

Original Research Article

Determination of Intercultural Sensitivity of Nursing Students in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Background: This research was conducted to determine the intercultural sensitivity of nursing students which are receiving education in Turkey's Eastern and Western regions, and factors which affect their sensitivity levels.

Methodology: This research, which was planned as a descriptive study, was conducted on 779 nursing students who were studying at Adiyaman University and Harran University, which are in the South-eastern Anatolia region and Uludag University, which is in the South Marmara region. Data was collected by the researchers using a Student Introductory Information Form and an Intercultural Sensitivity Scale.

Results: It was found that the students who were studying at the three different universities had high intercultural sensitivity. A statistically meaningful difference was found between the students' mean scores on the intercultural sensitivity scale and their current universities, genders, preferences for nursing, familiarity with foreign languages and attendance of exchange programs.

Conclusions: It is founded that the students which are studying three different university have a high intercultural sensitiveness.

Key words: Intercultural sensitiveness, intercultural nursing, nursing students.

INTRODUCTION

Culture is defined as the values, beliefs and attitudes and usages which are created by people, learned by people, shared by people and transferred between generations as a response to nature's creations. [1,2] Cultures are composed of many factors such as the effects of ethnic origins and geographical locations, besides individuals' living, economic and social environments, the historical process and education. [3,4]

Intercultural communication means communication between individuals who

have different cultural and sub cultural fields, information and experiences. [5] In this content intercultural communication can be observed both in situations in which differences between individuals are extreme and in different subcultures of the same culture. [6] In this process, minimization of misunderstandings and the establishment of active communication can only be possible through sufficient intercultural communication. [4,7] Intercultural sensitivity can be defined as the talent for the development of a positive emotion which encourages proper and effective behavior in

terms of intercultural communication. A definition like this addresses the dynamic nature of intercultural sensitivity.^[2] Besides respect and cultural harmony, cultural sensitivity requires evaluation of information.^[8] Individuals who are raised in contemporary societies are expected to develop a positive attitude towards different cultures and to have intercultural sensitivity.^[9]

Looking at studies of the measurement of intercultural sensitivity, it was found in a study by Bulduk et al.^[1] that the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale is a reliable and valid tool for the measurement of sensitivity among nursing students. In the same study, it was stated that this scale could be used to define nursing students' cultural sensitivity and that it could be used in nursing education as instructor model for cultural model and guides.

In a study by Meydanlioglu et al.^[10] to evaluate the factors which affect nursing and medical students' cultural sensitivities, it was found that students have good sensitivity levels. In the same research, it was found that students who had communication with people came from foreign cultures and students who could speak foreign languages had more sensitivity than others. In a similar research conducted by Penbek et al.^[11] it was found that students who received education in two different universities had a high level of cultural sensitivity.

In a study conducted by Roh^[12] it was concluded that students' intercultural sensitivity was affected by different than individual differences. In a study conducted by Yılmaz and Göçen^[4] to evaluate class teacher applicants' intercultural sensitivity level, it was found that while students' intercultural sensitivity levels were not affected by gender, class level or dwelling unit variables, it was affected by learning style. In a study by Bekiroğlu and Balcı^[5] on the faculty of communication, it was found that the intercultural sensitivity level was differentiated according to claiming benefit from an exchange program,

frequency of communication with people from foreign cultures on social media, and having lived in a foreign country and knowing foreign languages. In a study among multinational employees in China by Peng^[13] on the intercultural differences between students who had received education in English and those who had not received education in English, it was found that the students who had received education in English were affected by factors such as respect for foreign cultures and responsibility in interaction and liking the interaction. Multinational employees stated that they were affected by the interaction without liking it. Also in the same study, it was found that the students who had received education in English felt the pleasure of interaction more easily than the students who had not received their education in English and multinational employees.

