

The Attitudes of the Students in the Faculty of Health Sciences Towards Children's Rights: Descriptive Study

Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi Öğrencilerinin Çocuk Haklarına Yönelik Tutumları: Tanımlayıcı Çalışma

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ABSTRACT Objective: The study was carried out to determine the attitudes of students studying in a faculty of health sciences towards children's rights. **Material and Methods:** This descriptive study was conducted with the students studying in the departments of nursing, midwifery, nutrition and dietetics and social services in a faculty of health sciences of a big university located in the northern part of Türkiye between March-April 2022. The sample of the study was composed of 722 students. "Personal Information Form" and "The Attitude Towards Children's Rights Scale" were used to collect data. Data were analyzed by SPSS-21.00 program. The results were accepted as statistically significant at $p<0.05$ within a confidence interval of 95%. The study was carried out in compliance with the principles of Helsinki Declaration. **Results:** 77.7% of the students stated that they have not taken any education about children's rights, and 75.3% indicated that children's rights were neglected. Mean total score of the students from the Attitude Towards Children's Rights Scale was found to be 29.98 ± 8.50 . Besides, mean total score of the students from this scale was found to be significantly different based on their department of study, grade and their states of having an education about children's rights ($p<0.05$). **Conclusion:** In the study, the attitudes of the students toward children's rights were determined to be positive. In addition, midwifery and nursing students and 3rd and 4th graders were found to have more positive attitudes toward children's rights.

ÖZET Amaç: Bu çalışma, sağlık bilimleri fakültesinde öğrenim gören öğrencilerin çocuk haklarına yönelik tutumlarını belirlemek amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. **Gereç ve Yöntemler:** Tanımlayıcı nitelikteki bu araştırma, Mart-Nisan 2022 tarihleri arasında Türkiye'nin kuzeyinde büyük bir üniversitenin sağlık bilimleri fakültesinde ebelik, hemşirelik, beslenme ve diyetetik ve sosyal hizmet bölümünde eğitim gören öğrenciler ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın örneklemini 722 öğrenci oluşturmuştur. Verilerin toplamasında "Kişisel Bilgi Formu" ve "Çocuk Haklarına Yönelik Tutum Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Veriler SPSS-21.00 programı ile analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar %95'lik güven aralığında, $p<0.05$ anlamlı kabul edilmiştir. Çalışma, Helsinki Deklarasyonu prensiplerine uygun olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. **Bulgular:** Öğrencilerin %77,7'si çocuk hakları konusunda bir eğitim almadıklarını ve %75,3'ü çocuk haklarının ihmal edildiğini belirtmiştir. Öğrencilerin çocuk haklarına yönelik tutum ölçeği toplam puan ortalaması $29,98\pm 8,50$ olarak bulunmuştur. Öğrencilerin öğrenim gördüğü bölüm, sınıf ve çocuk hakları konusunda eğitim alma durumları ile Çocuk Haklarına Yönelik Tutum Ölçeği toplam puan ortalamaları arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark olduğu saptanmıştır ($p<0,05$). **Sonuç:** Araştırmada, öğrencilerin çocuk haklarına yönelik tutumlarının olumlu düzeyde olduğu belirlenmiştir. Çalışmada, ebelik ve hemşirelik bölümünde okuyan öğrenciler ile son 2 senede olan öğrencilerin çocuk haklarına yönelik tutumlarının daha olumlu tutum sergiledikleri belirlenmiştir.

Keywords: Human rights; health; students; attitude

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnsan hakları; sağlık; öğrenciler; tutum

Children constitute a significant part of the population. Health states and behaviors of the children, who will be the adults of the future, begin to be shaped during this period.¹ In order to become a healthy adult, individuals are required to meet some basic needs during childhood period such as nutrition, education, health, living and accommodation.²

Healthy populations are constituted by healthy children. Healthy growth and development of children take place when each child has equal rights and societies defend these rights.³ Thus, the rights of the children can not be protected due to the vulnerability of children, gaps in the laws and the increased danger all over the world. Lack of knowledge, poverty, in-

