

*Original article*

**Nursing Students' Perceptions of Their Caring Behaviors and The Factors Affecting Their Perceptions**

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**Abstract**

**Aim:**In this study, it was aimed to determine nursing students perceptions of caring behaviors and the factors affecting them. **Methods:**In the study, no sample was selected, 205 students who accepted to participate voluntarily were included in the study. Data were collected by using the personal information form and Caring Assessment Questionnaire. Data were analyzed by SPSS. **Results:**The mean total score of the Caring Assessment Questionnaire was found 270.65±50.55. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was found 0.96. When the total mean score of the scale was compared with the personal characteristics of the students, no statistically significant difference was found between gender, working experience, hospitalization experience, caregiving experience status and negative experiences during the care process. However, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference between the grades, care-taking experience and opinions that care is the primary duty of the nurse. Also a statistically significant difference was found between all subscales and the students who think that nursing care is the primary duty. **Conclusion:**As a result, students perceptions of care behaviors scored above the average. High care perceptions of students will lead to positive progress in their professional life and provide them to be qualified health professional.

**Keywords:**nursing students, care, behavior, perception

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**Introduction**

The care concept contains basic human needs and it is based on understanding human nature although difficult to explain or define. Care is a process of protecting individuals and providing what they need, also it is related to individuals comfort, satisfaction

and outcomes<sup>1,2,3</sup>. The aim of care is to increase the individual's health, well-being, improve their health and healthem in case of illness<sup>4</sup>.

Care is the main and important factor of nursing profession also it is the most essential competence because of the most independent role<sup>5,6</sup>. Caring

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provides a therapeutic relationship between nurse and patient and this process enables nurses to intuitively distinguish patients problems, produce solutions for problems, prepare a plan, and apply and evaluate the plan<sup>7</sup>.

Jahromi et al. (2018) suggested in their study that nursing education programs should be improved, by this way the quality of care will also increase<sup>8</sup>. Especially, in nursing education, caring is considered as the foundation of nursing education and in this process, it is important to teach the care concept to the student by nurse educators. All knowledges and experiences transferred are necessary to reveal the students learning ways about how to care. Being supportive to nursing students during their nursing education provides the student to understand the patient better, find and produce solutions to the patients problems thus nursing students perceive the roles of profession in their career life<sup>9,10</sup>.

In this study, it was aimed to determine nursing students perceptions of caring behaviors and the factors affecting them.

### Literature Review

It has been also found that students perception of care behaviors is high in other studies<sup>1,4,11,12,13,14,15,16</sup>. Petrou et al. (2017) found that nursing students have a multiple perception about caring in their study. Sirin et al. (2008) found that 54.9% of the students participating in the study willingly chose to the nursing department, also Turk et al. (2018) found that students chose nursing profession with the most help feeling in the study. Erzincanli and Yuksel found that nursing student's attitudes and behaviors related to care-focused nurse-patient interactions, were positive in their 2018 study. It is very important for the students who will be members of the profession of the future to gain care behaviors which is the most important function of nursing profession and to accept care as the primary duty of the nurse.

### Research Questions

1. How do nursing students perceive their care behaviors?
2. What are the factors that affect nursing students perception of care behaviors?

### Materials and Methods

#### Study Type

This study is a type of descriptive research that involves defining and examining relationships

between variables.

#### Study Area and Population

The population of the study consisted of students who were studying in the Nursing Department of the School of Health Sciences of a Private University in Istanbul (N = 350). The sample included of 205 students who accepted to participate in the study. The study reached 72% of the population.

#### Study Design

The data of the study were collected between May 15-June 15 2019. The students were first informed about the study and participants verbal and written informed consent was obtained.

#### Data Collection

Data were collected with a personal information form and Caring Assessment Questionnaire.

#### Personal Information Form

This form was included sociodemographic information of the students (such as, gender, class, high school education, choosing the profession voluntarily, working experience, hospitalization experience, opinions that care is the primary duty of the nurses, receiving care experience, caregiving experience, negative experiences in care process). Form had 10 questions and it was completed in 15-20 minutes.

#### Caring Assessment Questionnaire

The scale, which was developed by Larson (1981) is a 50 item questionnaire which uses a 7-point Likert scale. Scale measures 6 subscales; "Monitors and follows through" (8 items), "Trusting relationship" (16 items), "Comforts" (9 items), "Being accessible" (6 items), "Explains and facilitates" (6 items), and "Anticipates" (5 items). The possible range of scales was 50 to 350, as the score of individuals increases, perception of care behaviors increases positively. In Turkey, the validity and reliability of the scale was made by Eskimez & Acaroğlu in 2012 and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.97.

#### Data Analyses

The Statistical analyzes were performed in SPSS software version program with a significant level of  $p < 0.05$ . For statistical analysis, the means, standard deviations, frequency, Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests were used. For reliability, cronbach's alpha coefficient test was used.

