

Why Do Nursing and Midwifery Students Choose Their Profession in Turkey?

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out in order to find out the opinions of nursing and midwifery students about their professions. This cross-sectional and descriptive study was conducted on Health School students at Yuzuncu Yil University in 2014-2015 spring term. 473 voluntary students were included in the study (except the cases of absence, suspension of registration and non-voluntary students). The data were collected by the question form prepared by the researchers, and were evaluated in SPSS software with the application of percentage and chi-squared tests.

It was found that the majority of our students have chosen the profession due to the ease in finding a job. It was also found that half of our students had a desire to change their professions. On the other hand, the ones who made their career choice in the light of strong reasons did not have such intentions. While most of our students (92.8%) knew their profession was taking major roles in treatment and aftercare periods, a significant proportion (42.5%) did not consider their professional status positively, and almost half of them (43.6%) stated that they believed their profession was not well-known enough. Students stated that the education of nursing and midwifery needed to be given at the bachelor level (84.4%) and would like to specialize in branches of their profession. Students (87.9%) also were evaluated the participation of males to the profession positively.

In the 21st century, employment is a major reason for profession selection and our students seem to have made their choice in accordance with this reality. It was determined that our students were aware of the responsibilities of their profession, but were affected by the negative public image of their professions.

Key Words: Nursing students, career choice, nursing perception

Introduction

The choice of the profession is a major decision point that shapes a person's life. An individual spends a significant part of her/his lifetime for training for the profession that s/he will choose and the other part by practicing it, so s/he should make her/his career choice in a conscious way. In order to make the correct professional choice, individuals should consider their own abilities and interests. Thus they can be more successful and happy with the area that they selected. Nursing is defined as a profession that is responsible for the planning, organization, application and evaluation of the services aimed at protection, improvement and recovery of the health and wellbeing of the individual, family and society. It is a profession that composed of science and art and by essence it includes humanism and helping people. Therefore this professional choice cannot be made randomly (1).

In order to improve a profession, members who embrace the profession's ideology and their occupational identity, who are equipped with professional knowledge, skills and who have self-

sufficiency in their occupational practices and also have the consciousness regarding the profession's authority and responsibilities are needed (2). In this regard, it is expected that the aforementioned characteristics should be transmitted to the students in the institutions where professional educations are provided. The reason for choosing the profession, perception for the profession, the rate of benefiting from the education should be questioned since these factors affect the service quality of the nurses and midwives after graduation. It is believed that students' perception for nursing/midwifery, their opinions and evaluations regarding to their professions, that is questioning the reasons for choosing this profession, would contribute to their career development. This research was conducted with the aim of finding out the opinions and ideas of Van Yuzuncu Yil University Health School students on their profession.

Materials and Methods

Study Design: The cross-sectional and descriptive study was conducted in Van Yuzuncu Yil University Health School at 2014-2015 spring term. The

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Table 1. Personal Characteristics of the Students

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Female	303	64.1
Male	170	35.9
Age		
18-20	150	31.7
21-24	302	63.8
25-28	15	3.2
29 and above	6	1.3
Department		
Nursing	298	63.0
Midwifery	175	37.0
High School Graduated		
Normal High School	290	61.3
Anatolian or Science H.S.	156	33.0
Vocational High School	27	5.7

Table 2. Income Breakdown Based on Student's Department Preference

Variables	n	%
Reasons to choose the profession		
Is the ideal profession	66	14.0
Due to score of the exam	91	19.2
Advised by close people	57	12.1
Has a high employment chance	259	54.8
Expectations from the school		
To have a profession	172	36.4
To get Bachelor's Degree	35	7.4
To get Bachelor's Degree and profession.	215	45.5
Other	51	10.8
Expectations from the profession		
To find employment easily	154	32.6
To became a good nurse	185	39.1
To feel safe	18	3.8
To have a career	110	23.3
To graduate from college	6	1.3
Wish to change the department		
Yes	217	45.9
No	256	54.1
Reasons to not want to change the department		
Satisfaction	158	33.4
Feeling of responsibility	89	18.8
The ideal department	63	13.3
Ease of employment	163	34.5

population for the research was formed by university's nursing and midwifery students. No sampling was made. Voluntary students were included in the study (except the cases of absence, suspension of registration and non-voluntary students) (n=473).

The research was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Written consents were taken from the Board of Ethics for Clinical Studies and the Health School Directorate, and verbal consents were taken from all of the participants.