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equality, gender discrimination and racism also decrease the respect for children's rights.^{1,2,4} However, recognition and implementation of children's rights are very important in terms of the survival and health of the child. Every individual in the society should cooperate to recognize children's rights and to have positive attitudes towards this issue. Healthcare professionals, who will provide service to the children in the fields of education and health, take place at the key point in this regard due to their one-to-one communication with the families.^{1,5} Besides the children, professionals who work for children should also be educated in this field in order to create a culture that respects children's rights.⁶⁻⁸ Children also have rights in the field of health such as being informed about the disease and treatment process, respect to privacy, taking a care and treatment service from the nurse and doctor with love and smile, being called with name, recognizing their nurses and doctors, sleeping uninterruptedly and playing games at wherever they are. All professional disciplines that take care of children have significant responsibilities in raising healthy generations.⁷⁻⁹ Positive attitudes and knowledge gained especially by the healthcare professionals regarding the rights of a special group of children, who will get service from the field of healthcare, will make them become individuals who recognize, know and look after the rights of children during their practices in professional life.^{10,11} There are few number of studies in the literature on the knowledge levels and attitudes of the individuals working in various occupations in the field of healthcare concerning children's rights.^{1,2,8,12} It has been suggested that training programs and practices that enhance knowledge level on children's rights and develop positive attitudes in the hospitals will empower the child and the family, support the child to gain self-control, strengthen cooperation during care and treatment process and lead to early discharge by accelerating recovery process.¹ Therefore, it is required to gain awareness on children's rights before starting professional life. It is also suggested that recognition of the children's rights is crucial for the university students, who study in various departments in the field of healthcare and will provide service to children in their professional lives.

Aim: This study was carried out to determine the attitudes of students, who were studying in the faculty of health sciences in a university located in the northern part of Türkiye, towards children's rights.

Research problem and questions

Answers were sought for the following questions.

- How are the attitudes of the students towards children's rights?

- Is there a relationship between sociodemographic characteristics of the students and their attitudes towards children's rights?

- Is there a relationship between students' states of having education about children's rights and their attitudes towards children's rights?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

STUDY DESIGN

This is a descriptive and cross-sectional study.

STUDY SETTING AND SAMPLE

The study was conducted with the students studying in the faculty of health sciences of a big university located in the northern part of Türkiye between March 1-April 31, 2022. The universe of the study was composed of 2.034 students who were studying in the departments of midwifery (n=453), nursing (n=661), nutrition and dietetics (n=533) and social services (n=377) that will provide service to a group of children in their professional lives. The sample size was calculated as 502 participants.¹³ The study was completed with 722 students who approved to participate in the study and who were accessed between the dates of the research.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

"Personal Information Form" and "The Attitude Towards Children's Rights Scale (ATCRS)" were used to collect data.

Personal Information Form: This was a questionnaire form which was created by the researchers in line with the literature and included sociodemographic characteristics of the students (age, sex, department of study, grade, education

level of the mother and father, employment status of the mother, family type, income level) and their thoughts for children's rights (status of having education about children's rights, status of thinking that children's rights are neglected, child raising attitude of the participants and their families).^{1,8,14}

ATCRS: This scale was developed by Karaman Kepenekci in 2006 to determine the attitudes of nurses toward children's rights.¹⁵ There are 22 items in this 5-Likert type scale for vital, developmental, protection and participation rights of the children. Among the statements in the scale, 19 are positive and 3 are negative. Negative statements (items 2, 14 and 15) are reverse-scored. A high score obtained from the scale indicates a negative attitude. The lowest score taken from the scale is 22, and the highest score is 110. At the end of the validity and reliability study of the scale which was conducted by Karaman Kepenekci, Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was determined as 0.85.¹⁵ In this study, Cronbach alpha value was found to be 0.92.

DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected from the students, who were studying in the health sciences faculty of the university where the study was conducted between the dates determined by the researchers through a survey method. Students were given data collection instruments after providing necessary explanations and they were enabled to fill out the questionnaire forms within nearly 15-20 minutes. Then, answered questionnaire forms were collected.

ETHICAL ASPECT OF THE STUDY

Ethics approval was taken from the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee (date: February 25, 2022, no: 2022-135) and an institutional permit was obtained from the faculty where the study was conducted in order to collect study data. The students were given information about the aim of the study, their questions were answered and their verbal consents were taken. The scales used in the study were obtained through e-mail from the relevant individuals. The study was carried out in compliance with the principles of Helsinki Declaration.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed by SPSS-21.00 (IBM SPSS Corp.; Armonk, NY, USA) program. Descriptive statistics were performed by using numbers, percentages, mean, standard deviation and median. Normality assumption of data was analyzed by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis test and Tamhane test) were used for the analysis of data that did not show normal distribution.

RESULTS

Mean age of the students included in the study was 21.03 ± 1.98 years old; and 86.8% were females. Among the students, 38% were studying at nursing department, 28% were studying at nutrition and dietetics and 27% were 3rd graders. The mothers of 45% of the students were elementary school graduates; fathers of 31.4% were high school graduates; mothers of 87.7% were unemployed, 90.9% had a core family and the income of the family was equal to the expenses in 65.5% (Table 1).

In the study, 77.7% of the students stated that they didn't take any taken education about children's rights. 75.3% of the students stated that children's rights have been neglected. When the thoughts of students about the attitudes of their families as parents toward their children were examined, 53.2% of them were found to report a protective attitude (Table 2).

