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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDES TOWARD ELDERLY AND PREPAREDNESS FOR CAREGIVING IN HEALTH STUDENTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN TURKEY

Türkiye'de Covid-19 Salgını Sürecinde Sağlık Öğrencilerinin Yaşlı Bireylere İlişkin Tutumları ile Bakım Vermeye Hazır Oluşları Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi

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ABSTRACT

Aim: This study was conducted to examine the relationship between Nursing and Elderly Care students' attitudes towards elderly and their preparedness for caregiving during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods: Descriptive and cross-sectional methods study was performed between June and August 2020 with the help of 310 university students studying at Nursing and Elderly Care. In the study, the data were collected through Google Forms in the digital environment by informing the students and obtaining their consent, and the information form prepared by the researchers in line with the literature, the Kogan attitude scale for the elderly and the readiness to care scale were used as data collection tools.

Results: A statistical significance was determined between the scores of the students on the scales and whether they would like to provide care to an elderly person diagnosed with COVID-19, and their education level and grade level. When the scores obtained from the scales were evaluated, it was observed that there was a moderately positive significant relationship between the students' attitudes towards the elderly and their preparedness for caregiving.

Conclusion: It can be said that students have a positive attitude towards elderly people during the COVID-19 pandemic, are ready to provide care, and also, a positive attitude towards the elderly prepares students to provide care. Nursing and elderly care graduates play an important role in protecting the health of the elderly and providing long-term care to the elderly. Therefore, it can be said that students' attitudes towards the elderly will affect their preparations for care. Recognizing the students' attitudes towards the elderly, eliminating the deficiencies and ensuring a positive attitude towards the elderly will ensure that elderly people are cared for more properly.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Attitude, caregiving, COVID-19, elderly care, nursing.

ÖZET

Amaç: Bu çalışma, Hemşirelik Bölümü ve Yaşlı Bakım Bölümü öğrencilerinin COVID-19 salgını sürecinde yaşlı bireylere yönelik tutumları ile bakım vermeye hazır oluşları arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi amacı ile yapıldı.

Yöntem: Tanımlayıcı ve kesitsel tipteki bu çalışma, Hemşirelik ve Yaşlı Bakımı bölümünde öğrenim gören 310 üniversite öğrencisinin gönüllü katılımıyla Haziran- Ağustos 2020 tarihleri arasında gerçekleştirildi. Çalışmada veriler öğrencilere bilgi verilip onayları alınarak dijital ortamda Google Forms aracılığı ile toplandı ve veri toplama aracı olarak, literatür doğrultusunda araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan bilgi formu, Kogan yaşlılara yönelik tutum ölçeği ve bakım vermeye hazır oluşluk ölçeği kullanıldı.

Bulgular: Öğrencilerin ölçeklerden aldıkları puanlar ile COVID-19 tanısı alan yaşlı bir kişiye bakım vermek isteyip istemedikleri, öğrenim bölümü ve sınıf düzeyi durumları arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlılık tespit edildi. Ölçeklerden alınan puanlar değerlendirildiğinde, öğrencilerin yaşlılara yönelik tutumları ile bakım vermeye hazır oluşlukları arasında orta derecede pozitif yönde anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu görüldü.

Sonuç: Öğrencilerin COVID-19 salgını sürecinde yaşlılara yönelik olumlu tutum sergilediği, bakım vermeye hazır oldukları ve yaşlılara yönelik olumlu tutumun öğrencileri bakım vermeye hazırladığı söylenebilir. Hemşirelik ve yaşlı bakımı mezunları, yaşlı sağlığının korunmasında ve yaşlılara uzun süreli bakım sağlanmasında önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu nedenle, öğrencilerin yaşlılara karşı tutumlarının bakım için hazırlıklarını etkileyeceği söylenebilir. Öğrencilerin yaşlılara karşı tutumlarının tanınması, eksikliklerin giderilmesi ve yaşlılara karşı olumlu tutumun sağlanması, yaşlılara daha düzgün bir şekilde bakılmasını sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tutum, bakım verme, COVID-19, yaşlı bakımı, hemşirelik.