Nurses in the health care system are expected to have intercultural sensitivity because beliefs and practices concerning health and disease play a part in nursing practices.^[2,14] One study found that nurses' knowledge of the cultures of individuals to whom they were giving care and their possession of intercultural sensitivity reflected positively to their nursing.^[15] A culturally proper care preparation requires that a nurse have information about cultural differences and similarities.^[1] In order to offer individuals a more qualified nursing care, it is very important to be aware of cultural factors, to understand cultural differences, and to have cultural sensitivity. In this content, the importance of awareness of the level of cultural sensitivity of future nursing applicants and nursing students and the factors which affect this level is clear.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

A descriptive cross-sectional study.

Setting and Sampling

The research was conducted in the academic year 2014-2015, between 20th February and 15 March at Adiyaman

University, Harran University and Uludag University. Adiyaman University is a university which was founded in 2006 in the south-eastern of Turkey. Similarly, Harran University is another university in the south-eastern Anatolia region, founded in 1992. Uludag University was founded in 1957 and it is located in Bursa province in Turkey's Western region, in Southern Marmara. The population of the study consisted of 1546 nursing students who were studying at Adiyaman University, Harran University and Uludag University. The researchers tried to form a population without sampling; however, after students who did not want to take part in the study and students who were absent in the time period were eliminated, 779 students were left. Participation in the study was 50.38%.

Research ethics

The necessary permission to conduct the research (2015/605-247) was obtained from the relevant authorities. Also, necessary information was given to the participating students and their permission was obtained for voluntary participation in the research.

Instruments

Research data was gathered using the Student Introductory Information Form and the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale.

Student Introductory Information Form

In this form, which was developed by the researchers, there were nine questions which included students' age, class, gender, living location, knowledge of foreign languages, preference for nursing, claiming benefit from exchange programs, view of their job, and chance of getting together with people from foreign cultures.

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale was developed by Chen and Starosta^[16] and the Turkish validity and reliability was performed by Bulduk et al.^[1] The original form of the scale is that it was developed as cinque likert type 24 items and it is composed of five dimensions: awareness of intercultural interaction, respecting different cultures, self-reliance in intercultural

communication, getting pleasure from intercultural interaction and accuracy in intercultural interaction. From the 24 questions, the responsibility dimension includes items 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23 and 24, respect of different cultures includes items 2, 7, 8, 16, 18 and 20, the self-reliance dimension includes items 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10, the getting pleasure from communication dimension includes items 9, 12 and 15, and the accuracy of communication dimension includes items 14, 17 and 19. Items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20 and 20 of the scale are coded in reverse. The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale has a cinque likert type rating of (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree (3) neutral, (4) agree (5) strongly agree.^[4] In the original form of the scale the Cronbach Alpha index was .88, and in this study it was calculated at .80. Data Collection After the necessary information was given to the students by the researcher, data gathering forms were distributed to the volunteer students. The time given to answer the questions was calculated as 20 minutes. The completed forms were collected from the students and taken for evaluation.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 17.0 was used to evaluate the research data. In the statistical analysis of data, average and percentage values were calculated, and in the independent groups t test and ANOVA were applied.

RESULTS

Demographics

The average age of the students was 20.82 ± 2.28 . 40.1% of the students stated that they were receiving education at Harran University, 63.2% were women, 30.9% were in their first year, 40.2% were living in the provincial capital, and 51.1% stated that they viewed nursing positively. 58% of the students had chosen nursing willingly. 69.8% of the students that were willingly studying nursing stated that they preferred this job for economic reasons or in terms of convenience in finding a job. 69.7 % of the

participating students stated that they found a chance to take education with people from different cultures, 37% of the students knew a foreign language and 66.6% of the students stated that they stated to receive education in a foreign country (Table 1).