Mean ATCRS score of the students was found to be 29.98 ± 8.50 (minimum: 22, maximum: 79). When ATCRS scores of the students were compared based on their sociodemographic characteristics, their mean scores were found to be statistically significant based on the department of study; and the students studying midwifery (29.62 ± 10.57) and nursing (28.21 ± 7.61) were found to have lower mean scores compared to the students studying nutrition and dietetics (31.63 ± 8.37) and social services (31.28 ± 8.09) ($p < 0.05$). Moreover, 3rd (28.70 ± 8.23) and 4th graders (28.88 ± 7.61) were found to have lower mean scores than the first (31.43 ± 9.16) and 2nd graders (31.11 ± 8.71) ($p < 0.05$). In addition, mean ATCRS score of the students who have taken education about children's rights (28.52 ± 7.24) was found to be higher ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3).

TABLE 1: Descriptive characteristics of the students (n=722).

		21.03±1.98 (minimum: 18, maximum: 34)	
Age		n	%
Sex	Female	627	86.8
	Male	95	13.2
Department of study	Nursing	274	38.0
	Nutrition and dietetics	202	28.0
	Midwifery	101	14.0
	Social Services	145	20.0
Grade	1 st grade	164	22.7
	2 nd grade	185	25.6
	3 rd grade	195	27.0
	4 th grade	178	24.7
Education status of the mother	Elementary school	375	45.0
	Secondary school	164	22.7
	High school	159	22.0
	University and higher	74	10.3
Education status of the father	Elementary school	189	26.2
	Secondary school	156	21.6
	High school	227	31.4
	University and higher	150	20.8
Employment status of the mother	Unemployed	633	87.7
	Employed	89	12.3
Family type	Core family	656	90.9
	Patriarchal family	66	9.1
Income status	Income less than expenses	170	23.5
	Income equal to expenses	453	65.5
	Income more than expenses	79	10.9

TABLE 2: Some characteristics of the students for children's rights.

Statements		n	%
Status of having education about children's rights	Yes	161	22.3
	No	561	77.7
Status of thinking that children's rights are neglected	Yes	544	75.3
	No	178	24.7
The attitudes of their parents according to the students	Democratic attitude	190	26.3
	Authoritarian attitude	133	18.4
	Protective attitude	384	53.2
	Permissive attitude	15	2.1

DISCUSSION

In the study, the attitudes of the students studying at the faculty of health sciences toward children's rights were found to be positive in general. Raising child's welfare requires multidisciplinary approaches. Healthcare professionals are expected to act as an advocate for children's rights in all segments of soci-

ety.³ At this point, all departments included in the study are intended to have a higher awareness of children's rights. Based on the departments, midwifery and nursing students were found to have a positive attitude at a higher level. When the relevant literature was examined, no studies were found including the students studying at midwifery, social services and nutrition and dietetics. However; similar to our re-

TABLO 3: The distribution of mean ATCRS scores of the students based on their descriptive characteristics.

(ATCRS)		The Attitude Towards Children's Rights Scale	
		$\bar{X}\pm SD$	Statistical assessment
Sex	Female	30.14±8.70	U:2.8256.500
	Male	28.98±7.02	p=0.419
Department of study	Nursing	28.21±7.61 (a)	KW:39.481
	Nutrition and dietetics	31.63±8.37 (b)	p=0.000
	Midwifery	29.62±10.57 (a)	
	Social services	31.28±8.09 (b)	
Grade	1 st grade	31.43±9.16 (a)	KW:19.884
	2 nd grade	31.11±8.71 (a)	p=0.000
	3 rd grade	28.70±8.23 (b)	
	4 th grade	28.88±7.61 (b)	
Education level of the mother	Elementary school	30.33±8.68	KW:1956
	Secondary school	29.66±7.93	p=0.582
	High school	29.47±8.54	
	University and higher	30.29±8.95	
Education level of the father	Elementary school	30.66±9.17	KW:2.274
	Secondary school	30.07±8.82	p=0.518
	High school	29.74±7.83	
	University and higher	29.40±8.32	
Employment status of the mother	Unemployed	29.98±8.41	U:27.916.500
	Employed	30.00±9.21	p=0.891
Family type	Core family	29.90±8.52	U:19.368.500
	Patriarchal family	30.83±8.40	p=0.157
Income status	Income less than expenses	30.47±8.87	KW:0.702
	Income equal to expenses	29.74±8.30	p=0.704
	Income more than expenses	30.40±8.95	
Status of having education about children's rights	Yes	28.52±7.24	U:39871.000
	No	30.40±8.79	p=0.023
Status of thinking that children's rights are neglected	Yes	29.95±8.76	U:45305.500
	No	30.09±7.69	p=0.196
The attitude of their families as parents according to the students	Democratic attitude	28.68±7.63	KW:6.684
	Authoritarian attitude	30.92±9.41	p=0.083
	Protective attitude	30.35±8.60	
	Permissive attitude	28.73±6.60	

a, b: There is no difference between the groups with same letter; U: Mann-Whitney U test; KW: Kruskal-Wallis H test.