1. INTRODUCTION

Aging which is an inexorable process that starts with birth and ends with death that can be affected by many physiological sociological and psychological factors has an influence on every aspects of human life including social, economic, cultural and political areas (Öztek & Kubilay, 2008; Talmage et al., 2016).

Coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19), which began from Wuhan, China and now is affecting the whole world, and was announced as “pandemic” by the World Health Organization has affected Turkey as well. COVID-19 pandemic has caused millions to be infected and a great number of people to lose their lives. Severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection can be contracted at any age, however, middle-aged and above were the ones who were affected more frequently (WHO, 2020).

Current information confirms that the disease progress critical especially in elders and people with a chronic disease (Bai et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2020; Verity et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Studies have shown that the disease tends to progress more rapidly on elders and could cause death on more short notice for the people at and over the age of 65 (Kim et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020). During the pandemic process, which Turkey takes place, separately from the normal process, the elderly in public are accused of neglecting their own well-being and the public health by not taking enough precautions for COVID-19; and find themselves in the fire of more restrictive precautions disregarding their own free will (Armitage & Nellums, 2020; Kim et al., 2019; WHO, 2020;).

The morbidity and mortality rates of COVID-19 observed among the elder adults were expressed in both mainstream media and social media. Especially in the social media where the young population use more frequently, the elderly was labelled as a joke or “the other”. In a study conducted in Italy on the recent ageism and that involves tweet analysis, it was shown that the 21.1% of the tweets were either implying that the elder adults’ lives were less valuable, or making the COVID-19 treatment in elderly seem like unimportant (Cesari & Proietti, 2020). Many warnings on the effects of the pandemic and the ways of protection from it have been made using elderly. The most emphasized thing by the doctors giving information on corona on TV have been the age.

It is a common idea that there is a discrimination towards elderly in the whole areas of health care services in the recent years (Brooke & Jackson, 2020; Tuna, 2020). In a study that the positive and negative behaviours of acute care nurses were evaluated, it was stated that nurses behave negatively regarding the discrimination towards elderly, and they have the lack of knowledge on elderly care, and thus, the quality of the elderly care are affected (Özdemir & Bilgili, 2014).

In this respect, it is important for the nursing and elderly care students who will be a part of the health care workers as professionals to have a positive attitude, not to show any signs of discrimination, and to have proper knowledge on elderly while they guide the society and give elderly health care. The institutions that provides training for the nursing and elderly care students have crucial tasks on helping them to adopt positive attitudes towards aging and old age (Altay & Aydın, 2015). In this sense, with this study intended for the examination of the relation between the attitude towards age of the nursing and elderly care students, who are being trained to start the profession, during the COVID-19 pandemic and their preparedness for caregiving, it is thought to determine the future of the health care system and to help necessary planning.

1.1. Research Questions

- ✓ During COVID-19 pandemic, what are the levels of attitudes towards elder individual and preparedness for caregiving of health students?
- ✓ During COVID-19 pandemic, is there a difference between the demographic data of the health students and their attitudes towards elderly and preparedness for caregiving?



- ✓ During COVID-19 pandemic, is there a significant relationship between health students' attitudes towards elderly and their preparedness for caregiving?

2. METHODS

2.1. Study design and participants

The study was conducted in descriptive and cross-sectional type between June and August 2020. The population of the study was formed by the 666 students (nursing=546, elderly care=120) studying at a university in the south of Turkey. The power analysis was conducted in order for the determination of necessary sample size for the study. As the result of this analysis, the necessary sample size were calculated as 316 people with the calculations considering variance gathered from the previous studies (Kılıç & Adibelli, 2011; Sullivan, 2008). This study was completed with 310 participants. The data were collected via questionnaires on the digital platform to prevent the physical contact with the participants, regarding the precautions taken against the COVID-19.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

2.2.1. Information Form: The form was formed by the researchers with the questions that aim to obtain personal information of the participants (Köse at al., 2015; Toygar, Hançerlioğlu & Teofonidis, 2020).