#### Ethical Considerations

Ethics Committee approval was obtained for the implementation of the study and permission was granted by the authors to use scale. The nursing students were informed about the aim of study and nursing students verbal and written informed consent was obtained.

## Results

The mean age of the students was  $21.24 \pm 1.94$  (18-29), 76.1% were female. 28.8% were first grade, 13.2% were graduated from medical vocational high school, 79.5% choosed nursing profession willingly, 13.7% had working experience, 19.0% had negative experience in caregiving. 85.9% of the students thought that care is the primary duty of the nurse (Table 1).

The mean total score of the Caring Assessment Questionnaire was found  $270.65 \pm 50.55$ . The mean scores of subscales in the scale; "Monitors and follows through" was  $45.86 \pm 9.08$ , "Trusting relationship" was  $87.88 \pm 18.21$ , "Comforts" was  $49.57 \pm 9.80$ , "Being accessible" was  $32.20 \pm 6.53$ , "Explains and facilitates" was  $31.02 \pm 7.54$  and "Anticipates" was  $24.06 \pm 7.39$ .

The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was found 0.96. When the total average score of the scale was compared with the personal characteristics of the students, no statistically significant difference was found between gender, working experience, hospitalization experience, caregiving experience status and negative experiences during the care process. However, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference between the classes, care-taking experience and opinions that care is the primary duty of the nurse, ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 3).

There were no statistically significant between the "Being accessible", the "Explains and facilitates", the "Comfort", the "Anticipates", the "Trusting relationship" subscales and gender of students, ( $p > 0.05$ ), but there was a statistically significant difference between gender of students and the "Monitors and follows through" subscale ( $p < 0.05$ ). Women's "Monitors and follows through" subscale scores were significantly higher. A statistically significant difference was found between the student's "Being accessible", "Explains and facilities" subscales scores and their willingness to choose their profession. In both subscale, the scores of those who chose their profession willingly was higher.

It was found that there was a statistically significant difference between the total score and all subscales

score of the scale and the mean score of the students who think that care is the primary duty of nursing. All the mean scores of those who think that care is the primary duty were found high. It was found that there was a significant statistical difference between the students' grade and the "Being accessible" subscale and the total score average of the scale, and the average score of the first grade students were higher.

## Discussion

Being aware of the importance and stages of the care process and believing that it is necessary, will make students enable to positive progress in their transition to professional life and become qualified employees. In our study, the mean score of the CaringAssessmentQuestionnaire has been found  $270.65 \pm 50.55$  (Table 2), which determines that the student nurses scored above the average. It has been also found that students perception of care behaviors is high in other studies<sup>1,4,11,12,13,14,15,16</sup>. Therefore, it is thought that students improve self-awareness and consciousness about attitudes and behaviors to be shown, the stages of care process and responsibilities to be taken.

When the mean scores of the subscales of the CaringAssessmentQuestionnaire were analyzed; the "Trusting relationship" mean score found highest with  $87.88 \pm 18.21$  in values, the "Comforts" subscale mean score found  $49.57 \pm 9.80$  and the "Monitors and follows through" subscale mean score found  $45.86 \pm 9.08$ , both are close to the upper limit. The "Anticipates" was the lowest subscale score with  $24.06 \pm 7.39$  (Table 2). Care is a process involving the holistic use of emotions, thoughts and actions in providing physical and emotional comfort in sick individuals<sup>2</sup>. Doing the observation-follow-up carefully and being in a state of reassuring communication are extremely important to provide this comfort, carry out the thoughts and actions. Since care is an essential element of the nursing profession, it is necessary for nursing students to understand positively what care is and all requirements during the education process in order to be competent on this subject when they graduate<sup>17</sup>. Since comfort contributes positively to the patient's illness process, communication, observations, attitudes and behaviors of nurses -and consequently student nurses- about care are very important in this process. Through a reassuring communication, appropriate care requirements can be defined for the patient and more appropriate approaches and interventions

can be identified. In this study, the “Trusting relationship”, the “Comforts” and the “Monitors and follows through” subscales mean scores which were important elements in the care process was found high, it is possible to say that students developed positive thoughts about the care process.

It can be said that the students who think that care is the primary duty of the nurse, the total score of the scale and all subscale scores were found statistically significant, the students comprehend the importance of care in the nursing profession and develop attitude-behavior in this direction. This idea indicates that care is considered important by students in every aspect.

Although the average score of the “Anticipates” subscale is the lowest among the other subscales; Despite the low number of male students and those who received nursing care before, it was observed that they scored high in this subscale. In addition, the anticipates subscale score of those who voluntarily chose the nursing profession, those who thought that care was the primary duty of the nurse, those who worked as a nurse, those who had hospitalization experience, caregivers, those who had negative experiences, and last year students were found to be high. This result shows that clinical practice, professional training and experience create awareness among students about the anticipates of patients from nurses.