sults, nursing and medical faculty students reported positive attitudes toward children's rights.^{10,12,14} Also, the studies conducted with clinical nurses have shown that their positive attitudes continue following graduation.^{1,5,8} In addition to this, the inclusion of the subject of children's rights in course content of midwifery and nursing students and their higher interaction with the children during their practical training have been suggested to contribute to their awareness of children's rights and to be a factor in developing a more positive attitude.

The students, who have taken education about this subject, were determined to adopt a more positive attitude towards children's rights in the current study. Similar results were found in the studies conducted with students and graduate healthcare workers.^{1,5,8,10,12,14,16,17} Karaman-Kepeneci indicated that the attitudes of the undergraduate students, who have taken a course on human rights and children's rights, were at a higher level.¹⁵ Turan reported in their study with study-control groups that a statistically significant increase occurred in the attitude scores of the nursing students, who have

taken a course on women and children's rights for 14 weeks, towards gender roles, violence against women and child abuse/neglect.¹⁸ Gallitto et al. also reported that undergraduate students developed a more positive attitude towards children's rights as their knowledge on this subject increased and they adopted a point of view against the use of physical force against children.⁴ Based on these findings, we may suggest that individuals, who have a higher knowledge on children's rights and have positive attitudes toward these rights, are more sensitive at the point of protecting children from all kinds of abuse and preventing risks.

Another finding of the study was the observation that 3rd and 4th grade students had positive attitudes toward children's rights at a higher level. There are subjects concerning children's rights within the content of education programs of nursing and midwifery departments in the study, and practical courses for child-family and community health are given from the 3rd grade. In this direction, students taking these courses are expected to develop more positive attitudes compared to lower grades. In the study by Ergin et al. comparing intern and research assistant doctors, interns were found to have more positive attitudes unlike our findings; and it was reported that this was likely to be associated with the higher incidence of having education about children's rights among the intern doctors.¹⁰ However, there are also studies reporting no difference between nurses and candidate teachers based on their grades.^{11,12,19} In the light of these data, it can be suggested that it is more important to develop awareness by having a relevant education rather than the grade level in terms of the attitude toward children's rights.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was carried out in only one university. No comparison was performed with the students studying in different faculties that would provide service to children in their professional lives other than the field of healthcare. Besides, the duration of data collection was limited to the indicated dates.

CONCLUSION

Although most of the students have not taken education about children's rights and thought that children rights have been neglected in the study, their attitudes

towards children's rights were observed to be positive. Moreover, the students, who were studying midwifery and nursing and who were 3rd and 4th graders, were found to show more positive attitudes toward children's rights.

Including content of children's rights as an obligatory course in all health-related departments and teaching these courses through methods that can maximize student awareness is very important. It is suggested that enhancing knowledge levels of the students on children's rights will increase the quality of healthcare service that they will provide to children during their professional lives and will be effective in taking care of the protection of the child from all risks that may adversely affect his life. In addition to this, it is recommended to integrate this subject into continuous education programs in the scope of lifelong learning goals following graduation for the continuation of students' awareness on children's rights. It may be suggested to plan studies that examine the knowledge, attitude and behaviors of the candidates of healthcare professionals at various branches regarding children's rights.

Source of Finance

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Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest between the authors and / or family members of the scientific and medical committee members or members of the potential conflicts of interest, counseling, expertise, working conditions, share holding and similar situations in any firm.

Authorship Contributions

Idea/Concept: Esra Tural Büyük; **Design:** Esra Tural Büyük, Hatice Uzşen, Merve Koyun, Emine Güdek Seferoğlu; **Control/Supervision:** Esra Tural Büyük, Emine Güdek Seferoğlu; **Data Collection and/or Processing:** Esra Tural Büyük, Hatice Uzşen, Merve Koyun; **Analysis and/or Interpretation:** Esra Tural Büyük, Hatice Uzşen, Merve Koyun; **Literature Review:** Esra Tural Büyük, Hatice Uzşen, Merve Koyun, Emine Güdek Seferoğlu; **Writing the Article:** Esra Tural Büyük, Hatice Uzşen, Merve Koyun, Emine Güdek Seferoğlu; **Critical Review:** Esra Tural Büyük, Hatice Uzşen, Merve Koyun, Emine Güdek Seferoğlu; **References and Fundings:** Esra Tural Büyük; **Materials:** Esra Tural Büyük.

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