2.2.2. Kogan's Attitude toward Old People Scale (KAOPS): This scale developed by Kogan (1961) and created to qualify the attitudes of people toward old people. Mentioned scale was applied to the health care workers and several occupation groups to determine their attitudes toward old people. KAOPS which is a 6 points likert scale contains 26 items. Total score of the scale can vary between 26-156. An increase in the total score shows the positive attitude of the individual toward old people. The Cronbach's alpha was stated as 0.82 (Kılıç, & Adibelli, 2011). In this study, it was determined that the Cronbach's alpha=0.84.

2.2.3. Preparedness for Caregiving Scale (CPS): It is a scale that aims to determine the preparedness for caregiving of the caregivers who provides care for those who experience acute exacerbation of the chronic diseases, who are old, who are in the change of care or before home care, or who have chronic diseases. The scale was developed by Archbold and Stewart in 1986 and has 9 items (Archbold & Stewart, 1986; Zwicke, 2010). There are 8 items in the scale and one extra item that questions the area that caregivers want to be prepared at. A 5 point Likert scale changing from 0 to 4. Total score of the scale can vary between 0-32. An increase in the total score shows that the caregivers feel more prepared to give care, and a decrease in it show the opposite. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was stated as 0.92 (Karaman & Karadakovan, 2015). In this study, it was determined that the Cronbach's alpha=0.95.

2.3. Data Analysis

The power analysis was conducted in order for the determination of necessary sample size for the study. According to normality test, normally distributed characteristics were compared in 2 independent groups using Student's t-test, and non-normally distributed characteristics were compared in 2 independent groups using Mann-Whitney U test. Also, for normally distributed characteristics in the compare of more than 2 independent groups of numeric data, analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used while for non-normally distributed characteristics, Kruskal Wallis test and Dunn's multiple comparison test. The relations between scales scores were tested using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. As defining statistics, average and standard deviation were provided for the numeric variables while number and percent values were given for the categorical variables. SPSS Windows version 23.0 package program was used for the statistical analysis and $p < .05$ was accepted as statistically significant.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the non-invasive clinical research ethics board of Hatay Mustafa Kemal University (Date: 04/06/2020, Number: 7/32). A written permission was had from the departments. Since the answers need to be given voluntarily, it was placed great importance on voluntary participation of the students. Also, the aim of the study and for what purpose the results will be used explained the students before they have started to answer the questions, and they were assured that the personal information obtained will not be given to third persons or will not be allowed third persons to obtain them and their approval were received. In order to be able to use the scales, the permission was received via e-mail.

3. RESULTS

This study was conducted with the help of 310 students studying at nursing and elderly care. According to the results of the study, the score that the students have obtained from the KAOPS was 103.29 ± 14.00 (min=55 – max=143), and their score from the CPS was 18.73 ± 8.42 (min=0 – max=32) (Table 1). The age average of the participants in the study was 20.93 ± 1.73 dir. The 69% of the students were Nursing Department student, 35,5% of them were in the 1st grade, 54,2% of them has never experienced living with a person older than 65 years old, and 70% of them cleared that they do not want to give care to a patient with COVID-19 (Table 2).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Scale Scores (n=310)

	Mean±Sd	Min-Max	25 per cent	Median	75 per cent
KAOPS	103.29±14.00	55.00-143.00	92.00	102.50	113.00
CPS	18.73±8.42	0.00-32.00	14.00	19.00	25.00

Abbreviations: Sd: Standard deviation, KAOPS: Kogan's attitude toward older people scale, CPS: Preparedness for caregiving scale

When the data was analysed, it was observed that the ones who do not prefer to give care to an old patient with COVID-19 have statistically significantly higher scores with the points (105.47 ± 13.98) looking at their KAOPS than the ones with (98.20 ± 12.74) KAOPS score ($p = .001$). A statistically significance was not found between the other characteristics of the participants and their KAOPS points ($p > .05$) (Table 2).