Table1. Distribution of the Findings Related to Instructor Features of Nursing Students

Instructor Features	n	%
University		
Adiyaman University	294	37.7
Harran University	312	40.1
Uludag University	173	22.2
Age		
22 and below	664	85.2
23 and upper	115	14.8
Sex		
Female	492	63.2
Male	287	36.8
Class		
Freshmen	241	30.9
Sophmore	229	29.4
Junior	166	21.3
Senior	143	18.4
Region		
District	313	40.2
Province	459	58.9
Other	7	0.9
Preference of Nursing Profession		
Willingfully	452	58.0
Convenience of finding job and economical	544	69.0
Family request	153	19.6
Teacher guidance	37	4.7
Point of view to nursing		
Positive	398	51.1
Negative	209	26.8
Neutral	172	22.1
Being together with people from different cultures		
Yes	543	69.7
No	236	30.3
Knowing foreign language		
Yes	290	37.2
No	489	62.8
Wish of attending to an exchange program		
Yes	519	66.6
No	260	33.4

Findings on Students’ Intercultural Sensitivity Scale and Its Sub-Dimensions

The students’ Intercultural Sensitivity Scale total point average was calculated as 90.48±15.14 and their intercultural sensitivity rate was found to be high. The average scores on the scale’s sub dimensions were as follows: responsibility in communication 26.75 ±5.21, respecting cultural differences 23.49±4.61, self-reliance in communication 17.69±3.79, was getting pleasure from communication 11.07±2.62 and accuracy in communication 11.46±2.47 (Table 2).

Table2: Intercultural Sensitiveness Scale’s Sub Dimensional Point

Sub dimensions	Mean ± SD*
Communicative responsibility	26.75 ±5.21
Respect to different cultures	23.49±4.61
Communicative self-reliance	17.69±3.79
Getting pleasure from communication	11.07±2.62
Accuracy in communication	11.46±2.47

*SD, Standard deviation

Findings on the Relation between Students’ Instructor Features and Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Scores

The difference between the participating students’ universities, genders, chance of being together with people from different cultures, knowledge of a foreign language, having received education in a foreign country through exchange programs, view of nursing and intercultural sensitivity average scores were found to be statistically significant (p<0.05, Table 3).

Table 3. The Comparison Between Introductory Features of Students and Their Average of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Scores

Instructor Features	n	Mean Scale Scores Mean ± SD	
University			
Adiyaman University	294	86.93±17.43	F= 13.463 p*= 0.001
Harran University	312	90.43±13.28	
Uludag University	173	92.98±12.85	
Age			
22 and below	304	91.19±15.20	t=1687 p=0.092
23 and upper	276	89.04±15.46	
Sex			
Female	492	93.16±13.08	t=6.659 p*=0.001
Male	287	85.87±17.21	
Class			
Freshmen	241	91.28±15.69	F= 0.802 p= 0.493
Sophmore	229	90.24±14.54	
Junior	166	89.60±13.84	
Senior	143	89.61±16.53	
Region			
District	313	88.98±15.86	F= 0.810 p= 0.922
Province	459	91.54±14.63	
Other	7	86.85±8.95	
Preference of Nursing Profession			
Willingly	452	91.41±14.81	t=2.034 p*=0.042
Unwillingly	327	89.18±15.50	
Point of view to nursing			
Positive	398	91.96±14.70	F= 3.984 p*= 0.019
Negative	209	88.74±15.91	
Neutral	172	89.15±14.91	
Being together with people from different cultures			
Yes	543	91.45±15.57	t=2.738 p*=0.006
No	236	88.23±13.85	
Knowing foreign language			
Yes	290	92.38±15.38	t=2.720 p*=0.006
No	489	89.34±14.73	
Wish of attending to an exchange program			
Yes	519	92.31±14.53	t=4.857 p*=0.001
No	260	86.81±15.67	

*P<0.05

DISCUSSION

At the end of this research, it was found that the students who were studying at the three different universities had a high intercultural sensitivity. In the research on this topic, students' intercultural sensitivity rates were found to be high. [1,10,11] The conclusion of our research is similar to the conclusions of the study above.

