurses as study group. In postgraduate dissertations; such critical topics as elderly neglect and abuse, child neglect and abuse, sexual violence-sexual assault-sexual harassment against women should qualitatively be investigated in relation with forensic nursing. Moreover; studies on how individuals' psychologies are affected and how and which coping strategies are used can be undertaken; thus, other researchers and societies and communities can obtain information. Besides; thanks to qualitative studies to be done on forensic medicine, environmental conditions can be adjusted in accordance with working conditions and forensic nursing studies can be improved and integrated into practice. Thus, evidences and proofs can be identified, collected and registered correctly. Thanks to the evidences and proofs collected and placed in evidence chain; legal hearings can be conducted properly and wrong decisions can be prevented. Thus, a valuable contribution to justice is done.

Conclusions

As a conclusion; although postgraduate dissertations on forensic sciences and nursing published in the database of National Thesis

Center of Council of Higher Education have created awareness towards forensic nurses' roles and functions and contributed to justice system and nursing profession; it was concluded that not enough number of dissertations has been conducted. Due to the growing number of neglect-abuse, harassment, violence and suicide cases that occupies the agenda in Turkey; all nurses should be educated about collecting and keeping evidences and handing them in judicial authorities, interviewing with victims and doing examinations, providing psychological support and working as experts in courts. Therefore; it may be suggested that such topics as 'child neglect and abuse', 'elderly neglect and abuse', 'forensic nursing', 'forensic case management' and 'legislation' should be included in curriculum of -particularly- nursing schools and undergraduate nurses who work at departments in which there may be judicial cases should be encouraged to get 'forensic nursing' certificate. Besides; emphasizing topics, variables, samples and methods used by the dissertations investigated in the current study will help both postgraduate students and academicians determine study-topics and plan prospective studies on forensic sciences and nursing in the future.

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