Table 2. Test Statistics Between Variables and Scales (n=310)

Variables	Groups	n	%	KAOPS		CPS	
				Mean±Sd	Test	Mean±Sd	Test
Age (Mean±Sd =20.93±1.73)	18-20	137	44.19	103.19±12.33	KW=6.360 $p = .095$	18.54±8.61	KW=3.433 $p = .330$
	21-23	153	49.35	103.41±14.64		19.43±8.05	
	23-25	16	5.16	107.87±17.45		16.43±8.42	
	25+	4	1.29	83.25±16.17		16.75±2.87	
Educational Department	Nursing	214	69.0	103.12±13.35	Z=10133 $p = .849$	18.12±8.04	Z=8.620 $p = .023$
	Elderly Care	96	31.0	103.66±15.43		20.10±9.12	
Class Level	1	110	35.5	102.57±12.79	KW=2.439 $p = .486$	^a 17.73±8.36	KW=9.170 $p = .027$
	2	69	22.3	103.68±14.39		^{ab} 19.10±9.24	
	3	70	22.6	104.79±14.53		^b 20.79±8.49	
	4	61	19.7	102.41±15.18		^a 17.77±7.14	
Have you ever lived in the same house with the aged 65 and over?	Yes	142	45.8	101.92±14.15	t=-1.581 $p = .115$	18.38±8.45	Z=0.800 $p = .424$
	No	168	54.2	104.44±13.81		19.03±8.42	
Want to care for an elderly patient diagnosed with COVID-19?	Yes	217	70.0	105.47±13.98	t=4.301 $p = .001$	20.04±8.06	t=4.426 $p = .001$
	No	93	30.0	98.20±12.74		15.68±8.51	

Abbreviations: ^{a,b,c} are groups of statistical significance according to the Dunn test. Z:Mann Whitney U testi, KW:Kruskal Wallis H Test, t: t test, Sd: standard deviation, KAOPS: Kogan's attitude toward older people scale, CPS: Preparedness for caregiving scale

After the statistical analysis of the answers of the students in the study, it was observed that the Elderly Care Department students' scores of CPS were statistically significantly higher than the scores of the Nursing Department students ($p < .05$). A statistically significant difference was observed between students from different classrooms ($p < .05$). As the result of the further analysis completed to determine between which groups the difference was, it was observed that the scores of 3rd grade students have statistically significantly higher scores from the CPS compared to the scores of 1st grade students ($p < .05$). Similarly, it was observed that the scores of 3rd grade students have statistically significantly higher scores than the scores of 4th grade students. The scores of the students, who want to give care to an elder patient with COVID-19, from the CPS were observed to be statistically significantly higher compared to the scores of the students who do not prefer to give care to an elder patient with COVID-19 ($p = .001$) (Table 2).

When the answers of the students (n=22) for the “Is there another topic that you would like to prepare better for caregiving?” question (included in the CPS scale) were evaluated, it was determined that they request to be prepared better on the emergency treatment and drug applications (n=12) widening the theoretical curriculum on elderly care and caregiver burden (n=7), increasing the number of clinical and field practices about elderly care (n=6), elderly mental health (n=4), the wound care (n=4) and communication (n=3).

Table 3. The Relationship Between Kogan’s Attitude Toward Old People Scale And Preparedness For Caregiving Scale Levels (n=310)

KAOPS	CPS
	r=0.428* p= .001

Abbreviations: *Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient, KAOPS: Kogan’s Attitude toward Older People Scale, CPS: Preparedness for Caregiving Scale

When the relation between the attitude toward older people of the students in the study and their preparedness for caregiving are examined, a moderate statistically significant correlation in the positive way between the KAOPS and the CPS were detected ($r = .428$; $p = .001$). It is expected that the CPS level increases when the KAOPS positive level increases (Table 3).