At the end of the study, a significant difference of cultural sensitivity level was found depending on the universities where students received their education. The intercultural sensitivity level of nursing students at Uludag University was found to be higher than that of the nursing students at Harran University and Adiyaman University. The intercultural sensitivity levels of the students of Harran University and Adiyaman University were found to be quite close to each other. The outcomes of the research showed that the nursing students who received education in the Western region had more intercultural sensitivity. It is known that cultures include the influences of many factors such as ethnicity, geographical position, experiences of individuals, economic and social environment and education. [3,4] In this regard, it is expected that intercultural sensitivity can be shaped with the interpretation and evaluation of cultural differences. From this point of view, the different intercultural sensitivity of the students who were receiving education in the three different universities in two different geographical regions of Turkey suggests that these differences might arise from the geographical regions, ethnicities, and economic and social environments of the students.

A significant difference of intercultural sensitivity levels was found depending on the gender of the nursing students. Roh [12] found a connection between students' genders and intercultural sensitivity levels in his study on the issue. The results of this study were similar to those of our study. However, some researchers have reported that there is no

connection between gender and intercultural sensitivity levels. [4,5,10,17] It is thought that this difference originates from differences between the students.

A significant difference in intercultural sensitivity levels was determined from the results of the research between the opportunities of being together with students from different cultures and knowing a foreign language. Bekiroğlu and Balcı [5] found that the intercultural sensitivity level of students who were in touch with people from different cultures was higher than that of students who were rarely in touch with people from different cultures. Meydanlıoğlu et al. [10] and Roh [12] found similar results. Also, studies on the topic show that students who know a foreign language have a high intercultural sensitivity level. [5,10,13,18] Language is a common symbol system shared by a society and the members of a culture, and so a foreign language is a basic instrument of communicating with members of a different culture. Thus, the level of knowledge of a foreign language is an important condition for intercultural sensitivity which refers to an emotional world. [5] For all these reasons and in accordance with the results of this research, being more together with people from different cultures and increasing the knowledge of a foreign language help to increase the intercultural sensitivity level.

As a result of our study, it was found that the intercultural sensitivity levels of students who wanted to receive an education in another country with an exchange program were high. Bekiroğlu and Balcı [5] had similar results in their studies. In Turkey, some students study in other countries for 3-6 months with the ERASMUS program. The structure of such an exchange program makes intercultural communication unavoidable and this makes students who want to benefit from exchange programs sensitive to other cultures.

The students who participated in the research, who chose nursing willingly and who had a positive attitude to nursing had a higher intercultural sensitivity level than the

others. The purpose of nursing is to provide healthcare in a respectful manner to people who have different cultural values and lifestyles. [2] Nurses who are in the healthcare service system are in interaction with people from around the world. In this way, the nature of nursing requires a high level of intercultural sensitivity. Because of the all of this, nurses should have a high intercultural sensitivity level.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there was no significant difference in the intercultural sensitivity level between the age groups of the students, class, or the region they lived. Different from our study results, Yılmaz and Göçen [4] determined a significant difference in intercultural sensitivity levels between classes and the regions where students lived. Roh [12] found a connection in intercultural sensitivity levels between age groups and regions of residence in her study. Our study results are different from the other study results given above because the departments of the students, their ethnicities, regions, social environments and the schools that they were receiving education were different.

Limitations

This study is a cross-sectional research and because it is limited with under graduate nursing students in Adiyaman, Harran and Uludag Universities, research does not represent the other nursing students in other different regions in Turkey. These condrestriction is that research is conducted with only the nursing students. Another restriction is the questions in the survey are limited about the defining characteristics of students so that there might be lots of variables which all can not be analyzed.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded in this study that the undergraduate nursing students had a high intercultural sensitivity level. Also, it was determined that the intercultural sensitivity level of the students depended on

the school where they were studying, their gender, being together with people from different cultures, the desire to participate in an exchange program, knowing a foreign language, choosing nursing, and their attitude to nursing. These results suggest that in order to increase the intercultural sensitivity level of nursing students, universities should have more exchange program agreements, opportunities should be given to students to get to know different cultures, there should be more foreign language courses at the curriculum, and the study should be repeated with other students in other universities.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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