Table 3. Students' thoughts on the profession

Thoughts	I Agree n (%)	I don't Agree n (%)	Indecisive n (%)
Nursing is a job solely for women.	60 (12.7)	394 (83.3)	19 (4.0)
Males can be nurses as well.	416 (87.9)	39 (8.2)	18 (3.8)
Nursing and Midwifery are professions valued by the community.	191 (40.4)	189 (40.0)	93 (19.7)
Nurses are an important part of a medical team.	430 (90.9)	26 (5.5)	17 (3.6)
Nursing is a satisfactory profession.	186 (39.3)	188 (39.7)	99 (20.9)
Nurses are kind and patient people.	217 (45.9)	181 (38.3)	75 (15.9)
Primary duty of the nurses is to treat people.	147 (31.1)	280 (59.2)	46 (9.7)
The profession of nursing is held highly by the community.	204 (43.1)	201 (42.5)	68 (14.4)
Nurses are people who apply the directions given by the doctor without questioning, for the good of the patient.	152 (32.1)	274 (57.9)	47 (9.9)
Participation of males in the profession increases the value of the Nursing.	284 (60.0)	123 (26.0)	66 (14.0)
Participation of males in the Nursing profession makes it easier for nurses to fight for their rights.	207 (43.8)	188 (39.7)	78 (16.5)
Nursing is a profession understood well enough by the community.	267 (56.4)	167 (35.3)	39 (8.2)
Nursing is a profession that is only recently developing.	172 (36.4)	243 (51.4)	58 (12.3)

Table 4. The Breakdown of the Student's Thoughts Based on Their Relation to Gender

Variables	Gender		X ² , p-value
	Male n(%)	Female n(%)	
What are your expectations from the school?			19.13, < 0.05
To have a profession	101(%33.3)	71(%41.8)	
To have a Bachelor's Degree	19(%6.3)	16(%9.4)	
To have a profession and Bachelor's Degree	159(%52.5)	56(%32.9)	
Other	24(%7.9)	27(%15.9)	
What are your expectations from the profession?			22.12, < 0.05
To find employment easily	81(%26.7)	73(42.9)	
To become a good nurse	132(%43.6)	53(%31.2)	
To feel safe	7(%2.3)	11(%6.5)	
To have a career	80(%26.4)	30(%17.6)	
To graduate from college	3(%1.0)	3(%1.8)	
Nursing and Midwifery are satisfactory professions?			6.15, < 0.05
I agree	131(%43.2)	55(%32.4)	
I disagree	116(%38.3)	72(%42.4)	
Indecisive	56(%18.5)	43(%25.3)	

Data Collection: In relation to the discussions in the literature a question form consisted of 37 questions was prepared by the researchers and used. Along with the questions related to the demographic, educational and occupational characteristics of the students, questions aimed at evaluating the reasons for the choice of the profession, expectations from

the profession and opinions regarding the profession were asked.

Statistical Analyses: The data were evaluated by SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software by the researchers. Chi square test was used to determine relationships between the categorical variables.

Table 5. The Breakdown of the Student's Thoughts Based on Their Relation to Department

Variables	Department		X ² , p-value
	Nursing n(%)	Midwifery n(%)	
Would you have liked to change your department?			16.55, < 0.01
Yes	158(%53.0)	59(%33.7)	
No	140(%47.0)	116(%66.3)	
Indecisive	17(%5.7)	10(%5.7)	
Nursing and Midwifery are satisfactory professions.			13.85, < 0.05
I agree	100(%33.6)	86(%49.1)	
I disagree	136(%45.6)	52(%29.7)	
Indecisive	62(%20.8)	37(%21.1)	

Results

There are 298 (63%) students in nursing department and 175 (37%) students in midwifery department (Table 1).

When we examined the reasons for students' choice of the department, 54.8% of them stated that they chose it due to its high employment rate after graduation. When examined students' expectations from the school, 45.5% of them expressed that their expectation was to have a profession and get a bachelor's degree. When we asked their expectations from the profession itself, it was determined that %39.1 of them wanted to be good nurses and 54.1% of them did not want to change their profession. 34.5% of these students indicated that they did not want to change their department due to the ease of finding a job after graduation, and 33.4% indicated that they were content with their professions (Table 2).

Of the students, 83.3% disagreed with the idea that nursing was a job for women, while 40.0% of them stated that their profession was not valued enough by society, and 90.9% believed that their profession is an important part of the health care team. (Table 3).

52.5% of the female students expect to have a job and a bachelor's degree, 41.8% of the male students expect to have a job ($p < 0.05$). In terms of expectations regarding the profession, men (42.9%) expect to find jobs easily while women (43.6%) expect to become good nurses ($p < 0.05$) (Table 4). The difference between men's (32.4%) and women's (43.2%) agreement with the idea that their profession grants occupational satisfaction was found statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). A higher rate of nursing students expressed their desire to change their department compared to midwifery students ($p < 0.05$) (Table 5).

Discussion

When the reasons for the choice of the profession were examined, it was seen that the primary reason was higher employment opportunities. When we examine the studies conducted in our country, we determine that students choose the professions of nursing and midwifery primarily due to the high opportunity of finding a job and employment security (3-9). Today the concerns about finding a job direct young people to the professions of nursing and midwifery with the attraction of high employment rates. Practicing a profession with love, excitement and passion creates a productive career, makes positive contributions to the profession, and provides a peaceful and happy life for the individual. A profession which was acquired by chance or coincidence and also which is practiced under the shadow of negative societal emotions could bring unrest and unhappiness to the life of individuals.