The fact that the “Monitors and follows through” subscale was found higher in female students with a statistically significant difference compared to male students, shows that female students performed more careful and effective applications in the care and evaluation process. The “Trusting relationship” subscale scores of those who did not have care-taking experience was found significantly higher. Although the students do not have the experience of taking care, it shows that how necessary the therapeutic communication and the education they receive at the university, students are aware of the importance of empathy in this process and their importance and accept the patient as an individual. It was thought that the lower level of the “Trusting relationship” subscale score of the students who had experience in receiving care was due to the level of care they received and the quality of patient-nurse interaction in this process.

The “Being accessible” subscale score of the students who chose nursing profession willingly was found high with a statistically significant difference. This shows that the students care more about the individual patient, the patient’s problems and the needs of help on the basis of volunteering and thus have the personal characteristics such as helpfulness, conscientiousness, empathizing with others, solution-oriented, in a way that nurses should be. The “Explains and facilitates” subscale scores of those who chose the profession willingly found significantly higher too. In addition to students have personality traits suitable for nursing education, it shows that students perform the Autonomy principle -which is one of the ethical codes of nursing- through care about giving the necessary explanations to enlighten the patient in the medical process and save the patient individual from dependence and open up an opportunity<sup>18,19,20,21,22</sup>.

**Table 1: Individual Features of Students(n=205)**

	<b>Individual Features</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	156	76.1
	Male	49	23.9
<b>Class</b>	1st class	59	28.8
	2nd class	57	27.8
	3rd class	44	21.5
	4th class	45	22.0
<b>Graduated High School</b>	Regular High School	93	45.3
	Medical Vocational High School	27	13.2
	Science High School	85	41.5
<b>Choosing Nursing Profession Willingly</b>	Yes	163	79.5
	No	42	20.5
<b>Working Experience</b>	Experienced	28	13.7
	Inexperienced	177	86.3
<b>Hospitalization Experience</b>	Yes	86	42.0
	No	119	58.0
<b>Opinions That Care Is The Primary Duty Of The Nurse</b>	Yes	176	85.9
	No	29	14.1
<b>Care-giving Experience</b>	Yes	77	37.6
	No	128	62.4
<b>Care-taking Experience</b>	Yes	60	29.3
	No	145	70.7
<b>Negative Experience In Care Process</b>	Yes	39	19.0
	No	166	81.0

**Table 2: Mean Scores of Students Caring Assessment Questionnaire and Subscales (n=205)**

Caring Assessment Questionnaire and Subscales	m ± sd
Being Accessible	32.20±6.53
Explains and Facilitates	31.02±7.54
Comforts	49.57±9.80
Anticipates	24.06±7.39
Trusting Relationship	87.88±18.21
Monitors and Follows Through	45.86±9.08
Caring Assessment Questionnaire Total Score	270.62±50.55

**Table 3: The Relationship Between Students' Individual Features And Caring Assessment Questionnaire Mean Scores (n=205)**

Individual Features		Mean Rank	$\chi^2 / Z$	p
Gender	Female	106.28	Z=-1.41	0.15
	Male	92.55		
Class	1st class	112.75	$\chi^2=7.83$	<b>0.04*</b>
	2nd class	102.22		
	3rd class	82.35		
	4th class	111.40		
Working Experience	Experienced	102.45	Z=-0.53	0.95
	Inexperienced	103.09		
Hospitalization Experience	Yes	97.23	Z=-1.18	0.23
	No	107.17		
Opinions That Care Is The Primary Duty of The Nurse	Yes	109.12	Z=-1.18	<b>0.00*</b>
	No	65.86		
Care-giving Experience	Yes	108.01	Z=-0.93	0.34
	No	99.99		
Care-taking Experience	Yes	90.33	Z=-1.96	<b>0.04*</b>
	No	108.24		
Negative Experience In Care Process	Yes	108.22	Z=-0.61	0.54
	No	101.77		

P\* $<0.05$  (Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests were used)

**Conclusion and Suggestions**

It was found that student's perception of care behaviors is in a good level; the "Trusting relationship", the "Monitors and follows through" and the "Comforts" subscales of the scale had the highest scores but the lowest scores were obtained from the "Anticipates" subscale. It has been shown that factors such as class levels, caregiving experience, and thinking that care is the primary duty of nurses affect students' perceptions of care behaviors. In line with these results; high perception of care behaviors of students will enable them to progress positively in their transition to professional life and become qualified employees. It is recommended to ensure the continuity of this perception, to implement these practices and to gain cognitive, affective and psycho-motor skills that increase the importance of care concept.

**Conflict of Interest**

The authors have no conflict of interest to disclose.

**Sorce of Fund**

No financial support was received in this study.

**Ethical Clearance**

Ethics committee approval was obtained from the institution where the study was conducted.

**Authors Contributions**

Data Gathering and Idea Owner Of Study: Funda Karaman, Ayşe Nur Yerebakan, Sultan Çakmak

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