4. DISCUSSION

It was aimed in this study that the relationship between the attitude toward elderly of the nursing and elderly care department and their preparedness to give care. In this study conducted with the help of 310 students studying the nursing and elderly care, the age average of the participants was determined as 20.93 ± 1.73 . There is a similarity between this study and the studies on the ageism against elderly, carried out in Turkey with nursing and elderly care students, in terms of the average of age and gender of the participants and their experience of living with individuals over 65 years old (İşcan Ayyıldız & Evcimen, 2018; Kolcu & Kalındemirtaş Küçük, 2017). This finding, considered as a natural result of that the student group are formed by university students, accords with the literature (Bozdoğan Yeşilot et al., 2020; Can et al., 2020). Therefore, similar findings were detected in both national and international studies carried out with nursing students (Benli & Acar, 2017; Bozdoğan Yeşilot et al., 2020; Kolcu & Kalındemirtaş Küçük, 2017; Langford, 2007). Also, in another study, the experience of living with individuals over 65 years old of the participants was confirmed to be higher (58%) than that of this study (45.8%) (Söylemez et al., 2018).

Evaluating the scores students got from the KAOPS, similarly with our study, it was detected the students’ scores in a study (Adıbelli, Türkoğlu & Kılıç, 2013). In another study completed using the same scale in Italy (Matarese et al., 2013). It is possible that the average score may seem higher since KAOPS was used with 26 items in Turkey while in Italy, the same scale was used with 34 items. However, when it is evaluated as 26 items, it can be concluded that the score is less and at the middle-level in Turkish society. This study’s results show that the people of Turkey usually appreciate older people. Mostly, people in Turkey consider older people as wise people and guides and respect them in the society. Also, the reason of this can be the popularity of ageism on media during the pandemic and the younger individuals’ sensitivity or interests on this subject.

In the study, the scores of the students who want to give care to an elderly with COVID-19 were determined to be statistically significantly higher than the ones who does not prefer to give care ($p < .05$) (Table 2). It was detected in a study that the most important result of this study, it was stated that the proper knowledge on preferring working with older people and growing old can affect the positive attitude. The fact that the positive attitude of the students, in this study, toward older people, who want to give care to the elderly with COVID-19, is supported by this result (Liu et al., 2013). The most important outcome of the study of Matarese et al. (2013) was that the proper knowledge on growing old and preferring working with the elderly can affect the positive attitude. This outcome can explain in this study that the reason why the positive attitude of the students, who want to give care to the elderly with COVID-19, toward older people. When it is considered that the patient is both older and a carrier of a contagious disease, it may ease to conclude that the nursing and elderly care students value the patient and care about their health and right to life.

It can be concluded that the nursing and elderly care students feel moderately prepared when their score from the CPS was evaluated (min=0, max=32) (Table 1). Reviewing the literature, CPS was detected to be used to determine the level of preparedness for caregiving of the patient's relatives who play a part as caregiver other than the students (Erdoğan İnan, 2020; Karaman & Karadakovan, 2015; Mecek 2019; Sözeri Eser, 2019; Uslu, 2019). As the caregiver role of nursing is considered, caregiving behaviours of nursing and elderly care students and their perceptions on caregiving can be expressed as a sign of their preparedness. According to Li et al. (2013) if the students manage to integrate the care into clinical practice, their potential to become more qualified nurses and give better nursing services can improve. In Solvoll and Heggen's study (2010), however, it was stated that there is the potential for better caregiving, but the experiences of the students' on caregiving are not questioned, and there are cases in the students such as focusing theory at school and practice at clinic can lead care to remain in the background.