According to our evaluation of students' expectations from their school, 45.5% of them expressed a desire to acquire a bachelor's degree and a profession. When we asked questions about their expectation from their profession, 32.6% stated their expectations as to find jobs easily, 39.1% expresses their expectations as to be good nurses. A statistically significant relationship was found between the students' ages and their expectations from the profession. 30% of 18-20 years old and 34.4% of 21-24 years old expressed their expectation from the profession is to find a job easily. Concern about finding a job increases with age. This is an expected outcome such that as the age of an individual increases, her/his desire to find a job which is a significant criterion for an independent life also increases. When the expectation from the profession was analyzed in terms of gender, a statistically significant difference was found between the rate of men (42.9%) and women (26.7%) who expressed

their expectation as to find jobs easily ($p < 0.05$). The rate of the women who expressed their expectation as to become a good nurse/midwife was higher than that of the men ($p < 0.05$). In their study, Nilsson and Stormberg indicate that female students prefer helping others and take care of them, while male students' priorities are employment security, opportunities, flexibility(10). Furthermore, male students rank the desire of giving care service to the others at the last order (10).

In an interesting study conducted on 254 high school graduates and 498 associate degree students, students' reasons for the choice of profession is explained in five categories. These categories are described as moral interest, emotional needs, employment opportunities, economical reasons and interest towards science and diseases (11). Stevens and Walker conducted a study on 641 college students, and in this study students specify their reasons for the choice of profession as the desire of helping people and the desire of doing something important, respectively (12). Another study explains the decision to become a nurse in relation to the desire of human contact, the opportunity to help others, the feeling of doing something useful, and job security (5).

Almost half of our students expressed that they wanted to change their profession. The ones who do not want to change their department, indicated that their reason to stay was the satisfaction with the profession (33.4%) and feeling responsibility (18%). A statistically significant relationship between the desire to change profession and the reason for choosing it was detected ($p < 0.05$). Those who chose the profession with stronger reasons (perception of ideal profession, employment) had no desire to change their profession. In the study of Özpancar et al, it is stated that 78.6% of the students do not want to change their profession(3). In our study, almost half of (45.9%) the students have such a change desire and this is a thought-provoking result. The rate of the students who want to change their profession increases as the time they spent at the university increases ($p < 0.05$). Our initial hypothesis is that this could stem from the awareness of students regarding the challenges and responsibilities of the profession after attending the practice and application classes held at the hospitals.

The nursing/midwifery students included in the study group, 83.3 %, do not agree with the idea that nursing is a job solely for women. They (87.9%) agree with the idea that males can also practice nursing. As they get closer to the graduation, the rate of the students who do not think nursing is a job solely for women have increased ($p < 0.05$). Other similar studies in the literature too have revealed that the students find the

idea of male nursing positive (3,13-16). There are many studies that state sick/healthy individuals, practitioners of other professions, members of health care teams, academician nurses and nursing students have positive opinions about males practicing the nursing profession (13,17-19). The increase in the number of male nurses also shows that the social expectations have changed. There are many factors affecting the efforts of improving the status of the nursing profession, like elimination of males' concerns about the profession, career opportunities, job security and wages. 60% of the students in our study believe that the participation of males in nursing will increase the value of the profession and 43.8% believe that it will ease their fight for their legal rights. This result made us think that the students included in the study were affected by the patriarchy and the dominance of males in the decision-making processes in Eastern Anatolia Region where this study was conducted.

42.5% of the nursing/midwifery students stated that they did not agree with the idea of profession of nursing has a significant status in the society. Besides, a significant portion (35.3%) of the students disagreed with the idea that the profession of nursing is known enough by the society. Nurses/midwives think that their profession has a negative perception in the society. Occupational self-esteem is defined as an individual's value judgment towards the profession that s/he chose. Occupational self-esteem plays an important role in terms of making nursing students successful and productive and considering their profession important and valuable (20,21). In similar studies it is claimed that the image of nursing and societal perception negatively affects the high school students and occupation group (21,22). On the other hand, in the study of Özpancar et al, 59.2% of the students agreed with the statement of "nursing is a profession valued by the society", and 72.4% of them claimed that they believed the profession of nursing was recognized enough by the society (3). In a study conducted in Canada, it was reported that students found the image of their profession positive(5). In addition to this, students stated that they perceived themselves as individuals who defended their patients, and performed medical integration (5).

One in three students in our study group believes that their profession is a new and developing profession. Professionalization is defined as "a series of changes made in the structure of the job in order to reach the status of profession". When nursing is considered in this process, though the profession still lacks some of the professionalization criteria, a considerable progress has been made, especially after the 1980s. Yet, the profession of nursing still has deficiencies,

primarily in scientific know-how and autonomy areas. Therefore especially these areas should be strengthened (2,23).

Employment is an important determinant in our students' choice of profession. They consider the presence of male nurses as a positive development and seek specialization in branches. The reason why almost half of the participating students want to change their profession needs to be inspected and solutions should be formulated to solve this situation. Our students are aware of their responsibilities but feel uncomfortable with their image in the society. Taking steps which will improve the status of our occupation in the society and will make people perceive the importance of it can be advised.

Author Contributions

SI Guner conceived paper, oversaw data collection, conducted data analysis, wrote manuscript, critically revised manuscript and approved final version. S Karaaslan participated in study design, data analysis and approved final version. R Orhun participated in study design, interpretation of data and revision of manuscript and approved final version. The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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