A significance was determined between the departments of the students in the study and their preparedness for caregiving ($p < .05$) (Table 2). Elderly Care Department is a associate degree program within the higher education institutions and started by the Republic of Turkey the Ministry of Health to raise manpower for transition on the support the elderly health in Turkey, and to provide for the elderly in constitutions and at home, and the graduates receive "elderly care technician" title (Olğun & Yıldırım, 2019). Thus, the reason that the elderly care students feel more prepared than the nursing students can be because they focus on only elderly care during their four-semester training.

It was determined in this study that there was a statistically significance between the class levels of the students and their preparedness for caregiving ($p < .05$) (Table 2). Murphy et al. (2009) stated that the nursing students' perception level on caregiving decreases during the training process, and this is because they start thinking differently when they 'unmask' the professional nursing. According to a study by Eklund-Myrskog (2000) it was determined that caregiving theories are superficial and cannot be comprehended thoroughly in the first years of training, but when the students move forward to the end of the training, the theories are comprehended better yet a problem in connecting the theory with the practice occur.

The CPS levels of the students who want to give care to an older individual with COVID-19 were observed to be higher than the ones who do not want to give care ($p < .01$) (Table 2). Corbin (2008) explains this situation as, "Caregiving is an inseparable part of being a nurse and the only factor that turn them into professionals." The main responsibility of being a nurse is to provide adequate care and help for the individual. A nurse's act of performing their duties such as caregiving and wishing to help, is an independent function that they use their professional knowledge, abilities, and skills. Use of this function also contributes to the self-efficacy. The self-efficacy is known to be an objective indicator to determine the performance, and to be known effective on detecting skills and increasing motivation (Zengin et al., 2013). In this concept, Açıköz et al (2016) reported in their study that the students with higher level of self-efficacy feel more prepared for clinical practices, and hence, for caregiving. If the health professional candidates, who will take place in the health care services, show that they are willing to give care for the elderly with COVID-19, this points out that they have the responsibility of their future profession, and it is considered to be a factor that helps them to feel more prepared for caregiving. Moreover, this finding can be said to be in accord with the teachings of Turkish culture as embracing family elders or elder individuals, respecting them, and giving care if required.

When the answers for the "Is there another topic that you would like to prepare better for caregiving?" question were evaluated, it can be concluded that the students experience lack of knowledge on old age and any kind of treatment that can be applied to an elderly, and they are willing to fulfil these deficiencies. Similarly as the current study, in the study by Sözeri Eser's (Sözeri Eser, 2019) it was reported that the first three topic that the caregivers want to be supported are the everyday care of the patient, the emergencies and emergency treatments that can be applies to the elderly and psychological support for the elderly.

According to the study, it was determined that there was a statistically significant moderately relation between the scores of two scales ($p < .01$) (Table 3) It is possible to say that the level of preparedness for caregiving of the students increases as their positive attitude toward elderly increases. Similarly, with the current study, Baştürk (2019) and Gümüşoğlu (2019) reported in their studies that there was a positive significance in the same way between the positive attitude toward elderly and caregiving behaviours.

5. CONCLUSION

In our study, a moderate correlation was found between students' attitudes towards the elderly and their preparedness for caregiving. Therefore, positive attitudes of the students towards the elderly will affect the care they will give to the elderly and will enable them to be given quality care. Older people are in high risk for COVID-19 and attitude toward these people is one of the most important factors that affect the health care services offered to them. In this sense, the recognition of the attitudes of caregivers toward elderly, the remedy of the deficiencies and providing the positive attitude toward elderly will ensure that the elderly is given care more properly. The nursing and elderly care department graduates are the ones who are the most frequently communicate with the elderly. Given the fact that the increasing elderly population in Turkey and around the world, both enriching the curriculum for the theoretical knowledge on elderly care in schools for the students in the nursing department at the level of bachelor degree and the ones studying elderly care at the level of associate degree, and ensuring that they gain experience in practice on the field will contribute to increase the quality of elder health and care.

The Limitedness of the Study

The results of this study can be generalized only for this group since the results are based on the self-statements and with the help of the scale forms in the digital environment.

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